



COMPETITION — The Main-Transit Fire Department hosted its annual firematic tournament last Saturday, competing against other teams from across the state. Its "C" class truck, above, competed

in hose and ladder races and is sanctioned by the New York State Drill Team Captains Association.

Photo by Joe Eberle
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Exotic animals travel to Getzville

by **CHRISTINE A. SETLOCK**
Intern

Kristy Wisniewski, 23, reaches both hands through the fence and caresses the head of the 400-pound tiger as if she were petting a dog.

The tiger, named Sebastian, belongs to Call of the Wild Sanctuary in Chautauqua County but will be coming to John and Mary's Subs, 2363 Millersport Highway in Getzville, from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, July 14 and Saturday, July 15 along with another tiger named Shantal and a black bear cub.

Wisniewski's natural ability with the tiger comes from growing up with exotic animals in Sinclairville, N.Y., a small, rural town south of Dunkirk where she and her family run a nonprofit wildlife refuge. She is one of three people in her family who can interact so closely with Sebastian.

"(Tigers) are very smart, intelligent, affectionate animals," said Wisniewski. "You can tell when they're mad. You can tell when they're sad."

The upcoming Getzville exhibit is part of the tigers' summer itinerary, which has included visits to John and Mary's Subs in Alden and Riverside Park carnival in Buffalo.

Wisniewski said she watches over the animals' comfort level closely when on the road. One tiger doesn't like the sight of fireworks and becomes uneasy, but for the most part, the animals become excited about road trips and start to play, she said.

"They kind of box around with each other, and they wrestle," said Wisniewski.

Visitors can view the tigers and black bear cub while ordering subs at John and Mary's or be treated to popcorn and cotton candy. A raffle will be held for two mountain bikes, donated by Coca-Cola. There will also be an array of sanctuary memorabilia for sale.

The tigers' home sanctuary is nestled in the hills, past miles of sprawling vineyards, an hour's drive from Buffalo.

A one-hour tour of the facility is offered for a minimum suggested donation of \$5. The facility houses two female lions, three wolves, three bears, and a black leopard in addition to its 12 tigers.

"Eventually, it's going to be a natural habitat," said Donna Ostrye, who lives close to the compound and has been volunteering there since February 2006.

Sanctuaries such as the Sinclairville refuge help displaced exotic animals find a home. One lioness was a government seizure

from the Department of Environmental Conservation, obtained when someone failed to renew the state license.

Others, such as the tiger Sasha, are abused. She had an owner in upstate New York who beat her into a corner, making her angry and vicious.

"She was in terrible condition," Wisniewski said. "When they were trying to load her, they had to put another lining of caging over the caging they had."

The Getzville tour is an educational exhibit to teach about exotic animals both in captivity and the wild and raise awareness for endangered animals.

"It's scary to think that you can go on the Internet, spend \$10,000, and get yourself a tiger cub," said Ostrye.

Exotic wildlife cubs are often bought in such a way and exploited in photo shoots, with no provision for the cub once it is grown.

The sanctuary is limited in the number of animals it can take in and in need of grant writers to help work toward its expansion.

Wisniewski said the sanctuary is raising funds this summer to help pay for better facilities at the habitat, plans which include the addition of a swimming pond for the tigers.

Public meeting set about Sheridan Drive development

The Amherst Industrial Development Agency, in cooperation with the Town of Amherst, will hold a meeting to gather ideas for the redevelopment of Sheridan Drive.

A public input meeting has been planned for 7 p.m. Thursday, July 12 at the Sweet Home High School Community Room, 1901 Sweet Home Road. After a presentation describing the purpose of the "Sheridan Drive Commercial District" study, public comments will be taken.

The AIDA received a grant in 2006 to study Sheridan Drive from Niagara Falls Boulevard to Sweet Home Road in relation to revitalization plans for areas affected by properties where there may be some environmental concerns impeding redevelopment.

The study is also part of a larger comprehensive redevelopment effort that includes the Town of Amherst Comprehensive Plan, and the AIDA Enhancement Area Incentive Program.

The input from the public will be used to form the foundation of the vision for the area's future and to generate ideas for what can be done to help the area be more successful.

This is the first of two public meetings, the second will be held later in the year to discuss the results of the study.

Project planners would like input on:

- Specific boundaries for the study area (Should residential areas be included? Should both sides of Eggert Road be included or only the side along Northtown Plaza?)
- What are the major issues — traffic, aesthetics?
- What are the major opportunities?
- What would you like to see happen in the area?

Written comments can be sent to David Mingoia, Amherst IDA, 4287 Main St., Amherst, 14226 or dmingoia@amherstida.com.

Business News

Pesci's Pizza and Wings, 8065 Main St. at Transit Road, has pledged \$10,000 to be divided among the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Buffalo Sabres Foundation, Ryan Miller's Steadfast Foundation and Mercy Flight. The pizzeria is making \$2 donations for every Leo Getz speciality pizza sold. Call 635-4400.

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School News

Richard Sima of East Amherst was one of 300 state winners to receive a 2007 Discover Card Tribute Award Scholarship, a \$2,500 award. State winners are based on overall excellence in the areas of leadership and community service, while successfully overcoming a hardship or challenge.

The **Preston L. Wright Greenhouse** was dedicated at The Park School of Buffalo in June. The new educational facility will enhance the school's environmental and outdoor education programs. The facility is 600 square feet and provides a space to study plants, botany and the environment. Mr. Wright was a trustee at Park School and parent of two graduates. His wife, Irene, made the lead gift towards the greenhouse.

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