

# CITY & REGION

SECTION | B

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THE BUFFALO NEWS

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## Hindu community center looks to future after fire

By LEAH CLARK  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

When Meena Vivek of Amherst received a call just before 11 p.m. Thursday from a fire alarm company, she did not think much of it. The president of the Hindu Cultural Society of Western New York on North French Road in Amherst had gotten these kinds of calls before.

"I thought maybe it was a false alarm," she said. That is until 15 minutes later when she arrived at the society's building to see police officers creating a perimeter around the scene and firefighters breaking windows to ventilate the smoking structure.

A smoke detector on the second floor of the two-story building activated and alerted fire control at 10:52

p.m. Upon arrival, a Getzville fire department officer saw smoke coming from the second floor and called additional units to the scene.

As Vivek watched crews extinguish the fire and ventilate the building, she said she was devastated.

"It was hard. I saw the damage. It was intense," Vivek said.

Since December 1995, the society has opened its doors to the Getzville community as a place of worship and a gathering space. With more than 300 members, the building has been a staple in the community for events such as lunches, concerts, cultural programs and interfaith meetings.

"It's been a beautiful temple all these years. Everyone loves coming here. It keeps all the community to-

See Fire on Page B2

## Celebration next weekend called city's 'most important Juneteenth'

By MAKI BECKER  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

For the first time since the pandemic began in 2020, Buffalo's annual Juneteenth Festival will be held in person.

That alone would be cause for extra celebration for Buffalo's Black community as it commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people following the Civil War.

But this year's festival is taking on extra meaning this year, politicians and organizers said Friday, as the city continues to mourn and heal from a terror attack that claimed the lives of 10 Black people May 14 at the Tops Markets on Jefferson Avenue.

"This was not just an attack on Black Buffalo. This was an at-



Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News

**"This Juneteenth Festival takes on more significance than it ever has before. It takes on the significance of honoring those whose lives were snatched from them."**

—Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown

tack on Black America." Mayor Byron Brown said as he addressed a crowd of about 100 who gathered in Niagara Square to raise the red, black and green Black liberation flag. "And so this Juneteenth Festival takes on more significance than it ever has before. It takes on the significance of honoring those whose lives were snatched from them, of remembering the families who still grieve their beloved loved ones, remembering the survivors — those who were shot and survived. Those who were in the store and survived. Those that were in the neighborhood and survived."

The festival, now in its 47th year, is one of the largest celebrations of

See Juneteenth on Page B2

## Off Main Street /

The lighter side of the news

### This meal was REALLY 'to go'

Ryan Yeates had a Chipotle craving Tuesday, so he ordered lunch for himself and two co-workers at Towne Mazda and, shortly before 1 p.m., headed over to the nearby Chipotle Mexican Grill on Milestrip Road in Hamburg.

When he got there, it wasn't ready. At first, he told us, he thought he was early. When an employee couldn't find the order, Yeates looked it up on his phone.

That's when he realized he'd ordered from a different Chipotle — on Broadway in Manhattan, about 370 miles away.

How did that happen? Yeates had visited New York City the previous weekend, had ordered food from that Chipotle, and never changed the location when he entered Tuesday's order online. (Yes, his first mistake was getting Chipotle in one of the world's great restaurant cities.)

Yeates feared he would owe another \$40 for the replacement order, but the employees generously gave it to him for free.

"When I left I was like, well, that Chipotle's still going to be at the other store just sitting on the shelf," he said. "So I might as well throw it out there and see if somebody wants to go grab it."

Yeates, who has a large Twitter following, sent a tweet highlighting the free food and his embarrassing mistake.

An acquaintance, Jared Weiss, saw it while riding the subway from Brooklyn into Manhattan. Within 15 minutes, he was there.

Weiss' retweet — "A lot of people aren't ready when opportunity strikes. A lot of people aren't me," featuring a photo of the bagged food — received 270,000 likes.

"Yeah, I had no idea it would get this big. That has been very funny for me," Weiss told us.

Yeates' tweet earned 129,000 likes itself, as well as a response from Chipotle. They sent him a message Wednesday with codes for four free meals.

He's already used one. And he got the location right.

