Beyond the Vine: How CMAC Is Changing the Finger Lakes Experience

By Ben Kenna

One performance that stands out in CMAC's history is Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers' sold-out concert in 2017. Jordynn Gould, CMAC's public relations director, attended the show, which became especially meaningful after Petty died just months later. Fans continue to share memories of the performance with the CMAC team.

Located in Canandaigua, the Constellation Brands-Marvin Sands Performing Arts Center (CMAC) is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2026. The outdoor concert venue has grown into a place for big-name artists while maintaining its connection to the Finger Lakes.

According to Gould, a transformation in 2006 allowed CMAC to host larger artists and productions while keeping its outdoor setting and intimate atmosphere. "It completely changed what was possible here by allowing us to bring in bigger artists and productions while still maintaining the feeling of an outdoor, intimate Finger Lakes experience," Gould said.

For many people, CMAC has become part of their summer traditions. An evening at a show gives friends and families the chance to spend time outdoors while making memories around live music. Gould said it has been rewarding to watch first-time visitors return year after year.

CMAC's influence goes beyond the music. Gould said the venue brings thousands of people into the region, including visitors traveling from outside the area. Those visitors may stay in local hotels, eat at restaurants, visit wineries and breweries, shop locally and explore nearby attractions, bringing attention to the Finger Lakes region. Gould said some visitors come for a show and discover the area around the venue, giving them another reason to return.

The venue's accomplishments have also earned national recognition. CMAC was nominated for the Academy of Country Music's Outdoor Venue of the Year in both 2025 and 2026. Gould said the nominations recognize the people who make each concert possible, including staff, volunteers, production crews, ushers and food and beverage teams. With a management team of fewer than 10 people, Gould said the recognition reflects the collective effort needed to make each season successful. The venue's community includes people who have been involved for decades, helping maintain an experience that brings audiences back.

Looking toward the next 20 years, Gould hopes CMAC continues to grow without losing the qualities that make it distinctive. "There are plenty of large concert venues, but there aren't many where you can see a nationally recognized artist while sitting outside with views of Canandaigua Lake," Gould said.

For fans who still share memories of the 2017 Tom Petty concert, that outdoor setting and connection to the music remain part of what makes CMAC memorable. Twenty years after opening, the venue continues to bring audiences together in the Finger Lakes.

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