

Waterford Canal Festival Returns May 20-21, 2023

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The Waterford Canal Festival is set for the weekend following the opening of the New York State Canal System, with exciting festivities planned and a chance to celebrate the 200 years of the Champlain Canal (1823-2023). Many people know that the original Erie Canal opened in 1825, but the Champlain has been around two years longer! It's fitting that the Festival takes place right at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, where these two storied canals meet.

This year, the Waterford Canal and Towpath Society (WCATS) is taking on an expanded role as co-host of the event. Known mostly for its historic tours of the remnants of the old waterway in Waterford, and the pre-Pandemic canal outings and boat rides offered to grade schoolers as part of the 4th grade history curriculum, WCATS is dedicated to preserving and showcasing the history and value of the canals. President and longtime Waterford resident Russ Vandervoort, who also serves as Deputy Supervisor of the Village of Waterford and historian to the Town of Waterford, is elated to have an extra special reason to celebrate this year. "Waterford has a great history with the canal," says Russ, "so its fitting that we can kick off the 200th anniversary of Champlain Canal travel right here where the waterway and, in fact the nation, begins."

The Waterford Canal Festival is a perennial favorite, attracting thousands of visitors to the shores of the waterway. Hosted by the Waterford Canal and Towpath Society and the Village of Waterford, with support from the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County and other sponsors including Momentive



These tugboats, owned and operated by the NYS Marine Highway Transportation Co. (nysmarinehighway.com) out of Troy, serve to remind everyone that the Erie and Champlain Canals remain very much a working waterway. Commercial

craft aren't seen as often these days, but they still ply these waters, and with so many changes ahead in how New York State supplies its energy and propels its delivery vehicles, this industry could well be poised for a remarkable comeback!

Performance Materials, Stewart's Shops, the Port of Albany, State Farm-Christina Lloyd Insurance Agency, and others, the festival will feature vendors, food, kids' activities including a fishing clinic presented by the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, free boat rides from several local tour boat charters, boats and cars for sale, music, presentations, and of course a front row seat to the operation of the fabled canal itself, from the "Battery" where the rivers meet, to the top of Lock E-2 on the Erie Canal.

For more information on the 2023 Waterford Canal Festival, visit waterfordcanalfestival.com. If you have something you'd like to exhibit or sell at the Waterford Canal Festival, there still may be space available! Please visit the website and fill out the contact form, and someone will be in touch as soon as possible.

For more information on the Capital Region Chamber, its affiliates, events and programs, visit capitalregionchamber.com or stop by the visitor center at the Clifton Park Rest Area on the I-87 Northway at Exit 9.

Hudson Valley resident and publisher Tom Martinelli helped his son David pull this nice largemouth from the waters off Peebles Island during the kids fishing clinics at the 2022 Waterford Canal Festival. Professionals from the Hudson River Fishermen's Association (thehrfa.org) volunteer their time to assist and teach young people to master this great sport!



Companies large and small participate in the Waterford Canal Festival each year. Momentive Performance Materials (momentive.com), also located in Waterford, not only has a large display booth (background) but their Fire Brigade and EMTs provided emergency services support for the event. Thankfully no one was needed, and they mostly educated people on safety and served free cups of juice, but their presence definitely is reassuring!