

Niagara Pride holiday shopping auction to fund 2022 programming

Niagara Pride is asking Western New Yorkers and local businesses to help with its 2021 holiday shopping online auction by donating items or services to be part of the event. The auction will start on Black Friday, Nov. 26, and run through Saturday, Dec. 4. All items need to be donated by Nov. 20.

Niagara Pride is seeking gift cards, home goods, art or home décor, wine or alcohol, collectible items, gift baskets filled with various items, or other items to be auctioned off.

To donate auction items, email info@niagarapride.org or call 716-298-7656. For more information about Niagara Pride's services or to donate directly to the organization, visit www.niagarapride.org.

Ronald Piaseczny, president of Niagara Pride, said, "Events like this auction and fundraisers we do throughout the year, like 'WNY Shopping With Pride,' are vital to the continued operations of our agency. Many people are not aware of this, but all of our programming and services are funded 100% by donations from the community. We do not receive any grants to fund the numerous programs and activities that we provide. Additionally, all of our services are managed by solely by our board of directors, who volunteer their time; we have no paid staff."

Piaseczny added, "We are very excited about this event. We have received a number of amazing items that we think folks will want to bid on, including an autographed Dylan Cozens jersey courtesy of the Buffalo Sabres, original art pieces from local artists, gift cards and wines from area wineries, Buffalo Bills items courtesy of M&T Bank, and other great items."

Proceeds from this auction will go toward the continued funding of existing programming, as well as help with the creation of the following new services in 2022:

- √ Establishing an LGBTQ+ youth vocational training conference;

- √ The creation of a virtual WNY Pride 5K run/walk;

- √ A scholarship for a local LGBTQ+ youth going to college;

- √ Additional diversity trainings for the community; and

- √ More support programming aimed at LGBTQ+ seniors and people of color

Niagara Pride is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving LGBTQ+ individuals and families in Western New York, with a focus on Niagara County.

Piaseczny said "due to the amazing support of individuals and business in the area," Niagara Pride was able to achieve the following accomplishments in 2021:

- √ Created "WNY Shopping with Pride," an event that will be held yearly to highlight and showcase LGBTQ+ owned businesses;

- √ Provided free diversity and inclusivity training to various local businesses and agencies; and

- √ Helped the Oliver Street Merchant Association launch the first community Pride celebration in North Tonawanda; held a historic five Pride flag-raising ceremonies throughout Niagara County; hosted several Pride events in June;

- √ Implemented an LGBTQ+ community needs assessment for Niagara County, which looks at how the LGBTQ+ community feels in terms of safety throughout Niagara County as well as examines how open and affirming providers are in the fields of physical health, mental health, housing, legal services and others;

- √ Held several donation drives that resulted in 2,213 pairs of socks being donated to local homeless shelters and over 180 backpacks filled with school supplies being donated to LGBTQ+ youth;

- √ Created online and in-person meet-ups to provide safe and affirming spaces and opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth and adults to socialize during the pandemic;

- √ Conducted focus groups to explore elder abuse amongst the senior LGBTQ+ population in Niagara County;

- √ Hosted a speaker event, where local authors and professors Alex Bitterman and Daniel Baldwin Hess presented on "The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighborhoods";

- √ Created a monthly online community provider town hall where individuals and families could interact directly with representatives from various agencies and organizations to link with services;

- √ Held free community trainings on topics such as banking and budgeting, healthy eating, minority-owned business opportunities in Niagara County, gambling addiction in the LGBTQ+ community, financial disparities within the LGBTQ+ community, and other topics;

- √ Created an online directory of LGBTQ+ affirming community providers, including health care, insurance, mental health, legal, spiritual and other services;

- √ Created an LGBTQ+ community garden in Niagara Falls to demonstrate LGBTQ+ folks are present in the community and an integral part of Niagara County;

- √ Partnered with SAGEVets to host two ongoing monthly meetings aimed at assisting LGBTQ+ veterans with accessing services and benefits, as well as providing a safe space and supportive environment to socialize with other LGBTQ+ veterans;

- √ Created the first-ever WNY Pride interfaith committee, where spiritual leaders, clergy and leaders of faith-based organizations can meet on a regular basis to begin addressing the spiritual needs of the LGBTQ+ community; and

- √ Finally, through partnerships with other organizations, created several family events open to all local LGBTQ+ individuals during the summer and fall seasons.

LiveNF Makers Market returns to Niagara Falls

The LiveNF Makers Market, presented by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, will take place on Small Business Saturday, Nov. 27. It will run from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at The Conference & Event Center Niagara Falls, 101 Old Falls St. Admission is \$1 per person.

Organizers said, "We welcome everyone to shop with over 75 local artisans and vendors, enjoy a day of live music, art, concessions, and kick-off the holiday season as a community."

There will be free on-street and surface lot parking provided by the City of Niagara Falls and New York State Parks.

In addition to an eclectic variety of vendors, the event will also feature a group of mini-makers, ages 5-14, organized by the Packard Court Community Center.

Musical guests include Zak Ward, Niagara River Iroquois Dancers, Kurt and the Loders, the Niagara Falls High School jazz band and Dynamic Drum Arts of WNY.

LiveNF thanks this event's sponsors and partners for helping to bring this event back to the community after last year's COVID-19-related cancellation. Sponsors/partners include the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, The Healthcare Education Project and The Conference & Event Center Niagara Falls.

