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Lauren Daigle will headline an Artpark concert on Friday, July 14. (Images courtesy of Atlantic Records/Centricity Music/PFA Media)

AN 'IDOL' AT ARTPARK: Lauren Daigle to bring joy to Lewiston

BY JOSHUA MALONI
 GM/Managing Editor

The artists performing at Artpark this summer have placed songs in major motion pictures, sold millions of records, toured the world and, yes, even had a flavor of Hibbard's Original Frozen Custard named in their honor.

But only one is an "American Idol." Lauren Daigle, a past competitor, season 21 mentor to finalist Megan Danielle, and recent finale headliner, will perform July 14 in the Artpark Amphitheater.

Following her time on "American Idol" as a contestant on seasons nine and 11, Daigle wasn't necessarily planning to flip the music world on its ear. She chipped in on a project spearheaded by fellow Louisiana musicians, and her vocal prowess caught the eye of Centricity Music.

Daigle was signed to a record contract and, over the course of just two full-length albums (plus a Christmas sampler), Daigle established herself as one of the most important and impactful artists in all of music.

She earned Platinum status, plus, a slew of awards (two Grammys, four AMAs and 10 GMA Doves), as, get this – a Christian artist.

While that might seem less daunting in a decade featuring for KING & COUNTRY, We the Kingdom and

Anne Wilson, this level of success by a faith-based songwriter hadn't been seen since the days of Amy Grant.

Like, in the 1990s. Pre-Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok – you name it.

It was a time when only Zack Morris had a cellphone, and the internet was just an idea in Al Gore's mind.

Three decades later, Daigle has shattered the wall that separated church and state – or, more accurately, Christian and mainstream music.

And she did it in an era when everything competes with everything, when attention spans are nil, negativity drowns out flames of uprising, and Red States have fisticuffs with Blue States. Daigle has cut through the mire, and walls of white noise, rising to the top by making music that dares you not to feel hope, peace and joy.

Perhaps that's why she holds the record for longest-charting No. 1 single – longer than the Beatles, Elvis, Beyonce and Taylor Swift – for her song "You Say."

"You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing // You say I am strong when I think I am weak // And You say I am held when I am falling short // And when I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours // And I believe, (I) oh I believe (I) // What You say of me (I) // I believe."

SEE LAUREN, continued on Page 3

'Walls in Wheatfield' a source of community pride, identity



Wheatfield welcome: Rita and Tom Kontak of the Wheatfield Enhancement Volunteers stand by the Wheatfield wall at Nash Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard. That wall, completed in the fall of 2022, is part of a project that will include two future walls at the Ward Road and Witmer Road intersections with Niagara Falls Boulevard. Ward Road's wall will feature a farming motif, while the Witmer Road wall will highlight the contributions made by the former Bell Aerospace.

The project goal is to ensure that thousands of residents, commuters and tourists know they are passing through the Town of Wheatfield.

The second two walls are expected to be completed by end of this year.

The New York State Department of Transportation is working on intersection revitalization projects at Ward and Witmer, too. This will add turning lanes to all four points of both intersections and improve the safety of travel along the corridor. (Contributed photos)

BY KAREN CARR KEEFE
 Senior Contributing Writer

Wheatfield is in the process of defining its borders, enhancing intersection safety and building community pride – all through a project dubbed "Walls in Wheatfield."

"The project really began by way of a goal of the Wheatfield Enhancement Volunteers to sort of put Wheatfield on the map," said Wheatfield Council member Curt Doktor, chairman of the volunteer group.

"We were looking for ways to improve Niagara Falls Boulevard, which we really view as our main corridor through town. There are over 10,000 cars that pass through on that route every single day."

Doktor said the goal is to let those many motorists know exactly where they are: "A lot of commuters, a lot of people, a lot of tourists pass through Niagara Falls Boulevard, and I don't even think they know that they're in the Town of Wheatfield."

Identity, and ultimately safety, were the initial vision for work that was completed in the fall of 2022 with the installation of a decorative wall at the intersection of Nash Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard. The sign on the wall reads: "Wheatfield" and "Farming is our Heritage."

The reaction? "Very positive feedback," Doktor said. "Some of the comments that I've heard are that it really is a nice ode to our rich agricultural history. But also, it kind of lets people know that we are a community that has class – that has a lot of pride in the community in which we live."

"Our hope, as Wheatfield Enhancement Volunteers, is that it helps instill a sense of pride for the community, for the residents and the people that live here."

Next will come two similar walls, one at the intersection of Niagara Falls Boulevard and Ward Road, very close to the Town Hall campus; and the other at the intersection of NF Boulevard with Witmer Road, directly across from Oppenheim Park. Completion is expected by the end of this year.

"The hope is that all three walls together make quite a statement," he said. "They all have similarities – an example being the yellow wheat structures that are iconic of the Town of Wheatfield – you'll see those on all three walls."

He said the wall at Witmer will depict the town's connection to Bell Aircraft Corp., "which is right in our backyard. The X-1, which has quite a place in the history or aerospace, was built right here in Wheatfield." Pilot Chuck Yeager flew the Bell X-1, a rocket engine-powered aircraft, when he became the first to exceed the speed of sound in level flight in 1947.

"Ultimately, our goal as Wheatfield Enhancement Volunteer members, is to make the community, which we love so dearly, even better," Doktor said.

He said Rita Kontak of the Wheatfield Garden Club is one of the leaders of the 10-member volunteer group: "She has really played an integral role in pulling together

SEE WALLS, continued on Page 23

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