

HOCHUL LIFTS MASK MANDATE

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Wednesday announced her order requiring masks to be worn indoors throughout New York state would end on Thursday. Her “mask mandate” was implemented Dec. 10 in an effort to slow the spread of coronavirus – particularly the delta and omicron variants. Hochul said infection numbers and related hospitalizations are now back to a pre-“winter surge” level, allowing a lessening of the restrictions.

Hochul said further requirements to wear a mask will be left to the counties, and then to cities and individual businesses.

The governor noted an assessment will be made in March with regard to masking in schools.

“New Yorkers, this is what we’ve been waiting for: tremendous progress after two long years, and we’re not done. But this is trending in a very, very good direction, and that is why we are now approaching a new phase in this pandemic,” she said.

Hochul added, “We had a mask-or-vax requirement. For businesses. It was an emergency temporary measure put in place literally two months ago. And at this time, we say that is the right decision, to lift this mandate for indoor businesses, and let coun-

ties, cities and businesses make their own decisions on what they want to do, with respect to mask or the vaccination requirement, given the declining cases, given declining hospitalizations. That is why we feel comfortable to lift this in effect tomorrow.

“And I want to thank all the businesses and the county leaders and the health departments, in places as far away as Erie County, who did the right thing to help us get through this. I believe this has made a huge difference – and it gives also patrons of businesses the comfort to know that they are safe when they went into these stores during our most vulnerable time. We saw those numbers literally off the charts, and now those numbers are coming down and it is time to adapt.”

Hochul said masks are still required in high-risk areas and higher-risk, close-contact settings. That includes state-regulated adult care facilities, nursing homes and health care facilities; schools and child care facilities; homeless shelters; correctional facilities; and public transportation.

Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz tweeted: “New COVID cases and hospitalizations have dropped precipitously. In fact, less



than 10% of all current hospital patients were admitted for COVID. Now that @GovKathyHochul has lifted her mask requirement for businesses, we will as well for public locations, effective tomorrow.

“While Erie Co.’s mask requirement for public locations is lifted, masks must still be worn by all county employees and our guests

in county buildings through February. We will review conditions then to determine whether this county building order can be lifted for March.

“Thank you to @GovKathyHochul for her leadership and to all who came together to protect our neighbors during these recent Delta and Omicron waves, especially our businesses. I greatly ap-

preciate every business that took action to protect their customers and our public.”

Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysz said, “As the declining COVID-19 numbers in our weekly update show, we are clearly trending in the right direction and doing so quickly. With Gov. Hochul’s announcement today that the mask mandate for indoor businesses is now lifted, there is no public mask mandate in Niagara County as of tomorrow, including all county buildings, except for those under control of the court system.

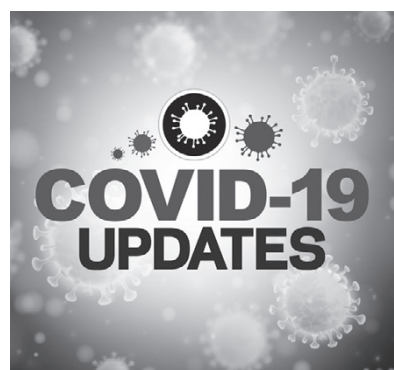
“However, we are very disappointed that the governor not only failed to lift the mask mandate in schools, but did not identify a clear, definitive threshold for doing so. This will continue to frustrate many parents who believe we are well past the time for schools to resume a normal learning environment for students. The state taking another month to evaluate is wholly unnecessary.”

•For more, see “Hochul announces ‘winter toolkit’ for new phase of COVID response: Keep New York ‘safe, open and moving forward’” online at www.wnypapers.com.

