

Wilson Middle student raises \$8,000 in fundraiser



Wilson Middle School eighth grader Rayn Cooper recently presented two checks totaling \$8,000 to the Dale Shank Fundraiser at the 3F Club in Lewiston. The checks marked the successful completion of a wristband sales fundraiser Cooper held in the Niagara County community in honor of Shank – her role model – a Vietnam veteran and youth hunting mentor at the 3F who is battling cancer.

Proceeds will go to benefit the services of Willow Lodge at the Veterans WNY Health System, and Courage for Carly to assist child cancer patients at Roswell Park.

Commenting on the donation, Shank said, "I've been mentoring her for two years; she's come a long distance and she just appreciated everything that I have done and taught her. She just turned around and surprised me with this donation. I'm overwhelmed here; I'm overwhelmed by the support from the people that donated, friends, family corporations, it's just amazing. The funds are going to the children at Roswell and the veterans at the Veterans Hospital."

In the photos, Cooper joins with Shank for the check presentation, and shows off a blanket presented to her from Shank and his wife in appreciation of her efforts. (Photos by Terry Duffy)



'In the Loop': Celebrating Lew-Port's Class of 2021

BY **JODEE RIORDAN**
Board of Education President

The pandemic has given us all an opportunity to reflect on what is most important in our lives – what can stay, and what can go. Also, how we can better help others and how we can be really creative in doing so – given all the restrictions and precautions we need to employ to keep everyone safe.

As we as a community prioritized the need for care and focused our creativity energies, celebrating and supporting Lewiston-Porter's graduating seniors rose to the top of the list, both last year and today. Let us now focus on celebrating the Class of 2021, as they head into their final days at Lewiston-Porter.

The Class of 2021 had both junior and senior years at Lewiston-Porter dramatically altered by the pandemic. Throughout the past 15 months, students demonstrated incredible resilience, patience and grace. We at Lew-Port are very grateful that, as restrictions have eased, the Class of 2021 was able to return to campus five days per week, and that they will be able to have traditional graduation events this year.

The senior prom is set for Friday evening, June 18, at the historic Wurlitzer venue in North Tonawanda, and Lew-Port's graduation ceremonies will take place Friday, June 25, at Artpark.

Past months have also seen new ways in how the community came together to celebrate our graduates.

One new tradition born of the pandemic is the "Adopt-a-Senior" project, led (this year and last) by the fabulous Christal Justiana-Riddle. Christal is the mom of twin boys, Matt and Joe, who are graduating this year. Christal, together

with (the equally fabulous) Claudine Carlo, coordinated this "adoption" program for all members of the Class of 2021, which saw the involvement of 181 generous families.

All these families "adopted" a senior and were tasked with putting together an individualized graduation gift basket. Deliveries to all students were made at the same time, on Saturday, June 5. And judging by the photos of the joyful seniors everywhere, it was a success.

Heartfelt thanks to Christal, Claudine and everyone who took part in this project – including the Lewiston Police Department who helped deliver baskets for families unable to do so themselves.

"COVID created a need in our community to show our young people that they are valued and appreciated," Christal noted on the Lew-Port "Adopt-a-Senior" page. "It takes a village, and there is no better village than Lewiston-Porter!" I could not say it better myself.

In another new tradition, the Lewiston-Porter Senior Class of 2021 parade is set for Wednesday, June 16. Seniors traditionally decorate their cars on Class Day, but for 2020 the quick drive from Lewiston-Porter High School to the class picnic evolved into a full community celebration, with a true parade complete with revelers cheering on the graduates all along the way.

This year's parade begins at 10:30 a.m. from Lewiston-Porter High School. It will proceed across campus and continue through the villages of Youngstown and Lewiston before returning to the high school. Lewiston Police will serve as escort for the parade and provide traffic control during the event.

From the Creek Road campus,

the parade route will proceed north on Creek Road to the Route 93/Lockport Street intersection at Porter Town Hall. It then turns left on Route 93 toward the Village of Youngstown.

