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Underground Railroad claims absurd

(Publisher's note: This is the second of a three-part investigative series by Niagara Falls Reporter Editor in Chief Mike Hudson examining spurious claims that the city was a major hub of the Underground Railroad in the years prior to the Civil War, claims that are now being used to justify the spending of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars celebrating a history that never happened.)

History is a funny thing.

Library shelves are filled with volumes that will tell you that Thomas Jefferson messed around on his wife, that Winston Churchill was a war criminal, or that Elvis slept with his mother, and since most of the people who could have spoken definitively about the subjects are now dead, who's to say?

Back in 2009, Kevin Cottrell — who was hired by the city to promote the idea that what is now the city of Niagara Falls played a central role in the Underground Railroad that helped thousands of former slaves escape their tormentors — repeatedly told reporters that Harriet Tubman personally led hundreds of former slaves to Canada and freedom across a suspension bridge very near to what is now the Whirlpool Bridge in the city's North End.

A series of articles in this newspaper showed conclusively that Cottrell was either lying or sadly misinformed, and raised serious questions concerning his motivation by exposing his involvement with a tour company he founded that profited from the absurd claim.

MIKE HUDSON

Historians agree that Harriet Tubman may actually have led as few as 17 people north, and that most of these traveled along a New England route hundreds of miles away from the roar of Niagara Falls.

It turned out that the story of her heroics here was rooted in a single passage from a book that was billed as her autobiography, but was actually written by a young white woman with Abolitionist sympathies long after the events it described actually took place. The book is riddled with errors, perhaps the most comical being a solemn prayer for the soul of the late Confederate president Jefferson Davis, who happened to be very much alive when the book was published.

Cottrell's conflict of interest in the matter was readily apparent to anyone who wanted to look at it. He founded the for-profit Motherland Connexions tour company, billed on its website as being the "originators of the Underground Railroad tour experience."

For just \$78 (\$48 for children under 12), Cottrell or one of his employees will guide you on a three-hour tour dedicated to a history that never happened. The company's website, filled with misspellings and typographical errors, describes the experience.

"Sojourn the towns and sites that played host to thousands of freedom seekers passing through Niagara Falls

on what's described as one of this countries (sic) 'First Multicultural (sic) Humanitarian Efforts,'" the site states.

Interestingly, Cottrell's employment by the city is never mentioned.

"As a local Historian, Preservationist, Educator and Entrepreneur, Kevin Cottrell has been lecturing both locally and nationally on the topic of the Underground Railroad especially as it relates to Western New York, and Southern Ontario," the profile states. "Presently, Mr. Cottrell is Station Master (owner operator) of Motherland Connexions, a company specializing in Heritage Tourism."

All of this would be easy to dismiss as the shenanigans of a two-bit history hustler, were it not for the fact that, aside from his \$74,800-a-year salary as the city's resident Underground Railroad "expert," he is a principal consultant on a project that will ultimately cost Niagara Falls taxpayers millions: The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.

The centerpiece of the heritage area, the old U.S. Customs House on Whirlpool Street, is in the midst of a \$40 million renovation that backers hope will one day house a new Amtrak station, as well as the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center.

One of the oldest buildings in Niagara Falls, the Customs House was built in 1863, well after the Underground Railroad was stopped in its tracks by the outbreak of the Civil War.

But unlike the actual Underground Railroad, the city's Underground Railroad Heritage Commission won't be stopped. With an annual budget of \$350,000 a year provided by the city, Cottrell's commission affords him the perfect vehicle to promote and expand his private company without having to explain his business plan to any pesky bankers.

The commission's recently released Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Management Plan, completed at an unknown cost to the city by an outside consulting firm called EDR Companies, does little to hide what is about to occur here.

The report identifies 23 sites in the city as serving "important functions during the formation and operation of the Underground Railroad."

One of these, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, wasn't built until 1873, a full 14 years after the Underground Railroad ceased operations. Its "important function" was apparently that "many prominent local families, both African American and European

American, were associated with St. Peter's Episcopal Church."

Another "important site" is the Emma Tanner home, located at 619 Ashland Ave. Tanner was a black Canadian woman who moved to the city in 1925. Like every other black person living in the United States at the time, she had relatives who had once been slaves.

The so-called Colt Block, at the corner of Main and Ontario streets, also had an important connection to the Underground Railroad and was named in the report.

"Leander Colt represents widespread local support for helping people to get out of slavery. Colt 'and lady' attended a benefit concert for George Goines in Lockport, who was raising money to buy freedom for his mother and brother," the report states. "After Colt constructed this limestone commercial block in 1855, he rented part of the building to George Hackstaff, editor of the Niagara Herald, who had antislavery sympathies."

That's right, Leander Colt went to some benefit and then rented out space in a building of which he was the landlord!

The Solon Whitney home, now better known as the law offices of John Bartolomei, was also found to be very significant. Why?

"Solon Myron Napoleon Whitney, son of Parkhurst Whitney, owned the Cataract Hotel for more than 50 years with his brothers-in-law Dexter Jerauld and James Trott," the report states. "All of them hired African Americans as waiters. Many of these waiters had born in the South and had likely escaped from slavery."

In other words, the private home of a man who owned a hotel that hired black waiters who may or may not have "escaped from slavery" has been deemed culturally significant. All of the hotels in Niagara Falls at the time hired black waiters, and indeed, all of the places the hotels once stood — for none exist today — have been named as important sites.

The historical fraud being perpetrated on the taxpayers of a city whose guest book has been signed by luminaries such as Abraham Lincoln, Charles Dickens, Nikola Tesla, Marilyn Monroe and more kings and queens than you can shake a stick at is truly historic in its appalling proportions.

(NEXT WEEK: In Part 3 of this special Niagara Falls Reporter investigative series, we'll see why Kevin Cottrell, Mayor Paul Dyster and City Engineer Tom DeSantis have a vested interest in phony history.)

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City Planner DeSantis had \$36,000 secret kitchen and bath installed without filing permits

High-ranking Dyster official in charge of compliance may have deliberately skirted law

By Frank Parlato Jr.

Niagara Falls City Planner Thomas DeSantis is known as a zealous bureaucrat who does his level best to make sure property owners in this city comply with every municipal law that comes within his purview.

From building height restrictions to making sure the law is followed as to the number of shrubs planted on a property, he is known as strict, by the book, and prepared to close a business down, rescind site plans, and seek condemnation of properties when property owners do not follow the rules and regulations of the city, many of which he wrote himself over the 20 years he has been city planner.

When it comes to his own house, however, Mr. DeSantis may have a different standard.

The *Niagara Falls Reporter* learned that Mr. DeSantis, in January 2011, had more than \$36,000 in repairs, including extensive electrical and plumbing work, made to his home at 8502 Pershing Ave. in the LaSalle area of Niagara Falls, without getting any of the legally required building, electrical and plumbing permits.

The *Reporter* learned he had purchased materials from Kinetic Kitchen & Bath at 1655 Fashion Outlet Boulevard in Niagara Falls.

The former president of Kinetic, Chris Connolly, confirmed that Mr. DeSantis purchased materials to install a kitchen and bath at his home.

"I knew at the time who he was and I knew his position with the city," Mr. Connolly said. "His home had been built in the 1930s and it looked like a beautiful home, but nothing had been done to the kitchen. He and his wife went with a fairly high-end finish. They did not buy cheap. The work, as I recall, was done by a subcontractor."

The *Reporter* contacted Code Enforcement Acting Director Dennis Virtuoso. Mr. Virtuoso said he knew nothing about any work done at Mr. DeSantis' home and confirmed no permits had been filed for a kitchen, bathroom, plumbing or electrical work in 2011 by Mr. DeSantis or anyone on his behalf for his house at 8502 Pershing.

Mr. Virtuoso said the last permits filed for Mr. DeSantis' home was on June 31, 2004, to erect a Florida room, and before that, on Oct. 16, 2003, when he installed a roof.

While exterior repairs, evident to inspectors and neighbors, require permits, do interior repairs, such as putting in a new kitchen, also require a permit?

"It depends on what they do," Mr. Virtuoso said. "A licensed electrician is required for any electrical work. For plumbing, unless the homeowner does it himself, a licensed master plumber must do the plumbing. But even if the homeowner does his own plumbing, he still needs a permit. We have to inspect it to make sure it is done to code."

What if a person does not file a permit?

"We send them a letter that we received a complaint and no permits were applied for. Then we go

and inspect the work," said Mr. Virtuoso. "Also, once a permit is taken, the city assessor sends someone out to determine what the value of the improvement was, and the house is then reassessed. That is why a lot of people try to bypass the building permit so that the assessor won't get in there. If the assessor goes in and sees, for example, a new kitchen and bath, then he would reassess it accordingly."

