

SABRES VISIT

FANS FLOCK TO OPEN PRACTICE AT DWYER ARENA **SPORTS/1B**



'FUTURAMA' FORWARD

FROM TV TO NEW DVDS **INSIDE NIGHT AND DAY**



NIAGARA SINCE 1854 GAZETTE

THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2008

NIAGARA-GAZETTE.COM

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK • 50 CENTS



SEEING CLEARLY

Town of Niagara woman doesn't let bad vision affect golf game. **SPORTS, 1B**

3 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TODAY

1 USA Niagara is set to explain plans for the West Pedestrian Mall along Old Falls Street — an \$8 million project — at a meeting today at the Conference Center Niagara Falls. **LOCAL, 3A**

2 The Host Communities Standing Committee OK'd funding for the Freedom Crossing Monument in the Village of Lewiston and two projects near LaSalle. Lewiston-Porter School District must wait longer for approval of power authority funds toward its \$28.8 million capital project. **LOCAL, 5A**

3 The newly-appointed Niagara-Wheatfield superintendent Carl Militello encountered a widely-publicized outcry about budget issues in the midst of exiting his current job. Board members defended their decision to hire him. **LOCAL, 3A**

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

Do you have a problem in your neighborhood that needs to be addressed?
 ■ Contact Gazette Managing Editor Dick Lucinski at 282-2311, Ext. 2241, e-mail him at lucinskid@gnewspring.com
 ■ Or write to: Niagara Gazette, 310 Niagara St., Niagara Falls, NY 14302. Attn: What's Your Problem?

WHERE TO TURN

WEATHER
Please see page 2A

Classified.....	4-9B
Comics.....	10B
Local/Region.....	3A
Lottery.....	3A
Obituaries.....	4A
Opinion.....	6A
Sports.....	1-3B
Television.....	11B

Page designer: Jocelyn Delmar
 © 2008 Community First Holdings, Inc.

Rooting for LOCAL GARDENS



PHOTOS BY DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ORGANIZERS: Artie Vanderpool, right, talks about the upcoming Orchard Parkway Garden Walk with Allison Pasquantino and Nels and Pat Frank in front of Vanderpool's home on Orchard Parkway. Top, the Orchard Parkway Garden Walk will feature flowers such as these petunias and impatiens from the home of Tara King.

Organizers of community event hope to see it grow

BY DAN MINER
minerd@gnewspring.com

The idea began when a couple Falls residents went to an event in Buffalo.

It solidified as they hung out one evening on the front porch at one of their homes, talking about what they could do for their neighborhood.

And now the organizers of the Orchard Parkway Garden Walk are hoping their event takes off in Niagara Falls, moving to neighboring streets along Main Street such as Pierce and Chilton avenues, and reminding people that nice neighborhoods downtown do exist.

"I think that some people tend to have a negative view of downtown Niagara Falls," said Allison Pasquantino, who lives on Orchard Parkway and helped organize the event. "We thought it would surprise them to know there's a whole community of people here who do care how they live. It'll be good for people to come and see."

The event, which will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. July 12, started with Pasquantino, Artie Vander-

IF YOU GO

- **WHAT:** Orchard Parkway Garden Walk
- **WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on July 12
- **WHERE:** Along Orchard Parkway off Main Street
- **MORE INFO:** Visit Harris and Lever Florist and Gifts on Main Street

pool and Scott Akdogan — all Orchard Parkway residents. But after their initial attempts to garner interest fell flat, responses to flyers they had posted started pouring in.

As it stands, every single owner-occupied house on the street has cultivated some kind of garden in their front or backyard available for anyone who takes the self-guided tour, which begins at Harris and Lever Florist on Main Street. In all, there will be 30 gardens.

"All the neighbors have come out and done wonders in their yard," Vanderpool said. "It's all been on everyone's own money and own effort and own time."

Organizing the event itself has been a bonding experience for the people living on Orchard Parkway. They've used their own money to plant flowers around lampposts in the median of the road and involved their friends and family.

"I found it interesting that some of the people that lived on one end of the street didn't know the people on the other end," Vanderpool said. "This has not only done wonders for the beauty of the street but it's helped to create and in some cases even reestablish friendships between neighbors."

What will make the event a success?

"We're looking forward to the day of the event," Vanderpool said. "But I think we've accomplished what we set out to do and that's to bring people's attention to downtown in a positive way."

Pasquantino's task has been doubly hard because much of her garden was destroyed in wind storms over the winter which blew down fences she had. But she's managed to replant her roses, get a small pond in working order and plant a

SEE **GARDEN** ON PAGE 5A

Balloon plans lose air

DOWNTOWN: Concern over amount of insurance may void new deal.

BY RICK FORGIONE
forgioner@gnewspring.com

The latest attempt to bring a tethered balloon ride back to Niagara Falls has been grounded before getting in the air.

Adrian Devine, co-operator of the High Life Ballooning Company, has been in talks with city officials and the Cordish Co. to operate a hot-air balloon at the site of the former Flight of Angels Balloon Ride at 310 Rainbow Blvd.

While not as large as the one operated by the Great American Balloon Co., Devine said his balloon could've been in place by this weekend if not for a "last-minute hiccup" Wednesday in finalizing the lease with Cordish, the property's owners.

"I'm literally battling right now to try to save the venture," Devine told the Niagara Gazette. "We would like to be in Niagara Falls. It's in Mr. Cordish's hands now."

Devine said Cordish is requiring the balloon to have an

SEE **PLAN** ON PAGE 5A

CHARTER SCHOOL

Test scores still behind the pack

STATE TESTS: Despite lag, school principal calls tests a success, says more work is needed.

BY CAITLIN MURRAY
murrayc@gnewspring.com

Though Niagara Charter School's standardized test scores are still lagging behind schools in neighboring districts, this year's results show a significant improvement over last year. There's still work to do, but principal Karen Marchioli said the results are a success story, proving the more time the school can work with students, the better they'll perform.

SEE **TEST** ON PAGE 7A

Company to convert auto shop into tourist shop

PLANNING BOARD: Falls resident gets OK to revamp building on Niagara Falls Boulevard.

BY MARK SCHEER
scheerm@gnewspring.com

For years, Frank D'Agostino earned a living fixing and selling cars in Niagara Falls.

Now, he and his partners are embarking on a new ven-

ture: Tour bus operation.

D'Agostino and his associates received approval Wednesday from the Niagara Falls Planning Board for a special permit that will allow them to convert part of an old automobile repair shop on Niagara Falls Boulevard into a home base for their new business, Cataract Tours & Sightseeing, Inc.

D'Agostino said his property at 6929 Niagara Falls Blvd. has for years operated

as a motor vehicle repair shop, most recently as Choice One Automotive Center and previously as a Meineke Muffler site. The main building will be converted into a ticket center for the new sightseeing company.

Cataract Tours and Sightseeing, Inc. currently offers guided tours of local attractions under a license with the city. The owners will house their fleet of six tour buses at the Niagara Falls

Boulevard location. Under the conditions of the approval from the Planning Board, the company's owners are prohibited from parking their tour buses in front of the building.

D'Agostino and one of his business partners, Thomas Kerr, said they decided to go into the tourism business because they figured in a place like Niagara Falls it made more financial sense to sell tours to visitors than tune-ups to motorists.

"It really looks like things are starting to turn around in the city" D'Agostino said. "That's why we are getting into this."

In other matters, the planning board, approved plans from the Wal-Mart Realty Co. to construct a gas station in the parking lot at the existing Sam Club's store at 5535 Porter Road.

Contact reporter Mark Scheer at 282-2311, ext. 2250