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Contact: Jackie Schillinger | 518-281-5510 | jackie.schillinger@nypa.gov

New York Power Authority and New York State Canal Corporation Announce the “On the Canals Accessibility Education Program” Will Continue for a Second Year

Successful Launch of Program Educated “On the Canals” Providers

Program Aims to Ensure Accessibility Across the New York State Canal System

The New York Power Authority and New York State Canal Corporation today announced the “On the Canals Accessibility Education Program” will continue for a second year. The expansion of this initiative follows a successful first year of Rochester Accessible Adventures teaching and training “On the Canals” excursion providers. Through this program, businesses are receiving the correct tools and knowledge they need to ensure their facilities and programming are fully accessible for all who seek to enjoy recreation on the 524-mile New York State Canal system.

“As the ‘On the Canals’ programming continues to evolve, working to ensure that people of all abilities can enjoy its offerings is the next logical step in its evolution,” said **New York Power Authority President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll**. “Opening access to more people has benefitted ‘On the Canals’ and New York State in many ways, including increasing participation numbers in programming; increasing patronage of local businesses; and, in turn, giving a boost to local economies.”

Through the education program, Rochester Accessible Adventures, along with NYPA and Canals has been working with “On the Canals” excursion providers to evaluate their current systems of including people with disabilities. The first round recently concluded. Rochester Accessible Adventures conducted a site visit with each program participant to develop a Strategic Inclusion Action Guide for removing barriers that inhibit inclusive participation and support the development and implementation of operational practices, then met regularly with each provider offering guidance on implementation. These efforts are intended to allow people with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities to fully engage in all program offerings alongside their family and friends - now and in the future. Each Action Guide was customized for the provider, including actions for reviewing the provider’s mission and values, training, promotion, website design, policies, physical considerations of the provider’s space and surroundings, and introduction to applicable nationwide grant opportunities.

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, “The canal corridor, between its waterways and trails, offer countless ways for people to get outside and explore. ‘On the Canals’ makes those opportunities even easier, and removing barriers to participation through our collaborative work with Rochester Accessible Adventures is now allowing everyone – not just some – to enjoy this beloved and historic gem.”

Over the past year, the “On the Canals Accessibility Education Program” has achieved many milestones, including:

- 533 hours of initial inclusion training and assessments
- Training for staff from 29 program providers
- Extensive adaptive equipment training
- Designation of Inclusion Points of Contact
- Social media and community connections training
- Engagement at various outreach events

New York State Chief Disability Officer Kimberly Hill Ridley said, “I commend the New York Power Authority and the Canal Corporation on the one-year anniversary of their ‘On the Canals Accessibility Education Program’ in partnership with Rochester Accessible Adventures. This collaboration has helped create increased participation of people with disabilities - both for New Yorkers and for those visiting our great state - in free recreational, educational and creative offerings and has reduced barriers to access for all. Increasing inclusion opportunities all along the historic New York Canal system enhances our communities and promotes equitable engagement in society. I look forward to the growth and expansion of this program for many years to come.”

New York Power Authority Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer Nancy Harvey said, “Expanding our 'On the Canals' programming to welcome a broader audience benefits everyone—from the providers and neighboring businesses to, most importantly, participants of all abilities. This initiative allows more people to enjoy the canals with their friends and family, creating new opportunities for connection and enjoyment that were previously inaccessible. I am excited to witness the positive outcomes as we move into the program’s second year.”

Rochester Accessible Adventures Executive Director Anita O’Brien said, “The Accessibility Education Program is truly a transformative game-changer. We are encouraged by an amazing increase in physical access to ‘On the Canals’ activities, and we are loving the radical shifts in awareness and knowledge that are manifesting in intentional operational changes that welcome participation by people who are now, many for the first time, joining in the delightful array of inclusive experiences across the Canal system.”

Additional program initiatives include assisting participants in securing more grant funding to broaden their initiatives, improving participant websites with enhanced accessibility

features and detailed amenity descriptions, and fostering greater community involvement and outreach with organizations that serve individuals with disabilities.

Now in its sixth season, “On the Canals” offers a variety of free activities, most of which are inclusive, including kayaking, cycling, boat tours, birding, wildlife hikes, and painting. To learn more about “On the Canals” and the accessible adventures already available, please visit the program’s [website](#).

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About NYPA

NYPA is the largest state public power organization in the nation, operating 17 generating facilities and more than 1,550 circuit-miles of transmission lines. More than 80 percent of the electricity NYPA produces is clean renewable hydropower. NYPA finances its operations through the sale of bonds and revenues earned in large part through sales of electricity. For more information visit www.nypa.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Tumblr](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About the New York State Canal Corporation

New York’s Canal system includes four historic canals: the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga – Seneca. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. The canals form the backbone of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and connect hundreds of unique communities.

The New York State Canal Corporation is a subsidiary of the New York Power Authority.

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