Mr. DeSantis, when contacted by phone and asked specific details, admitted contractors had installed a brand-new kitchen and bath to his home, and confirmed it was at a cost of about \$36,000 and that plumbing and electrical work had been done.

Was a permit taken?

"I don't know if there was a permit," said Mr. DeSantis. "As far as I'm concerned, the work (the contractor) did was inclusive. My perspective is the contract included the permits."

Do you know if a permit was actually taken?

"No."

Were you aware that a permit was required?

"Absolutely."

Did you ever ask to see the permit?

"I can't recall. ... I contracted with a company who contracted with a (subcontractor who did the work). The implication to me was that (permits were) all taken care of. At no point was it discussed that I had to get the permits. That is my side of the story."

Did you ever check to see if the contractor filed permits?

"That's irrelevant. ... I am assuming they are professional and they are doing it legally."

But isn't it the homeowner's responsibility to file for permits?

"Absolutely."

Then it was an oversight?

"Was it an oversight? Maybe you can characterize it that way. I don't have anything else to say. To me this is a very simple thing."

Now, of course, it makes good fodder, if the city planner does renovations on his private residence without a permit, while requiring everyone else to follow the law by the book, but is it really much ado about nothing? After all, the city of Niagara Falls charges only \$30 for the first \$1,000 of work done, and \$15 per \$1,000 after that. If Mr. DeSantis had paid the proper permit fees, his total permit costs would have been under \$500.

Still, there are some questions.

Was it an innocent oversight?

Or perhaps more delicately: Being a public figure, did he not want the public to know he spent \$36,000 on his kitchen and bath, which is more than half his annual \$57,000 income at City Hall?

Was there even a remote possibility that he did not want the city assessor to know how much in improvements were made to his home?

And, most importantly, was it true, as he said, that the contract reads that it was the contractor's responsibility to get permits?

The *Reporter* determined to investigate these questions and obtained a copy of the contract.

Signed by Thomas and Kathy DeSantis, the contract, dated Dec. 22, 2010, after listing the scope of repairs, which included extensive rewiring and plumbing, along with carpentry and cabinet installation, reads, "If permits are required, they are the sole responsibility of Kinetic or the Customer. The cost will then be revisited and adjusted for inspections, permits, scheduling, delays, etc."

Studying the contract and comparing it with the final installation "customer sign off sheet," dated Feb. 1, 2011, it appears the cost for permits was never "revisited and adjusted," leading one to believe that Mr. DeSantis was never charged for permits. If he had read the contract carefully, by the time he and his wife signed off that the work was done satisfactorily, he certainly would have known permits never were filed.

Associated paperwork connected with the contract shows there was, as Mr. Connolly suggested, an elegant, if not stunning design plan, with a sophisticated use of space, color and finish, including granite countertops and state-of-the-art appliances. It was designed by Jill J. Westcott, the well-known interior designer for Kinetic Kitchen & Bath.

When contacted by the *Reporter*, Ms. Westcott disagreed with Mr. DeSantis' contention that the contractor was responsible for permits.

"At that time, we discussed verbally that it was his responsibility to get the permits required," said Ms. Westcott. "Mr. DeSantis, at that time, requested that the contractors park on 85th Street (side street) rather than Pershing, due to visibility. He made mention of the kitchen remodel causing his home to be reassessed, and he did not want that to happen."

"The (cost of the) permits were never added in by Kinetic Kitchen & Bath. It remained the responsibility of the homeowner. Therefore, it was always left to the homeowner's responsibility."

"Lastly, I included a sheet that we have the homeowners sign off on when the work was complete. This again states 'not responsibility of Kinetic providing the permits.' On all jobs, we require the homeowners to purchase the permits."

The *Reporter* contacted several others involved in the work. They confirmed that it was an "open secret" that Mr. DeSantis did not want permits taken on his home.

Anne Daggett, marketing manager of Buffalo Cabinetry on Military Road in Niagara Falls, was formerly head of marketing for Kinetic. Part of her duties was to make sure work done by subcontractors for products Kinetic sold was done in an efficient fashion.

She said when she drove by Mr. DeSantis' residence on Pershing Avenue, she noted "workers were coming to his house in their private vehicles or in the (subcontractor's) company trucks that were not marked with the company name on it."

Restaino to challenge Ceretto for 145th Assembly seat

By Frank Parlato Jr.

Niagara Falls attorney and former City Court Judge Robert M. Restaino announced his candidacy this week for New York State's 145th Assembly District.

Barring a Democratic primary, Mr. Restaino is expected to face the current 138th District Assemblyman, John Ceretto, a Republican, in November's general election.

Redistricting altered the 145th District to encompass the majority of the present 138th Assembly District, and added Grand Island and northern portions of North Tonawanda.

Niagara Falls, Niagara, Lewiston, Cambria and Wheatfield, now part of the 138th, will be part of the 145th District, which first appears on the ballot in the fall of this year.

Youngstown, Porter, Wilson, Newfane and Hartland, also now part of the 138th District, will be part of the new 144th District, which will also include Lockport, Royalton, Middleport and Somerset, along with other municipalities outside of Niagara County.

The New York State Assembly is composed of 150 members, with each district having an average population of 128,652. Assembly members serve two-year terms and convene at the State Capitol in Albany. Democrats have been in the majority since 1975, with a present 51-seat plurality.

With Mr. Restaino throwing his hat into the ring, the race for the 145th promises to be a marquee event.

"I enter this campaign knowing full-well that the make-up of our Assembly impacts the effectiveness of our representation on the Assembly floor," said Mr. Restaino, referring to the large Democratic plurality in the Assembly. "It has nothing to do with personalities. The simple truth is that the make-up of our State Legislature relegates the party in the minority into less-effective positions of lesser influence."

Mr. Restaino said he sees a need in the Assembly for a representative with the courage to challenge unfunded state mandates, mandates he believes shift a disproportionate tax burden onto Western New Yorkers.



Robert M. Restaino

"I have every intention of asking tough questions," Mr. Restaino said, "and addressing issues that affect the daily lives of the constituents of the 145th Assembly District."

Mr. Restaino said he welcomes working with Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

"As the governor struggles to strengthen the fiscal well-being of our state, to 'right size' its government, to create a more effective final product, he will need effective partners. Once I am elected, I intend to work with the governor and our state delegation to provide more effective policies and programs in Albany.

"But my No. 1 priority will be protecting and enhancing the quality of life for the people of Western New York."

Mr. Restaino, a lifelong resident of Niagara Falls, is married to the former Diana Capilupi. They have two children, Danielle and Robert.

A graduate of Niagara Catholic High School and Niagara University, Mr. Restaino received his Juris Doctor Degree in 1985 from the University of Buffalo School of Law. He was admitted to practice law in New York state in 1986. From 1986 to the

present, Mr. Restaino has maintained his private law practice.

From 1996 until 2008, Mr. Restaino was a Niagara Falls City Court Judge. During his tenure, he was one of the most active judges within the local judicial community. Judge Restaino played a major role in the development and growth of the Niagara Falls Drug Court Program. In addition, he acted as a consultant to the Niagara County Domestic Violence Intervention Program, served as a presiding judge for the Niagara Falls Domestic Violence Court, and assisted in the development of the Judicial Justice Court.

As the result of a 2005 incident in his courtroom, the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct in 2008 recommended the removal of Mr. Restaino from the bench. Reacting to a disruption in courtroom procedures, Mr. Restaino placed numerous defendants, who were there mainly on charges of domestic violence, into custody, after no one in the courtroom would take responsibility for a ringing cell phone that interrupted transactions within the courtroom.

The decision to remove Mr. Restaino created a public furor. Thousands of residents signed petitions asking he be kept on the bench, a stunning testimony to the overwhelming support for Mr. Restaino locally.

After Mr. Restaino's removal from the bench, he returned to private law practice, and in 2008, became a special assistant, Medicaid Inspector General, Medicaid Provider Fraud, in Niagara County, and in three years time he identified more than \$3 million in fraudulent payments that were improperly paid to Medicaid service providers.

Mr. Restaino also won election last year to the Niagara Falls Board of Education.

"Dealing firsthand with the challenges facing today's schools in the less-affluent areas of this state, such as Niagara Falls, has become an education in itself," he said. "The need exists now, more than ever, for voices in Albany screaming that underfunding education is creating irreparable damage to the future of New York state."

Mr. Restaino intends to present similar ideals from the floor of the Assembly.

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SABRES SOFT AND GUTLESS APPROACH SPELLS F-A-I-L-U-R-E

New owner Pagula's rehire of GM and coach bodes ill for team to "man-up"

The best possible thing happened to the Buffalo Sabres at the end of the NHL's 2011-12 regular season: The team failed to make the playoffs.

