



The Grand Island Lion

July-August 2025

www.gilions.com



Upcoming Events:

July 4th Parade See Lion Donna's post.

Wednesday July 16th

Kids Picnic - July 16th - All Lions are needed to help out with this extraordinary Lions Event - 9am - 2pm Buffalo Launch Club



Paddles Up - Beaver Island State Park - July 26, 2025 we will be selling Hot Dogs, Chips and water. Help us support Paddles Up and raise some money.

Lion Dick

Members Picnic July 19th See below

Fellow Lions:

We are off to a great start to our 2025-26 Lions year with the induction of seven new Lions. Please welcome Liz Blundell, Ashley Kopf, Brian Kopf, Wendy Menter, Timmy Pelletier, Kyle Rusert and Tom J. Rusert. Their input and fresh ideas can only add to our already strong and vital mission. Please note my entries on page 6 regarding can returns, support for the Neighbors Foundation and available apparel at Stuart Sports. Let's have a fun and productive Lions year.



See you at the Kid's Picnic!
Lion President Tom Rusert

Grand Island Lions Picnic

Saturday, July 19th
@ Anne Fahning's Home at the river
2186 East River Road
4PM to 7PM

Sign up to bring an Appetizer, Side Dish, or Dessert
Club will provide adult beverages, water, and soda
Dinner will be chicken - cost is \$10.00 per person

RSVP to Jim Ryan at
lionJMR24a@gmail.com or 703-507-9696
by July 16th

Members and Spouses Welcome!

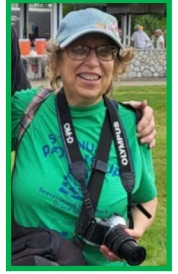
Parade notice

July 4th parade
We would love to have as many Lions as possible participate in the July 4th parade. We need at least 10 to pull it off nicely. Anne and Bob Fahning will provide an old fashioned car. We need 2 for the banner, 2 for Flags and at least 4 for candy. Please let me know if you have a wagon to cart the candy for refilling. We need at least 2. If someone is brave enough to wear the Lions costume, let me know, it is hot! We usually line up at the Speedway by Dunkin Donuts and Pizza Amore. They close the roads for the Dick Bessel race around 8:30 but we usually do not walk until 10 ish. When I know our placement in the parade I will send out an email. This is a good way to showcase our club, hope to see you there! Call or text me with any questions. Lion Donna (716) 803-7605



Editors Note:

Human trafficking was the focus of an April 23rd joint meeting of service organizations, which included the Lions Club, Zonta, and the Rotary Club. Two speakers, Julie Palmer of PATH and Bella LaFreniere of Project Mona's House presented. The speakers presented a great deal of information. Part one of this article focused on some of the statistics that Julie presented, as well as information about the prevalence of human trafficking and was presented in the June Newsletter. Part two, presented here, will focus on services provided by PATH and Project Mona's House, as well as information about governmental agencies equipped to help victims of human trafficking. The meeting was held at the Buffalo Launch Club.



Support and healing offered for victims of human trafficking in Western New York
Part two of the human trafficking presentation story
Story and photo by Alice Gerard

"They (traffickers) see a kid who needs something. They groom them and they fill that gap and they make them feel loved. A lot of times, for victims, the traffickers are the most positive persons in their lives, which is such a crazy thing to wrap your head around, but it's the sad reality."

"Oftentimes, victims might not even realize they're victims."
- Bella LaFreniere of Project Mona's House

PATH (People Against Trafficking Humans)

Julie Palmer explained the services for victims of human trafficking provided by PATH, as well as the mission of this nonprofit human services provider. "Our mission is ending human trafficking through education, prevention, and restoration. We do public speaking for community groups, schools, colleges, etc. We serve people who are trafficking victims or who could become victims. We have an enrichment center on Delaware Avenue in Buffalo, a block south of Canisius High School."

PATH goes "to school districts and speaks to both teachers and children. The organization will do presentations in assemblies, health classes, and staff development programs. "Some districts are doing parent nights, too, and we've been invited to those," Julie said.

"We provide services for youths and adults. There is also a child program from birth to age 11. "That program is intended to serve children of victims."

"We have a lot of diversity in who we serve, and we get clients from the eight surrounding counties"

There are also an adult program and a youth program, aimed at young people between the ages of 12 and 18.

"We will service people who are not necessarily traffic victims, but maybe they're victims of other crimes, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, or a vulnerability that they're being groomed or led toward potential trafficking. We do service individuals who are victims of sexual or labor trafficking.

"We piloted last year a male program. The pilot went well so we sent out more funding to make it a permanent program at alternative locations to be able to better serve that population."

