



**Erie Canal Harbor
Development
Corporation**

For Immediate Release: December 1, 2015

Contact:

Pamm Lent (Governor's Office) | pamm.lent@esd.ny.gov | (716) 846-8309 | (800) 260-7313

Laura Magee (ECHDC) | laura.magee@esd.ny.gov | (716) 846-8239 | (800) 260-7313

Canalside to Host Fifth Annual Holiday Celebration and Tree Lighting

Festivities include children's activities, visit from Santa, holiday music, discounts on skating with a non-perishable food item, free sapling trees for first 300 visitors and more

Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) invites the public to its Fifth Annual Holiday Celebration and Tree Lighting at Canalside from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday, December 4. This year's FREE celebration takes place at The Ice at Canalside presented by BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York, which opened last week for the winter season. The celebration will feature children's activities, holiday music, dance performances and more. The evening's highlights are the lighting of the beautiful Canalside holiday tree and a visit from Santa Claus, both courtesy of First Niagara Bank.

"Another holiday season is upon us and what better way to kick it off than the Fifth Annual Holiday Celebration and Tree Lighting at Canalside," said Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation President Robert Gioia. "With so many improvements and new amenities at The Ice at Canalside this year, there's always something unique to experience. We hope you join us for this fun, festive and family friendly event on the waterfront."

"First Niagara is committed to Buffalo's waterfront revitalization and the growth that is taking place in our city," said First Niagara Western New York Regional President Buford Sears. "We are proud to sponsor the holiday tree lighting and open skate nights at Canalside as our community celebrates the resurgence of our downtown this holiday season."

Santa Claus will arrive shortly after 5 p.m. on a Buffalo Fire Department fire truck and will stay on site for visits with good little boys and girls until 8 p.m. The 40 foot Canalside Holiday Tree, presented by First Niagara Bank, will be lit at 6:30 p.m. It will be decorated with more than 6,000 lights and blue, gold, silver and white ornaments. The tree will be surrounded by a festive holiday landscape that is sure to be a picture perfect setting for skaters and others looking to enjoy the season.

First Niagara and Canalside will provide mini sapling evergreen trees for the first 300 families. BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York will provide vouchers for free cups of hot chocolate to the first 500 individuals. Tiff Nature Preserve, Explore & More Children's Museum and Young Audiences Western New York (YAWNY) will be offering children's ornament, holiday card, and liquid nitrogen marshmallow making. Musical entertainment will be provided by Dickens Carolers, Theresa Quinn Trio, Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts, Old School B Boys, Brass Pro and Kickstart Rumble Acoustic. The Foxy Diamondz and Dance Spectrum will perform dance numbers. Sue O'Neil from Star 102.5 will serve as the emcee. Other entertainment includes Nick Presents Magic and Crowns & Gowns (two snow princesses).

Food and beverages will also be available for purchase. A few of the food vendors that will line up at The Ice at Canalside include The Flaming Fish, Buffalo's Best Catering, Taste of Puerto Rico and Duke's Donuts. The new Canalside Winter Pavilion presented by Cricket Wireless is heated and has food and merchandise vendors, including Just Fries (topped and loaded fries), Harborside Mercantile (waffles, popcorn, pizza, coffee), Bubbles & Brews (beer, wine and Pepsi products), as well as Buffalove and Canalside merchandise. Bryce's Winter Café (kiosk at The Ice entrance) will serve coffee, hot chocolate, pretzels and roasted nuts. Liberty Hound and 716 Food and Sport will also be open.

Even though the activities end at 8 p.m., open ice skating will be available until 10 p.m. The cost is \$6 for ages 13 plus, \$4 for ages 6-12 and free for 5 and under. Skate rental is \$4. Those who bring a non-perishable food item for the Food Bank of WNY will receive a \$1 discount on skate admission. Skate Great will be on site for skating lessons. A DJ will also provide music until 10 p.m.

More information on the schedule of events, parking and updates can be found at <http://www.canalsidebuffalo.com>. Visitors can take the NFTA Metro Rail to the Erie Canal Harbor Station stop; parking is available in adjacent parking ramps and lots.

About Canalside

Canalside is a growing regional destination and entertainment district, situated on 21 historic acres along downtown Buffalo's emerging waterfront on the Buffalo River. Canalside earns its name from its storied past, when the Erie Canal Harbor was built in 1825 as the western terminus of the Erie Canal. Until five years ago, the land was barren and inaccessible, but the area has been reclaimed by the state's Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation and developed with millions of dollars in public and private investment. With more than 1,000 yearly events and nearly 1 million annual visitors, Canalside is fast becoming the go-to place for in- and out-of-towners of all ages to learn, play and relax.

###