



Niagara River Greenway

# NEWSFLASH

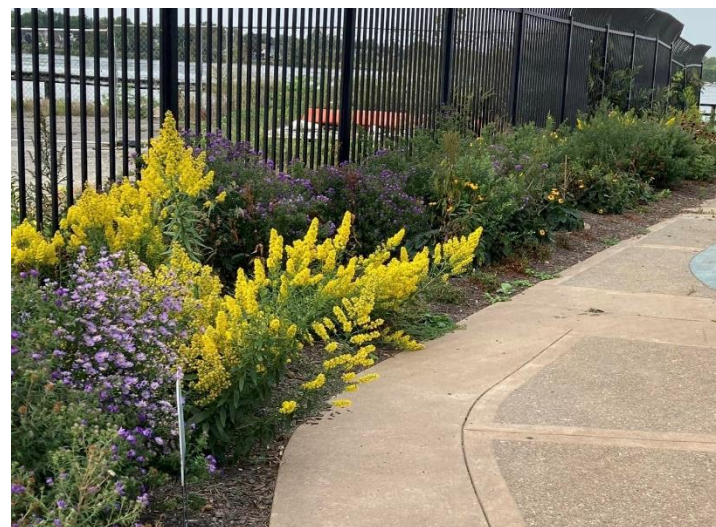
Fall 2024



*Niagara River Greenway has been focused on assisting Grassroots Community Groups (GCG's) to develop wellness recreation events appropriate to their communities. Pictured above are participants who rode the Freedom Park CanAm Ride with East Side Bike Club and Friends of Freedom Park.*

## Niagara River Greenway's Expanding Focus

Niagara River Greenway's (NRG's) priorities are evolving now that our Shoreline Trail is nearly complete! The Commissioners have directed us to focus on community engagement and environmental youth stewardship. We have a special grant from Highmark that enables us to assist GCG's in the coordination and development of outdoor recreational events in their communities. Recently, we have assisted GCG's in bike ride events, walks, clean ups, trail maintenance and gardening parties all along the Niagara River Corridor. Our goal is to help plan GCG events that meet the wants and needs of various communities and promote environmental stewardship. We are also developing long-term plans for additional pollinator habitats, installed and maintained by GCGs, along the Niagara River Corridor.



Buffalo Sunrise Rotary Club's pollinator garden at Tow Path Park.

## Freedom Park CanAm Ride

On the sunny and brisk Saturday morning of October 26<sup>th</sup>, East Side Bike Club (ESBC) and Friends of Freedom Park (FOFP) held the Freedom Park CanAm Ride, honoring those who crossed into Canada in search of freedom during the Underground Railroad. Niagara River Greenway assisted ESBC and FOFP in the promotion and coordination of this event to ensure that the riders were safely guided through the Peace Bridge and well-fed afterwards! Soul food caterer, Soulful Venus, provided our riders with a delicious array of meal options, including chicken, pasta dishes, roasted vegetables, and more.



The eager riders journeyed from Freedom Park Buffalo to Freedom Park Fort Erie, Ontario, symbolizing the final stretch of the Underground Railroad journey from America to Canada. On the day of the ride, The Peace Bridge Authority closed off an entire lane on the Peace Bridge so we could ride over the bridge as one big group. This unique experience was unforgettable and representative of enslaved people who bravely crossed over into Canada to reach their destination.



This 15.5-mile bike ride not only commemorated those who sought freedom, but also celebrated the international connection between the US and Canada. Once the riders crossed over, they were met by the Rotary Club of Fort Erie, Freedom Park Conductors Dewitt Lee III and Saladin Quanaah Allah, and Mayor of Fort Erie, Wayne Redekop. Thanks to the support and thoughtful contributions of these individuals, riders were given a richer experience through presentations of historical accounts written by freedom seekers themselves. Dewitt Lee III and Saladin Quanaah Allah presented riders with real-life passages written by Rev. Josiah Henson, who crossed over into Fort Erie, Canada in search of freedom for his family on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1830.



Saladin Quanaah, a descendant of the Henson family, made this experience more meaningful by giving riders the opportunity to reconnect with our ancestors who deserve to be recognized by their unwavering bravery and perseverance. After congressing in Freedom Park Fort Erie, riders headed back to Buffalo to enjoy a warm, home-cooked meal. East Side Bike Club and Friends of Freedom Park are already looking forward to making this an annual bike ride event. We can't wait for next year! This event was made possible with funding from Highmark's Blue Fund.

## WNY Land Conservancy opens new trail on Grand Island



Photo courtesy of WNY Land Conservancy

The beginning of November brought a beautiful new trail to Grand Island, situated on a 44 acre plot off of Love Rd. This land is one of several properties that have received funding through the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee to permanently protect ecologically valuable land from development. The property is full of mature hardwood trees, like pin oaks, black cherry, northern red oaks, white oaks and shagbark hickories. You can also find important native bushes such as the buttonbush, a source for pollinators, and witch hazel that supplies food and shelter to many animals.

The hiking trail provides an up-close experience with nature as it winds around these beautiful towering trees for a little over one mile. There are a few bog bridges making it easier for people and safer for animals as the trail traverses some vernal pools. Please do not bring your dogs or bikes on the trail or in the preserve, to help protect fragile plants and wildlife. The trailhead is located at 3050 Love Rd. in Grand Island, NY, which is just a little over a half mile from the West River Shoreline Trail. This would make a great addition to a walk on the Shoreline Trail! Prior to building the trail, the Land Conservancies stewardship team worked on removing invasive species such as common and glossy buckthorn and multiflora rose, making room for more healthy natives to flourish. This is a great place for people and animals alike if we are respectful of their habitat. There have been many sightings of great horned owls on this property, maybe you will spot one too!

## Maple Avenue School draws families out to the Shoreline!

Maple Avenue School in Niagara Falls partnered once again with Niagara River Greenway for a Fall Wellness Walk. Approximately 150 students and family members gathered at DeVeaux Woods State Park and hiked together to Whirlpool State Park. Students and family members enjoyed snacks at Whirlpool and learned about the Shoreline Trail and all the opportunities that exist for hiking, biking, and outdoor recreation. We love seeing all their smiling faces! If your school or community group is interested in having the Niagara River Greenway team host a walk or bike ride on the Shoreline Trail, please contact us. This event was made possible in part with funding from Highmark Blue Fund.



*Niagara River Greenway is all about making our greenspaces better for both people and wildlife. We hope to continue our educational and outdoor recreational programs for communities and need to rely on external funding to help us increase and improve our efforts. If you are interested in donating to the Niagara River Greenway, please visit our website at [www.NiagaraRiverGreenway.com](http://www.NiagaraRiverGreenway.com) and click on the DONATE button at the top of the page.*

