

Community Missions: Help spread 'Tidings of Joy' this holiday season

Guest Editorial by Marilee R. Clark
Vice President of Youth Services

The REACH (Restorative Environments Allowing Children Hope) division of Community Missions provides a safe haven for neglected, abused and troubled youth and young adults, ages 7-24. We provide services to the needy, homeless and emotionally disturbed populations in Niagara County and other neighboring counties as needed. Services include housing, case management, outreach, counseling, and restorative justice circle work.

This year marks the 33rd year that the Niagara County community libraries and other community supporters have graciously sponsored the "Tidings of Joy" campaign benefiting youth in



our programs. We are pleased to say the positive response to this project has always been overwhelming. It provides our youth with many necessities such as clothing, hygiene items, leisure activities, toys, games and so much more to help make the

holiday spirit a little brighter. In 1990, Susan E. Kotlarz (director of the Niagara Falls Youth Bureau) designed and implemented this fundraising project for all the youth and young adults in the CMI youth services programs. At that time, Sue set

up a Christmas tree with paper ornaments, describing each youth's "wish" for a gift. Patrons of the Niagara Falls Library then took an ornament and returned the gift, unwrapped, for CMI staff to distribute.

Susan assured that all the kids had several gifts, and often took the remaining ornaments from the tree, to personally solicit donations so gifts could be purchased. We are also aware that she purchased gifts on her own.

With the unexpected passing of Sue in May 2023, we have decided to honor her spirit by renaming this project the "Susan E. Kotlarz Tidings of Joy Campaign." Each year, we will continue to remember Sue and her commitment to our youth and the true spirit of Christmas.

We would appreciate your consideration of a donation for the "Tidings of Joy" project. Our ornament trees with specific gift ideas or suggestions are displayed at libraries in Lockport, Sanborn, North Tonawanda and Lewiston. We hope that you might help our youth, who often cannot return home for the holidays. We also accept tax-deductible monetary donations, which can be mailed to CMI "Tidings of Joy" Project, 1570 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, NY 14303.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Any gift would be accepted, and know that no gift is ever too small. For further information, please feel free to contact the REACH offices at 716-285-3403, ext. 2231. We look forward to hearing from you!

Old Fort Niagara Association works to preserve history



Photo courtesy of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Niagara Region.

Guest Editorial by Robert Emerson
Executive Director, Old Fort Niagara

The Old Fort Niagara Association is made up of 700 members who value the rich early history of our region. Founded in 1927, the association worked with the United States War Department to save venerable buildings and landscapes at Fort Niagara from certain ruin. The association took the lead in restoring the fort between 1929 and 1934. Since then, the historic site has welcomed millions of visitors from all over the world.

Today, members of the association receive free admission to the fort's many special events, from large-scale reenactments to smaller educational programs like lectures and demonstrations.

They also receive a quarterly newsletter, Fortress Niagara, which is packed with historical articles, photos and fort news. In addition, members get discounts in the museum shop on books, clothing and other souvenirs.

Perhaps most importantly, members have the satisfaction of knowing that their membership helps preserve the historic buildings and fortifications at the fort. Members also enable the fort to plan and carry out educational programs for all audiences.

In 2023, the fort served some 12,000 school students who experienced firsthand life in the 18th century. One student was so excited about his trip to Fort Niagara that he exclaimed, "This is the best day of my life!"

The association also offers volunteer opportunities. Many volunteers serve as docents who provide informative guided tours to school groups, local residents and travelers to our region.

Those interested in joining the Old Fort Niagara Association may do so simply by visiting the fort's website at www.oldfortniagara.org. They can also call the fort at 716-745-7611 and ask for membership materials. Gift memberships are available.

The Old Fort Niagara Association has been doing the important work of historic preservation and education for almost a century. Those who join today can ensure that this work continues and that Old Fort Niagara is here for many future generations to enjoy.

Celebrate end of Christmas season at 'Twelfth Night Ball'

On Saturday evening, Jan. 6, 2024, Old Fort Niagara will host the return of the "Twelfth Night Ball."

Among the "Twelve Days of Christmas" the 12th day – also known as Epiphany, the Feast Day of the Three Kings, or the Feast Day of the Magi – corresponds to the arrival of the wise men at Jesus' manger in Bethlehem and traditionally signifies the end of the Christmas season. In secular 18th century society, the 12th night was often celebrated with a fancy party, the "Twelfth Night Ball."

The Old Fort Niagara "Twelfth Night Ball" will be held in the Fort Niagara Officers Club. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the event concludes by 11:15 p.m.

Tickets, at \$60 each, are required, and quantities are limited. Reserve in advance through Eventbrite.

- Each ticket includes:
- ✓ English country dancing (instructed and briefed as needed)
 - ✓ Live ECD music performed by O'Ryan's Belt
 - ✓ A scrumptious variety of finger foods (aka heavy hors d'oeuvres) and desserts
 - ✓ Complimentary beer and wine, as well as non-alcoholic punch, water, coffee and tea

Historical clothing in good order is highly encouraged, but not required. Also welcome would be modern attire in the festive spirit of the season.

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