—Stephen T. Watson

### Woke up this mornin' ...

This merger announcement has been brought to you by ... HBO.

When the Empire State Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors announced its merger with the New York Construction Alliance, it was billed as a "major move that will resonate throughout New York State's entire construction industry," by uniting the state's two dominant non-union construction trade groups.

But that wasn't the most interesting part of the announcement. The statement from the chapter's board chairman was.

"At ABC, jobsite safety has always been at the center of what we do," said ABC Empire State Chapter Board Chairman Tony Soprano.

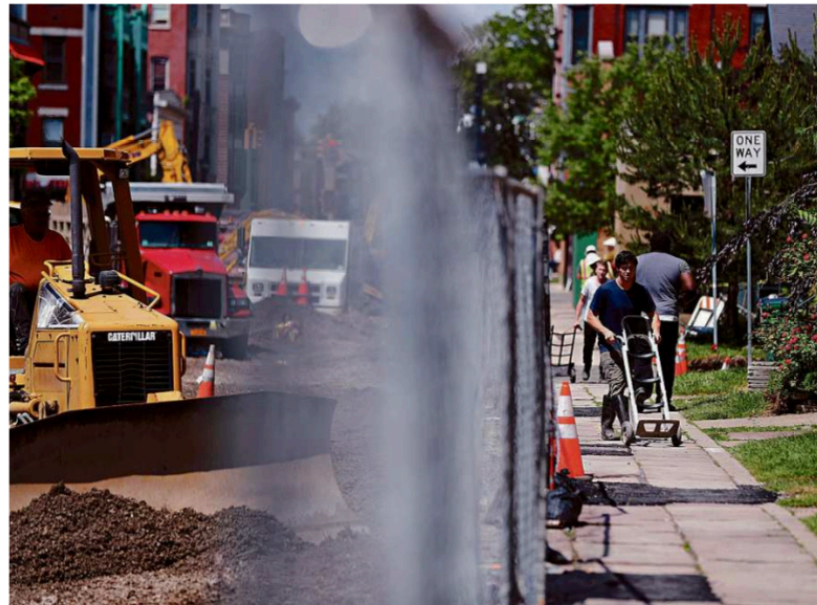
Tony Soprano? Wait. What?

"Yes, Tony Soprano is a real person," confirmed Santino R. Thomas, spokesman for the combined Empire State Chapter, now bolstered with more members and additional leadership.

Soprano — formally Anthony — is

See Main on Page B2

## Allentown Art Festival, Allen West are back after two years lost to Covid



Photos by Minh Connors/Buffalo News

Justin LaMonto makes a delivery during construction on Allen Street between Elmwood and Delaware Avenue on Friday. City officials say pedestrians may use sidewalks on both sides of Allen Street for this weekend's art festival but that the sidewalk on the south side is wider.

### Street reconstruction spurs layout changes

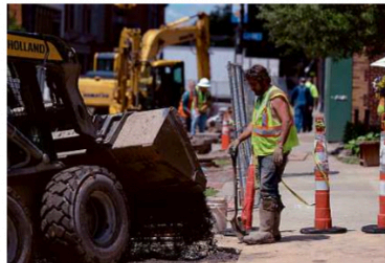
By BEN TSUJIMOTO  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

After two years of cancellations due to Covid-19, the Allentown Art Festival is set to return this weekend, and festival president Rita Harrington-Lippman is as thrilled as she is relieved.

"We're delighted to be back," she said Friday. "It's been such a dark time. We're delighted to bring people back together, bring art back to the streets of Buffalo."

The street festival will run from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, with about 300 vendors participating, the president said. Pre-pandemic, the festival ranged between 350 and 400 artists.

The layout for 2022 is slightly different due to a multi-phase overhaul of Allen Street; a stretch of Allen between Delaware and Elmwood has been torn up for construction and blocked off to traffic



A three-year street reconstruction project raised concerns about staging the Allentown Art Festival, but "it really won't have a big effect," festival president Rita Harrington-Lippman says.

for months. Festival exhibitors will set up on Delaware Avenue between West Tupper and North streets; a small stretch of newly paved Virginia Street between Delaware Avenue

and Franklin Street; Franklin Street between Allen and Virginia streets; and Allen Street between Franklin Street and Delaware Avenue.