At the Main-Lockport intersection in Youngstown, it turns left and heads south, continuing on Lower River Road, ultimately to Center Street in the Village of Lewiston. The procession then heads east through the village to Ridge Road (Route 104), where it heads north at Creek Road (Route 18) and returns to the high school.

Upon their return to campus, the Class of 2021 will enjoy a grilled picnic lunch courtesy of the Lewiston Police Department at Blakeslee Field. We hope the entire community will turn out to cheer on the Class of 2021!

Commencement ceremonies take place Friday, June 25, in the Artpark Amphitheater. As this is an outdoor event, a rain date is set for Sunday, June 27. Guidelines continue to change quickly, but as of press time graduation is set.

Superintendent Paul Casseri offers the following update:

"Over the holiday recess, I had the opportunity to speak with Sonia Clark, executive director of Artpark. As you may have read in the newspaper, the NYSDOH rules have now changed, again, for outdoor venues in terms of COVID-19 protocols and event attendance. Artpark is a New York State Park and rules are developed not only by the NYSDOH but also by New York State Parks and Recreation.

"As was described to me, we now have two attendance opportunities for graduation. We can separate all attendees based on whether they are vaccinated or unvaccinated. This would require a check at the gate and for individuals to show proof of vaccination. For example, I went to the Blue Jays game on Wednesday night and, although my wife, my 15-year-old son and I are

fully vaccinated, I had to sit in the unvaccinated section because my 10-year-old nephew is unvaccinated. Artpark would set up the venue with these two sections and then monitor protocols in each section.

"The other attendance option that was described to me is the same option that Niagara University chose for its graduation ceremony, that is to treat all attendees as unvaccinated; maintain the originally planned, socially distanced, four-seat family pods; and require all attendees to wear a mask. After discussion with the administrative team, we have opted for this second protocol. This will avoid any confrontation at the gate as to the vaccination status of attendees and will allow us to move forward with our original plan: graduates having four family tickets for attendance at graduation.

"We did learn yesterday that all attendees will be required to show proof that they have completed a health questionnaire prior to attendance. Below are the specific rules that were distributed to us from Artpark regarding the graduation ceremony. Of course, this may all change by June 25. The high school administration will be communicating with senior families as we move toward graduation. Stay tuned."

COVID-19 Graduation Ceremony Protocols

- Every graduate and each guest must complete a contact tracing and health-screening questionnaire. To complete the contact tracing and health screening, please text the word LEWPORT TO 234-ARTPARK (234-278-7275) within 12 hours prior to the graduation ceremony. Complete your contact information and answer the questions. Once completed by each individual, a green checkmark or a message that reads, "Thank you for checking in. Enjoy the show!" is sent. Please be sure to keep this text; each individual will need to show this at the gate upon arrival.

- No bags are allowed, this in-

cludes camera bags and large purses. The only exception is a small clutch wallet, 4.5-by-5.5 inches in size.

- Masks are required of all visitors, other than when eating or drinking at your seat. We ask that you please be sure to have your mask on and be socially distanced when arriving at the gate. Please arrive early and be patient. Each person will need to show their ticket, provide confirmation that they completed the contact tracing form, and there will be temperature checks.

- There will be single seats in the bowl reserved for the graduates, and the remainder of the seats is for general admission in groups of four.

- Individuals who have not completed the screening process, or who present at the gate with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above, and all individuals who accompany them would not be permitted entry to the event.

Lewiston-Porter extends its appreciation to Artpark, and particularly to Executive Director Sonia Clark, for working closely with us to create a unique graduation ceremony for the Class of 2021. We encourage everyone to closely follow guidance from high school Principal Brad Rowles, the Class of 2021 advisers, and Superintendent Casseri, as we can only anticipate further changes as the June 25 commencement approaches.

The Board of Education will meet on Monday, June 14, for a work session. It opens at 5:30 p.m. with an executive session to discuss a contract extension for the superintendent of schools and continues with the public session at 6 p.m.

Board of Education meetings are now open to public attendance and we encourage community members to join us. COVID-19 precautions (social distancing and proper mask-wearing) remain in place. To attend virtually, follow the link found at www.lew-port.com for the Zoom webinar; passcode: Lancers.

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