

Walk for Sight to begin at Amherst Pepsi Center

Lions Clubs throughout New York State, in conjunction with Lioness and school-based Leo clubs, are hosting a Walk For Sight on Saturday, April 21.

The event is being held to raise money for Campaign SightFirst II, a three-year effort to raise a minimum of \$150 million globally to combat preventable blindness and to restore sight to the estimated 41 million people who will lose their vision by 2020.

The Lions Clubs of Western New York, formally known as District 20-N, will hold their walk on the Ellicott Creek Trailway beginning at the Amherst Pepsi Center trail

head, 1615 Amherst Manor Drive.

Registration begins at 10 a.m. inside the front entrance of the Amherst Pepsi Center. Registration is \$5 per person; \$1 for children aged 12 and younger. The walk, which begins at 11 a.m., can be any distance up to 3.4 miles. Refreshments and food will be available in the center's Sky Box upon completion of the walk.

Donations will be accepted. For more information, call 773-4437, e-mail 20nwalkforsight@adelphia.net, or visit www.district20nlions.org and click on the "Walk for Sight" logo.



Food drive to begin April 21

The Girl Scouts of Buffalo and Erie County will be dropping off bags for the 11th annual Spring Food Drive. This year's drive is being run by Brownie Troop 1786.

The bags will be dropped off on Saturday, April 21 and picked up on Saturday, April 28. Those wishing to donate may leave the bag outside the door by 9 a.m. on the day of food pickup.

The selected food pantry for this year's drive is the Primera Food Pantry in Buffalo.

Items for donation may include boxed foods, paper and hygiene products and canned goods, including fruit and tuna fish. There is also a special request for bags of rice and kidney beans. Any item in a glass container cannot be donated. Flyers specifying other items to donate will be distributed with the bags.

For more information, call 725-5897 or 837-6400 or visit www.bflogirlscouts.org.

Youth Foundation moves gala to Independent Health center

by JESSICA L. FINCH
Associate Editor

In its third year, the Amherst Youth Foundation's annual gala will be held for the first time at the Independent Health Youth and Family Center.

Opened in March 2006, the center is home to several Youth Foundation functions, including a daycare program and coffee house for youth.

"This is the perfect opportunity to welcome everybody who has supported us over the years and get together in the building they helped fund," said Guy Marlette, Youth Foundation president, about holding the gala at the center.

He added it also will give the public a look at what the center offers and how it has increased in size since being remodeled. The building previously was part of the Hutchinson Hose Fire Company.

"Dancing with Our Stars" will be held from 6 to 11 p.m. Saturday, April 28 at the center, 5005 Sheridan Drive, near Mill Street.

Hors d'oeuvres, carving stations and desserts will be provided by local restaurants, including Pizza Plant, Bing's, Lebros and Brierwood and Tan Tara Country clubs.

Tickets are \$55 per person or \$100 per couple. Proceeds will support youth and family services provided in Amherst, including the recently founded Eggertsville Community Center.

Also, Mike Valentic, a dance instructor and studio owner, will coordinate a dance competition. Attendees will be asked to judge the dancers.

A silent auction will also be included.

Prepaid reservations are required. Call 633-6773. For information visit, www.amherstyouth.com.

Williamsville Schools

Below-average attendance expected

by JESSICA L. FINCH
Associate Editor

Student attendance days were scheduled for the last three days of Williamsville Central School District's spring break (April 6-13), and attendance was lowest at the high school level.

Superintendent Howard S. Smith said the average for the three days were as follows: elementary schools, 85 percent; middle schools, 80 percent; and high schools, 67 percent.

The average attendance range

for the district is 92 to 96 percent.

Parents were informed in October that two days would be taken from spring break because the district closed for seven days following the Oct. 12, 2006 storm. Then in February, the district used another snow day, forcing the schools to open on April 11.

"It is less than average, but the lower attendance was anticipated," Smith said.

Students who missed the scheduled days can request the work missed and are required to

make it up.

Amherst Central and Sweet Home School districts, which were closed six days and eight days, respectively, in October, did not use any spring break days to make up the difference.

According to state law, student attendance days must total a minimum of 180.

Smith said that the change in schedule went smoothly, and the administration and staff were a great help in opening the district and informing parents of the change.

Poet will headline fourth annual Poetry, Music, Dance Celebration

World-renowned poet Sonia Sanchez, author of more than 15 books, including "Shake Loose My Skin: New and Selected Poems," will headline the fourth annual Buffalo/Williamsville Poetry, Music, Dance Celebration at Kleinhans Music Hall, at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 26.

Sanchez's readings will be just one of the many displays of artistic creativity as the Celebration brings students from Buffalo and Williamsville school districts together to collaborate in displaying their creativity.

The event won acclaim from the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors through a recent \$70,000 grant from the New York State Music Fund.

Sanchez is a poet, activist and teacher whose work addresses the history of African-Americans from slavery to modern periods of oppression. She is a master of haiku, tanka, and villanelle, reconstructing them to create her

distinctive poetic style that mixes street speech with sophisticated formality.

Having worked with Malcolm X in the New York activist group CORE, Sanchez refers to him and Martin Luther King Jr. as her influencers.

Sanchez is a 2001 recipient of the Robert Frost Medal in poetry, and was awarded the Langston Hughes Poetry Award in 1999 and in 1998 received nominations for both the National Book Critics Circle and the NAACP Image Awards. Among numerous other honors, she was granted a Pew Fellowship in the Arts for 1992-93.

Students from Casey, Heim and Transit middle schools; Country Parkway, Forest, Maple East and Maple West elementary schools; and Williamsville East, North and South high schools, will be taking part in the event.

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