There's No Place Like Home: Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

PATTY RITCHIE   August 1, 2016

Just recently, I had the opportunity to take part in the 56th annual Ogdensburg International Seaway Festival Parade, an event that celebrates the local community, and the North Country region as a whole. This year, the parade's theme was "There's No Place Like Home"—a sentiment that rings true for me, and for so many others who have built their lives in the Central and Northern New York.

Events like this remind us just how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful, unique part of our state with dedicated, close knit community members. The Ogdensburg International

Seaway Festival is just one of summer's highlights. Before the season ends, I wanted to share some of the things that top my summer to-do list and demonstrate why our region is such a special place to live:

Boldt Castle and Singer Castle: Our region is home to two amazing castles, Boldt Castle on Heart Island in Alexandria Bay and Singer Castle on Dark Island in Chippewa Bay. Both are open to the public and accessible by private boat or tour boats. For more information, visit www.boldtastle.com or www.singercastle.com.

Fort Ontario State Historic Site: For more than 250 years, Fort Ontario has been an important part of history, and the City of Oswego. The site played an important role throughout the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812. Throughout WWII, it was used by the United States Army, and from 1944 to 1946, it served as the only refugee camp in the country for mostly Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Today, the Fort is open to the public and hosts a number of special events throughout the summer. You can find out more information by visiting www.fortoswego.com.

New York State Parks: From Southwick Beach State Park in Henderson to Coles Creek State Park in Waddington and Selkirk Shores State Park in Pulaski, Central and Northern New York are home to a number of great State Parks. These scenic gems offer everything from campsites to fishing opportunities. I invite you to learn more about them at www.parks.ny.gov.

Bill Johnston's Pirate Days: Join the Village of Alexandria Bay in celebrating the adventurous life of Bill Johnston, a pirate who hid out in the Thousand Islands during the 19th century. For 10 full days, from August 12th through the 21st, events including a pirate invasion, live music, children's activities and more will take place in the Village. Check out a full schedule events at www.visitalexbay.org.

A weekend of music and art in Oswego County: In August, art and music will come alive in the Oswego County, as the community will celebrate the CNY Arts Center's Arts Fest and the annual Fulton Jazz Festival. Taking place on August 13th at the Fulton War Memorial, Arts Fest will feature artists and artisan vendors, food and music. The Fulton Jazz Fest will take place on August 12th and 13th on the shore of Lake Neahtahwanta, behind the War Memorial. For more info on these exciting events, visit www.visitoswegocounty.com.

Old Fashioned Harvest Days Exhibition: As summer draws to a close, the St. Lawrence Power and Equipment Museum will host its annual Old Fashioned Harvest Days Exhibition. Held on September 3rd and 4th, this event will feature live equipment demonstrations, tractor and horse pulling competitions, children's events and more. For full details, visit www.slpowermuseum.com.

These are just a few of the places and events that make summer in Central and Northern New York so enjoyable. For more information on other community happenings, I encourage you to visit or call your local chamber of commerce. If you have a favorite summertime event or tradition you would like to tell me about, I invite you to email me at ritchie@nysenate.gov, or find me on Facebook.

(Senator Ritchie is pictured at the Ogdensburg International Seaway Festival Parade in the above photo)