

WNY United Reconnects with First Night Buffalo

WNY United was proud to partner with the Independent Health Foundation to help produce First Night Buffalo 2010. WNY United and Rich Products were the original founders of First Night more than 20 years ago, so we were elated to reconnect with the event. WNY United and the Independent Health Foundation mutually promote healthy choices, as well as share the common goal of providing families of WNY a fun, safe, drug and alcohol free celebration to ring in the New Year.

The 5,000 families that experienced the 21st Annual First Night® Buffalo at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center were treated to rides and amusements, storybook characters, roller skating, live theater, Doktor Kaboom science experiments, music, exotic reptiles and the grand finale balloon drop in a fun family atmosphere.

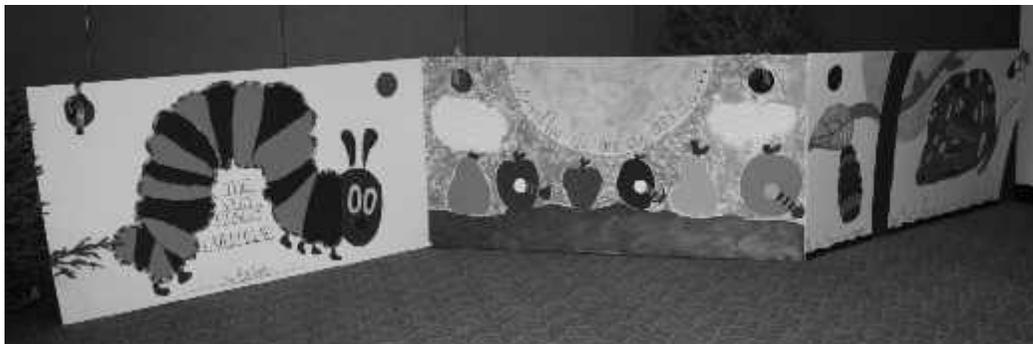
Thanks to the sponsorship of Evans Bank the WNY United "Drug-Free Tree" made its debut at the event. Hundreds of hand-made ornaments created by area students offered hope for a safe, drug and alcohol-free holiday season and served to remind observers that drugs and alcohol are not necessary for holiday fun. Howard Martin, Senior Vice President Chief Information Officer, from Evans Bank attended the lighting ceremonies on December 2nd to present WNY United with the sponsorship check for the Drug-Free Tree.

WNY United also sponsored a Poetry and Painting contest for area students in grades K – 12. We received over 100 entries for the Poetry contest and 130 entries for the Painting Contest. The goal of these contests was to reconnect the arts with First Night as well as spread the message of drug & alcohol free fun in the community. The theme of the painting contest was to paint a picture of "Drug-Free Fun" or a "Portrait of Your Drug-Free Family". The poetry contest asked the students to write a poem about their "Drug-Free Role Model" or "How You Stay Drug-Free." All submissions were displayed at First Night for everyone to read and view.

A special thanks to the following schools which participated in the Painting Contest: A.J. Schmidt Elementary School, Cheektowaga Central Middle School, Christ the King, Eden GLP, Eden Jr/Sr High School, Immaculata Academy, Lorraine Elementary School, Our Lady of Victory, School #3 in Dunkirk, St. Leo the Great, and St. Stephen School. See pages 3 and 4 for all the winning entries.

A special thanks to the following schools which participated in the Poetry Contest: Cleveland Hill High School, Cleveland Hill Middle School, Harold Brumstead Elementary, Immaculate Conception School, Iroquois Middle School, John T. Waugh Elementary School, Lorraine Elementary, Mary Queen of Angels School, Our Lady of Victory Senior School, and Pinehurst Elementary School. See page 5 for all the winning entries.

Another option for school involvement in First Night was the opportunity to create scenery for Storybook Forest through the "Backdrop Contest". The participating schools were assigned a storybook character to work from and provide the necessary supplies. As First Night attendees wandered through Storybook Forest, they visited with costumed characters and voted on their favorite backdrop. The winning school received a \$500 grant. The schools that participated in the backdrop contest were:



Winning backdrop *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by BUILD Academy

What Is WNY United?