NCDOH offers free rapid COVID-19 testing in Niagara Falls

The Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) announced free rapid coronavirus testing is available for all Niagara County residents. Testing is offered at the Doris W. Jones, Family Resource Center at 3001 Ninth St., Niagara Falls. It is available from 9 a.m. noon Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

“Although there are many testing sites available for the public, Niagara County Department of Health wants to provide barrier-free testing in an area with continued high rates of COVID-19



infection,” Public Health Director Daniel J. Stapleton said. “There is no cost for testing, and health

insurance information is not required.”

Appointments are preferred, but walk-ins are welcome. Registration may be completed online at <https://on.ny.gov/3J3TiD0>, or onsite upon arrival.

A rapid antigen test will be performed using a nasal swab. Results will be available after 15 minutes.

“Anyone experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or who was exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19, should seek testing,” NCDOH

Director of Nursing Adrienne Kasbaum said. “We recommend testing five days after exposure to a confirmed case.”

Stapleton added, “We are grateful for the partnership with the Niagara Falls Housing Authority to host the testing clinics, and

encourage Niagara County residents to take advantage of this service.”

For more information on COVID-19 and testing, visit: <https://www.niagaracounty.com/health/COVID>.

National Fuel Gas Company Foundation announces \$220,000 in grants to community nonprofits

The board of directors of the National Fuel Gas Company Foundation, the charitable giving arm of National Fuel Gas Co., recently held its quarterly meeting and approved grants totaling \$220,000.

David P. Bauer, foundation president and president and CEO of National Fuel, said the foundation is committed to initiatives that uphold safe and healthy communities across its service territory,

evidenced by recent grant recipients.

“We are extremely proud of our ongoing support of the American Red Cross. Their numerous public safety efforts coupled with expert and compassionate disaster response makes them a vital and worthy organization,” he said.

Grants were awarded to the Western New York, Northwestern Pennsylvania and Mid Central

Pennsylvania American Red Cross chapters.

In addition, the board approved grant requests for the following nonprofits that help underserved populations, as well as advance health care and veteran services.

- In New York:
 - ✓ Buffalo City Mission
 - ✓ Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center
 - ✓ Veterans One-stop Center of WNY



Revolutionary New York
Sat., Feb 19th, 2022
2 to 3 pm

For Presidents’ Day weekend,
discover the American Revolution
on the New York frontier

LEARN MORE ON THE OFN WEBSITE

www.oldfortniagara.org
716-745-7611

February is AMD / Low Vision Awareness Month



Macular degeneration is a leading cause of vision loss. Low vision aids can make the most of remaining vision. Information on eye disease warning signs and on low vision aids should be made available by eye doctors and other medical professionals.

Schedule Your Eye Appointment Today!

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Town of Wheatfield 2022 Baseball & Softball Registration

NOW THROUGH MARCH 18TH

Recreation Department 6812 Nash Rd. • 731-3942

Mon. – Fri., 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

REGISTER IN PERSON OR ONLINE AT
WWW.WHEATFIELD.NY.US/159/RECREATION

Coed T-Ball - Ages 4-6

Coed Coach Pitch - Ages 6-8

2 SESSIONS FOR T-BALL & COACH PITCH:
MAY - JUNE & AUG. - SEPT.

Baseball - Ages 9-10, 11-12, 13-15

Girls Softball - Ages 9-11, 12-14, 15-18

Jan. 1st birth date will
determine age for all leagues

- * Proof of residency is required at the time of registration. A driver’s license, tax receipt or utility bill is acceptable proof.
- * To ensure the safety and fairness to all participants, a birth certificate must be shown for 1st time participants at the time of registration. If you have participated within the last 2 years and have shown proof of age, a birth certificate is not necessary.
- * In-house baseball & softball fee for residents is \$80.00. (\$120 for non-residents.) T-Ball and coach pitch fee \$50.00. (\$90 for non-residents.) There is a 20% discount for each additional child when registering at the same time.
- * Registration fee is non-refundable.

* Anyone signing up after March 18th will be charged a \$20.00 late fee per participant (\$40.00 for non-residents) and placed on a waiting list. Registrants after March 18th cannot be guaranteed a uniform due to manufacturer’s availability.