LiveNF is also once again an official Amex Small Business Saturday Neighborhood Champion.

Empire State Wrestling returns to Niagara Falls with 'Wrestlebash'

Empire State Wrestling comes back to its old stomping grounds in Niagara County – and brings back its traditional Thanksgiving Weekend super event with "Wrestlebash" on Saturday, Nov. 27 at the Frontier Fire Hall, 2176 Liberty Drive, Niagara Falls. This is the first Empire State Wrestling event in Niagara County in two years, and the first ESW event at the Frontier Fire Hall in three years.

"Wrestlebash" comes on the heels of two acclaimed events held at Buffalo RiverWorks. Western New York's top independent wrestling promotion looks to build off these successful events with a super show stacked with star power. Among the matches already scheduled for "Wrestlebash" included a battle between two best friends for the ESW heavyweight championship.

The matches taking place at "Wrestlebash" include:

- 2019 Ilio DiPaolo Memorial Cup winner Kevin Blackwood will cash in his title shot versus ESW heavyweight champion and All Elite Wrestling star "Red Death" Daniel Garcia.

- 2021 Ilio DiPaolo Memorial Cup match featuring Impact wrestling stars Matthew Rehwoldt (formerly known as Aiden English) and Josh Alexander. Plus, Niagara Falls native "Invincible" Vince Valor, Ohio Valley Wrestling star Facade, Game Changer Wrestling

star KTB plus former ESW heavyweight champion "Big Time" Bill Collier.

- ESW Interstate Champion Frankie Feathers will defend his title against up-and-comer Jeremiah Richter.

- Ring of Honor star Tony Depen will face "Blue Thunder" Jay Freddie.

- Two ESW debuts will occur in a women's bout when Albany's Christina Marie takes on Ohio Valley Wrestling star Dani Mo.

- In tag team action, High Seas (former Ring of Honor star Cloudy and Nick Ando) will face Philly Marino Experience (Marino Tenaglia and Philly Collins) – a Cleveland-based team that will make its ESW debut.

- North Tonawanda's Vinnie Moon will look for revenge against "The Remix" Kevin Bennett (accompanied by Roscoe).

Several ESW regulars are scheduled to appear, including "The Big Bang" Jerk Cockins, "A Cut Above the Rest" Gavin Glass, James Sayga and Keenan Moore. Stay tuned to ESW's social media pages for further match announcements leading up to the event

First and second row tickets are sold out. General admission tickets are still available for \$20 and can be purchased at www.ESWtix.com. Doors open at 5 p.m. with a bell-time set for 6 p.m.

As Western New York's premier

independent professional wrestling promotion, ESW has hosted many of pro wrestling's top up-and-comers and biggest legends.

Current World Wrestling Entertainment stars Kevin Owens, MVP, Jinder Mahal, Cedric Alexander, Johnny Gargano, Tommaso Ciampa, Damian Priest, Candice LeRae, Joaquin Wilde, Oney Lorcan, Robert Stone, Joe Gacy and Nash Carter all wrestled in ESW's ring.

Several current AEW stars also wrestled for ESW including Matt Hardy, Billy Gunn, Dustin Rhodes, MJF, Adam Cole, Orange Cassidy, Eddie Kingston, Ruby Soho, Colt Cabana, Lucha Bros, Best Friends, The Butcher and The Blade, Brian Pillman Jr., Allie, Matt Sydal, Ethan Page, Evil Uno, Private Party, Shawn Spears, Bear Country, Bobby Fish and Mark Sterling.

Pro wrestling legends Kevin Nash, Brutus Beefcake, Sgt. Slaughter, X-Pac, The Honky Tonk Man, Jim Duggan, Koko B. Ware, Bushwacker Luke, Demolition, D-Von Dudley, Raven and The Sandman appeared at previous ESW events.

Founded in 2002, ESW is run by Brett Stymus. Over half of ESW's performers reside in the Western New York area. ESW runs regular shows throughout the year that draw up to 400 fans, and an annual "super show" that boasts crowds of up to 1,000 people.

All cards are subject to change.

KeyBank, First Niagara Foundation awards grant to Memorial

KeyBank, in partnership with First Niagara Foundation, has awarded a \$40,000 grant to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center for its cooling tower capital investment to protect women's health services project.

The funds will be used to replace the cooling tower that is currently serving Memorial's Mary C. Dyster Women's Pavilion. Replacement of the tower, which removes heat from the building, will protect against deterioration caused by any water leakage, as well as maintain appropriate temperatures inside the facility. A press release said, "The project will offer a safe and comfortable environment for patients, employees and visitors."

Elizabeth Gurney, director of corporate philanthropy at KeyBank, and executive director of the First Niagara Foundation, said, "For decades, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center has provided quality and compassionate care to the people of Niagara County. We are proud to support them as they ensure that exceptional patient care will continue as they improve what is already a first-class

facility in Niagara Falls."

This investment has a direct benefit to the Niagara community as a whole. The Women's Health Pavilion, which is the only facility of its kind in the City of Niagara Falls, serves as a hub for the provision of obstetrical and gynecological care, including labor and delivery services, postpartum education and care, and a large outpatient center

that includes an integrated behavioral health program.

The press release added, "With these funds, the integrity of the building will be protected, allowing these much-needed services to be offered without interruption, giving women of Niagara Falls continued access to vital health resources."



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