WNY United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Inc. is a grass roots initiative designed to increase awareness, educate, and mobilize area residents to participate actively in proven strategies to prevent substance abuse. We are your prevention connection. Funded, under contract with the Erie County Department of Mental Health, by the NY State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. Additional funds provided by the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, the Rich Family Foundation, the John R. Oishei Foundation, the WNY United Foundation, the Erie County Department of Youth Services, and private contributions.



Experience. A Better Way.

Bilingual Center BPS #33 creating the *Olivia* backdrop. The Boys and Girls Club of Eden designed the backdrop for *Nate the Great*, BUILD Academy BPS #91 created *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* backdrop. Hillery Park Elementary BPS #27 designed the backdrop for *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* story, Lorraine Elementary BPS #72 created *Skippyjon Jones* backdrop, and Native American Magnet School BPS #19 created the *Wild Thing* backdrop. All backdrops were creative and impressive with BUILD Academy receiving the \$500 grant.

WNY UNITED AGAINST DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE, INC.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gary Kotaska, Chairman
 Robert Travers, Secretary
 Gerald Pullano, Treasurer
 Milissa Acquard
 Tina Battistoni
 Reginald Z. Burt
 Otis Glover
 Barbara Hicks
 Sheriff Timothy Howard
 Thomas Kulaszewski
 Andrew Neyman
 Marcy Peterson
 Robert E. Rich, III
 Daniel Sarzynski
 Drew Cerza, Ex Officio
 Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, Ex Officio
 Melinda R. Rich, Chairperson Emeritus
 Robert E. Rich, Jr., Chairperson Emeritus

FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alvino Battistoni, President
 Urmas Lupkin, Vice President
 Jeff Pappalardo, Secretary
 Howard Martin, Treasurer
 Timothy Walsh, Past President
 Joseph R. Ciffa, Past President
 Thomas Grys, Past President
 Michael Buczkowski
 Julie Gicewicz
 Otis Glover
 Gary Kotaska
 Kim Rich Lupkin
 Jean Toth
 Melinda R. Rich, Chairperson Emeritus
 Robert E. Rich, Jr., Chairperson Emeritus

STAFF

Linda Flowers, CPP, Exec. Director
 Rachel Andelora
 Beth Anzalone, CPP
 Steve Bennett
 Donald Burch
 Lynn Burdzy
 Kate Chudoba
 Michelle Cotter
 Kathleen Deet
 Jermaine Jennings
 Doneshia Lewis
 Tammy Regnet
 Karen Smith
 Timothy Smykowski
 Jennifer Thorpe
 Jessica Ulmer
 Theresa Villano
 Stephanie Watson



Partner Profile ~ School 89

On an average November Wednesday morning in Buffalo, WNY United prevention specialist Jennifer Thorpe is heading up the sidewalk into Dr. Lydia T. Wright School Excellence when she is spotted by a boy and girl getting out of their mom’s car. “Miss Jenn! Miss Jenn! Do we have you today?” they yell, excited to see her. Inside the school and down the halls the story is the same: kids everywhere want more Miss Jenn.

Lydia T. Wright, still commonly known as school 89, is a magnet school with 826 students from pre-K through 8th grade. While it is a “school in good standing” in New York State, its full name reflects its fierce commitment to constant improvement.

Today Jenn is giving lesson 7 of an 8-week program for 6th graders on violence, part of the Building Skills unit that teaches decision-making, communication, and goal-setting skills. The lessons are subtle: Jenn talks to the students about obstacles and overcoming them, stress and how to avoid it when it starts to arise, the impact of violence on loved ones. “There’s someone who looks up to you,” she points out.

She wants to make them see things they wouldn’t normal think about: consequences. Warning signs. How do live long, healthy lives. How to earn respect in their community. How deeply people are hurt because of drugs and money. “Go to college, “ she says “and you’ll still get the big house and the vehicle with rims, but you get to keep it and grow old and see your little brothers and sisters grow up.”

At the Helm

Principal Mary Jo Conrad is enthusiastic about the impact WNY United’s programs have on her students – and grateful. But she envisions even more. “I wish that we had more Jennifers to work with all the kids all of the time because it is very effective. We continue to be a school in good standing, and I attribute WNY United with being a primary factor in helping us achieve our goals. We’ve seen major decline in disciplinary referrals and suspensions, and our numbers are far better than similar schools. These programs are a main reason why.”