Had the Sabres managed to grab the last playoff spot and sneak into the post-season, team president Ted Black would likely have considered lifetime appointments for coach Lindy Ruff and General Manager Darcy Regier.

After all, he recently gave the longest-tenured duo in professional sports a vote of confidence despite their overseeing what was arguably the most humiliating season the franchise ever endured.

Ruff and Regier have been retained by several revolving-door ownership teams despite their unparalleled legacy of mediocrity and failure. The pair will enter their 15th and 16th seasons, respectively, with the Sabres next year, and have absolutely nothing to show for it.

The Sabres have missed the postseason six times in 10 years and have not won a playoff series for five consecutive seasons.

Across the league, Ruff and Regier's teams have been called everything from "soft" and "mentally fragile" to just plain "gutless." The fact that no one in the organization seems to be troubled by these unflattering observations on their manhood indicates that, despite owner Terry Pegula's declared commitment to win the Stanley Cup, his tenure is more likely destined to be a classic case of one step forward, two steps back.

Ruff and Regier's best seasons occurred in their first two years with the team, but those Sabres clubs were built by former GM John Muckler and coach Ted Nolan. Does anyone remember the dismissal of NHL Executive of the Year, Muckler, and NHL Coach of the Year, Nolan, back in 1997 at the conclusion of the

organization's best season in over a decade?

The Sabres have yet to recover from that act of self-mutilation, and the results speak for themselves: Once the Muckler/Nolan teams were dismantled by Ruff and Regier, they managed to win only five playoff series in 13 years.

For this lack of accomplishment they have become the longest-tenured coach/GM tandem in professional sports. Only in Buffalo.

Those who believe that the once-proud Sabres organization has hit rock bottom cite the perception around the league that not only some, but all of Buffalo's players are not just "soft" and "mentally fragile" but "gutless." An article published on the New England Sports Network's website rubbed salt in the wounds days after Boston's Milan Lucic

concussed goalie Ryan Miller with a cheap shot to the head. The incident, which violated one of hockey's most forbidden taboos against hitting goaltenders, provoked no response from the Sabres, but did elicit a decidedly disparaging one from NESN sportswriter Douglas Flynn. Within the title of his article he sums up the prevailing view around the league: "Sabres' lack of a response was truly gutless."

NESN's Flynn wrote, "Actually, gutless would be a better description for the utter lack of response from the Sabres to the sight of their goalie laid out violently. Lucic was called for charging, but faced no other repercussions for the hit. Despite violating one of hockey's most vigorously enforced unwritten rules to avoid hitting the goalie, Lucic faced absolutely no retaliation from the Sabres. The lack of response was startling, and the Bruins took full advantage of the knowledge that they

were facing a foe easily intimidated by their physical style."

But he didn't stop there. Flynn accused the Sabres on the ice at the time of the hit, Paul Gaustad, Tyler Myers, Thomas Vanek, Jason Pominville and Andrej Sekera, of "cowardice."

When asked if the response from the Bruins would have been different if Boston goalie Tim Thomas had been hit, Lucic did not mince words:

"Definitely. We wouldn't accept anything like that. We would have taken care of business, but we're a different team than they are."

They sure are. The Bruins are defending Stanley Cup champions and the Sabres are watching the playoffs on TV while they get their nails done at the spa.

That, in a nutshell, is the problem with the Buffalo Sabres: No guts, no pride, no playoffs. It's as simple as that.

The Miller-Lucic incident was arguably the catalyst of the Sabres' playoff fortunes. Miller missed three weeks because of the hit, and his return in early December coincided with the club's notorious tailspin that permanently derailed the season. From Dec. 17 to Jan. 24, Buffalo set a franchise record by losing 12 straight road games. The Sabres scored only 17 goals during this stretch and finished with just 90 goals total on the road, ranking 27th in the league out of 30 teams.

Particularly disturbing is the fact that the incident between Miller and Lucic was not the first between the Sabres and Bruins in which Boston used intimidation and violence to injure and demoralize Buffalo's "soft" and "fragile" players.

Despite finishing first in the Northeast in 2009-10, the Sabres were knocked out of the first round of the playoffs by the Bruins. Boston adopted a strategy long ago perfected by NHL legend

Conn Smythe, who famously said, "If you can beat 'em in the alley, you can beat 'em on the ice." Bruin bruisers Milan Lucic, Sean Thornton and Zdeno Chara manhandled undersized and passive Sabres like Jason Pominville, Tim Connelly and Derek Roy, and took control of the series after Thomas Vanek was slashed across the ankle in Game No. 2. Vanek was playing his best hockey of the season, but missed the rest of that game and the next two, all of which the Sabres lost. There was no response from the team except perhaps a whimper and some tears. The Bruins easily won the series.

The following season Boston would win its first Stanley Cup in nearly 40 years.

One would think Boston's obvious strategy for success, an admixture of skill, toughness and fine goaltending, might have caught the attention of Sabres' shot-callers. Unfortunately, those in charge persist in their inexplicable commitment to cowardly and passive playing and its inevitable consequence in the tough and brawny world of hockey: failure.

At the trade deadline, rough-and-tumble rookie Zack Kassian, just the kind of player the team should be attempting to acquire, was dealt to Vancouver for Tim Connelly-clone Cody Hodgson. Management's preference for effeminate, undersized pretty boys has made Buffalo the laughingstock of the league and helpless whipping boys for teams that field strong men on the ice. One can go to the Ice Capades for fancy skating. Fans throughout the league love to see robust rugged men fight on the ice for dominance.

Somewhere along the way, a change in philosophy was made within the Sabres organization to abandon the blue-collar blueprint that had come to

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More time in the sun, more opportunity for skin cancer



Long summer days are a double-edged sword in construction. Those extra hours of sunshine — often crucial for completing projects on schedule — increase the risk of skin cancer. Laborers or anyone spending time outdoors should take the necessary precautions to minimize their skin exposure to harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays.

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month for Laborers. Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. In the United States, more than 2 million cases are diagnosed annually. Melanoma, the most deadly form, has seen a marked increase over the last 30 years.

In 2010, more than 8,000 Americans died from melanoma; most resulting from exposure to UV rays of which sunlight is the main source. That means that the majority of these deaths could have been prevented. Regular and liberal application of sunscreen and minimizing midday and high sun exposures throughout the year will usually prevent skin cancer. Laborers need to use lip balm, neck flaps and sun block towelettes available free at the Union hall to protect against damaging exposure to sunlight. The Laborers encourage everyone to take appropriate steps to protect themselves from harmful sun exposure.

Who will bear the pain for Bills lease deal?

Tony Farina



The Bills made some big free-agency additions in recent weeks, getting top pass rusher Mario Williams for a cool \$100 million and then picking up another defensive end with strong credentials, Mark Anderson, who had 10 sacks last season with the New England Patriots.

Last week, the faithful appeared to have a few more reasons to get on the Bills bandwagon, as the team got generally high marks in drafting South Carolina cornerback Stephon Gilmore, seen by many as the second-best corner in the college ranks, and 345-pound Georgia offensive tackle Cordy Glenn.

The off-season action has already paid off for the Bills, as the team announced that 1,400 new season tickets were purchased and over 4,000 season tickets were renewed shortly after the Williams deal was announced in March.

While all this was going on, negotiations on a new stadium lease deal between the Bills and the county and state were moving along quietly in the background, and at this point very little progress has been made.

There have been three meetings so far, beginning in January, and talks about what level of taxpayer pain might be required have not been on the agenda.

"At this point, we're just at the entry-level phase," said County Attorney Michael Siragusa during an interview with the *Niagara Falls Reporter*. "The Bills are presenting to us what they want, what renovations they would like done."

And while the projected costs of those renovations are in the \$200 million range, Siragusa, who is County Executive Mark Poloncarz's point man in the talks, said there has been no discussion yet on where the money will come from.

The current 15-year lease between the county and the Bills expires in July of 2013, and the county executive is hoping to get an agreement on a new lease before the start of Bills training camp this summer, a deadline that may prove difficult to meet, given the heavy lifting that will be required. The county has hired the law firm of Nixon Peabody to help in the negotiations. The county executive himself and Deputy County Executive Rich Tobe, a veteran of the last lease negotiation under Dennis Gorski, are also taking part in the talks.

Sam Hoyt, senior vice president for regional economic development, and Steve Gawlik, in-house counsel for Empire State Development, are representing the state in the lease discussions. For the Bills, CEO Russ Brandon, Treasurer Jeff Littman, and local counsel Mike Schiavone are carrying the ball, hoping, as Brandon has stated, "to make this franchise as viable as possible" in the least costly way, by renovating the stadium as outlined in a study they commissioned by the Populous group.

