

Wired differently: Niagara Falls to honor Nik Wallenda with 'Sculpture in the Sky'

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

Nik Wallenda will walk over Niagara Falls again.

Well, sort of.

At a press conference Wednesday morning, it was announced celebrated sculptor Susan Geissler will create a bronze statue of the "King of the Highwire" – and the figure will be suspended in the air over a portion of Old Falls Street facing Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino.

Local elected leaders invited Wallenda back to Niagara Falls to observe the 10th anniversary of his historic tightrope walk from Niagara Falls State Park to Niagara Falls, Ontario. The aerialist is the first and only person to cross Niagara Falls in such fashion. His feat was broadcast live, across the country, on a primetime television special.

City of Niagara Falls Mayor Robert Restaino said, "This is a really important day for us. It again commemorates something (special). We always know that Niagara Falls is in the minds of people all across the world. They come to visit us year after year after year. But for that one moment 10 years ago, all of the eyes in the globe were focused on the City of Niagara Falls. And so, this is a very important time for us to remember that spectacular event."

He explained the statue will provide a "continual memory of what happened 10 years ago."

"It's our intention to bring to the City of Niagara Falls a lasting memory of the event that put us in a much different place," Restaino said.

Calling it the "Sculpture in the Sky," Restaino again said, "It is our intention to forever com-

memorate the wire walk of Nik Wallenda over the falls by having that same impression here, over Old Falls Street."

Geissler's works include the Freedom Crossing and Tuscarora Heroes monuments in Lewiston.

Of the Wallenda project, she said, "I've been asked to execute this sculpture of Nik. I'm very flattered to be selected as the artist to do this."

She noted the cast bronze figure will weigh about 300 pounds.

"It's going to be a pretty exciting project," Geissler said. "I'll do a lot of research on Nik himself and make sure that I'll produce the likeness of him."

A portion of the wire Wallenda used to walk the falls is expected to be included in the tribute piece.

The \$150,000 project – said to be funded through sponsors – is anticipated to take one year to complete.

Wallenda said, "This is a surprise to me ... which is pretty awesome. I, personally, have never seen a sculpture above the ground, or above the street, so I'm excited to see how it's gonna work. But it's quite an honor."

At the media gathering, Restaino presented Wallenda with a proclamation and key to the Cataract City. New York State Assemblyman Angelo Morinello and New York State Sen. Rob Ortt also presented Wallenda with citations.

Ortt said, "Nik Wallenda, 10 years ago, did for Niagara Falls with one event what countless other people claim they wanted to do for Niagara Falls: He brought people to the City of Niagara Falls. He put Niagara Falls back on the map globally – for all the right reasons."

Wallenda had to gain permis-

sion to cross the falls from both the U.S. and Canadian governments. He said it was no easy feat, but well worth the time and effort.

"I tell the story often that, when I was 5 years old, I came and saw the falls with my parents. They were performing on a Shrine Circus in Buffalo. And it was at that point that I remember looking across and already thinking about walking a wire across there," Wallenda said. "Now, with my family history, it probably makes sense. My mom was six months pregnant with me and still walking the wire. So, I've done this longer than I've been alive, and that's the way that my mind works."

"But I'd always wanted to walk across it. I just didn't know what it was going to take to get permission. I knew that there was a

SEE WALLENDIA, on Page 9

IN THE NEWS

Take a break from politics – give back to the community you love!

By Lion Rob Nichols (716-213-3292)

Lately these pages have been filled by many differing opinions about who is the best candidate to lead our village forward. I figured everyone deserves a small break to hear about what WE all can do right NOW to make a difference in the community we all love.

The Lewiston Community Lions Club is committed to our core environmental mission, and plans to continue a partnership with the Village of Lewiston for future Earth Day celebrations and clean-ups.

But it does not stop there. Our club is kicking off new projects to

promote a sustainable and healthy future for generations to come, starting with raising the funds necessary to plant trees in three locations: Academy Park, Toohey Park and Potter's Field in the First Presbyterian Church graveyard (owned by the village).

The club will be participating in the Lewiston GardenFest, June 18-19, on Center Street in the Village of Lewiston, offering butterfly (wildflower) garden planting pods for a donation of only \$5, and bottled water for a donation of \$1. If you are unable to visit our booth at the GardenFest, donations can be made directly to the Lewiston Lions Club.

Any amount is welcome, and the club will recognize you and your business/organization in future social media releases.

Since this project is a core mission of Lions International, the club qualifies to apply for a matching grant from the New York State & Bermuda Lions Foundation. This means that every donation we receive is essentially doubled, up to the entire cost of the project. Your donation will have twice the impact within our community, and help us reach our goal that much sooner.

If you, or your business/organization, would like to be a sponsor and receive a tree plaque with your name on it, or a dedication within the park, please contact me directly.

11th annual Project H.O.P.E announced

The owner of Painters Plus, Jesse Gooch, created Project H.O.P.E (Helping Others Paint Exteriors)

in 2011 as a citywide campaign to help beautify exterior homes for people and families in need.

Over the past 10 years, Gooch and his team have painted the exterior homes in North Tonawanda for the elderly, cancer patients, terminally ill individuals, Vietnam veterans and World War II vets. To date, Painters Plus has donated over \$95,000 in value of free painting jobs for people in need of Project H.O.P.E.

In conjunction with the office of Mayor Austin Tylec, Painters Plus will be accepting applicants until Aug. 8. Applications can be picked up at City Hall or the Painters Plus office at 800 Walck Road.

Call 716-693-7587 or visit www.paintersplus.us.

The winner will be announced Aug. 15 and the job will take place at 9 a.m. Aug. 27. Paint is donated by Sherwin Williams, while lunch is provided for volunteers.

Strawberry Fest returns

St. John's Episcopal Church, overlooking the Niagara River

on Main and Chestnut streets in Youngstown, will hold its annual Strawberry Fest. The event is set for 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, June 25.

Homemade strawberry shortcake – made with local berries, freshly baked shortcake and real whipped cream – will be served alongside an assortment of grilled foods prepared by the Youngstown Lions Club. Donuts D. Clown will be on hand from noon to 3 p.m. for children of all ages. The Nickel City Blues Band will perform starting at 2 p.m.

Strawberry Fest dates back to World War II, when the congregation hosted a "strawberry social" for soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Niagara.

The church, built in 1878, will be open continuously throughout the event for self-guided tours. St. John's is one of only a few remaining board-and-batten carpenter gothic churches with an active congregation in Western New York. It is listed on the state and national Registers of Historic Places.



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Please forward resume via email to clerksoffice@youngstownnewyork.us, mail to PO Box 168, Youngstown, NY, or deposit in drop box at Village Center, 240 Lockport St. by June 27, 2022



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