

Oneonta Mayor – 07-11-23

A Plaza Full of Possibilities

The soap bubbles drifted just beyond the 5-year old's reach, landing feet away... pop pop pop... in the shadow of her dad and big brother. They didn't notice, as the game of cornhole had all but consumed their attention.

A scant few yards away, a young mother was patiently explaining the nuances of a knight's movements to her young son, as he hoisted the 3-foot-tall chess piece in anticipated capture of his sister's bishop.

The gentle breeze that had teased the glistening orbs beyond extended fingers pushed the aroma of sizzling jerk-chicken from corner to corner in the cobblestone space.

Joe and JoAnn, a popular local duo, began a sing-along as they launched into a rendition of Warren Zevon's "Werewolves of London" ... (ah woooo!)

Bright red umbrellas provided cooling shade for the take-out diners and people-watchers seated at tables and on the surrounding benches.

Sounds idyllic, doesn't it?

This was the scene last Saturday.

Where, you might ask, was this magical place?

Muller Plaza in Downtown Oneonta, the previously empty venue that springs to life every Tuesday through Saturday, from 10am til 6pm.

Every day offers a different experience!

With a variety of free classes and demonstrations being continuously scheduled for the space, these next 10 weeks of "Muller Plaza Reimagined" will provide a unique chance to learn about the wonderful

opportunities for diversion, education, and entertainment that are offered in the area.

For those businesses and groups that would like to promote their yoga, or painting, crafting, sewing, or dance classes, sharing the experience with those in the plaza is an opportunity to increase your participating membership.

It's free and easy to get your group scheduled.

There's a simple application on All4Oneonta.com.

Similarly, those who would like to provide entertainments – from face painting, to henna tattooing, balloon tying, juggling, magic, singing, or the playing of instruments – charging a fee or displaying a tip jar is perfectly fine, (and even encouraged.)

The same holds true for crafts and food vendors.

All proposed uses of the plaza need to be scheduled, so again, I'll direct you to the application on All4Oneonta.com

Our hope is that with each new day, Muller Plaza's potential will grow organically, increasing in vibrancy and vitality as our creative neighbors begin to see the space as a blank canvas on which they can add their mark.

That was my experience a lifetime ago, when as a student putting myself through art school in Manhattan, I would gather my pens and paper and set up on a folding chair or park bench near a museum or in the park.

Caricatures. Five dollars.

Within a short time, I would attract a crowd.

Soon that gathering would be joined by all manner of street performers, musicians, vendors, and people selling ices or shish kebob.

Invariably, those impromptu gatherings became the “eye and ear candy” for couples and families who settled-in nearby, enhancing their enjoyment of the day.

We were “where the action was.” And it was as fun then as it is memorable to me now.

This experience is replicable.

The most engaging downtowns are the most successful, and many cities have embraced that notion.

Providing our visitors and our neighbors with reasons to linger in Muller Plaza, where they can open a “menu” to a full listing of every restaurant in the city (QR code provided), dine, relax, socialize, or even tap into our free Wi-Fi to do some work, will add energy to our downtown.

What could be better or more fun?

Muller Plaza is being reimagined.

I'll be there. I hope to see you there, too!