Now, the question is, who is going to come up with the dollars to get the renovations done, with an expected price tag north of \$200 million? County Executive Poloncarz wants the longest lease possible — at least 10 years — and he's hoping the state will pay for the majority of the costs associated with the new agreement. But the state has said little so far about what level of pain it will take on — and where the money will come from — to help get the deal done.

One of the key ingredients of the negotiations will be whether there will be an early-termination clause for either or both parties. In other words, should taxpayers put up some, most, or all of the \$200 million in renovations the Bills say they want made to the stadium, will the lease allow the Bills to sell or relocate before the lease is up? If so, what happens to the taxpayers who have renovated what will be — compared to the investment made — a largely worthless stadium in Orchard Park?

The last agreement, 15 years ago, called for \$63 million in state-funded stadium renovations and annual upgrades by the county that so far have totaled more than \$38 million, with the county and the Bills each paying just over \$4 million for game-day expenses during the 2010-11 season.

What penalty clause will be included, if there is a provision for early termination? And, of course, what rent will the Bills be expected to pay?

Siragusa said that any agreement made between the county and the Bills would provide for a clause protecting taxpayers against an early departure by the team.

Brandon, the marketing whiz who has expanded the Bills fan base north and east, would seem to be in the best seat when it comes to making a favorable deal, given the value the community places on the Bills and the excitement being generated about the team's future success on the field in the coming season. That's a great backdrop for the Bills negotiating team.

Never mind questions about the ownership succession after the passing of 93-year-old owner Ralph Wilson. They will be dealt with down the still-uncharted road. The important thing in 2012 for the

county and the state is to try and get a deal done on the stadium, hopefully with some help from the Bills, as has happened in other small-market cities. What share of the pain, if any, will the Bills be willing to take on to get the renovations they deem crucial to keeping the franchise viable? And what will the politicians pay to keep the fans and the Bills happy? One possibility, of course, would be to leverage the costs over the long haul in a bond deal, something Poloncarz has indicated he would consider.

Whatever agreement is reached, according to Siragusa, has to be palatable to taxpayers.

"We want to get this deal done as quickly as possible to ensure that the Bills remain part of our community," he said. "But we are sensitive to the fact that it needs to be done in a fair way from a cost perspective, with numbers that the taxpayers can live with."

The Bills have enjoyed great success selling their product in Buffalo, even though the team has often been a disappointment on the field. Sure, there was the great run during the Kelly era in the early '90s, but since then the Bills have struggled to be competitive, and have often failed. Yet the fans keep coming, from Rochester and points east, and from across the border, where the team sometimes travels for "home" games.

Russ Brandon is one of the NFL's top executives and he championed the Bills' successful regional approach, even with a team that is often underwhelming and that last year went 6 and 10. Talk of dramatic improvement and a playoff run are nothing new when it comes to the hometown fans, but this year Ralph opened his wallet, and maybe this time the team will contend and put Buffalo on the map. Time will tell. But for now, the pressure is building off the field, as the lease negotiators wrangle over how to come up with \$200 million to make everyone happy.

Another meeting is scheduled this month, and the talks are expected to heat up as they go forward. All parties involved are expected to remain tightlipped as the negotiations get down to the nitty-gritty of the matter, which is likely to happen in the near future. In the meantime, expect the Bills to be front and center about their additions and the playoff run that is hoped will follow. What better way to negotiate a lease than to whip up the crowd about the team, even before they play a down, putting the pressure on the county and state to get it done.

That's just good business, and Russ Brandon is a good businessman.

(E-mail Tony Farina at tonyfarina2010@gmail.com.)

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It's relaxing just to be here. There may be no better place to spend an evening, dining on rice balls or sea bass or plain old, simple, comforting spaghetti and meatballs, with a sauce so fine and delicately sweet it reminds one at once why tomato and semolina, olive oil, herbs and the right pinch of spices work so wonderfully together to nourish and tempt the palate.

Casa Antica is a place where you can take your whole family, your date, your wife, your friends, business acquaintances, in a lovely quiet setting in beautiful historic Lewiston.

It is an experience just to go there.

The family-owned business was started by Angela Bellanca in 2006, and it has taken off — a genuine Lewiston success story.

Her father, Jack Soldano, and her brother, Calogero Soldano, are the chefs that make the cozy restaurant at 490 Center St. a culinary experience.

"Basically, we're family oriented," Jack Soldano explained. "Whoever comes in here, for even an hour, they feel the family atmosphere. We treat them like family. And our customers, they treat us back like family."

The experience, as I and my colleague Michelle came into the restaurant, was one where we were greeted warmly, and although they were busy, I noticed that we and other arriving customers were seated right away.

There was no pretension, but rather the immediate feeling that we were welcome, in that warm, hospitable Italian way that made it feel we were in an Italian home of sophistication and elegance, but warm and welcome nonetheless.

OK, said simply, like we were family.

As we gave our orders, we were given free appetizers, including little pizzas.



"People know the food is going to be fresh," said the elder Mr. Soldano. "We don't get it out of the freezer and microwave it. It's all fresh."

And it was.

Studying the menu and sampling the fare, it seems the restaurant provides cuisine from all over Italy.

"We do Northern Italian cuisine, Southern Italian cuisine. We do a bit of everything. A lot of our food is homemade." Jack said.

Officially, what would you call the wonderful blend of the best of all Italian foods, old and new recipes, prepared by chefs who not only understand the art of cooking, but care to make it the best it can be?

It's "traditional, new-age Italian cuisine."

Coming out of his spotless kitchen, Jack pours us coffee made from a state-of-the-art coffee brewer, and then comes to our table for a moment to talk.

The summers are nice here at the outside patio, when the sun is setting and day turns to dusk. There is a magical quality in this quiet pleasure garden in the village of Lewiston, once designated by President Jimmy Carter as the most historic square mile in the United States.

"We're right on Center Street, and there's always something exciting going on in summer," Mr. Soldano said.

Sure there is. There is Artpark, the Peach Festival, the parade, the Jazz Festival — always something going on. Always interesting people and old architecture, stately trees and the nearby Niagara River.

And when your eyes are done feasting on the sights, and you are hungry for real Italian food — for fine taste, excellent quality, ample quantity and affordable price — it so happens, for my vote, it is right here.

As I watched customers enter, I observed they were not only locals. I learned many were from Canada, shoppers who came to take advantage of the parity of the U.S. and Canadian dollar who found a good place

to dine when they had worked up an appetite after the strenuous task of shopping all day.

Several had come all the way from the Fashion Outlet Mall several miles away and en route had to pass many restaurants.

I had to wonder if shopping alone was their reason for crossing the bridge into the United States, and if an ample part of the fun was not dining at Casa Antica after they went shopping.

It was a joyous place, I observed.

I also noticed there were people from Ohio, Illinois and Pennsylvania, as the license plates proved.

Sea bass was popular. Indeed, they were literally swimming out to hungry customers. Along with a gorgeous salad — nearly everybody had some — with, and I can attest to this, a dressing that lit up my taste buds and danced on my tongue, created, I later learned, by Jack's son, Calogero. It is the Casa Antica house dressing. I fell in love with it and suggested they bottle it and put it on the market.

I noticed a number of people relaxing, enjoying wine at the bar, selecting from a list of good, choice and affordable wines by the glass or bottle. Merlot seemed to be the favorite.

Calogero says serving the customers at Casa Antica, the fine mix of patrons — regulars, locals and tourists — are his passion.

"My father was raised up in the restaurant business, and so was I," he said, and told us how as a child he would spend virtually all his available hours in the restaurant, and how he always knew what he wanted to be in life, and how he went to culinary school and now works with his father in the kitchen almost every night. His whole life, like his father's, has been spent in a restaurant, born for this work and excelling at it.

Jack comes back with huge plates of Italian risotto and grilled meats, cooked painfully slowly to keep in the flavor, marinated just perfectly. It was moist and savory, and indeed exquisite.

He sat down with us for a minute and took a sip of coffee. The smell of the roast was as good as the taste.

"You've got to be here to experience it," he said.

He's right.

As I watched customers leave — and perhaps this is the most telling tale of all — I noticed that everyone took food home.

So did I.

Casa Antica is open Tuesday through Sunday during the spring, fall and winter, and seven days a week in the summer. Doors open at 5 p.m.

