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New York Power Authority and New York State Canal Corporation Launch On the Canals Accessibility Education Program

Initiative will Drive the Establishment of Inclusive Recreational Opportunities Across the Entire New York State Canal System

Video from Today's Announcement is Available [Here](#)

Photos are Available [Here](#)

The New York Power Authority (NYPA) and New York State Canal Corporation today announced the launch of the **On the Canals Accessibility Education Program**. This new initiative will work to establish inclusive recreational opportunities across the 524-mile New York State Canal system through a collaboration with Rochester Accessible Adventures.

“By providing training and support to small businesses seeking to grow their reach to include more participants, the On the Canals Accessibility Education Program will make the canal corridor an inclusive destination for tourism while supporting local economies,” said **New York Power Authority President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll**. “NYPA and the Canal Corporation are proud to partner with Rochester Accessible Adventures to provide the training, equipment, and marketing resources needed to ensure our ‘On the Canals’ providers are fully accessible and welcoming to all.”

Through the new education program, Rochester Accessible Adventures will work with “On the Canals” excursion providers to evaluate their current system of including people with disabilities. As part of a year-long comprehensive assessment, Rochester Accessible Adventures will make recommendations to each business on how to remove barriers that inhibit inclusive participation and support the development and implementation of operational practices that will enable people with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities to fully engage in all their program offerings year after year.

For each “On the Canals” business, Rochester Accessible Adventures will work with a core Inclusion Team to:

- Provide mentored training that enables that business to understand their operations through a lens of inclusion

- Develop and support the implementation of a Strategic Inclusion Action Plan with recommended strategies within a business' programming, policies, and operations that remove barriers to participation by people with disabilities
- Conduct intentional outreach and engagement of individuals living with a disability
- Establish a sustainable inclusion process to ensure equitable access year after year

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, "Earlier this year, we convened a meeting to explore ideas on how to make the Canal system more inclusive and accessible for people with and without disabilities. Today, through this new program, we are turning ideas into reality. The canal waterways and trails offer incredible opportunities for recreational exploration and our collaborative work with Rochester Accessible Adventures will allow all to enjoy this uniquely New York asset."

New York State Chief Disability Officer Kimberly Hill Ridley said, "I am beyond thrilled that the New York Power Authority and the New York State Canal Corporation are emphasizing the importance of people with disabilities having equal opportunities to enjoy one of our state's most beautiful features. I am also thrilled that Rochester Accessible Adventures is a key partner in this endeavor as they have established themselves as a tremendous resource in assisting people with disabilities to enjoy the Canal system to its fullest."

New York Power Authority Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer Nancy Harvey said, "Through this program, NYPA and the Canal Corporation are championing and prioritizing accessibility, demonstrating our commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and building a more equitable New York State. By working with Rochester Accessible Adventures, each of our 'On the Canals' providers will view their business through an inclusive lens that will allow them to welcome a broader audience to the canals and trails each year."

Rochester Accessible Adventures Executive Director Anita O'Brien said, "The need to ensure inclusive recreation experiences in one's hometown, as well as true, equitable choice in destination travel, has never been more urgent. With one in four Americans living with a disability, we must make inclusion and accessibility a priority – and the On the Canals Accessibility Education Program does just that. We are thrilled with the commitment and energy this program sparks!"

The education program was inspired by the first convening of the SUNY/Erie Canal Bicentennial Forum Series held this past April in Rochester. The forum focused on exploring ways local governments, businesses and recreational service providers could make the canal waterway and trails more accessible and welcoming for people with and without disabilities.

Now in its fifth season, “On the Canals” offers a variety of free activities 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 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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