Jenn Thorpe
Prevention Specialist



Mrs. Conrad - Principal,
 Khaila Gardner, and
 Kristen Krull, LIT Advisor

(continued on page 6)



**LIT Team from #89
 Helping Those in Need**

Meet the 7th grade Leaders In Training team from Buffalo Public School #89: Khaila Gardner, Kennedy Robinson, Sharde Howard, Isaac Howard, Avyanna Morehead, Sean Sumpster, Mack Hill, Daija Jones, Unique Edwards and Victoria Hennegan. With the guidance from Jenn Thorpe Prevention Specialist, and Kristen Krull LIT Advisor, this group of young leaders has defined what the LIT program is all about.

The LIT team decided to focus on the Harvest House and donate to the Baby & Children's Outreach program. They held fundraisers to purchase items that the program was in desperate need of, and in return began to impress and influence others around them.

The students soon began to learn that “good deeds do not go unnoticed”. To date, the LIT Team at #89 has donated nearly \$700 worth of children's items to the Harvest House. This amazing group of seventh grade students has also volunteered multiple times with newsletter mailings and the sorting, folding and hanging of the children's clothing. The group's name and number are on speed dial for future volunteer needs.



School #89 LIT Team
 at Harvest House.

These LIT students have made their school and community very proud! Can't wait to see what will be next for these Leaders! Read more details about this group in the School 89 Profile.

First Night Painting Contest Winners




1st Place Winner for the K-4 Category
Autumn Schunk, AJ Schmidt Elementary School, Grade 3





2nd Place Winner for K-4 Category
Abigail Sonnenberg, St. Stephen School, Grade 4




3rd Place Winner for the K-4 Category
Luz Bautista, School #3, Dunkirk, NY, Grade 4





1st Place Winner for the 5-8 Category
Xue Er Lee, Our Lady of Victory School, Grade 7




2nd Place Winner for the 5-8 Category
Sydney Kozminski, Cheektowaga Central Middle School, Grade 7




2nd Place Winner for the 5-8 Category
Briana Jackson, Cheektowaga Central Middle School, Grade 8

congratulations!

First Night Painting Contest Winners



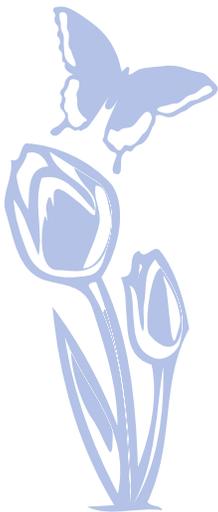
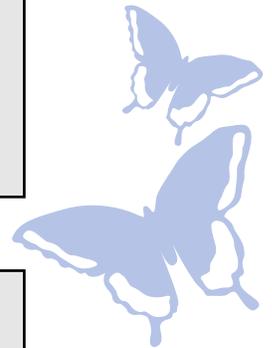
1st Place Winner for the 9-12 Category
Rachel Shoemaker, Eden Jr/Sr High School, Grade 12



2nd Place Winner for the 9-12 category
Amanda Tobin, Immaculata Academy, Grade 9



3rd Place Winner for the 9-12 Category
Lianne Van Wagner, Immaculata Academy, Grade 9



congratulations!

First Night Poetry Contest Winners



*Pictured here left to right are
Sennie Lay, Alix Novack,
Joshua Lee-Mueller, teacher Mrs. Dole,
all from
John T. Waugh Elementary School.*

Alix Novack
John T. Waugh Elementary
1st Place Winner K-4 Category

I Want To Paint
I want to paint. Really paint.
Not just grab a brush and get the paper
wet.
But, paint.
I want to draw. Really draw.
Not just grab a crayon and make one
thing.
But, draw.
Imagination out of my head,
And, wiping the victory off my face,
I'll finally get to see the artwork
Hiding in me.
I want to be a painter.

Joshua Lee-Mueller
John T. Waugh Elementary
2nd Place Winner K-4 Category

Drug Free!
I will be drug free
For people who aren't
I pledge to be drug free
So I can be
Healthy!
I pledge to be drug free
So I don't get sick
For the fight against drugs
And cancer.
I am a drug free child.

