

## **Festival Returns to Lake Front Park July 10; Buffer Strip Garden Dedication at Noon**

COOPERSTOWN: When the Otsego Lake Festival returns next month after a one-year hiatus to its original location – Cooperstown's Lake Front Park – it will do so with a new name, a broader message, familiar favorites and several special highlights.

Now called the Otsego LAKES Festival, this event is traditionally a day of educational outreach with a focus on water quality. Once a celebration that recognized Otsego Lake and its vital role to the region as the source of the Susquehanna River, from here forward the festival will focus as well on Otsego County's other major water bodies, including Canadarago and Goodyear lakes, and their importance.

Organized under the umbrella of Otsego County's Water Quality Coordinating Committee, the Otsego Lakes Festival offers all the components of a festive occasion – music, art, children's activities, good food and camaraderie – while providing valuable educational opportunities about lake protection and regional water quality programs from those who work to protect these resources. Personnel from WQCC member organizations will be on hand both to distribute literature and to discuss water quality issues one-on-one with interested parties.

In 2009, due to a lack of funding, a more limited Lake Appreciation Day event was held at Glimmerglass State Park. On Saturday, July 10, the Otsego Lakes Festival will offer an expanded educational program for 2010, including a children's tent and watershed stewardship workshops on a variety of topics – rain gardens, lawn and garden maintenance, shore-line restoration, water conservation strategies, and more. The event will also honor Dr. Ted Peters, who has recently stepped down from the WQCC, for his steadfast service to the region on behalf of water quality protection.

As part of the Otsego Lakes Festival, at noon the Lake and Valley Garden Club and the Otsego Lake Association will hold a dedication of the Buffer Strip Garden in Lake Front Park. Senator James Seward, Cooperstown Mayor Joe Boan, former Mayor Carol Waller and dignitaries from the Garden Club of America will be among the honored guests. The buffer strip has been a joint effort of the LVGC and OLA. Phase one of the project was initiated by OLA primarily to deal with the run-off from Pioneer Street into Otsego Lake and to provide a demonstration of the effectiveness of the buffer strip concept. After that, efforts were combined with LVGC to expand the project to span the entire frontage of the park, including a handicapped accessible boardwalk, native plantings, horticultural beautification, and plans for education about conservation and protection of lakes and streams.

Members of OLA and LVGC were assisted in this endeavor by volunteer contributions from numerous individuals and businesses who will be recognized at the dedication ceremony. Among these are the Otsego Area Occupational Center's Building Trades Program, the students of which built the boardwalk, and Lynn Marsh of Landscape Alternatives, who donated many hours of technical advice regarding plantings and ongoing maintenance of the garden. OLA and LVGC member Suzanne Kingsley, along with board members from both organizations, was instrumental in the design and execution of the garden. The contributions of the Village of Cooperstown and Cooperstown Graduate Program will also be recognized.

The Buffer Strip Garden has been the recipient of awards from the New York Federation of Lake Associations and College For Every Student, as well as the prestigious Founders' Fund Award from the Garden Club of America, which included a \$25,000 stipend for this project.

As in past years, the Otsego Lakes Festival will showcase non-profit groups from throughout the region that support water quality initiatives. Exhibits will detail local efforts to improve and safeguard water resources in Otsego County. The festival will also feature lake-related activities and entertainment, including:

- Water Quality/Ecology Barge Tours by SUNY-Oneonta Biological Field Station staff
- 17" x 22" signed and numbered limited edition 2010 Otsego Lakes Festival posters by Richard Duncan
- Fish printing station for children of all ages, by the Cooperstown Art Association
- Cooperstown Farmers' Market annex
- Commemorative Otsego Lake poster sales by Natura Productions
- Raffle, 10-piece wardrobe suitable for American Girl and all 18" dolls, by Molly Holtje
- Aquatic life touch tanks and "show and tell"
- Food by the Envirothon Committee and Hartwick American Legion Auxiliary
- Expanded children's education tent
- Educational exhibits by lake-focused organizations

Confirmed exhibitors and vendors at the Otsego Lakes Festival thus far are: Cooperstown Art Association; Cooperstown Farmers' Market; Richard Duncan, Photographer; Lake and Valley Garden Club; Natura Productions; Natural Resources Conservation Service; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; New York State Federation of Lake Associations; Otsego County Conservation Association; Otsego County Planning Department; Otsego Lake Association; Otsego Land Trust; Safe Kids of Otsego County; Stasilli Photography; SUNY-Oneonta Biological Field Station; Otsego 2000; and Otsego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee.

To date, Lakes Festival donors include: Bruce Hall Home Center, Church & Scott, Cooperstown Art Association, Richard Duncan, The Farmers' Museum, Tier French, Molly Holtje, Hubbell's Real Estate, Inc., Mrs. Suzanne Kingsley, Lake and Valley Garden Club, Michael and Carol Manno, Richard McCaffery, Mohican Flowers, Natura Productions, New York State Historical Association, Otsego Boating Association, Otsego County Conservation Association, Otsego Lake Association, Otsego Land Trust, Otsego 2000, William H. and George-Ann Ryland, Safe Kids of Otsego County, SUNY-Oneonta Biological Field Station, and Wilber National Bank.

The OCWQCC was established in 1992 as a sub-committee of the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District. It is comprised of a diverse group of people representing state and local government agencies, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and lake associations. These members have technical expertise and knowledge and are committed to working to improve and maintain the quality of water in Otsego County through the reduction of nonpoint source pollution within its boundaries.

For more about the Otsego Lakes Festival, or for further details on sponsorship and volunteer opportunities, contact Darla M. Youngs at (607) 547-4488 or visit the OCCA website, [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org).

**Photo caption:** Photographer Richard Duncan created this year's Otsego Lakes Festival commemorative poster. Signed and numbered limited edition posters will be available at \$100 each, with smaller prints priced at \$20. All proceeds go the Lakes Festival.