



P.O. Box 219, Waterford, NY 12188 ■ 518-237-7000 ■ www.eriecanalway.org

Erie Canalway Media Release

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Contact: Jean Mackay, Director of Communications and Outreach
518-237-7000, ext. 222 or 518-925-6721 (cell); jean_mackay@partner.nps.gov

Canalway Challenge Racks Up Big Miles

Congressman Tonko recognizes Capital Region Participants

WATERFORD, NY- Congressman Paul D. Tonko, representatives of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and Capital Region participants of the Canalway Challenge celebrated a significant milestone today at a reception at the Waterford Harbor Visitor Center: people from 24 US states, Puerto Rico, and Canada have pledged to walk, run, cycle, and paddle **300,000 miles along New York's canals and Canalway Trail** this year as part of the **Canalway Challenge**. The new program invites people to trace history while tracking miles to discover all they can do along New York's canals.

Congressman Paul D. Tonko said: "New York's Erie Canalway is a precious piece of our history filled with the markers of our heritage and the stories of diverse people and cultures who have come before us. Visiting this special place and learning more of our local history can give us a remarkable sense of perspective and a wisdom and strength that can only come from connecting deeply with our roots. My heartfelt congratulations to the hundreds of enthusiastic participants and affiliated organizations who have already completed the Canalway Challenge—I can think of no better way to celebrate and share in the unique history of this incredible heritage site than to come and experience it firsthand in the company of family and friends. Programs like this capture the true spirit of our National Heritage Areas and remind us why we must keep fighting to strengthen and support this and all of America's heritage areas, which is why I am sponsoring the National Heritage Area Act."

Since launching in May, **591 individuals, 229 family/groups, 29 organizations, and 600 Cycle the Erie Canal Bike Tour** participants have set their sights on completing a personal mileage goal along the canal this year. Participants choose 15 miles, 90 miles, 180 miles, or 360 miles.

"300,000 miles is the distance you'd travel if you drove from New York City to Los Angeles 107 times. That's how far you'd go if you flew from Paris to Shanghai 52 times, or rocketed to the moon and halfway back," said **Bob Radliff, Executive Director of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor**. "All those miles translate into improved health, increased canal tourism, and lots of fun."

A dedicated Canalway Challenge Facebook group and Instagram hashtag enable participants to share where they have been, where they are headed, and what they have discovered along the way. Some have lived here for years, but never explored the canals before. Others are going beyond their usual stretch of trail to see what other parts of the Canalway Corridor offer. Some had never walked a mile before.

John Robinson of Our Ability, Inc. received special recognition at the reception for helping to make the Canalway Challenge more inclusive. Robinson invited people with disabilities and their families and friends to participate in a **1st Mile Challenge** as he handcycled all 360 miles from Buffalo to Albany in July. Hundreds turned out along the journey to join him.

I LOVE NY Executive Director Ross D. Levi said, “We are happy that the Canalway Challenge continues to motivate so many people to experience this crown jewel of New York State tourism in new and exciting ways. As autumn descends and brings stunning foliage and crisp temperatures, we look forward to welcoming even more visitors to enjoy the Erie Canal.”

Brian U. Stratton, Director of the NYS Canal Corporation said: “The Erie Canalway Challenge has been a runaway success in getting more people to experience the history, heritage and many attractions in the canal corridor. We expect they’ll come back and hopefully bring friends and family with them to find out just how much there is to see and do.”

It’s not too late to sign up!

Late summer and fall are excellent times to be on the water and trail, with cooler temperatures and changing colors. Sign up at: www.canalwaychallenge.org

The Canalway Challenge is funded in part by a grant from Market New York through I LOVE NY, New York State’s Division of Tourism, as part of the state’s Regional Economic Development Council initiative. Additional sponsorship is provided by the New York State Canal Corporation.

ABOUT THE ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Nearly 200 years after its construction, the Erie Canal remains an iconic symbol of American ingenuity and determination. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor preserves our extraordinary canal heritage, promotes the Corridor as a world-class tourism destination, and fosters vibrant communities connected by more than 500 miles of waterway. It achieves its mission in partnership with the National Park Service, New York State agencies, non-profit organizations, local residents, and more than 200 communities across the full expanse of upstate New York.

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