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Sabres' unhappy results a product of team philosophy

(Continued from page 5)

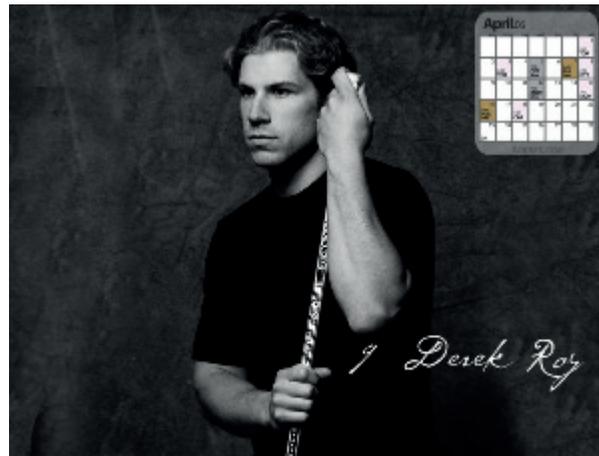
epitomize Sabres teams of the past. The glory years of the 1970s saw the considerable talents of the French Connection complemented by tough guys Jim Schoenfeld, Jerry "King Kong" Korab and Wildman Rick Dudley. Those teams easily neutralized Philadelphia's notorious "Broad Street Bullies" in the 1975 Finals, despite failing to grab the cup. Similarly, Ted Nolan's clubs, which paved the way for the 1999 "No Goal" Stanley Cup Finals, were a tough bunch (Ray, May, Barnaby, Boughner) that stood up for each other and took on all comers. Unfortunately, the present roster consists predominately of carefully quaffed timid boys who would rather perform center-ice pirouettes than get their noses dirty in the corners or muss up their hair. The lunch pails and work boots that once sat in lockers have been replaced by blow-dryers and skin creams.

Pegula's tenure has been distinguishable from that of his predecessors by his willingness to spend money on quality players. But giving the hopelessly incompetent Regier a "blank check" has only exacerbated the problem. By any reasonable assessment, Regier's key acquisitions (Leino, Ehrhoff, Regehr)

were all colossal busts. Centerman Leino managed just 8 goals and 25 points, and defenseman Ehrhoff was equally uninspired. Regier finished the season with the second-worst plus/minus (-12) on the team and clearly left his manhood on the west coast.

With former president Larry Quinn finally out of the picture, one would have thought now to be the perfect time to make a clean break with the past and begin the Pegula era in Buffalo with some fresh faces and fresh thinking. Unfortunately, such was not the case, and now another disappointing season of failure and humiliation is in the books. Worse yet is that another one looms on the horizon.

Are the Sabres and Bills really cursed, as many fans in Western New York have come to believe? The inauspicious beginning to the Pegula era in Buffalo only lends credence to the theory. Unfortunately, his inexplicable commitment to the most overrated coach/GM combo in the history of hockey and the most pathetic collection of scaredy-pants players the game has ever seen means things are going to get a whole lot worse before they get better.



Traditional, winning hockey it is not....

These photos of Derek Roy (Top) and Nathan Gerbe (Bottom), with their pouty, unnatural poses, tleave one wondering if they are hockey players or male, hairstyle models.



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Child Advocacy Center of Niagara offers training for preventing child abuse here

By Laura Kelemen

Sexual abuse is a major problem in the United States and in our community.

Nationally, one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. In Niagara County, the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara sees almost 300 cases of suspected sexual abuse each year.

While these statistics are staggering, the child sexual abuse epidemic is often hidden behind closed doors. We can better protect our children by gaining and spreading awareness, learning the warning signs and reporting suspicions of child abuse.

One way the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara does this is by working with Darkness to Light, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to reducing the incidence of child sexual abuse through public awareness and education.

Darkness to Light is the developer of Stewards of Children, an interactive, evidence-based sexual abuse-prevention training program led by specially trained Child Advocacy Center staff members. The course also is available online at www.d21.org.

Stewards of Children is appropriate for parents, caregivers and



Laura Kelemen

youth-serving organizations such as sports leagues, daycare centers, after-school programs, children's clubs and church groups. Adults who take the training will learn how sexual abuse affects children, families and our community. Most importantly, participants will leave with simple, proactive strategies for protecting children from sexual abuse.

As adults, it is our responsibility to protect the children in our community from sexual abuse so they can grow up to lead healthy productive lives.

If you call us in May to schedule Stewards of Children training, we

will provide the program free of charge.

The Child Advocacy Center of Niagara, a service of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, is a countywide resource providing a safe and child-friendly place for the investigation of child abuse allegations. We work with a multidisciplinary team of law enforcement, social services, prosecution, and medical and mental health personnel to investigate allegations of child abuse, prosecute offenders, help victims heal, and work to prevent further abuse.

For more information about how to prevent child sexual abuse in our community, or to schedule a free Stewards of Children training for your organization please e-mail Emily.Foschio@nfmmc.org or phone us at (716) 285-0045.

(Laura Kelemen, LCSW-R, is executive director of the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara.)

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NF Education Foundation to award Brown, Quaranto and Stoianoff

Six Niagara Falls students to receive scholarship grants

By Dr. Chitra Selvaraj

The Niagara Falls Education Foundation is honoring three alumni of the Niagara Falls School district and awarding scholarship grants to six seniors in the district, Friday, May 11, at their annual dinner award event at Antonio's Banquet Center on Niagara Falls Boulevard.

Board president Vincent "Jimmy" Cancemi announced the foundation will present their Distinguished Alumni Award to Rose (Mento) Brown, a 1940 Niagara Falls High graduate; Anthony Quaranto Sr., a 1947 Trott Vocational graduate; and Christopher Stoianoff, a 1992 LaSalle High graduate.

After graduating from SUNY Brockport, Mrs. Brown's notable 27-year teaching career began in 1944 at the 17th Street School kindergarten. She also taught at 79th Street School and 39th Street School, while raising a family of seven children who all graduated from the Niagara Falls School District.

Jill Spira, executive director of the Education Foundation, told the Reporter that Mrs. Brown has maintained contact with many of her old students, and more than a few said they vividly remember the

kindly and inspiring teacher who had such a positive influence in their lives.

Mr. Cancemi noted that "a lot of her old students, when they heard about the award, bought tickets and plan on attending."

Mrs. Brown is married to Harold Brown, founder of Brown & Co., CPAs. She has 15 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Mr. Quaranto is perhaps best known for a combined 25 years as a Niagara County legislator and Niagara Falls councilman, as well as for his skill as a bowler, including a perfect 300 game. He took up bowling at age 15, and in fact met his wife, Myrabelle, in a bowling alley. They have four children and four grandchildren. Mr. Quaranto retired from the Carborundum Company after 30 years. Among his volunteer activities are the Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center Auxiliary, Meals on Wheels, the United Way, and the Whirlpool Park Little League, where he has volunteered for more than 40 years. He has been involved in the Niagara Falls Men's Bowling Association Board since 1963. He leads the Niagara Falls Sports Hall of Fame.

Mr. Stoianoff will receive the foundation's first Emerging Leader Alumni Award.

Like many young people, he moved away from

Niagara Falls after graduating college. But unlike others, he returned to take an active role in civic life here. He taught computer classes at Stella Niagara, then launched the popular StenzTV.com, focusing on happenings in Niagara Falls, as well as NiagaraHub (www.niagarahub.com), an online Niagara news source, and Iwitnessniagara.org, a local history blog.

In January 2011, Mr. Stoianoff was appointed city historian by Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster. He is president of the Friends of Local History, neighborhood coordinator of the Downtown Niagara Falls Business Association, and board member of the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

In addition to honoring alumni, the foundation will present six students scholarship grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,500.

These are:

Michaela Badolato, who maintained a 96 GPA, and is a member of the National Honor Society. While working throughout high school and volunteering with Equistar and Mount St. Mary's Hospital, she played softball, basketball and volleyball. She plans to study chemistry at Niagara University.

Continued on page 15

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CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS NEW YORK NOTICE OF ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PUBLIC HEARING ON BUDGET VOTE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Public Hearing for the voters of the School District of the City of Niagara Falls, New York, 2012-13 budget and expenditure of funds vote will be held on Thursday, May 3, 2012, at 7:30 p.m., at Niagara Falls High School (Amphitheatre, 3rd Floor), located at 4455 Porter Road, Niagara Falls, New York.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the Board of Education of this District will have prepared and completed a detailed statement in writing of the amount of money which will be required for the ensuing fiscal year, 2012-13, for school purposes, specifying the several purposes and amount of each, together with the text of any resolution which will be presented to the voters. The amount of each purchase estimated necessary for payments to Boards of Cooperative Education Services shall be set forth in full with no deduction of estimated state aid. Said statement will be available, upon request, to taxpayers within this District during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. from April 26th through May 15th with the exception of Saturdays, Sundays or holidays at each schoolhouse in the District.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE That a copy of such statement maybe obtained from the District Clerk's Office each day other than Saturday, Sunday or holidays during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the period of April 26th through May 15th.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the annual school election/budget vote of the City School District of the City of Niagara Falls, New York, shall be held on May 15, 2012, at 12:00 o'clock noon (E.D.S.T.) to 9:00 p.m. for the following purposes:

1. To elect one member to the Board of Education, who will serve a full five-year term of office commencing July 1, 2012. Petitions nominating candidates for the office of member of the board of education must be filed in the office of the clerk of the district between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., not later than April 25, 2012. The petition must be signed by at least 100 qualified voters.
2. To adopt the annual budget of the school district for the fiscal year 2012/13 and to authorize the requisite portion thereof to be raised by taxation on the taxable property of the District.