The section of Allen Street between Delaware and Elmwood typ-

ically represents the western leg of the Allentown Art Festival, connecting it to the smaller and unaffiliated Allen West Art Festival, which features only Western New York artists on Allen between Elmwood and Wadsworth.

Mike Finn and Nolan Skipper from Buffalo's Department of Public Works, Parks and Streets said Friday that pedestrians may use sidewalks on both sides of Allen in the construction zone, but the sidewalk passageway on the south side is wider and preferred. Businesses in the thick of the construction zone, including bar-restaurants Allen Burger Venture, Gabriel's Gate and Frizzy's, are listed at each end of the blocked-off area and will be open for the festival.

Harrington-Lippman said there was initial concern during festival planning that the three-year construction project would create more hurdles for the festival, but that has not transpired. "It really won't have a big effect," she said.

See Allentown on Page B2



## CITY &amp; REGION

# National media invited to visit city 'while we celebrate'

**JUNETEENTH • from B1**

Juneteenth in the country, organizers said.

For the last two years, it was held virtually because of concerns over the spread of Covid-19. And then on May 11, the brick facade of the Juneteenth headquarters building crumbled.

This year's festival will take place from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. June 18 and 19 at Martin Luther King Jr. Park.

Brown promised a strong police presence at the park to allay concerns about safety.

"We will ensure that every resident of the City of Buffalo, New York and across the nation and internationally that comes to Juneteenth in Buffalo has a safe time, has a happy time, a time of reflection and a time to respect and honor the rich traditions and the rich Black history that we have here in the City of Buffalo," Brown said.

Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes invited the national media who descended on Buffalo in the days after the May 14 massacre to return here for the occasion.



Dancers march in the Juneteenth parade at Martin Luther King Jr. Park in Buffalo in June 2017. City Mayor Byron Brown has promised a strong police presence at this year's festival to allay concerns about safety.

"You couldn't even see the parking lot (at Top) there was so much media," she said. "You came when we were traumatized. Come while we celebrate."

Common Council President Daris Fridgen said he hoped that this Juneteenth in Buffalo will be "the most important Juneteenth ever to be held" — perhaps even the biggest Juneteenth celebration in the country.

He said some may question why Fridgen would want to go ahead with a large event after so much pain and trauma.

"Here's my question: Why not? Why would we allow a white supremacist who is sitting in jail to stop us from remembering that he was not the first one to massacre, he was not the first one to take the lives of Black people, Africans. He was not the first one. But we damn sure want to make sure that he is the last one," Fridgen said of the accused killer.

Fridgen had a suggestion on what else should happen next weekend.

"I hope wherever (the killer) is housed, that they put a TV when the Juneteenth parade is going on and let that person know you didn't stop anything," he said as the crowd clapped and cheered.

## Off Main Street /

*The lighter side of the news*

**MAIN • from B1**

vice president of pre-construction services for DiMarco Constructors in Rochester, and is responsible for managing the design phase of construction projects and overseeing a team of estimators. A graduate of Monroe Community College, he's been with DiMarco for 25 years.

"Tony's efforts ensure project objectives are met with respect to contracting, scheduling, budgeting, estimating and bidding," according to his bio on the company's website. "He manages and mitigates potential risk factors, and his work culminates with the seamless transition of the job to the project operations team."

And we're positive this is the first time anyone has said anything about the name he shares with a famous fictional organized crime figure.

— Jonathan D. Epstein

### Just like it sounds

Look. We get it. We live in Western New York. We know the words we say all the time that outsiders have a hard time with, such as Scajaquada, Chiavetta's and No Goal. But can professional broadcasters try just a little harder?

When the Canisius College softball team was playing in the NCAA tournament last month, the out-of-town announcers often came no where near the correct pronunciation of the Main Street institution. Maybe it's not so easy to get it right the first time you see it, but for the love of all things Jesuit, is it to much to suggest asking someone wearing blue and gold "How do you pronounce that?"

That's why we were delighted to see that Matthew Kochan, library access services coordinator at Canisius, shared a screenshot on Twitter of a fan holding a sign during the Griffs' game against Wisconsin that said "It's Can Kneeh Shh's."

