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Celebrate the New Year at First Night Buffalo

23rd annual drug- and alcohol-free event kicks-off New Year festivities downtown

BUFFALO, N.Y. (December 1, 2011) – Kick-off the New Year at Independent Health Foundation’s First Night Buffalo® - Western New York’s ultimate drug- and alcohol-free New Year’s Eve celebration - from 5 to 10 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 31, at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.

The annual holiday family tradition is celebrating its 23rd year in downtown Buffalo with activities for all ages to ring in the New Year. The Foundation and its partners announced this year’s First Night Buffalo lineup at a press event Thursday at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. Our acts include the comedy of improvisation with Wacky Chad, contortionist Aidan Orange, world famous hypnotist Jerry Valley, rides and amusements, Storybook Land, laser tag, music, exotic reptiles, the grand finale balloon drop with indoor fireworks, and more.

“Western New York families have celebrated a drug and alcohol-free New Year’s Eve at First Night Buffalo for more than 20 years,” said Carrie Meyer, executive director, Independent Health Foundation. “It’s an annual tradition for many families and we enjoy seeing them come back year after year. The Independent Health Foundation, along with Western New York United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse, is pleased to continue presenting this fun, affordable and safe event. We’ve got another great lineup of entertainment we think everyone will enjoy this year.”

“First Night Buffalo is one of our region’s mainstay events and we’re pleased to support this event each year with our dedicated sponsors and volunteers,” said Michael W. Cropp, M.D., president and chief executive officer, Independent Health. “This holiday tradition provides a healthy, positive and fun environment to start the New Year and we hope to see thousands of Western New Yorkers at this year’s event.”

WNY United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse is once again teaming up with the Independent Health Foundation to help spread the alcohol- and drug-free message in the community this holiday season.

“WNY United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse is excited to help produce the 23rd Annual First Night Buffalo event,” said Jessica Lafalce, communications coordinator, WNY United. “We work diligently each day to carry forward the message of living a life without drugs and First Night Buffalo is the ideal event to accomplish this goal. We encourage healthy choices and are thrilled to be part of providing families in Western New York a safe and fun place to celebrate. A family-focused event that showcases art, amusements and performances *and* a drug-free life - what a great way to ring in the New Year!”

Also at First Night, WiNnY, a life-size drug-free Buffalo, will showcase WNY United’s new “Fly Above the Influence” campaign for the New Year. Area school children will create wings that will be attached to WiNnY as a symbol that they will pledge to “Fly Above the Influence of drugs and alcohol.” Each decorated wing offers hope for a safe and drug-free year. WiNnY is made possible through Evans Bank. WiNnY will continue to unite the herd by traveling to different WNY United partner schools and Evans Bank locations throughout the coming year.

The \$8 event tickets, which go on sale Dec. 1 at all area Wegmans locations, include all rides, attractions and activities. Children 2-years-old and under are free. Tickets are \$10 at the door. Free parking is available at the Fernbach and Main Place Mall parking ramps, courtesy of Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps, Buffalo Board of Parking and Mayor Byron W. Brown.

“First Night Buffalo has become a popular family friendly holiday tradition that marks the passage of time with a drug and alcohol free celebration,” said Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown. “I am proud to support and be a part of this positive event which brings our community together. On behalf of city residents, I want to thank the leadership and staff at the Independent Health Foundation and WNY United Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse for their commitment and dedication to our community’s health and well-being, by providing this fun and safe way to ring in the New Year.”

For more information and a schedule of events, visit the First Night Buffalo website at firstnightbuffalo.org, visit us on Facebook, or call (716) 635-4959. Like us on Facebook and see frequent updates on this year’s lineup. Search “Independent Health Foundation.”

First Night Buffalo is presented by the Independent Health Foundation and Western New York United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse and sponsored by Channel 7, Independent Health, M&T Bank, Wegmans, The Buffalo News, VSP Marketing Graphic Group, 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.