

Free concert to cap off NCCC's 60th anniversary

By Niagara County Community College

Niagara County Community College will close out a yearlong celebration of the 60th anniversary of its founding by hosting a free concert featuring Nerds Gone Wild on Aug. 11. College officials have billed the event "Niagara County's Biggest Birthday Party" as a nod to the region's continuous support of the college since its founding in 1962.

"This concert is a way for us to

say thanks to the communities that have grown and sustained NCCC," Assistant Vice President for Institutional Advancement Barbara DeSimone said. "So many people across Niagara County and beyond have contributed to our success since the college's humble beginning in the former Nabisco Shredded Wheat plant in Niagara Falls, to its transition to the site our campus has occupied since 1973, and from the five pro-

grams we offered in 1962 to the more than 60 in place now."

NCCC's commemoration of its 60th anniversary began in October of last year. The college has woven its theme, "Honoring the Past and Reimagining the Future," into activities ranging from its Diamond Scholarship Gala and Veterans Day program to the holiday Gingerbread Wonderland installation at the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute and commencement this

past May.

"Niagara County's Biggest Birthday Party" will take place outdoors on NCCC's campus at 3111 Saunders Settlement Road, Sanborn. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs. Gates will open at 5:30 p.m. The Yachtfathers will start the show at 6:30 p.m. Nerds Gone Wild will take the stage at 8 p.m., featuring NCCC alum, Ed Wyner (Class of 1986).

There will be ample parking in

the college's lots, food trucks, and beverages available for purchase.

While the event is free to attend, there are sponsorships available that provide preferred parking and access to a hospitality tent. Proceeds will benefit the new Veterans Memorial Park opening on the NCCC campus this November.

More information can be found by visiting <https://www.niagaracc.suny.edu/nerds-gone-wild/>.

3 Niagara University students awarded Merani Scholarships

BY NIAGARA UNIVERSITY

Incoming freshmen Valentina Krajacic and Eoin Potwin, and Niagara University junior Gabriella Cole, are the 2023 recipients of the university's Merani Scholarship, a collaboration between Niagara and the Merani Hotel Group to provide opportunities for high-level experiential learning in the hospitality industry. The students will receive an annual scholarship of \$7,500 and paid rotating internships at Merani properties.

Krajacic, who will study hotel luxury operations at Niagara, is a graduate of the Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart, where she maintained a 3.65 grade-point average, while balancing extracurricular activities that included jobs as a teaching assistant at a local dance studio and as a restaurant hostess. She was captain of the school's bowling team and a member of several clubs, including the National Honor Society, the Distributive Education Clubs of America, the Cooking Club, the BeYOUtiful Club, and the Service Club. She is also passionate about community service and was awarded Sacred Heart's prestigious St. Clare Award in recognition of the more than 50 hours she volunteered during her junior year.

"Receiving this scholarship means a lot to me," said Krajacic, who hopes to manage a hotel one day. "It will help me to get hands-on experience in the hospitality industry and a head start on my future. It will also help me achieve my career goals by learning problem-solving skills and working alongside professionals who are well-experienced in the field. I look forward to starting this new journey and cannot wait to see what this internship does for me and my future!"

Potwin, who graduated as salutatorian of his class at Niagara Falls High School, will study hotel food and beverage management at Niagara. He also graduated from the culinary arts course at BO-



Pictured, from left: The Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., Niagara University president; Merani Scholarship recipients Eoin Potwin and Valentina Krajacic; Faisal Merani, president of the Merani Hotel Group and member of NU's board of trustees; and Bridget Niland, J.D., Ph.D., dean of NU's College of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management. (NU photo)

CES. He was a member of Skills USA and the National Society for High School Scholars, and maintained a 4.0 GPA while working at Hickory Stick Golf Course and at the Niagara Falls Public Library. In addition to his studies at NFHS and BOCES, Potwin also took the CAP course in Spanish 4 at Niagara County Community College, participated in Niagara University's NUSTEP program, and attended Yale University's National Youth Leadership Program. His volunteer work includes assisting with fundraisers for Oakwood Cemetery in Niagara Falls and Friends of Niagara Falls Public Library, and collecting donations of pet supplies that are distributed by FeedMore WNY to families in need.

"This scholarship will give me essential real-life experiences," said Potwin, who is already working with the Merani Group and hopes to own a café style business one day. "While assisting in paying for my education, it will allow me to exit college in a better financial position and give me networking that can help me get a good paying job in the future."

Cole, the first student to receive the Merani Scholarship for employees, is studying luxury hospitality operations at Niaga-

ra. She is completing a summer work-abroad placement with the Barchetta Hotel in Lake Como, Italy, and works at the Merani Hotel Group's DoubleTree Niagara Falls during the academic year. She hopes to become a manager in the hospitality industry, focusing on event planning, and eventually own her own boutique hotel.

"Receiving this scholarship means a lot to my family and me," Cole said. "My parents work very hard to allow me to continue my studies and always find a way to support me in everything I do

and what I want to accomplish. The Merani Scholarship is a stepping stone in the pathway of my success and will help me get there faster without as much stress and debt. The internship will help me get even more familiar with the industry and get to greater things faster. Keeping my grades up while working has not been easy, but it all pays off with opportunities like this one."

The Merani Scholarship was established in 2018 to synergize efforts to develop the outstanding hospitality leaders of tomorrow. Recipients train and work alongside Merani executives at one of the organization's five hotel properties in the Niagara Falls region - three on the American side of the falls and two in Ontario, Canada. Merani also operates a food truck and four restaurants.

This exceptional opportunity augments the knowledge gained in the classroom.

"Valentina, Eoin and Gabby are self-motivated, hard-working students with the passion and aptitude to succeed in the hotel and hospitality industry," said Bridget Niland, J.D., Ph.D., dean of the College of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management. "Their proven ability to balance school, work and extracurricular activities will enable them to take advantage of all this opportunity offers them."

Niagara University's College of Hospitality and Tourism Management offers undergraduate degree programs in hotel and restaurant management, sport and recreation management, and tourism and event management, as well as a graduate program in sport management. To learn more, call 716-286-8279 or visit www.niagara.edu/hospitality.

Additional information on the Merani Hotel Group can be found at www.meranihotelgroup.com.

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