

## Town of Niagara cancels more events due to COVID-19

**MICHAEL DEPIETRO**

Interim Tribune Editor

The Town of Niagara announced a number of event cancellations this week, including some related to winter time festivities. The cancellations were announced via the following message, which was posted to the town's website earlier this week:

A Message to Our Residents, Businesses and Neighbors,

As you are all aware, the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on every form of government, business and individual throughout our country. I can think of no other event in modern history that has had such a devastating impact on our entire globe simultaneously.

Throughout this epic event, the Town of Niagara must and will continue to place the health and safety of our constituents and neighbors as our number one priority. Therefore it is with a heavy heart that we are forced to cancel our plans for the following fall/winter events:

√ Noel at Niagara Opening Night Ceremony ONLY (Scheduled for 11/21)

(The actual lighting of Veterans Park will take place, but without an opening night ceremony)

√ Noel at Niagara Electric Lights Parade Scheduled for November 21st, 2020

√ Veterans Appreciation Dinner November 12th, 2020

√ Senior Holiday Luncheon December 8th, 2020

This decision was not made lightly, as many participants and spectators look forward to this festive event. However, holding a large public gathering during the current COVID-19 environment would be unsafe and irresponsible. We anticipate a return

of all programs, events and activities for 2021 and we thank you for your understanding.

Please stay safe and stay positive, together we will get through these difficult times.

The message was initially posted on the town's Facebook page, as well, but was taken down some time during the week. During Tuesday's Town Board meeting, Supervisor Lee Wallace addressed the matter, alluding to negative comments directed at town officials.

"Most of the decisions that we have made in this town related to COVID-19, I've struggled with," Wallace said. "You never know for sure when you should come back and when you shouldn't. But our No. 1 priority is always, and always will be, the safety and welfare of our residents. There are people out there who don't believe that this is real, or it's not as bad as it is. And then there are people who are petrified. ..."

"We had every intention of restarting the Electric Light Parade this year, but due to not just COVID-19, but financial constraints and the fact that we couldn't get much commitment from other people, we had to postpone that. We will still have the Noel Niagara lights, but there will be no opening night ceremony. It's unfortunate, but we really don't have a choice and we have to err on a side of caution.

"And it's unfortunate ... that some folks think it's necessary to go on Facebook and make outlandish statements about things that they have no concept of.

"It's not easy to do these jobs. Anybody would like to try, I welcome you to do it."

## Town of Niagara board: Public hearing scheduled for aerospace project

**BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO**

Interim Tribune Editor

Among the news from this week's Town of Niagara board meeting was that the town is scheduling a public hearing regarding the rezoning of property at the former U.S. Army Reserve Center from light industrial to heavy industrial. The potential move comes at the behest of Stavatti Aerospace, a Wyoming-based aerospace manufacturer that designs and produces military, commercial and general aviation aircraft, who are considering developing the site into a prototype production facility. The public hearing will be held Oct. 20.

The overall project is said to cost around \$26 million and, if it comes to fruition, could bring roughly 600 new jobs to the area.

Board member Richard Sirianni noted concerns about what could happen to the site if Stavatti pulls out of the project. He insisted that, pending the results of the public hearing, if the town does rezone the site, the

board should implement a claw-back clause, allowing the town to rezone the property back to light industrial should the deal fall through.

Addressing a Stavatti representative in attendance, Sirianni said, "I also have to protect the town, and I don't know what the present owner would develop there. They could put a chemical plant there. I'm not saying (they're going to do that), but everything's open under heavy industrial."

Elsewhere, the town approved a proclamation proclaiming September to be Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness month. Supervisor Lee Wallace said on Thursday, "We're always in the position where we would like to support organizations that do such good things for the community, and highlight causes that more people should be aware of."

The Town also announced that trick or treating this year will be 4-7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31.

## United Way kicks off 2020 campaign

**ARTICLE AND PHOTO**

**BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO**

Interim Tribune Editor

On Friday, the United Way of Greater Niagara announced the start of its 2020 fundraising campaign at the Four Points Sheridan Hotel in Niagara Falls. The organization says this year's campaign, which will run through Nov. 30, is more critical than ever as community groups continue to struggle with the effects of COVID-19. Funds raised throughout will continue to support 29 agencies focused on a spectrum of human services throughout the Niagara Region.

The organization announced that the co-chairs for this year's campaign are Denise Abbott from DeGraff Medical Park and Nicolas Maniccia from KeyBank.

Maniccia, who was unable to attend the event, said in a statement, "With the 2020 campaign, it's our hope to continue raising funds that will directly impact the residents of Niagara County who benefit from a wide range of programs and services throughout Niagara Falls, Lockport, Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. It's critical that United Way can continue empowering our region and helping Niagara County residents navigate this uncertain time."

