

NTHS Wall of Fame Project holding 'Party Like a Lumberjack' event

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

Tribune Editor

The North Tonawanda High School Wall of Fame Project – a nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing both the high school's athletic and fine arts walls of fame – is holding a "Party Like a Lumberjack" celebration/fundraising event from 1-5 p.m. Sunday, May 2, at Brownies Sports Bar, 775 Oliver St.

The cost is \$25 per ticket, which provides entrance to the event, two drink tickets (domestic beers or mixed drink) and one appetizer from a list of three options. Brownies will also offer regular food menu items and full bar service. Masks will be required when patrons are not at the bar or their table. A limit of 75 total tickets will be available.

The event will feature a basket raffle with prizes donated by local sponsors. Only event attendees will be able to win prizes. Some basket offerings include: A Thurman Thomas autographed ball; a free night stay at Downs Resort Hotel (Batavia Downs); a \$50 gift card for dinner and other prizes (Remington's); a basket full of Platter's chocolates and specialty items; a golf ball basket, including NT logo golf balls and other prizes (OnCore Golf); and gift cards to various NT restaurants.

To purchase tickets, contact Keith at 716-531-0436; John at 716-529-7722; or email nthswof@gmail.com.

While the event will raise money for phase 2 of the NTHS WOF project, it's also a celebration of fundraising efforts thus far. Last fall, the group raised more than \$34,000 to complete phase 1 of the project. The first phase saw the installation of specially printed UV-resistant window coverings, each designed to honor specific groups from the school's athletic and fine arts programs. It also featured the installation of a state-of-the-art touchscreen panel that provides an interactive way to learn about athletic and fine arts inductees (who each have their own page featuring photographs, biographies and stats).

Now in the midst of phase 2, the group is celebrating the ahead-of-schedule arrival of the brand new "Lumberjack Wall" – an impressive 4-foot-by-6-foot, LED-backlit lumberjack logo seated on beautifully stained reclaimed wood panels, centered in the NT Athletic Wall of Fame hallway.

The organization's founder, John Baran, said the wall was initially going to be installed in three stages, but one supporter's very generous donation of over \$4,000 helped fast-track the installation.



The North Tonawanda High School Wall of Fame Project is celebrating a brand-new "Lumberjack Wall" – an impressive, 4-foot-by-6-foot, LED-backlit lumberjack logo as it looks to complete phase 2 plans for the school's athletic and fine arts walls of fame.

Baran says the whole display cost \$17,000 in total – all raised through donations.

"I am very pleased, it has definitely exceeded my expectations," Baran says. "As far as how the kids have responded, first of all, (they say) it looks really cool. Secondly, we've been noticing quite a bit of activity on Facebook where seniors – like most recently, the girls volleyball team after their final match ... they did senior days. So, they had photos, and most that were taken were in front of the installation. We're so thrilled to see it."

As phase 2 continues, the group aims to install a similar wall piece along the Fine Arts Wall of Fame, featuring the department's shield emblem. Additionally, the group wants to repurpose and update

existing trophy cases for better display; create a hanging art gallery to student artists; and create a display case to better showcase the school's state championship plaques.

According to its website, the WOF project is meant to, "Inspire current NTHS students to get involved and participate by seeing the rich history and heritage of previous generations of NTHS students just like them who have achieved success."

The project was born after Baran noticed the WOFs were deteriorating and sought to honor the Lumberjacks – coaches, players, distinguished artists, etc., who had done so much to make NTHS a school worth being proud of.

Sadly, the Lumberjack community has had to deal with the recent

deaths of a pair of beloved former NTHS football coaches: Charles "Chuck" Ramsay and Frank "Fran" Burke.

The outpouring of sorrow and words of support from former alumni on the WOF project Facebook page demonstrates just how deeply engrained the Lumberjack tradition is. In a way, their passing underscores the importance of what the project seeks to accomplish: Preserving the legacies of those who came before.

Baran wishes to extend thanks to committee members, all NT alumni: Keith Miranto, Chet Wiech, Myron Annis, Rosie DeMart, Angela Donato Johnson, John Montesanti and retired teacher and baseball coach John Chiaromonte.

"Without their tireless contributions of time and money, we'd not gotten anything done!" he says.

Additionally, he thanks Chuck and Liz Insalaco, two lifelong NT residents who, "Have made a huge difference, raising over \$4,000 for the project while raising money for the NT Oliver Street Food Bank in parallel. I am blessed to have all of these people as dear friends."

For those who can't attend the event, donations can be made via the WOF website.

Additionally, Jamie's Ice Cream, located at 1401 Nash Road, is selling a "Lumberjack" sundae featuring vanilla custard, hot fudge, caramel and pretzel rod "logs" to represent the Lumber City's history. The sundae is available for \$5.95 with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the WOF project.

For more information about the project, visit www.nthswof.com.

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Work to continue at Wheatfield Veterans Memorial

BY TOM KONTAK

Larry Bell founded Bell Aircraft in Buffalo in 1935. Within a few years, prototypes, two Model "30"s were constructed as concept crafts. Bell moved engineering, testing and construction to Wheatfield in 1940. The first successful unit was produced in December 1942 followed by the second unit in June 1943 and the third in April 1945.

With the need for wartime aircraft ending, Larry Bell gambled on a civilian market for helicopters that would develop. If Bell could provide helicopters for the yet-to-materialize market, he could foresee the survival of Bell Aircraft. The Bell "30" was the first step into the future.

In June 1945, work began on

the new Model 47. Though primitive in many aspects, it was a giant step forward. The "47" with a seat configuration of two or three seats abreast, power coming from a six-cylinder engine using a two-main rotor design of laminated wood for the main rotor, was developed.

The COVID-19 outbreak has slowed progress of the Veterans Memorial under construction on the Wheatfield Town Hall campus. However, the Wheatfield Veterans Memorial Committee has not wavered in its vision of honoring veterans – past and present. Two new additions to the memorial are three new flagpoles taking center stage, and the M-60A3 tank, which was formerly located at the Highway Department garage.

The M-60 main battle tank, produced by General Dynamics Land Systems – which began development in 1957 – entered service in 1960 with a total of 15,000 being built. It was used in commands under the United States during Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and allied forces from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. As of 2010, approximately 900 units were still in service in Turkey and an additional 700 units in Israel. The U.S. Army phased out the M-60A3 tank in 1997, replacing it with the M1 Abrams.

The move and relocation to the new memorial site of the 90,000-pound tank was quite an undertaking. We extend heartfelt thanks to Fran Barone, owner of Cambria Contracting Inc., for his work in making this move. The tank needs some TLC, which the committee will address as the months pass and the weather improves.

Please take a moment to check out the veterans display case in the Town Hall next to the courtroom doors. Pictures will give the viewer a better idea of the helicopters. Content within the veterans display case will change in June, adding new pictures and content.

We are requesting the financial support of the residents of Wheatfield, veterans and families to help us with the memorial project by sending a tax-deductible donation to Wheatfield Veterans Memorial Inc., 2800 Church Road, North Tonawanda, NY 14120. Donations can also be made through the group's GoFundMe page at www.GoFundMe.com (search "Wheatfield Veterans Memorial"). One hundred percent will go toward construction.

The committee thanks you in advance for your donation.

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