

YYC excited for return of CanAm Challenge, LYRA Race Week

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attractive offerings of new Youngstown Community Boating experience and a new YYC Boat Club.

Found at 491 Water St., Youngstown Community Boating, "provides access to the Lower Niagara River for adults and children through sailing lessons and sailboat, kayak and paddle rentals and support," its Facebook page stated.

Part of this offering is YYC's popular junior sailing program. Here, young sailors ages 7-17 are provided the fundamentals in sailing skills, including instruction in safe boating, seamanship, dinghy sailing, sailboat racing and boat maintenance. What's more, the junior sailing program is open to the public, with no YYC membership required.

Check this one out at www.youngstowncommunityboating.com.

Also returning in 2021 is YYC's Boat Club, reports Justin Hays, director of Youngstown Community Boating: "YYC has leased a number of boats from Youngstown Community Boating for use by its Boat Club members."

He noted that, among the sail offerings available for YYC membership, are Ideal 18 keelboats, a 20-foot pontoon boat, Catalina 30 sailboat plus kayaks and paddleboards. This club is open to both regular and associate members of YYC. What's more, reserving a boat for an enjoyable experience on the lower river or lake is as easy as visiting the YYC website at yys.org.

And then there's YYC's social sailing experience. Returning this year following the COVID-19 hiatus, social sailing kicked off July 1 and is offered from 6-8 p.m. every Thursday (weather-permitting).

YYC said the social sailing experience provides those who may not own a sailboat the chance to get out and enjoy it all anyway. Included is a boat ride, plus cocktails and sunset sailing. Social sailing is offered at no charge for YYC members with a nominal price for their guests.

"It's a wonderful way for associate members to get out on boats and enjoy the water," said Tim Finkle, director of adult sailing at YYC. For details or to sign up, contact Finkle at timfinkle@rcryachts.com or call 860-917-5416.

Perhaps the biggest happening this year is YYC's Dyneema CanAm Challenge, set for the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, July 24-25, on the lower river and lake.

The event, which carries on the legacy of the Level Regatta of years past, typically sees the involvement of dozens of sailing enthusiasts from Toronto and southern Ontario, Great Lakes cities including Buffalo and Rochester, and sailors from throughout the northeast and Canadian provinces.

While COVID-19 dominated life in 2020, YYC still managed to stage a modified CanAm Challenge last year. It is optimistic for an even better return in 2021, with this year's event serving as precursor to LYRA Race Week, July 26-Aug. 1 at YYC.

"Hey there - some exciting news - we are combining the CanAm and the LYRA Course Racing to one great weekend, July 24 and 24. We have been locked down for 15 months (or more) - let's get back out there and make this a HUGE event with tons of boats and fun," a Facebook post noted.

Featuring various class sailboats, the CanAm Challenge typically sees such vessels as J/22s, J/70s, J/88s, Tripp 26s, Melges 24s, 8 Meters, Beneteau 36.7s, Laser 28s, PHRFs and Multi-Hulls. The CanAm Challenge features both One Design fleet competition and PHRF races over the weekend for placement with prizes awarded.

Despite the continuing border closures and the expected impact on participation, YYC nonetheless is upbeat for this year.

"Yes, Canada is still closed, Canadian participation is down. It's still affecting us, but it's gonna happen," YYC official Amy Reynolds said.

In a message welcoming sailing competitors to this CanAm Challenge-LYRA Race Week, Chairman Kevin Doyle offered his perspective on this year's border closure to the disruptions the YYC experienced some 80 years back when the club was also contending with border issues.

"On Nov. 16, 2019, I signed on as the chairman of the 2021 LYRA at the Youngstown Yacht Club. ... Globally, we have been on quite a ride since then. ... The world seems quite a different place now ... or is it?" Doyle said. He noted the world was also quite a bit different 80 years ago as World War II raged on.

He went on to include a passage of the events that transpired back then at the YYC: "There is no report of the regatta, except that the Canadian boats all tied up at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Only sailors holding passports could visit Youngstown. The commodore finally made arrangements for the Canadian crews to be allowed the final night at the YYC for prize presentation, but only on the guaranty that they would not put foot off the YYC property. The Canadians were returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake at midnight, only to find several yachts had transom trouble. The late James Hyland's Six Metre has suffered the worst. These yachts were secured with stern lines ashore and bow anchors out in the river to hold them off. The Cayuga had come at full speed, making large bow waves."

