

# Press-Republican

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## Revival seizes Ti

### Programs aimed at revitalizing Ticonderoga's business district

By LOHR McKINSTRY

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--- — Empty storefronts have been replaced with new businesses as multiple programs take effect in what some are calling a revival of Ticonderoga's downtown business district.

The community has become an exciting place, says Ticonderoga Montcalm Street Partnership Chairman Sue Rathbun.

"Our Ti Montcalm Street Partnership volunteer corps is really on the move this spring, sponsoring a lot of projects for downtown improvement."

One of those endeavors is seeking sponsors and artists to participate in street art this summer on Montcalm Street.

"The project calls for 'mustering' numerous sponsors to finance 6-foot wooden soldier cutouts to be decorated by area artists and displayed along both sides of the street from the Liberty Monument to the Heritage Museum," Rathbun said.

The unpainted wooden cutouts are created by craftsman George DeMers of Adirondack Furniture by George and several are already in front of his shop.

"I've been making them for a while," he said. "What could be better with Fort Ti 2 miles away? For tourists, it's eye candy. It gets their attention."

#### WOODEN SOLDIERS

Getting visitors downtown and getting their attention is what they want to do, Rathbun said.

"This street art project will be similar to the projects featured in Saratoga and Bennington, Vt., where artists have decorated everything from fiberglass horses to moose and pigs. The Promotion Committee volunteers thought it most fitting for Ticonderoga's main street and important gateway to Fort Ticonderoga to be lined with wooden soldiers."

Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Barbara Brassard said a painted soldier will soon grace the front of the chamber building.

"The Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce is happy to be working with Ticonderoga Montcalm Street Partnership for the betterment of the commercial area. We have a lot planned for this summer."

Those events include the 18th-annual Classic and Antique Car Show in Bicentennial Park on Aug. 8 and a Farmers Market from July through October at Moses Circle.

Besides DeMers' furniture store, there are several new businesses in downtown Ticonderoga, including a bookstore and consignment shop.

"Already, upon hearing about the project by word of mouth, over a dozen sponsors have indicated they will participate," Rathbun said. "We are willing to coordinate interested sponsors with artist volunteers who have indicated their willingness to help."

DeMers turns out unpainted soldiers for them for \$40 each but sells the painted versions for \$160.

"I use eight different colors of paint," DeMers said. "It's a lot of work. But they look striking."

Rathbun said that in the fall, all painted soldiers will be auctioned off at a social event with the proceeds to benefit future art projects and other downtown improvements. Potential sponsors or artists should call her at her place of business at 585-2244.

Rathbun Jewelers, operated by Rathbun and her husband, Howard, is celebrating its 70th year of business in the downtown area.

Mr. Rathbun said he's going to paint one of the wooden soldiers and is looking forward to having it ready before the second-annual Ticonderoga Streetfest.

## BIGGER, BETTER

The Streetfest is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, July 31, sponsored by the Montcalm Street Partnership.

"Streetfest is being brought back due to popular demand," Mrs. Rathbun said. "Last year was our first attempt at it, and based on its success and the many positive comments we received, we're striving to make it even bigger and better this year."

The street will be closed off from the Sunshine Laundry at Lake George Avenue to Glens Falls National Bank at Champlain Avenue.

Mrs. Rathbun said they are looking for arts and crafts vendors, restaurants, entertainers, school and civic groups, vintage car owners, boat dealers and others. Artisans who make unique handmade items are needed for the event, which attracted hundreds of visitors last year.

Beth Hill, the new executive director at Fort Ticonderoga, said she wants to work more closely with the community.

"Collaboration and joint programs are necessary to the success of our organization and community's well-being. We are indeed a team with the same goal in mind — to increase tourism to our area."

She said Fort Ticonderoga offers a unique opportunity for visitors to experience a place that played a major role in American history.

"We need to assess how our story as an organization can support community initiatives and together develop a collaborative plan that includes identity, marketing, education and quality of life. The plan should be part of a regional collaboration to increase tourism to the entire area."

Located in the business district, the Black Watch Memorial Library just completed an expansion project that added a new wing to the historic brick library. The added space will enable the library to expand its collections, and Glens Falls National Bank just donated \$2,000 to put toward filling those new shelves.

"It's like a different library," said Black Watch Board of Trustees President John McDonald Sr. "Everyone did a very good job. The downtown is looking great."

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