

June

**\*\*\* For Release \*\*\***

## **FIRST ANNUAL LIGHT THE LAKES ATTRACTED CROWDS OF AT LEAST 250,000 AND IS EXPECTED TO GROW FOR 2009**

*CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY, NY* - Last year, ideal weather conditions welcomed a crowd estimated at approximately 250,000 for the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Light the Lakes - a spectacle event where we light the Chautauqua Sky in one of the largest fireworks displays in North America that can be seen from space. Spectators lined all sides of Chautauqua Lake, as far as the eye could see. Each community involved noticed a substantial increase of attendance to their local hotels, restaurants and events from 2007 to 2008 over Labor Day weekend. Between the seven communities involved (Bemus Point, Findley Lake, Jamestown, Lakewood, Mayville/Chautauqua, Midway State Park and Westfield & Barcelona), the following results were noted:

- ✦ Approximately 250,000 spectators total, resulting in an economic impact of \$6.1 million overall;
  - ✦ Lodging revenue and room occupancy doubled at some hotels while others experienced an increase of at least 15%;
  - ✦ Attendance to local community events had an increase of a minimum of 60% and even skyrocketed to 100% in some areas;
  - ✦ Several local vendors and business owners, for the first time ever, sold out of products;
  - ✦ Local farmers markets and specialty stores experienced their largest weekend ever;
- National and local TV/radio advertising and interviews provided thousands of media impressions for our region.

“If ever there was a year to promote, stimulate and revitalize our region it is now. This project was a huge success and a proven winner for everyone county wide,” said Dan Dalpra, Light the Lakes founder.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Light the Lakes will take place during Labor Day weekend with the big “take-off” on Sunday, September 6. Highlights include: a special performance from ABBAMANIA, featuring a tribute to the Swedish super group ABBA on the Floating Stage, Bemus Point, NY; air communication with special event pilot, Lou Nalbone, Jamestown Aviation Company; the lighting of the flares for the ‘Ring of Fire’; and new this year, Water Fires - all lead up to the grand finale!

At 10:10 p.m. – BLAST OFF – the spectacular lighting of the Chautauqua Sky begins. At each “take-off” location the fireworks will run simultaneously to a specially programmed music piece, broadcasted via radio feed. Enjoy a spectacle of fireworks as they dance over the lake in rhythm with the each beat of the music.

“Our plans for this year’s event are unfolding as we explore adding Water Fire displays, Special appearances from Astronaut’s, NASA Displays, securing more locations, and community events around the region” said Dalpra.

This year’s locations for “take off” include: Bemus Point (event headquarters), Findley Lake, Jamestown, Mayville/Chautauqua and Westfield/Barcelona, Jamestown Savings Bank Ice Arena.

Light the Lakes is sponsored by the Chautauqua Star, DFT Communications, Media One Group, and WGRZ TV, with support from Bemus Bay Pops, Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce, Chautauqua Lake Association, and County of Chautauqua Industrial Development Agency.

For more information on Light the Lakes, visit [www.ilovenylakes.com](http://www.ilovenylakes.com).