Kochan shared it with the words: "Not all heroes wear capes."

That's true. Some work in libraries.



Geoff Mclear, a property manager for fire cleanup and restoration company Servpro, on Friday inspects the damage from a Thursday night fire at the Hindu Cultural Society of Western New York on North French Road in Amherst. Arson has been ruled out as a cause of the fire.

## Fire causes \$750,000 in damages to building

**FIRE • from B1**

gether," Vivek said. "I know it's a small hall, but we do a lot of amazing things here."

The fire caused \$750,000 in damages, officials estimated.

Although the fire was contained to the worship area on the second floor, heavy smoke and water caused damage in other parts of the building. While the investigation is ongoing,

officials have ruled out arson as the cause of the fire, Vivek said she fears the fire may have started in an altar created in honor of the society's 26th anniversary, but she did not want to speculate beyond that.

She, along with Hindu Cultural Society General Secretary Neelam Chatrath, also say many of the group's members are sharing in the feelings of devastation.

"Everyone is so concerned and calling each other wondering what

happened," Chatrath said.

Some members have come by to see the damage for themselves, but Vivek asks that they stay away for their safety and to allow the fire department to complete its investigation.

"The ceiling is kind of falling, and we don't want anyone to be injured," Vivek said. "Also, there is a lot of smoke. We don't want people to have smoke inhalation issues."

As the society looks to the future, there are no set plans for when re-

pairs will begin, when officials hope to reopen to the public, or where services will be held. The organization's executive committee plans to meet soon to discuss a course of action.

Until then, Vivek asks and thanks the community for their prayers and support toward the Hindu Cultural Society.

"We're totally overwhelmed at this point. ... Hopefully, we can rebuild everything, and it will be up-and-running soon," Vivek said.

## 30 newcomers to replace retired artists at festival

**ALLENTOWN • from B1**

The president did mention that a fan-favorite, veteran exhibitor — sculptor Richard Kolb from Louisville, Ky. — would have to relocate his booth due to construction. He will now be stationed near the Allen and Franklin intersection.

"One of the joys is to be able to come and see an artist they've seen for many years," Harrington-Lippman said. "Many become friends when they see them year after year."

Harrington-Lippman said a new wave of exhibitors will take part this year, not surprising given the three years between festivals. The president said that while there's still a blend of ages, roughly 30 new artists — many of them younger — have been selected to take part in the festival, replacing a slew of now-retired artists.

The participants, organized by type of art at allentownartfestival.com, are mostly from the U.S. and Canada, with more than half from New York State. As usual, the festival is adjudi-



Mark Mabile/News file photo

People walk up Delaware Avenue during the 2019 Allentown Art Festival, the last to be held before the pandemic put a halt to most cultural activities in the area.

icated, with 12 awards determined by a panel of judges. Harrington-Lippman believes this year marks the first time an artist from South Africa has taken part, with painter Freddy Tutu Ncube joining the fray.

In evaluating applicants' artwork, Harrington-Lippman was impressed by the quality of submissions across several mediums following the pandemic hiatus. In other words, time away from the festival path

hasn't led to artistic stagnancy. "There's an expression of what's been going on in the past two years," she said, "a tremendous amount of creativity in people."

Food and drink vendors

## Lottery Picks /

Winning numbers for Friday

**N.Y. Evening Number:** 504

**N.Y. Midday Number:** 036

**Win Four Evening:** 8468

**Win Four Midday:** 0726

**Cash4Life:** 7 8 22 33 38

**CashBall:** 2

**Take Five:** 6 13 18 22 25

**Pick 10:**

5 7 11 18 19 20 23 37 42 51

58 61 63 66 67 68 70 74 75 79

**Mega Millions:** 3 12 14 18 32

**Mega Ball:** 4

**Megaplier:** X5

**Pick 3 Evening:** 478

**Pick 3 Day:** 044

**Pick 4 Evening:** 4049

**Pick 4 Midday:** 6867

**Late numbers for Thursday**

**Take Five:** 2 19 23 30 31

These numbers are unofficial.

For official New York Lottery results go to [buffalo.com/lottery](http://buffalo.com/lottery) or your lottery retailer.