"That was 80 years ago. Seem familiar?" Doyle asked. "LYRA is simply a sum of its parts. HUMANS. As humans, we strive to fulfill our passions. Sailboat racing; what a silly thing."

"Trying to drive attendance to

a sailing event seems so inconsequential within the context of global events ... yet that is what this message is intended to do.

"Over the years, through all the challenges, LYRA survives. 2021 WILL exist prominently in LYRA history, not just as a footnote. Many of you are committed to be a part of it. Thank you.

"The YYC's LYRA committee, board of directors, members and sponsors have combined to fashion an event you don't want to miss. ... 2020 - fulfill your passion, there is still time, and; mind your passions."

This year, Reynolds said YYC is working with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club to accommodate the needs of Canadian sailors wishing to be a part of the CanAm-LYRA week happenings. She remains hopeful to see visitors from throughout the Great Lakes and northeast areas, and expects up to 50 boats participating in the waters.

On shore, Reynolds said the fun will be found at the YYC on Water Street, with nightly entertainment, food and drinks available. The public is invited, with on-site wristbands available for \$5. The scheduled entertainment includes such local faves as the leadoff Breakaway on Thursday, Chris Borgotti and the Half Trays on Friday, and Zak Ward on Saturday. Continuing into LYRA Race week will be performances by YYC's very own The Chamberlains on Tuesday, July 27, and Thursday, July 29.

"We encourage everyone to come on down and have some fun with us," Reynolds said.

For more on this year's Dyneema CanAm/LYRA Race Week happenings, visit the YYC on Facebook.

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Investigations continue into Swann Road MVA

Area police agencies are continuing their investigation into a motor vehicle fatal accident that occurred Saturday on the 900 block of Swann Road.

According to the Lewiston Police Department, officers responded to head-on MVA with one vehicle rolled over in a ditch. A preliminary investigation revealed a westbound vehicle crossed over the centerline, striking an eastbound vehicle and sending both into the ditch.

The driver and sole occupant of the eastbound vehicle, identified as Suzanne P. Gorbach, 73, of Sanborn, was pronounced dead at the scene after EMS responders attempted life-saving measures.

Matthew Sanoin, 23, of Ransomville listed as the driver of the westbound vehicle, was airlifted to ECMC in Buffalo via Mercy Flight with serious injuries. Sanoin was charged with driving while ability impaired, drugs, and vehicle manslaughter in the second degree. He was issued appearance tickets for Lewiston Town Court as he remains in care of medical staff.

Lewiston Police and the Niagara County Sheriff's Office Accident Reconstruction Team and participating in the ongoing investigation.

Sanoin is presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Local officials pledge support of Law Enforcement Academy move to NCCC campus

On Tuesday, a press conference was held to celebrate the return of the Niagara County Law Enforcement Academy to the Sanborn campus of Niagara County Community College. NCLEA will relocate to NCCC in August after a decade at Niagara University. Several elected officials joined college leaders to pledge their support of local law enforcement and the academy's move.

NCLEA, jointly operated by the Niagara County Sheriff's Office and the Niagara Falls Police Department, was previously located at NCCC from 1974 to 2011. The academy trains newly hired officers or those hoping to be hired by police agencies throughout Western New York.

NCCC President William J. Murabito said he is anticipating a collaborative program between the college and the academy to offer criminal justice students an opportunity to combine their college degrees with academy training.

"As I see it, we can integrate the academy experience, which is one semester, with a three-semester program outside the academy; so, the student can come here, attend the academy, graduate from the academy, and leave here after two years with an associate's degree,"

he said. "I believe, with the addition of the academy and their personnel on our campus, the NCCC criminal justice program will not only be one of the strongest in the region but also in the state."

Niagara County Sheriff Michael Filicetti praised the cooperation between all the entities involved and said the academy plans to move into the new space at NCCC in early August so the next class can begin in September. Filicetti also mentioned NCLEA was pursuing funding from New York State Sen. Robert Ort and the Niagara County Legislature for a new training facility built on the NCCC campus in the future.

"This facility would allow training for our officers to a whole new level in the county," Filicetti said.

Ort joined other local elected officials in praising the collaboration of the educational institutions with law enforcement leaders.

"It is very important to be part of the solution; you are either part of the solution or part of the problem," he said. "It is important to let our future generations of students know that somebody needs to be the next police officer in Niagara Falls, in Lewiston, in North Tonawanda, in Niagara County. And that we are sending a clear message, that it is an honorable profession, a noble profession, and that we in the community support those families who send their sons and daughters, husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters to become law enforcement officers."