Sennie Lay
John T. Waugh Elementary
3rd Place Winner K-4 Category

Be Drug Free
I am drug free.
I am proud to be drug free.
I made a promise to be
Drug free.
You should, too.
I will save the universe's resources.
I will not ruin the air.
I will save my body and me.
We should all be drug free!
I can..
You can..
And we could all have
Healthy lungs and organs.
When I'm old
I do not want to cough up
Those dirty cookie crumbs.



Jack Bett
Immaculate Conception School
1st Place Winner 5-8 Category

My Drug Free Cousin
My drug free hero is P.J.,
It wasn't always so.
When methamphetamines called him,
He had trouble saying no.

After many years of trying,
He learned a way to stop.
He became my drug free hero,
And now he's back on top.

He's making better choices,
His life is not so grim.
He finally learned to just say no,
And we're all so proud of him!



Sean Scannell
Immaculate Conception School
2nd Place Winner 5-8 Category

A Boy
There once was a very good boy
Who always stayed in school
He liked to play most sports
And his friends called him cool.

That is till one day
He was asked to try crack
Now he is addicted
And he can't hold back.

Soon this boy was stealing
And was out of school
All his friends had left him
So he was called a fool.

Many years later
I found him in a shack
And he told me his story
On how he got addicted to crack.

Now when I am asked
I always say No
Because on that night in years past
I sadly watched him go



Maddy Higgins
Lorraine Elementary
3rd Place Winner 5-8 Category

Don't Do Drugs
To be all you can be,
You must be drug free.
Anyone can take a pill,
You have a dream you should fulfill.
Don't choose the wrong path,
You might be good at math.
If math's not your thing,
Maybe you can really sing.
You might be good at soccer,
But not with drugs in your locker.
Whatever path you choose,
Stay drug free, you can't loose!
Because there is no hope with dope!



Sarah Henderson
Cleveland Hill High School
1st Place Winner 9-12 category

I Wonder Why?
She sticks a needle in her arm
As she cries
Her parents hate her
I wonder why?

She did heroin
Just to get high
She couldn't stop
I wonder why?

Her death came fast
Yes, she did die
But nobody cared
I wonder why?

She had no one
She had no life
She gave it all up
I wonder why?

She was weak
You are strong
Don't make the mistake she did
Because it is wrong
You have someone
You have a life
You shouldn't have –
To wonder why

Don't be like her
Live your life
Because you are stronger
I wonder why?

congratulations!

Partner Profile ~ School 89

(continued from page 2)

Conrad pauses, watching kids pass by her windows on their way to their buses. “I just need more Western New York United. That’s all I need.”

Leaders in Training

Jenn gets a lot of support from the teachers at Lydia T. Wright, but especially from math tutor Kristen Krull, who is also the school’s LIT advisor and WNY United representative. Kristen weighs in on new LIT student recommendations and participates in fundraising and field trips, often on her own time. This fall she helped Jenn and the LIT kids collect non-perishables for “Extreme Makeover Home Edition’s” record-breaking food drive, and then took the students to deliver the food and see the West Side construction site.

WNY United is making a noticeable difference in the lives of the children of 89, she says. “Students are more responsible. They make better choices because of what they learn from these lessons. They think before they act. The school has a more kind and caring environment now.”

It’s Monday now, and Jenn and Kristen are meeting with the 7th grade Leaders in Training kids. They talk about the field trip they took the previous Saturday to a consignment shop Second Time Around to buy baby items to donate to Harvest House, a former South Presbyterian church on Seneca Street that supplies free baby items and baby and children’s clothing to the local community and provides space of meetings and retreats.

Each LIT grade in every school does one service learning project per year. This class from Lydia T. Wright began theirs during the Summer LIT program and decided on Harvest House. Every day at lunch, they collected spare change in baby bottles. By the time the 5-week summer program was done, they had \$117 to spend for Harvest House. In the fall they raised another \$320 selling cheesecake mixes, saving some of the funds for future use. When they went to Second Time Around to shop, the owner of the store was so impressed by their leadership that she donated a baby mattress and some baby snowsuits to their project, free of charge.

Yes, She Can

Khaila is such a natural leader that she was the first one in her 6th grade class selected for LIT this past spring. “She almost doesn’t need the ‘I-T’ in the LIT,” Jenn Thorpe says. “She is so charismatic. Adults and kids can’t help but be positive around her.”

