

# \$250,000 from NY says: 'Long live the Riv!'



A rendering of the design for the expansion of the Riviera Theatre and Performing Arts Center on Webster Street in NT.

Submitted  
Assemblyman William Conrad announced \$250,000 in state funds will go to the Riviera Theatre to kick off a capital expansion project.

He said the state funds will be used as a challenge grant to be matched by public donations when the capital campaign kicks off Sept. 1 for the theater at 67 Webster St., North Tonawanda.

Conrad was joined at the news conference by Board Chairman Larry Deneff, Executive Director David Fillenwarth and other board members. The announcement was made in the expansion space, which is currently being renovated.

"The Riviera Theatre and Performing Arts Center is a nearly century-old jewel of North Tonawanda's downtown and driver of our region's tourism. And so, I'm pleased to share that I've secured \$250,000 in state funding to match public donations and help usher in a new era for this cultural treasure," Conrad said.

He explained the capital expansion project "will bring to completion an expansion to reconfigure space and add restrooms, dressing

rooms, bars and a patio, a merch store, and more."

Long live the Riv!" he said, using a phrase he said his staff coined for the Riviera fund drive.

"We talked about placemaking. We talked about this community – about bringing people here to know the Tonawandas. A lot of the ticket sales and folks that come here are from out of the area. This is a big part of tourism. It's a big part of economic development. It's a big part of North Tonawanda," Conrad said.

"So, thanks to the capital upgrades here, the Riviera's enjoyability and functionality will be enhanced and the space will be more accommodating for more larger events, which will draw more larger crowds, and from here and beyond, and the beautiful downtown in North Tonawanda will, of course, benefit."

Fillenwarth had a nice note for the many fans of music at the Riv: "In the six years I've been here, we've accumulated a collection of autographed guitars from the artists that have performed here, and we're going to have a guitar wall

that's going to display all those autographs. It should be quite a sight and an attraction."

He added, "The vibrant activity that's going on in North Tonawanda and the Tonawandas – it's a destination now to come here. Restaurants are full. The bars are hopping with people laughing and music playing. It's just so much activity going on. And this project is going to ensure that the continued growth of the Tonawandas continues."

"We're excited and we can't wait for Sept. 1 to kick off the campaign," Fillenwarth said. "The whole concert experience here is going to be greatly improved for all our patrons."

## Silver anniversary:

# 25th annual 'Kidz 'N' Kites' set for Sept. 16

Submitted by the Niagara County Public Information Office

The Niagara County Youth Bureau and Niagara County Department of Social Services is pleased to announce the 25th annual "Kidz 'N' Kites" event to take place on Saturday, Sept. 16. This year, the event will return to the Town of Niagara Veteran's Memorial Park, 7000 Lockport Road. It will take place from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., with first-come, first-served registration. The first 500 youths will receive a free kite, T-shirt and hot dog lunch.

The Great Lakes Kitefliers provide fantastic scenery of flying kites, and volunteers are present to help youth fly their own. The event is a great opportunity for parents and youth to work together to fly their free kite.

"This event has continued to be a staple on most families fall calendar. Twenty-five years of celebrating youth and families is exciting," Youth Bureau Director Ben Bunker said.

This annual event is sponsored by community organizations and local businesses to make this event 100% free for youth. Long-time partners Niagara County Sheriff's Office will be providing car seat safety checks on location, while Niagara PAL will be cook up the hot dog lunches.

Each youth will also receive giveaway coupons to local restaurants and be in the small and grand prize raffles to be drawn. Entertainment will be provided by Nels Ross from Injest Inc., who has showcased his juggling magic for over 25 years.

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