

Eyes on the sky

AMSTERDAM

Families gather to watch eclipse

BY ASHLEY ONYON

FULTON AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES — Streetlights came on several hours early in Amsterdam on the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge as the solar eclipse neared its peak.

“It was cool. It got dark at daytime, we’ve never seen that,” said Lilianna, 9, of Scotia.

She and her family were among the dozens of area locals gathered at the MVGO Bridge in Amsterdam to

watch the eclipse despite cloudy conditions on Monday afternoon.

As the clouds shifted, families would periodically exclaim, “you can see a little orange now” and other similar phrases of excitement as they peered into the sky through eclipse glasses.

“We could see every step up until the end. It was cloudy on and off, but still really cool,” Jennifer Sawicki said. She was there with her husband, Chris, and son, See **ECLIPSE**, Page A2



ASHLEY ONYON

Locals view the solar eclipse from the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge in Amsterdam on Monday.

Eclipse

Continued from page A1

Landon.

The couple probably would have kept their sixth-grader home from school for the once-in-a-lifetime experience had the Greater Amsterdam School District not closed schools for the eclipse.

“I wanted him to experience it and he’d be on the bus right now,” Jennifer Sawicki said.

Tara Holcomb brought her kids, Conner, 13 and Emmaleena, 8, to the bridge hoping the wide-open space would offer a better viewing experience than they would have from their home in Amsterdam.

The family said the sun gradually blocked by the moon reminded them of the Cheshire Cat from “Alice in Wonderland.”

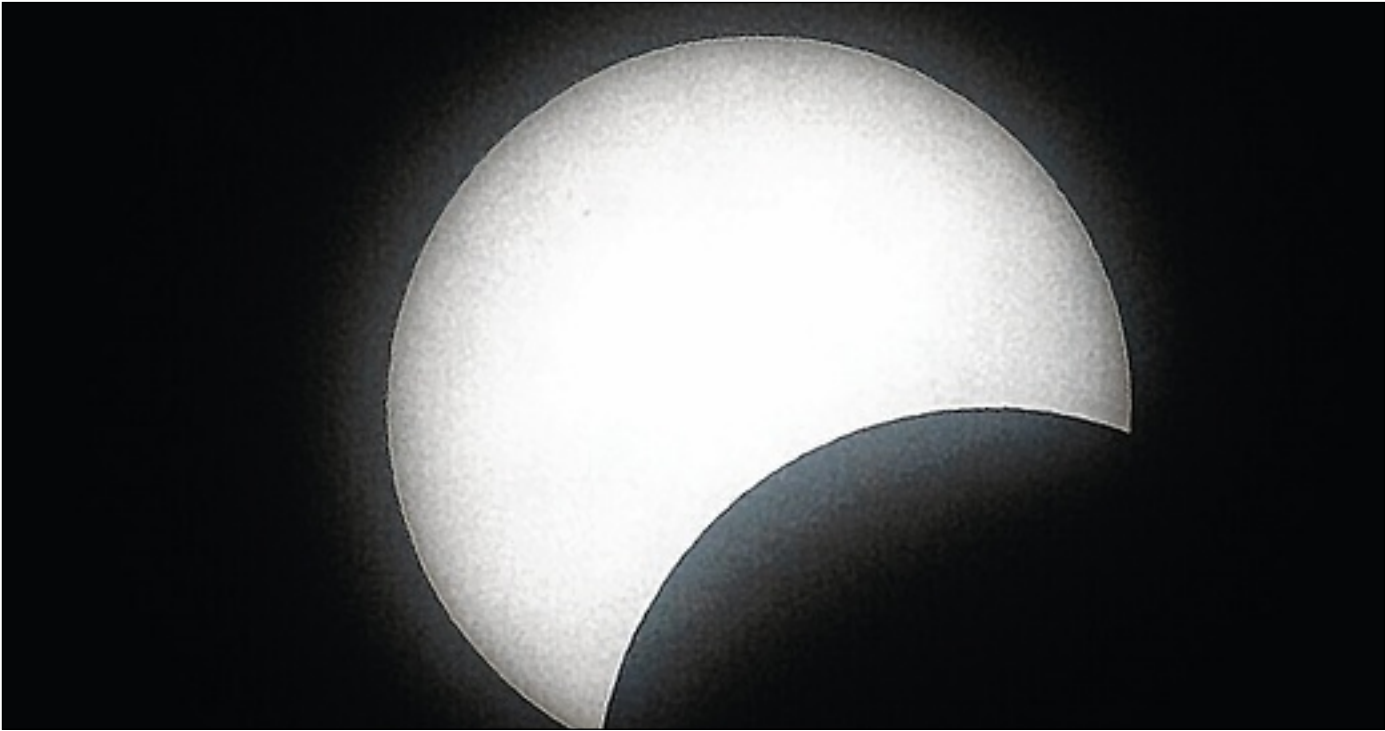
“It’s something you don’t see everyday,” Tara Holcomb said.