Khaila’s mom was thrilled, in part because it meant her youngest daughter would be out of their neighborhood for much of the summer of 2009 in the Leaders in Training summer program at Medaille College.

“In my neighborhood, we don’t get that many opportunities to do that type of stuff,” Khaila explains. “We don’t get opportunities to be a leader or do something in life instead of just sitting there. They love to shoot around my neighborhood. Gang fights and stuff.”

While it’s hard for her to pick one thing over another, the summer program has been Khaila’s favorite part of LIT so far. “It was like school, but more fun,” she says.

“But LIT has taught us that it’s not about coming here to have fun all the time,” she says, “We’re suppose to learn something about ourselves, about LIT, about other things like how to be a leader. I learned more about myself, like who I really am, what I can accomplish, what I can be when I grow up later in life.” Right now her dream is to be a doctor, lawyer, or surgeon.

Khaila wants to go to Performing Arts, City Honors, or Hutch Tech for high school “My mom told me, ‘I’m so proud of you. I can’t wait till you get older because I want to see what you’re going to be when you grow up.’” She’s so excited about her own future that she glows. “And I will come back and visit Miss Jenn, Mrs. Krull and all the other LIT teachers because those are going to be some memories,” she smiles.

How to Change a Life

Being a Prevention Specialist gives Jenn both rewards of teaching and the opportunity to provide the real-life skills needed to guide students in a positive direction. Every day she witnesses the effects of WNY United’s lessons. “The kids have way more confidence and better decision-making skills. They acknowledge the impact they really can have on their school and community.”

There’s a lot more she wishes she could do, though. “I wish I could afford them more exposure to the environment beyond Buffalo. They need to see other places, experience other things. I wish I could host reunions for each of my past classes, without burdening people for space or money. I wish I could organize more career panels and make more connections for these students with other adult leaders in our community. All the teachers want more lessons,” she says. “They mostly agree that though the core subjects are essential, kids can’t focus until you get to the bottom of this real-life stuff.”

WNY United: A Force for Change in the Community

Preventing substance abuse isn’t easy or simple these days, and maybe it never will be. But when you approach it the WNY United way – combining scientifically proven skill-building curriculums, prevention specialists dedicated to fostering healthy lives, and bright kids who absorb information and attention like a sponge – you give kids a whole new change by giving them a new outlook on themselves and their lives. We should always promise kids the world. But when we do, we have to help them get it.

We’re Going Green!

**Only two printed editions left.
The WNY United Digest will only be
available electronically!**

**Please email kchudoba@wnyunited.org
with your valid email address to continue
receiving your WNY United Digest.**





Bisons Host Fifth Annual Red Ribbon Game

On Saturday, April 17th, the Buffalo Bisons will face the Scranton / WB Yankees in the fifth annual “WNY United Red Ribbon Game” at Coca-Cola Field. Nearly 3,000 students earned free tickets to this game back in October during “National Red Ribbon Week.” There was a coloring activity for elementary students and an essay contest for middle school students. Kindergarten through fifth graders received an activity sheet where they were instructed to color a picture of themselves next to Buster Bison and Belle “the Ballpark Diva,” and then sign them, thereby promising to stay drug-free. Sixth through eighth graders were given the task of writing an essay on “Why Should We Remember Enrique Camarena?”

We are pleased to announce the winners of the following prizes as judged by a panel of the agency's Prevention Specialists.

First Place – Winner of an autographed Buffalo Sabres Jersey

Isabelle Perfetto, Our Lady of Victory School

Second Place – Winner of an autographed Football by Buffalo Bills Running Back Fred Jackson

Brandon Loyd, Lovejoy Discovery School #43

Third Place – Winner of a Buffalo Bisons dugout jacket

Tyler Fredette, Iroquois Middle School

congratulations!

All essay contest entrants will also receive a free ticket to the “Red Ribbon Bisons Game” and the winners will be honored in a special pre-game ceremony on the field. WNY United congratulates the winners on a job well done and thanks all for participating.

Over twenty administrators, educators, and concerned members of the community will receive plaques in a pre-game ceremony recognizing them as “Friends of Prevention.” These individuals were chosen by WNY United staff for their contributions to the general substance abuse prevention cause or for being instrumental in the prevention effort taking place in their own schools and communities.

