

Pumpkin-carving contest

October is the time of year when children and families artfully decorate pumpkins, and display these works for friends and neighbors. Now, your most decorative, scariest, funniest or kookiest pumpkin designs can win you a pitch(fork)-perfect prize in the Niagara Frontier Publications pumpkin-carving contest.

To enter, send us a photo of your best carved or decorated pumpkin. Submit the photo to this email address or follow us on X/Twitter (@wnypapers // @joshuamalani) and tweet

a photo to us; or submit your entry via U.S. mail to Niagara Frontier Publications, 1859 Whitehaven Road, Grand Island, NY 14072.

Please include contact information (including address and phone number) with each entry.

All photos will be displayed at www.wnypapers.com and in our newspapers.

Winners will be selected



based on reader feedback and the scores of NFP's judging panel. Bonus points will be given for photos with an accompanying person or pet in a Halloween costume.

Prizewinners will be selected from the pool of entrants with Western New York addresses.

Find complete rules at www.wnypapers.com.

Opera Hall: Event to mark reopening of theater/meeting space

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Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF). The goal was to transform the floor into a community event room and meeting space.

The Opera Hall's upper level will reopen to the public at 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 14, with the Lewiston Opera Hall Folk Festival. Sawyer Fredericks and Lilly Winwood will headline the event, with support from local artists Tonemah, Dave Thurman, Zack Joseph and Jason Mirek. Tickets are on sale now.

Tonemah grew up with an appreciation for the Opera Hall. He said, "I really hope people come and support what we're trying to do in the community, and with the community. Hopefully, this primes the pump and people get excited about it."

"And then the room itself, we want to make available for weddings or events or meetings. I want people to know about it in that capacity, as well. We're going to probably start opening it up for those things after the beginning of the year."

For more information, contact Tonemah Consulting Group at 716-246-1578.

Tonemah shared more about the Opera Hall and Folk Festival in this edited Q&A.

Q: Tell me about the Opera Hall: What it meant to you growing up; what you like about the venue; and how that tied into your interests – you and your partners – in acquiring this historic property.

Tonemah: Born on the Res and raised there for many years, and whenever we moved away, we'd come back to the Res, and we'd always go down to Lewiston and spend time in Lewiston, and walking Center Street. I like historical things: I like old buildings; I like old cars. I always admired that building, not knowing that much about it, but just admiring that it was so old.

And probably about five years ago, I had the opportunity to open an office. I'm a psychologist in my day job, and I had an opportunity to open up an office there in the Opera Hall, which, itself, I thought, "That's just amazing." It's so beautiful, and I have just loved having an office there for all of these reasons.

And my family would come and we'd sit in there and talk, and we'd watch parades. And then, I was approached by the International Order of Oddfellows about purchasing a building, and kind of tying in history. The Odd Fellows was the Sacarissa Lodge of the Oddfellows, which was a distant ancestor of mine. And so, they thought it would just be cool to have me as part of ownership of that building.

I talked to a couple of my colleagues, and we wanted to make the upstairs, kind of bring it back to its glory of having it be a center of activity in Lewiston. They used to have their cotillions there, and there's an old piano in there – that is still there – that they used to have dances to that piano, with all these music scrolls. I have all the scrolls, and the piano there; and I'm getting the piano repaired, because I kind of want to make the piano the centerpiece of the room – kind of the mascot of the room.

We want to just have as many events that the community can



The Lewiston Opera Hall Folk Festival is Oct. 14. Tickets are available at <https://loh-folk-festival.ticketleap.com>. (Submitted graphic)

come to as we can, including the first big one is the Folk Festival on the 14th. But we want to have Christmas concerts and plays and speakers and just fun things, too; magicians, and just whatever we can get the community to engage with that room in that building again is kind of the vision of it.

Q: The last time I was in there, it looked like it was in pretty good shape. It looked like it was certainly capable of having some of the events you mentioned. But you tell me: Was the space ready to go, or have you had to do a lot of changes or repairs? What did you encounter, and what has been the journey getting to the point now where you're about to have this big musical event?

Tonemah: We had had singer/songwriters series and Christmas events in there. And so, the room was capable. But we wanted to see what else could the room do. And so, we expanded it a little bit, and painted, and put in some different lighting, and redid some of the walls just to see what it could be, and what the next generation of it is going to look like.

We put a lot of time and effort into it, to make it a space for the community – and keeping as much of the old, classic things like the windows and the lighting. We wanted to make sure we respected the history of the room, as well as bring in some new painting. There was paneling on there that was probably from the 1970s. So, we took the paneling down. And there were some beautiful brick underneath there. We left that there, and kind of had that be present in the room, as well.

So, it's a lot of the history there, and bringing it into the 21st century.

Q: Tell me about the Folk Festival and why you thought this would be a

good debut.

Tonemah: We've always talked about having music in the room – a music festival in the room – and the singer/songwriter series always go over so well, and people really appreciate that it's a listening room. People go up there, and maybe how the room's set up or the history of the room, but people really engage with what's going on stage.

And so, a folk festival just seemed like a natural fit, because there's so many stories that go into folk music, as well as the players. That just seemed like a really natural place to start.

We asked some folks that we knew. We asked Sawyer Fredericks, who had won "The Voice"; and Lily Winwood, who is Steve Winwood's daughter – a great singer/songwriter. And then we populate it with people from the area, because we really want to not only bring in these other folks, but make sure that people know what great talents there is just right there in Western New York – just right there around the Lewiston area.

We want to kind of introduce folks to the headliner acts, as well as the folks that are local, too, because that's really the purpose, is let's create community. Let's engage each other locally, as well.

Q: Do you have a gauge as far as what the room can hold?

Tonemah: Theater-style is 150 people. We have tables and things, so, just depending on the event, it will change configuration of the room.

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A plaque on the Opera Hall notes the site was built by Joseph T. Hewitt about 1840 as a series of stores. Later known as Moss Hall, it "was the center of social activity."

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