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Ring in the New Year at First Night Buffalo

Annual drug- and alcohol-free event marks 30 years of New Year's festivities downtown

BUFFALO, N.Y. (Dec. 14, 2018) – The Western New York community is invited to join the Independent Health Foundation as they present the 30th annual First Night® Buffalo, the ultimate drug- and alcohol-free New Year's Eve celebration. This year's event will be held from 5 to 10 p.m., Monday, Dec. 31, at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.

The Independent Health Foundation and its partners gave a sneak peak of this year's lineup at a media event Friday at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. The annual holiday tradition offers safe, family-friendly activities for all ages to ring in the New Year.

As always, the event will feature plenty of rides and amusements. Popular returning attractions include Hybrid Fitness – Ninja Warrior Academy, Jeff Musial – The Animal Guy, the Bubble Black Light Dance Party, drum line DownBeat Percussion (you may also recognize them as the Buffalo Bills Stampede), the Toddler Zone, and Storybook Characters.

New attractions this year include laser tag, ComedySportz, and even more rides and bounce houses.

To cap off the event at 9:45 p.m. there will be a special countdown with In Jest Variety Show featuring Nels Ross, followed by a confetti- and balloon-drop.

First Night Buffalo, which draws approximately 5,000 people from the city and suburbs each year, has outlived many similar events across the country.

A group of artists and civic-minded citizens founded First Night in Boston in 1976 as an alternative to traditional New Year's Eve festivities. WNY United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse, in cooperation with Rich Products, initiated First Night in downtown Buffalo on Dec. 31, 1989.

The "first" First Night featured the up-and-coming Goo Goo Dolls, the Ramrods, Outer Circle Orchestra, blues musician Billy McEwen, comedy shows, dance performances, and more. The former Marine Midland Bank sponsored a "Light the Night" procession down Court Street.

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Ring in the New Year at First Night Buffalo/Page 2 of 2

In 1992, Independent Health, through its Foundation, secured the event and has proudly presented it for the past 27 years, said Carrie Meyer, executive director of the Independent Health Foundation.

“For some perspective, when the ‘first’ First Night debuted Dec. 31, 1989, the Bills led the AFC East heading into the playoffs, Jimmy Griffin was mayor of Buffalo, Phil Housley played for the Sabres, and a gallon of gas cost 97 cents,” she remarked. “First Night has truly survived the test of time.”

Michael W. Cropp, M.D., president and chief executive officer of Independent Health, added, “Independent Health is pleased to continue to sponsor First Night Buffalo, a mainstay event in our region, which engages our community in healthy, fun, and safe activities to ring in the New Year. I hope families leave our First Night celebration with lasting memories and feel inspired to participate in healthy activities throughout the year.”

Mayor Byron W. Brown also lent his support and encouraged families to come out for the event.

"The year 2018 will be soon coming to an end, and for those looking for a fun, responsible way to bring in the new year, please consider attending First Night Buffalo," said Brown. "The Independent Health Foundation has been committed to providing an alcohol- and drug-free New Year's Eve celebration that has become a tradition for families, city residents, and visitors in Buffalo. This is a great way to bring in 2019 on a good note."

Tickets are now on sale exclusively at www.firstnightbuffalo.org. Buy early and save or purchase tickets at the door for \$15. Tickets include all entertainment and activities. Admission for children ages 2 and under is free.

Free parking is available for attendees at the Fernbach and Main Place Mall parking ramps, thanks to the Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps, Buffalo Board of Parking, and Mayor Brown.

For more information and a complete schedule of events, visit the First Night Buffalo website at www.firstnightbuffalo.org, or call (716) 635-4959. Visit us on Facebook at facebook.com/IndependentHealthFoundation to see the latest news and event information.

First Night Buffalo is presented by the Independent Health Foundation and sponsored by WKBW-TV Channel 7, Independent Health, *The Buffalo News*, and Lamar.

Established in 1992, the Independent Health Foundation works to improve the health and well-being of Western New York residents through awareness, prevention, education and other programs focused on community health priorities. For more information on the Foundation's activities, visit www.independenthealth.com/foundation.

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