WNY United is proud to announce our 2010 “Friends of Prevention” honorees:

Mary Ross, Dr. Lydia T Wright School of Excellence

Brenda Wagner, Cleveland Hill

Maggie Henry, Dr. Antonia Pantoja Community School of Academic Excellence

Kim Farrell, BUILD Academy

Alicia Hartke, Native American Magnet School

Frank Brombos, Lovejoy Discovery School

Amy Hoffstetter, Lovejoy Discovery School

Jacquelyn Bavaro-Phelan, Lorraine Elementary

Nicole Ziolkowski, Lorraine Elementary

Margaret Boorady, Hillery Park Elementary

Christopher Meszaros, Fredrick Law Olmsted School

Stacey Williams, Fredrick Law Olmsted School

Marguerite Villa, Frank A. Sedita Academy

Kristen Warren, Frank A. Sedita Academy

Linda Gleason, Frontier Middle School

Sandra Smith, Southside Elementary School

Ariana Wright, Harriet Ross Tubman School

Ramona Reynolds, Martin Luther King Multicultural Institute

Linda Kraft, Buffalo Academy for Visual & Performing Arts

Lisa Holden, Bilingual Center

Cindy Latimore, Lake Shore Boys & Girls Club

Chris Walsh, Lake Shore High School

John Grande, Cleveland Hill

Thanks for all you do for our organization and our cause!



WNY United's Achievement Mentor Program (AMP)

The Achievement Mentor Program (AMP) provides academic support services to children who have been referred because of significant academic difficulties and/or behavior or attendance problems. Because early academic failure is a considerable risk factor for substance abuse; WNY United Achievement mentors work right in the classrooms to help keep these students on task throughout their lessons. Individual and small-group instruction is provided when necessary.

This school year, WNY United's AMP is pleased to announce its partnership with West Seneca AmeriCorps to place a full-time AmeriCorps member in two of our Oishei funded buildings, along with two part-time mentors. This exciting partnership provides additional services to the students, as well as more consistent academic support in the building.

The two buildings receiving this service are School #33 Bilingual School and School #19 Native American Magnet School. Julia Hopson represents AmeriCorps at School #33, a three year partner for AMP Services. Julia's time at the building is spent working with the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students.

Cassandra Couch is our AmeriCorps member at School #19. This is AMP's first school year in the building. Cassandra works with a variety of students in the building, while consistently making sure the school is aware of the program and the benefits it brings to the students.

We are delighted to be working with Julia and Cassandra - they both bring a lot of energy and dedication to both the agency and the program.



Julia Hopson (left) Cassandra Couch (right) AmeriCorps Mentors



Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Inc.

1195 Niagara Street
Buffalo, NY 14213

Nonprofit organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Buffalo N.Y.
Permit No. 1640



Tickets will be available at all Wegmans "That's The Ticket" locations or at the stadium box office the afternoon of the event.



 **WNY UNITED**
Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse Foundation, Inc.
Presents



IN HONOR OF ELAINE MACK, EVENT FOUNDER

Coca-Cola Field
The Home of the Bisons
Sunday, May 30, 2010
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

For one low price you will get
a **GAME TICKET, LUNCH**, all the
ATTRACTIONS & ENTERTAINMENT!

For more information, go to www.wnyunited.org
or call 821-7722, ext. 314.

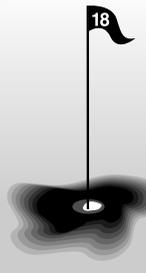
Mark Your Calendars!
SEVENTH ANNUAL



GOLF TOURNAMENT
in Memory of Robert E. Rich

Monday, August 2nd, 2010
Orchard Park Country Club
11:30 Lunch - 12:30 Shotgun

to benefit



Contact Kate Chudoba at 821-7722, ext 314
or kchudoba@wnyunited.org for more information.

WNY United Digest is published quarterly. We encourage community members to submit dates of interest and articles for sharing in this newsletter.

Send to: WNY United Digest, 1195 Niagara Street, Buffalo NY 14213

ATTN.: Kate Chudoba, Editor, or e-mail at kchudoba@wnyunited.org or fax at 821-7733 .