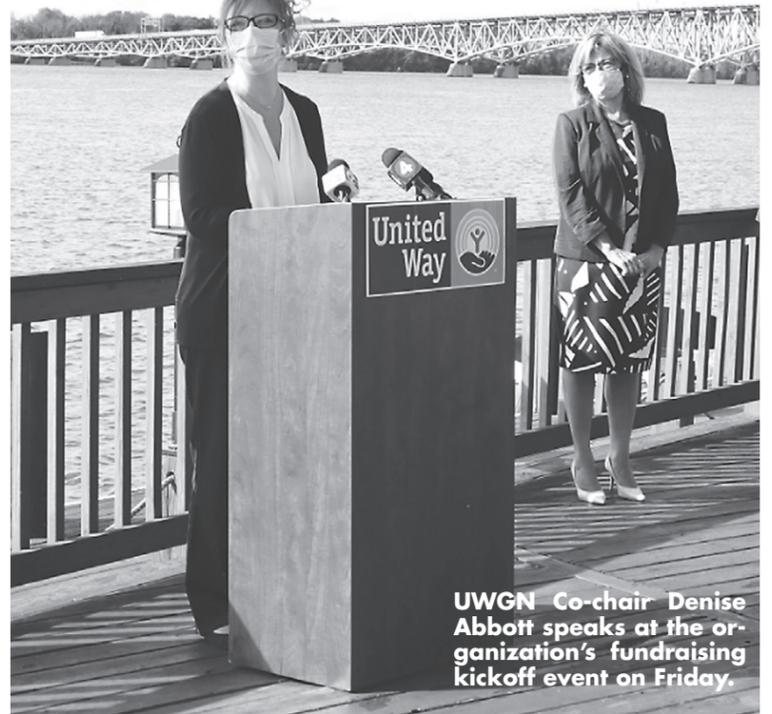
Abbott, this year's labor co-chair, discussed how, as a nurse, she saw firsthand how UWGN was able to help provide vital services to essential workers during the pandemic.

"I'm a nurse. I had to go to work. I didn't have an option to stay home, and many of my coworkers were in that same boat," she said. "Yet, there wasn't anything available to them to watch their children. The United Way stepped up immediately and put together a program to offer child care at either no cost or a very, very low cost to a lot of our members and it was incredibly needed and it was utilized and it still is utilized to this day. So, I thank them very much for what they've done for all of our members.

"I've taken calls from so many of our members that have been negatively affected, so I know what (UWGN has) done. ... The call has always been answered and there's never been anybody turned away. That's what makes the United Way so incredible is that they open their arms and everybody is taking care of. So, I want to continue helping them to help this community, the Greater Niagara Region, and answer the needs that have come up. ... It's more important now than ever, so I want that message to get out there that the United Way is needed, that they're valued, and that I will shout from the rooftops if I have to."

Niagara Falls School Superintendent and member of UWGN's board of directors Mark Laurie discussed how the organization helped local school districts provide child care services for essential workers and first responders during the pandemic.

"Those people have children and they needed places for those children to go. And it was a big discussion among superintendents about where are we going to provide day care; where are we going to provide support; where are we going to provide meaningful safe activities? ... Two member United Way agencies really stepped up," Laurie said. "So, where does your money go? It went into providing the day care support for first responders."



**UWGN Co-chair Denise Abbott speaks at the organization's fundraising kickoff event on Friday.**

One of those organizations was Youth Mentoring Services of Niagara County Inc, whose executive director, Sue Capell, went on to share some of the words of gratitude her organization received from some of the workers who received support.

"Thanks to the United Way, we were able to immediately shift to providing child care services for essential workers. The relief we were able to provide parents during this time of uncertainty allowed so many of our region's essential workers to receive child care support when they needed it the most," Capell said. "The best way to illustrate our success is in the words of parents whose children attend our program. ... 'Thank you, so much for this lifesaving program. I was able to continue working while knowing my child was engaged in a safe, fun and secure program.'

"And another parent, 'Thank you for offering these programs at such a crazy time. It's been such a

relief for me and my husband. As working parents, I cannot convey enough gratitude to all that you have done for our family.'

"Because of funds from United Way, organizations like Youth Mentoring Services are able to provide services year-round and during times of need."

UWGN President Connie Brown said those looking for ways to get involved with the campaign can visit [www.uwgn.org](http://www.uwgn.org) to donate directly, or visit <https://www.uwgn.org/Campaign> for information on how to sponsor a workplace campaign.

The mission of United Way of Greater Niagara is to invest in programs that focus on education, health and income that deliver measurable results to improve the Greater Niagara Region today and strengthen it for tomorrow.

To learn more about United Way of Greater Niagara, visit [www.uwgn.org](http://www.uwgn.org).

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