Programming that PATH offers includes mental health programs, creative arts therapies, intensive case management with master's level social workers, crisis counseling, and safety planning.

Three days of groups are offered, which include an art therapist, a music therapist, and a trauma therapist.

"We don't do behavioral mental health," Julie explained. "We work with other agencies (friends and partners) for that."

PATH offers work readiness workshops: a 12-week program that an outside provider comes and does. Julie said, "We've done three so far and we're on our fourth. It's been very successful so far."

In addition, PATH offers coping skills groups and well health. Licensed practitioners offer free health care every Wednesday.

Also available is a child exploitation curriculum with a national organization called the 146.

PATH provides 90-100 meals per week to anybody who comes in. This is donated. "We don't have a food budget. We are blessed by the community of people who really care about this," Julie said. PATH has a clothing closet, and it also provides personal care items.

"Transportation was another reported barrier to access," Julie said. "Two vans have been donated over the years. Staff who do direct care with clients are required to have a master's degree and to have qualifications. Our services are free to anyone who comes through.

"We do take volunteers. We have about 35 active volunteers who really help our functioning operations. There is a vetting process for volunteers. Donations are welcome."

You can find PATH on social media. On Facebook, you can find them at <https://www.facebook.com/PATHofWNY>
Julie did a TEDX talk in 2018 and it's on their website (<https://pathofwny.org/>)

Project Mona's House

Bella LaFreniere is a UB graduate, who has been doing this work since she was 19. Prior to speaking at the Buffalo Launch Club, she had spoken about human trafficking at Grand Island High School.

Project Mona's House was founded by Kelly Diane Galloway, who was working with victims of human trafficking in Greece. There, she met a woman named Ramona, who had been trafficked from her home in the Dominican Republic to Türkiye in 2014. "When she got there, they stole her passport, they stole her documents, and they tried to force her to work in a brothel. She managed to escape, and then, she became swept up in the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis" in Greece.

Kelly Diane Galloway, a native of Western New York, was working at the A21 house in Greece. This residential home is a short-term care facility for female survivors of human trafficking. Kelly's job was to go into the refugee camps and identify potential victims of human trafficking.

"Mona stuck out like a sore thumb because she could speak only Spanish, and if you look at the region, ain't no one speaking Spanish. Mona moved into the residential services there and that's also the house where Kelly worked out of, and we like to joke that you can fight in any language and it doesn't matter if you can't speak the same one. When you're doing life with someone, tensions can run high. Mona was always cool, calm, and collected. She carried herself with such grace that Kelly was like, 'How do you do it? I see you day in, day out. Healing is hard, and you are just so far above it all.' She said, 'I just fundamentally believe that tomorrow's going to be better than today and two days from now is going to be better than tomorrow.'

"Equipped with that hope and knowing that there were no restoration homes specifically for victims of human trafficking and housing services right in her own back yard of Buffalo, New York, Kelly came back and founded Project Mona's House in 2018, and we've been going ever since," Bella said.

According to Kelly, speaking in a video, "Project Mona's House is a restoration home for women who have been victims of human trafficking. We say women are allowed to come in as victims and be transformed into survivors. By the time they leave, they are overcomers. We have a love that is so fierce that it moves mountains. Inside the freedom center, we invite dynamic speakers to come and pore into the lives of the women that we serve. We provide workforce development, financial training, mental health counseling and coaching, life coaching. We also provide different things like clubs: a plant club, a book club, movie club. Any club that the women want to start and run themselves. The Freedom Center is a place where people get their hope back. It's a place where people get their faith back, not just in God or humanity, but even in themselves."

Kelly added, "We have an adult program. We have an adult housing program, and we have a youth prevention program, as well. Then we have outreach, where I speak to 20,000 Western New Yorkers every year, most of those being high school kids because we know the average age of entry. We prevent youth from being trafficked right here in Western New York.

"We reach out to girls that we know because of their identities, because of their statuses, maybe because of their family history, that they are vulnerable," Bella said. "They are in grades 3-12, and we pour into them, as much as we can. All our girls receive free mental health counseling and so do their families. It's important not just to heal the individual, but to heal the whole home.

"We have a residential program that's over two years. It's so in depth, so wrap around that, by the time they leave us, over 90% of the women own their own homes. Ain't no program like us in the country or in the world even.

"Beyond that, we have the Freedom Center. Three days a week, people come to our offices and they receive mental health counseling, art therapy, and all the great therapies Julie listed. There is such a great need that one place cannot do it all."

