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Record Breaking Numbers in Niagara Falls

Resurgence on Old Falls Street contributes to Tourism Increase

USA Niagara Development Corporation announced that summer tourism numbers are up in Niagara Falls. This summer is living proof that the region is on the move. New businesses, festivals, concerts, games, food and many other amenities in downtown Niagara Falls are complementing and contributing to the growing popularity of this iconic destination.

There have already been more visitors this year than there were in all of 2014. The year-to-date (YTD) is up 154 percent from last year. The Niagara USA Official Visitor Center assisted 11,687 guests during the month of June, a 100 percent increase over last June's numbers. The month of August was even higher, with a 196 percent increase over last year's figures. 7,679 visitors were seen in the Niagara USA Official Visitor Center in 2014 compared to a massive 22,763 just last month. This is very indicative of what is taking place throughout the Niagara Falls destination this summer.

"Through investments in the park and critical infrastructure, including the Robert Moses Parkway, we are improving access to arguably the greatest waterfront in the world for the community and visitors alike," said Congressman Brian Higgins. "Progress has grown out of a greater collaboration among leaders and a new energy driven by the great residents of Niagara Falls."

"The Niagara Falls tourism industry is continuing to grow, providing new jobs and strengthening our local economy," said Mayor Paul Dyster. "All of the additional development coming online will extend both the stay of our guests and the length of our season, providing greater benefit to our local families."

The tourism industry is expanding here, with a progressively more diverse downtown district to serve visitors to the Falls. Hotel occupancy in Niagara Falls is up 5% and the average daily rate is up 2.3% YTD. Old Falls Street is now home to one of downtown Niagara Falls' newest restaurants, the Rainforest Café, and this season alone, downtown Niagara Falls welcomed a number of other new establishments, including the Wingate Inn by Wyndham, Tony Roma's Restaurant, and The Great American Arcade, with several more hotels and restaurants under construction.

"Niagara Falls is one of WNY's crown jewels and a major economic driver that attracts tourists from across the globe. The rising number of visitors coming to experience the stunning views, natural beauty and wonder of the Falls is a testament to our region's allure, and it's vital that we

build on our progress and continue the city's ongoing revitalization," said Assemblyman John Ceretto. "As a former worker at Niagara Falls State Park, I know firsthand the importance of investing in one of our greatest assets and preserving our natural treasures for future generations. Moving forward, I will continue working with the governor and my colleagues in the Legislature to ensure our region remains a vibrant, world-class tourism destination."

On any given day, the colorful Adirondack chairs and lawn were filled all along Old Falls Street, which was fully restored in 2010 and each year grows in the number of activities and events being offered. The Imagination Playground was a huge hit amongst youngsters, letting their imaginations run wild while building a masterpiece play structure. The Back Yard Board Games was another attraction for visitors of all ages. Table tennis, football, large-scale Jenga, chess, checkers and hopscotch were all offered to those up for a challenge.

The *Flicks on Old Falls* movie program, one of the first outdoor film series in the region just ended its 5th successful season and continues to be a great family-friendly activity. BlueCross BlueShield of WNY is to credit for much of Old Falls's success. As presenting sponsor of Flicks on Old Falls, BCBS offered the Healthy Zone Cruiser as part of the family free entertainment prior to each Thursday evening flick. BCBS provided many options for fitness enthusiasts, including hula hoops, bean bags, Kan Jam, yoga balls, soccer balls, sidewalk chalk, jump rope and many more. Friday evening offerings included a concert series followed by fireworks. Carrie G and The Runaways wrapped up the final concert performance last week. TGI Fridays, located inside the Sheraton At The Falls was the major sponsor for this event.

"Old Falls Street was honored to partner with BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York and TGI Fridays inside the Sheraton At The Falls hotel to provide free well-rounded family entertainment for our guests throughout the summer," said Spectra's Jason Murgia, general manager of Old Falls Street, USA. "With the help of these wonderful sponsors, our Flicks on Old Falls movie series was able to feature additional children's performers each week and our Friday night concert series continued to attract a strong following from both local and visiting guests."

The Old Falls Street Touch-a-Truck Weekend, fast becoming a tradition downtown, again welcomed hundreds of young people and their parents to learn about a variety of firefighting equipment, emergency vehicles and other larger-than-life trucks to see how first responders ride in style. Over Labor Day weekend, Old Falls Street welcomed The Taste of Niagara which featured 25 local restaurants. All of the fun happenings this summer is the reason why Old Falls Street USA made the list of top 15 things to do in Niagara Falls USA.

The fun isn't ending just because the temperatures are lowering. There are many new events to be excited about as we head into autumn. The 9th Annual Niagara Falls Blues Festival will kick off its festivities tomorrow with a Classic Car and Bike Cruise at Old Falls Street, and will feature 20 free acts over four days, including the Fabulous Thunderbirds. On October 3rd, people can enjoy the day-long Old Falls Street Oktoberfest celebration while sampling German cuisine, a variety of local craft beers and live entertainment mixed with a good dose of traditional audience participation.

About USA Niagara Development Corporation

A subsidiary of Empire State Development Corporation, is solely dedicated to the support and promotion of economic development initiatives in Niagara Falls by leveraging private investment and encouraging growth and renewal of the tourism industry in the City of Niagara Falls.