The voting at such annual school district election/budget vote shall be by ballot on voting machines as provided by the Education Law, at such election the polls will remain open from 12:00 o'clock noon until 9:00 o'clock P.M. and for such longer period of time as may be necessary to enable voters then present to cast their ballots.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the voting at such election will be held in the school election districts designated and established by resolution of the Board of Education adopted March 29, 2012. Polling places for the election/budget vote to be held on May 15, 2012, are listed at the end of this notice.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that at the Annual School District Election/Budget Vote to be held as specified above, the Budget for the School Year 2012/13 proposition will be presented as follows, and
PROPOSITION NO. 1

Shall the following resolution be adopted to-wit:

Shall the Board of Education of the City School District of the City of Niagara Falls be authorized to expend the sums set forth in the proposed 2012-2013 budget in the total amount of \$122,438,834 and to levy the necessary tax; therefore be it

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that applications for absentee ballots may be applied for at the office of the clerk of the district at 630 66th Street, Niagara Falls, NY. A list of all persons to whom absentee ballots have been issued will be available in the said office of the clerk on each of the five (5) business days prior to the day of the election and that such list will also be posted at the polling places on the day of the election.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the board of registration shall meet to prepare the register of the school district on April 23, 2012 between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. at Niagara Falls High School, located at 4455 Porter Road, Niagara Falls, New York.

Any qualified person may have his/her name placed upon such register who shall present themselves personally for registration. The register prepared will be filed in the office of the clerk of the district and will be open for inspection by any qualified voter of the district during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday, beginning Tuesday, April 24, 2012 until the day of election, May 15, 2012.

SCHEDULE A: 2012 POLLING PLACES CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y.

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT	ELECTION DISTRICT		
3rd	*1 st	Board of Education Admin. Bldg.	630 – 66 th Street
	*2 nd	St. John DeLaSalle	8469 Buffalo Avenue
	*3 rd	St. John DeLaSalle	8469 Buffalo Avenue
	*4 th	Grace Lutheran Church	736 Cayuga Dr.
	*5 th	LaSalle Senior Citizens Ctr.	9501 Colvin Blvd.
	*6 th	Geraldine J. Mann School	1330 – 95 th Street
	*7 th	Geraldine J. Mann School	1330 – 95 th Street
	*8 th	Grace Lutheran Church	736 Cayuga Drive
	*9 th	79 th Street School	551 – 79 th Street
	*10 th	79 th Street School	551 – 79 th Street
	*11 th	Board of Education Admin. Bldg.	630 – 66 th Street
	*12 th	Community Education Center	6040 Lindbergh Avenue

4 th	*1 st	St. John AME Church	917 Garden Avenue
	*2 nd	V.F.W. Post 917	2435 Seneca Avenue
	*3 rd	Wrobel Towers	800 Niagara Avenue
	*4 th	V.F.W. Post 917	2435 Seneca Avenue
	*5 th	Niagara Falls Public Library	1425 Main Street
	*6 th	Niagara Falls Public Library	1425 Main Street
	*7 th	Niagara Arts & Cultural Ctr.	1201 Pine Avenue
	*8 th	Niagara Arts & Cultural Ctr.	1201 Pine Avenue

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT	ELECTION DISTRICT		
5 th	*1 st	Maple Avenue School	925 Maple Avenue
	*2 nd	Maple Avenue School	925 Maple Avenue
	*3 rd	V.F.W. Post 54	2772 Main Street
	*4 th	Spallino Towers	720 Tenth Street
	*5 th	John Duke Senior Citizens Ctr.	1201 Hyde Park Blvd.
	*6 th	John Duke Senior Citizens Ctr.	1201 Hyde Park Blvd.

6 th	*1 st	Hyde Park School	1620 Hyde Park
	*2 nd	Gaskill Prep School	910 Hyde Park Blvd.
	*3 rd	Cristoforo Columbo Society	2223 Pine Avenue
	*4 th	Cristoforo Columbo Society	2223 Pine Avenue
	*5 th	City Hall	745 Main Street
	*6 th	Niagara Street School	2513 Niagara Street
	*7 th	Royal Avenue Fire Hall	Royal Ave. @ Hyde Park Blvd.
	*8 th	Cristoforo Columbo Society	2223 Pine Avenue
	*9 th	Packard Court Center	4300 Pine Avenue
	*10 th	LaSalle Prep School	7436 Buffalo Avenue

*ACCESS FOR HANDICAPPED

Ace Movers of Niagara Falls not contacted by President Obama to move out of White House next year

An advertisement appeared in the *Niagara Falls Reporter's* April 24 edition that featured a photograph of President Barack Obama on the telephone, with the caption "Ace Moving Company ... I'd like to reserve 12 trucks for January 2013."

As soon as the ad appeared, a reader wanted to know if the Ace Moving Company mentioned in the ad was the locally owned Ace Movers at 2021 Main St. in Niagara Falls.

That company, founded by the late William Gratto, has been in operation since 1934. His son, Mr. Thomas Gratto is the current owner. Mr. Gratto confirmed that, as of press time, his company has not been contacted by President Obama to help him move out of the White House, nor, in fact, has

anyone contacted him to help move anyone located at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington D.C.

Upon investigation, it was discovered there is an Ace Moving and Storage in Washington, D.C., founded in 1990 by Oscar and Andy Bhatt. They also, the *Reporter* confirmed, have not been contacted by the president.

A call to President Obama at his home phone number, 202-456-1111, asking whether he had plans to hire any particular moving company in January was not returned.

With a record of 78 years of successfully moving people, should the president need an expert moving company this January, it would not be surprising, and he could not do better than if he were to choose Ace Movers of Niagara Falls.

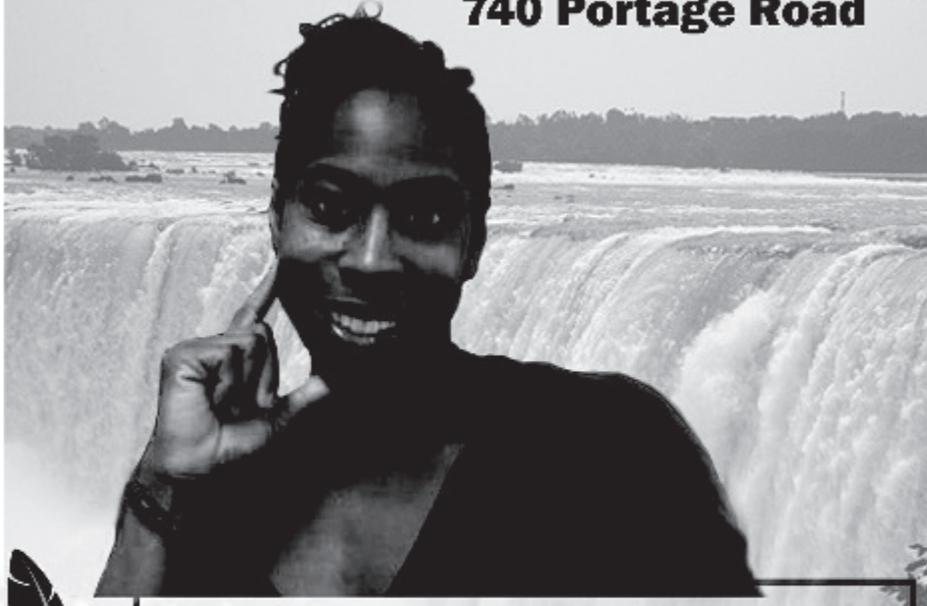


This ad does not refer to locally owned and operated Ace Movers of Niagara Falls.



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Grand Opening Sale through 5/15 !!!

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Foundation set up to encourage NF students

Continued from page 12

Henry T. Beaman Jr., an honor student with perfect attendance in middle school, He was on the wrestling team, serving as captain, while maintaining a 93 GPA. A Valedictory Honors Graduate, he participated in the Leadership for the Youth of Niagara County program. Henry plans to study biochemistry at Ithaca College.