You can find Project Mona's House's website at <https://www.projectmonashouse.com/>



Bella LaFreniere speaks about human trafficking and the promise of healing at Project Mona's House in Buffalo



Grand Island Lions Club Celebrated New Members, Prestigious Awards, and Generous Community Support

Grand Island, NY — The Grand Island Lions Club proudly welcomed seven new members, celebrated outstanding community service, and received a generous donation during a spirited dinner and awards ceremony held July 11th at the historic Buffalo Launch Club.

Lion Kelly McGarvey was honored with the prestigious Robert J. Uplinger Distinguished Service Award, and Lion Paul Krupa received the distinguished Melvin Jones Fellowship, one of the highest recognitions in Lions International. Special recognition was also given to author John Loss, who was presented with a Melvin Jones Fellowship, and Brigitte Heintz, Director of the Grand Island Memorial Library, who received a Robert J. Uplinger Award. Both honorees have made exceptional contributions to the community through advocacy, education, and engagement.

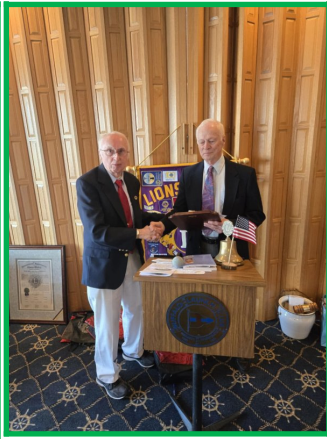
Joining the ranks of the Grand Island Lions are Brian and Ashley Kopf, Wendy Menter, Liz Blundell, Tim Pelletier, and Kyle and Tom Rusert Jr., adding fresh energy and commitment to the Lions' service mission.

Adding to the celebration, Niagara Frontier Antique and Classic Boats made a generous donation to support the Club's beloved annual Kids Picnic. The contribution, presented by Sharon Dickenson and Rocky Nagel, will help ensure a memorable event for local children this summer.

The evening concluded with WNY Lions District Governor-Elect Jeremy Schnurr officiating the swearing-in of the Club's officers and newly inducted members for the upcoming Lions year beginning July 1.

The Grand Island Lions Club continues to uphold its 69 year mission of service, dedication, and leadership in making our community and the world a better place to live in. It is with much thanks and gratitude to the Grand Island community for its unwavering support and commitment to our activities.

Lion Tom Witkowski



New members and their sponsors.



Awardees: Upper left, Lion Paul Krupa (Melvin Jones), upper right, John Loss (Melvin Jones), left Bridgitte Heintz for the GI Memorial Library (Uplinger). Not Shown, Kelly McGarvey received the Uplinger Award..



Top, current Board of Directors. Left, Incoming and outgoing presidents Lions Tom Rusert and Jim Ryan



Sharon Dickenson presents a generous donation from the Niagara Frontier antique and Classic Boat Club to incoming Lions President Tom Rusert.



A priest, a pastor and a rabbit walked into a blood donation clinic.
 The nurse asked the rabbit: "What's your blood type?"
 "I am probably a type O" said the rabbit.



Please return your empties to Bottle and Can Retrieval Center 2447 Grand Island Blvd, Grand Island, **Grand Island Can and Bottle Retrieval Center is now tracking our donations when items are left for them to credit our account.**



Donations for the Neighbors Foundation are on the upswing so please continue to bring any of the listed items to our meetings or drop off Tops gift cards, food items and checks/cash to me and I will deliver to them. They are also in need of diapers, toiletries and personal care items.

Thank you, Lion Tom Rusert



New Members!

- Liz Blundell
- Brian and Ashley Kopf
- Wendy Menter
- Tim Pelletier
- Kyle and Tom Rusert Jr.

Stuart Sports has many styles and colors of polo shirts along with other apparel available. Stop in and peruse their catalogs and request that the Grand Island Lions logo be applied to your selection.



It's just a short drive to Lewiston: Stuart Sports 486 Center St. Lewiston, NY (716-754-4895)

<http://www.stuartsportsinc.com/>

Lion Tom Rusert

Thanks to Lions Tom Rusert, Jim Ryan, Donna Lavalley, Dick Crawford, Alice Gerard, and Tom Witkowski for contributions to this newsletter. The deadline for the September Newsletter is Friday August 29th. If you have material for the newsletter, you can e-mail it to Lion Dave Chervinsky, the editor/publisher at:

grandislandliondave@gmail.com.

Visit us at: www.gilions.com.

See our facebook page at: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/GILIONSCLUB>



- Paul Bassette
- Thomas J Rusert
- Jenny Bagen
- Mark Frentzel
- Paul Krupa
- Kyle Rusert
- Mary C. Vari
- Donna Lavalley
- Elizabeth Blundell
- Wendy Menter