

Aquarium of Niagara says goodbye to beloved penguin

The Aquarium of Niagara is mourning the death of one of its beloved penguins, Opus.

Opus the Humboldt penguin was humanely euthanized Tuesday after a period of declining health that included severe joint deterioration and arthritis. The Aquarium of Niagara's animal care staff and veterinarians made the decision after medications and therapies meant to ease Opus' discomfort and improve her condition proved insufficient at helping her maintain a decent quality of life.

Opus was 32 years old and the oldest member of the Aquarium of Niagara's colony. The median life expectancy for a female Humboldt penguin is 17 years old.

Opus was hatched at the Aquarium of Niagara on March 16, 1988. She was one of the first birds to enjoy the \$3.6 million makeover of the penguin exhibit, "Penguin Coast," in 2018. The renovation helped the venue earn accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and restart its Humboldt penguin breeding program. The Aquari-



um of Niagara is one of just 20 accredited zoos and aquariums to house Humboldt penguins.

"It's always difficult to say goodbye to an animal, especially one as well-loved as Opus," Executive Director Gary Siddall said. "But we are heartened that Opus was able to live out her legacy in a state-of-the-art habitat where she received the highest stan-

dard of care."

Opus was a true ambassador for the vulnerable Humboldt penguin species and often participated in the Aquarium of Niagara's popular animal encounter program – and media interviews. She even took a field trip to Sahlen Field to celebrate and promote a partnership with the Buffalo Bisons.



Humboldt penguins are typically found in bonded pairs, but Opus chose not to take another mate after her own mate, Pecker, died in 2013. Instead, Opus formed strong bonds with her keepers.

"As animal care professionals, our highest commitment is to the welfare of our animal collection," Director of Animal Care Richelle Swem said. "We are proud that, under our care, Opus nearly dou-

bled her median life expectancy, and was able to live a full and impactful life that inspired so many to care more deeply about Humboldt penguins."

Opus has touched many lives, and anyone who would like to share photos, thoughts or memories can click here, visit the Aquarium of Niagara's Facebook account, or email info@aquariumofniagara.org.

IN THE NEWS

Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas postpones awards

The Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas announced it is postponing the yearly business awards, including Business of the Year, Citizen of the Year and Lifetime Achievement, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It has been a very difficult year for some businesses, but many have found opportunities to assist others in need," Executive Director Cathy Oddo said. "Therefore, the chamber will highlight those businesses that, during the pandemic, demonstrated an exemplary level of leadership and community engagement. This will include those that assisted with the needs of the community and/or serviced the needs of their customers and employees. The criteria in each of these areas will be evaluated with the weighting on engagement to assist other businesses/individuals to grow and foster and become/remains successful during these trying times."

Submit a business nomination by Wednesday, Oct. 14, to director@the-tonawandas.com.

Lewiston Travel Club meetings canceled

The Lewiston Travel Club announced that, with travel options remaining limited due to COVID-19, its Oct. 1 members' meeting and those for November and December are canceled.

Club spokesperson Paulette Glasgow said that trips are being planned for 2021. For more information on club activities and scheduled trips, contact her at 297-4749.

Porter Historical meetings postponed

The Town of Porter Historical Society announced its monthly programs and meetings remain postponed until further notice.

Society spokesperson Dottie Riordan said the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact its operations and services.

"The Red Brick (Youngstown Village Center) remains closed. This has been hard; we have not been open for six months," Riordan said. "We can't do any of our programs."

Riordan said the Historical Society is currently looking for volunteers to help it operate its museum in the Red Brick once it reopens, as well as assist with its various social media offerings such as Facebook.

For more information on volunteering, call 745-3081 or 745-1271.

Voters with disabilities in 5 counties can get free rides to vote

Independence Express, the transportation branch of Western New York Independent Living Inc. will provide free van rides to people with disabilities living in Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Orleans and Wyoming counties who need a ride to vote on Election Day (Tuesday, Nov. 3). Or, if one would prefer to cast a vote prior to Election Day, one can get a ride to a designated early voting site in their county during its limited hours of operation between Oct. 24 and Nov. 1.

In addition, Independence Express will also deliver ballots for anyone, with or without disabilities, to their respective Boards of Elections in the five-county service area.

Independence Express has wheelchair-accessible vehicles for those with mobility challenges, if needed. Organizers said, "While we can't help anyone up or down stairs, we can take people to their voting place and then back home or to work, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m."

Those with a disability who would like the free service offered by Independence Express can email transportation@wnyil.org. Put "Election Day" in the subject,

and provide this the rider's name, address and phone number; if the rider uses a wheelchair or is ambulatory; the name and address of the polling place (i.e., North Buffalo Community Center, 203 Sanders Road, Buffalo, NY 14216); if anyone is going with the rider, such as a personal care attendant; and lastly, the rider's first choice of the time to go to the polls.

Alternately, one may call Christian at 836-0822, ext. 108, to set up a ride. If there is high demand at times, requests will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis. Give at least two days' notice to ensure a ride.

The Western New York Independent Living Inc. family of agencies offers an expanding array of services to aid individuals with disabilities to take control of their own lives.

Addiction Recovery Month online celebration

Mental Health PEER Connection's Addict 2 Addict and Family 2 Family – Erie County program, in celebration of Addiction Recovery Month, presents "Applauding Recovery" for persons in, or struggling with, recovery and for professionals in the addictions field. The online event will run from 6:30-8 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 24. Individuals can register at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/applauding-recovery-celebration-event-tickets-118330135621>.

This virtual presentation is geared toward helping people enter into and keep recovery in their lives. Two community members will be honored for their contributions to the recovery movement. Attendees will listen to inspirational stories from persons who have overcome addiction and are now living successful lives, along with live entertainment from persons in recovery from addiction.

Other sponsoring agencies include: Friends of Recovery-Greater Erie Recovery Community Organization (FOR-Greater Erie), In

His Name Outreach Counseling & Recovery Services (IHNO), and Friends of Recovery-New York (FOR-NY).

Muzzleloader course to be given in Wheatfield

Hunting season is almost here and the Firearms Permit Review Board of Wheatfield will be giving its annual muzzleloader course at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 15, at the Community Center located behind the Wheatfield Town Hall. A certificate will be issued to those taking this course as a requirement for a muzzleloader discharge permit.

The course is open to anyone 14

years and older (14-17 with parent/adult) interested in muzzle loading, with young adults and women being especially welcome. For those interested in taking this course, sign up or call the Town Clerk's office at 694-6441. There is no course fee.

With its prime focus on firearm safety, Wheatfield enforces firearms Law 1-1975, amended July 15, 2002, which prohibits all rifle discharge within town limits except by permit.

Copies of the firearms law with area maps are available at the Town Clerk's office.

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