Although the roughly 98% coverage in the city didn’t bring the dramatic effect Conner Holcomb was hoping for, he and his sister agreed it was a worthwhile experience.

The gathering on the bridge was prompted by a Facebook event created by 4th Ward Alderman Christopher Carpenter.

“I love gatherings. Anything to bring people together is always a good thing,” Carpenter said, overjoyed at being surrounded by families with kids and pets roaming around.

Mayor Michael Cinquanti was among those at the bridge



PETER R. BARBER

The beginning of the eclipse Monday.

after closing City Hall at 2 p.m. to ensure non-essential staff had the chance to see the eclipse.

“It’s something you’ll always remember,” Cinquanti said. “I just wish the clouds cooperated a little bit better.”

A water main break on the South Side required the attention of water department staff into the afternoon. A boil water advisory was in effect following the restoration of water service.

Other watch parties were held at Rug City Bar and Lounge in Amsterdam, Great

Sacandaga Brewing Company in Broadalbin, Stump City Brewing in Gloversville and Northville Public Library in Northville.

In the hours before the eclipse, Carla Kolbe said traffic was flowing smoothly through the Vails Mills roundabout at Route 29 and 30 outside the Fulton County Visitor Center.

“Everybody is curious and excited. It’s a beautiful day here,” said Kolbe, tourism coordinator for Fulton County.

Still, Kolbe said traffic heading north on Route 30 towards

the Adirondacks was a little higher than usual for this time of year.

“I have a lot of traffic of people searching for eclipse glasses,” she added.

A variety of travelers and locals stopped by or called the visitor center searching at the last minute for the filtered glasses to safely view the phenomenon.

Anne Boles, executive director of the Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce, said local supplies had largely run out by the day of the eclipse.

“The businesses who invested in glasses are all sold out. The libraries and schools have helped families take advantage of this once in a lifetime viewing of the eclipse,” Boles said.

Libraries in Amsterdam, Canajoharie, Fonda, Gloversville, Johnstown and Northville had all run out by the day of the eclipse.

Many area schools were closed on Monday to avoid traffic issues related to the eclipse starting around dismissal time, while ensuring students and families could experience it.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to view the eclipse. I think we really lucked out with the weather,” Boles said.

While full details on the impact of the eclipse on local tourism were not immediately available, Boles and Koble said hotels saw an increase in bookings in Fulton County.

“People were coming in for the eclipse,” Kolbe said.

Historic Hotel Broadalbin was fully booked. Occupancy at the Holiday Inn in Johnstown was up around 60%. The Inn at the Bridge in Northville had only two vacancies.

Paul McAvoy estimated three to four times the number of regular visitors passed through the Mohawk Valley Welcome Center on the state Thruway between Fonda and Canajoharie.

“We have seen a big uptick in the number of visitors to the welcome center, especially this past weekend,” said McAvoy, spokesperson for Liberty ARC.

Liberty ARC operates the welcome center at Erie Canal Lock 13 for Taste NY and the NY Thruway Authority.

Many visitors to the rest stop were reportedly traveling west towards communities in the path of totality, such as Rochester and Buffalo.

“Lots of people are traveling from many states to see the eclipse,” McAvoy said. “There has been a buzz and excitement around it.”

Reach Ashley Onyon at aonyon@dailygazette.net or [@AshleyOnyon](https://twitter.com/AshleyOnyon) on X.