Alexander Carruthers, while achieving a GPA of 93, volunteered at the senior center, his parish, and the Nicaragua Mission. He has had a perfect attendance record since 2008. He achieved the Gloria Carey Excellence in Reading Award, and was named to the Gaskill Prep School Wall of Fame. Alexander plans to attend Niagara University for economics and pre-law.

Lauren Evans achieved a 98 average while being a member of the swimming and diving team, serving as captain, and was named New York State Qualifier in 2008 and Niagara Gazette Swimmer of the Year. A member of the National Honor Society, Lauren volunteered with Heart and Soul Soup Kitchen and local mayoral campaigns. She plans

to attend Canisius College to study biochemistry.

Kelsi Leo, a member of the National Honor Society, achieved a 94 average, led the softball and tennis teams as captain, served as president of the Wolverine Club, was awarded PAL Female Athlete of the Year, and was named to the first team All NFL and All Area in Softball. Kelsi plans to attend SUNY College at Buffalo to major in adolescent math education.

Anmol Bambrah, with a 97 average, is being awarded the Phyllis E. Jahn Scholarship for volunteer involvement and academic achievement. She was a volunteer at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, the Police Youth Academy, and the War of 1812 historical project, and organized a 9/11 10th anniversary tribute. Anmol participated in the Leadership for the Youth of Niagara County program (LYNC), and was honored by the National Federation for Just Communities Youth Award and Niagara County's Do the Right Thing. She was accepted into SUNY at Buffalo's Honors College Class of 2016. She plans to major in chemistry.

The public is encouraged to attend the dinner, which functions

also in part as a fundraising event for next year's scholarship grants.

"Your support shows a commitment to encouraging youth in the community and is an excellent opportunity to meet your neighbors who are interested in making Niagara Falls a place where gifted youth are encouraged to excel in school, in their careers and in life," said Mr. Cancemi.

Reservations are \$50 per person, \$25 for students. Contact the foundation's Executive Director Jill Spira at 341-6247, or e-mail niagarafallseducation@gmail.com.

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 Served 11:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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- Prime Rib\$24.95
- Prime Rib with Lobster Dainties..... \$29.95

These entrees include:

- Antipasto
- Mixed Vegetables
- Baked Potato
- Mixed Green Salad
- Apple or Cherry Pie



Mother's Day Brunch Served 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
 Scrambled eggs, bacon, carved baked ham, carved roast beef, homemade Italian sausage, Broccoli Parmegiana, Potatoes & Peppers, Tortellini Marinara, Chicken dinosaurs, stuffed clams, Belgian Waffles Ambrosia salad, assorted pudding, Italian pastries, fruit drink, a variety of fresh juices, coffee, decaf and tea.

Mother's Day Smorgasbord Served 2:30 - 7:00 p.m.
 Carved roasted turkey breast, carved top round of beef, carved baked ham, Penne macaroni with spaghetti sauce, Tortellino ala vodka sauce, chicken cordon bleu bites, perch tenders, sausage with peppers and onions, meatballs in sauce, stuffed clams ala como, broccoli parmegiana, chicken dinosaurs, red roasted potatoes, potato salad, salad italiano, feta pasta salad & Italian pastry table.

Adults \$17.95 | Children (5-10) \$9.95 | Under 5 FREE

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"WOMEN MONEY AND FRIENDS COME AND GO BUT DOGS ARE FOREVER."

DeSantis case reveals little downside to not filing permits

Continued from page 3

Did you know Mr. DeSantis was doing this job without permits?

"Yes. We all knew. I remember thinking, 'What an enormous set of balls he has. He's a city planner and he's not getting a permit,'" Ms. Daggett said.

Workers involved in the project said the same thing.

When asked about comments made by Ms. Westcott, Ms. Daggett and others, that it was clearly understood that no permits were to be taken, because the assessor might find out, Mr. DeSantis said, "That's a full-out lie. ... I did instruct them to park on the side street, because that's the easiest way to get into the house, and not for any other reason."

Did you really believe permits were filed back in 2011?

"As I said, it was my understanding that they were taking care of everything. ... If somebody is telling you different, then they are making things up," said Mr. DeSantis.

According to public records, 8502 Pershing Ave. has an assessed value of \$81,500, based on a 93 percent assessment. It has three bedrooms, one-and-

a-half baths, 1,532 square feet, and was built in 1936. It was purchased by Mr. DeSantis and his wife, Kathy, on Feb. 1, 1988 for \$61,500.

The Reporter again contacted Mr. Virtuoso.

Suppose it was Mayor Paul Dyster that had done work without a permit, would you still look at enforcement?

"I would enforce it, even if it was my own mother," Mr. Virtuoso said, "You have to enforce the law. Nobody is above the law. I stressed that all the time in my department: If you are going to have something done, get a permit."

Did you scold Mr. DeSantis?

"I did. I said, 'Tom, why didn't you come in and tell us what you were doing?'"

Mr. DeSantis' offices are 30 feet from the Code Enforcement offices on the third floor of City Hall. Mr. DeSantis also has a courtesy office inside the Code Enforcement offices.

Mr. Virtuoso sought to give Mr. DeSantis the benefit of the doubt.

"As soon as Tom found out about it (from the Reporter), he called and came down to the office ... and said, 'I will do whatever I have to do.'

"This is not the first time it has happened where people were confused. I make all my guys get permits. They know better than that."

Should Tom have known better?

"From what Tom is telling me, he thought it was taken care of," said Mr. Virtuoso, "I don't know. By Monday, he will come in and file permits and then we will go out and inspect and see if everything is OK. If it is not, then he will have to fix it. He has to pay double the permit fee now, and the assessor is going to go out, once the permit is filed, and reassess his house."

The New York State Public Servant law (195.00 of the penal law) states that a public servant is guilty of official misconduct when "He commits an act related to his office. ... He knowingly refrains from performing a duty which is imposed upon him by law or is clearly inherent in the nature of his office ... with an intent to obtain a benefit."

It is a class A misdemeanor and carries a penalty of up to one year in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

If Mr. DeSantis were a foe of Mayor Dyster, one would certainly expect he would leave City Hall in

handcuffs, or that Mayor Dyster would use this breach as an excuse to fire him.

Mr. DeSantis is a close friend of the mayor and one of his top advisers.

As it stands, he will be allowed to pay a double permit fee, costing him a few hundred dollars. In fact, the small penalty makes it an inducement for others not to get permits.

After all, if you do renovations, and nobody finds out, you get a win-win: You beat the assessor and save permit fees. In fact, if you are not found out, the gain is enormous, especially because reassessment is triggered by filing for a permit.

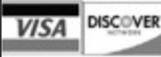
And if Code Enforcement happens to find out, it is no big deal. You pay a double permit fee, a few hundred dollars more. You're not really worse off than had you filed the permit.

The value of winning is so great when compared to the small penalty of doubling the permit fees that common sense would incline many to take the gamble. Indeed, had Mr. DeSantis' home improvements not been uncovered by the Reporter, he would have likely saved thousands in taxes over the course of years.

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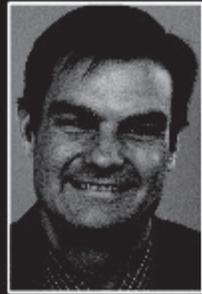
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Restaino wants to curb un-funded State mandates

“With the problems facing New York today, the needs of Western New York continue to slip down the ladder of priorities,” Mr. Restaino said. “And if anybody knows me at all, they know I have the ability and tenacity to speak up, to be heard and to argue for the welfare of our community.” Asked what he thinks is the most critical cash-flow challenge facing the area, Mr. Restaino said, “The Seneca Nation owes the city of Niagara Falls the equivalent of nearly 70 percent of the city of Niagara Falls’ entire annual budget. The time to renegotiate the casino compact is rapidly approaching. Clearly, Gov. Cuomo remains steadfast in his commitment to state-run gaming. And it may happen. At the same time, the Senecas are digging in their heels in regard to their casino exclusivity, seeking to create areas with guaranteed ‘non-compete’ clauses. “Can you see it coming? State-rungaming gets passed. The renewed compact retaining exclusivity eliminates the chance for such state gaming in Niagara Falls. Who is left out in the cold? Seldom has this community been painted into a tighter corner.

“A representative must have the courage to deliver this message: ‘If state-run gaming passes, fine. If non-Native American casinos are not allowed in Niagara Falls, that may be fine. But then we must demand the casino cash revenues from the Seneca Corp. be appropriated entirely and directly to the host communities.’

“This community will need effective leadership, willing to fight what promises to be a conflict of historic proportions.”

In a wide-ranging interview, Mr. Restaino displayed a command of many issues. Encouraged by the 2 percent property tax cap, he remains wary of the potential curtailing of local, essential programs that could

become the victim of “unfunded mandates we are force-fed by Albany.”

Mr. Restaino looks to the relationship between legislative leadership and the Executive Branch as a key to a better final product.

Mr. Restaino insisted, “Relationships aside, Assembly members must never forget the people who sent us to Albany in the first place.”

Repeatedly he returned to the topic of unfunded mandates — an expenditure required by the state of a locality but not funded by the state.

“Once in Albany, I will commit to an aggressive campaign for mandate reform. When mandates are under control, then and only then can Western New York develop a business climate capable of moving this area forward.”

Mr. Restaino said he predicts little improvement in the local business climate until “our needs” are presented in Albany from “a point of view of strength, not a position of chance.”

Mr. Restaino’s community involvement has seen him serve as a member of the board of directors for the Niagara Falls Boys & Girls Club, a volunteer with the March of Dimes of Western New York, American Heart

Association, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Local History of Niagara Falls Public Library, Pine Avenue Business Association, Polish Heritage Museum and the Italian Heritage Museum. He is a former member of the board of the Music School of Niagara, Health Association of Niagara County, Niagara Catholic High School, Niagara Falls Public Library, Community Missions, Inc. and De Franco Public Charity.

(E-mail Frank Parlato Jr. at info@niagarafallsreporter.com.)



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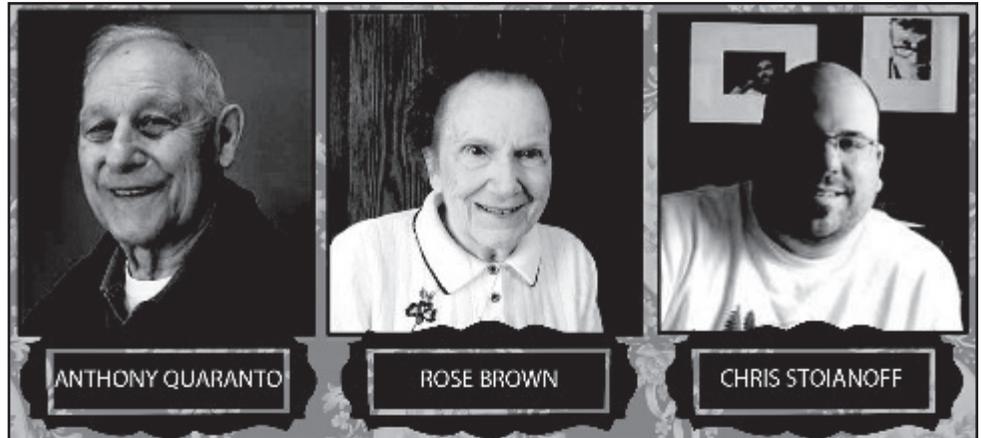
Notice of Formation of a Domestic Limited Liability Company
Name of LLC: Monaco Food and Farms LLC. Date of Filing of Articles of Organization with the New York Dept of State: Jan. 10, 2012. Office of the LLC: 4775 Upper Mountain Road, Lockport, N.Y., Niagara County. The NY Secretary of State has been designated as the agent upon whom process may be served. NYSS may mail a copy of process to the LLC at C/O United States Corporation Agents INC., 7014 13th Ave., Suite 202, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11228. Purpose of LLC: Food Service and Produce and Fruit Sales. No specific duration attached to LLC.

4/3/12 4/10/12 4/17/12 4/24/12 5/1/12 5/8/12

— LEGAL NOTICE —

ROZAN GARDEN, LLC (the "LLC") filed Articles of Organization with the NY State Secretary of State ("NYSSS") on March 23, 2012; the LLC is located in Niagara County; NYSSS is designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it can be served; a copy of any process served upon NYSSS will be mailed to the LLC at 15 Shadowdale Drive, Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada L8E5Z4; the purpose of the LLC is to engage in any lawful act or activity.

4/17/12 4/24/12 5/1/12 5/8/12 5/15/12 5/22/12



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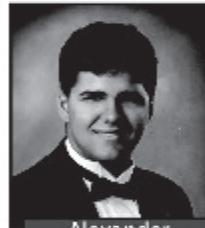
2nd Annual Scholarship & Alumni Recognition Dinner

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2012

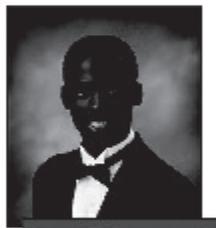
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6pm - Cash Bar Support your community
7pm - Dinner Enjoy a special evening

Questions or reservations call 716-341-6247 or email: niagarafallseducation@gmail.com



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Jeff Marohn, who resides in Bergholz with his wife, Brenda (Haseley), and is the father of Deena (Marohn) Chaffee, has been diagnosed with esophagus cancer that has metastasized to his liver and spine. Since his diagnosis, Jeff is getting chemotherapy that has left him unable to work and maintain health benefits. Jeff has been employed for more than 30 years as a Certified Forklift Mechanic and graduated from Niagara-Wheatfield High School in 1973.

Family, friends and loved ones will hold a benefit from 2-6 p.m. Saturday, May 19, 2012, at the Cambria Fire Hall, 4631 Cambria-Wilson roads, Lockport, N.Y. 14094.

We are asking for your help in making this a success, as the family is encountering mounting medical bills and living expenses.

Please help support our loved one by donating to this cause. Any donations big or small are greatly appreciated. Tickets are \$20 each and children under 10 are FREE.

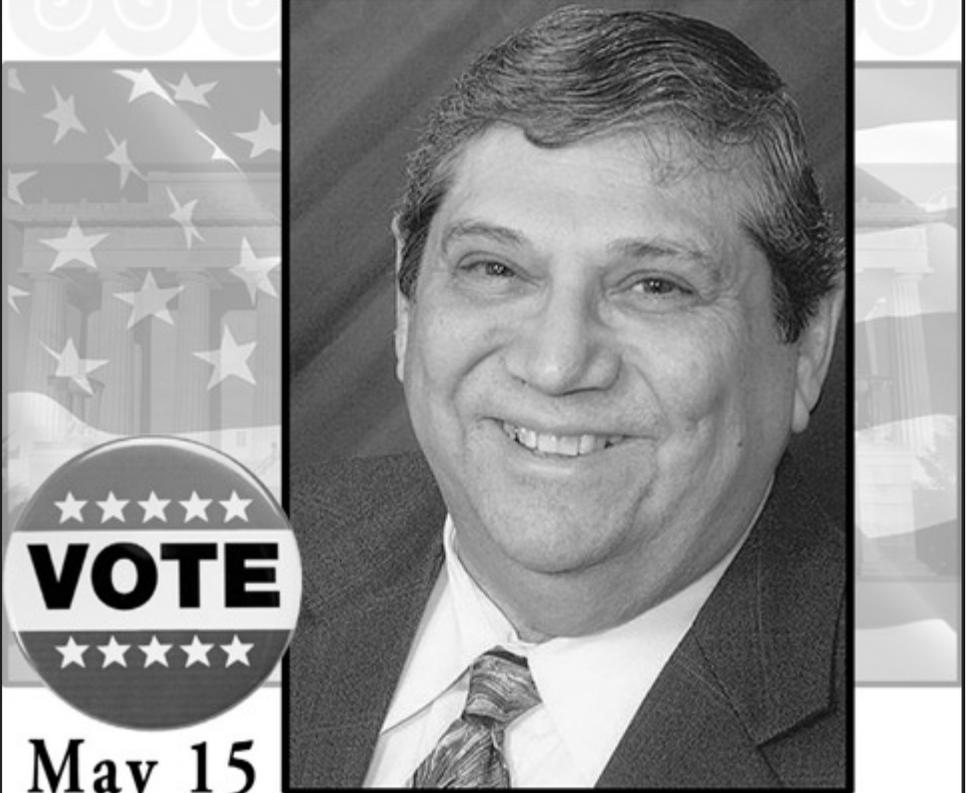
On behalf of Jeff and his entire family, thank you for your support.

2-6 p.m. Saturday, May 19, 2012

Cambria Fire Hall, 4631 Cambria-Wilson roads, Lockport, N.Y. 14094

- Basket auction
- Food provided by Macri's
- 50/50 splits
- Live music by Joe and Jim Marohn
- And much more ...
- For more information, call **716-297-1124** or **716-622-3110**
- Make checks payable to **Nothing Short of a Miracle**
- Sponsored by Thrivent.

Vincent "Jimmy" Cancemi for Niagara Falls School Board



May 15

- 25 years special education teacher NF schools (ret.)
- 30 years business owner - Cancemi furniture
- Life long resident of Niagara Falls
- President of NF Education Foundation

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