

# PROGRESS

# CHENANGO

# 2021

VOLUME ONE

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## UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital: Investing in the future of health care while navigating a pandemic

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NORWICH – A year ago, the world waited with bated breath as news reports of a deadly new virus began filtering out of Asia. It was a story that could have been ripped from the plot of a blockbuster movie or best-selling thriller, playing out in real life.

It didn't take long for the novel coronavirus to trigger use of the word "pandemic." Medical professionals across the globe, including here in Chenango County, raced to prepare for the worst case scenario as the threat grew.

"We had no way of

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Registered Nurse B.J. Tomsic administers Chenango County's very first vaccine, a dose from Moderna, at UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital on Tuesday, December 22. UHS has served a critical role during the pandemic, answering the public's questions, testing and treating COVID patients and helping to provide vaccines.

## Chenango County Health Department leads charge against COVID-19



A light memorial was created to honor the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic by Chenango County Director of Public Facilities Julie Gates. The display will run from February to March. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

BY TYLER MURPHY  
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CHENANGO – About 10 months ago, in late February of 2020, the New York State Health Department warned Chenango County officials there was a serious problem.

"That problem was COVID-19 and at that

point we thought that it originated in China and was present in the United States, primarily from travelers coming into the major New York City airports," said Director of Chenango County Public Health Marcos Flindt.

The concern was confirmed soon after as travelers from Europe brought the virus across the Atlantic. On average, about

three million travelers passed through the city's airports per month before precautions were put into place, he explained.

Flindt notified the Chenango County Board of Supervisors and began planning a response with Matthew Beckwith, the county fire coordinator and emergency management officer.

The emergency man-

agement office provided logistical support and helped healthcare workers obtain personal protective equipment during the initial supply shortage.

In the spring of 2020, the first residents in the county contracted the virus. A short time later the county began regular testing. At the urging of the New York State Health

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## THE EVENING SUN

### The Fight for Progress

This year's progress theme is: The Fight for Progress.

It is an attempt to highlight the challenges of the pandemic, what it has taught us and how our organizations have coped and learned.

Over the next five days, with more than 60 pages in 10 sections, Chenango County's daily newspaper, *The Evening Sun*, tries to do that.

How can we not highlight those who continue to adapt and succeed in Chenango County? The 2021 Progress focuses on health care professionals, small businesses and the demand for goodwill organizations.

We have great hope for our community. Crisis can unite and divide.

Hard times force self-reckonings that in better times we are able to comfortably ignore. In tougher situations, avoiding difficult choices will only add to the consequences.

As pressures mount they inevitably reveal who we really are, for better or worse. The best thing you can do is learn from them. The pandemic has revealed much about our culture, government and ourselves.

Important lessons can be learned the hard way, one of the most important of which is figuring out how to avoid learning things the hard way.

How? Avoid being a reactionary. Plan for the worst, expect the best and remember, life may be unfair but it doesn't mean we have to be.

If you have to react to a bad situation, ask yourself what kind of person you want to be, what kind of community you want to live in, then fight like hell for it.

No place and no one is perfect. Plans that never change almost always fail. Finding the path to improvement typically means dealing with constant failure and an occasional win. It's a road that never ends; we just need to stay on it as best we can.

Fight the good fight. Build on what works. Enjoy the little things.

Another important thing to understand from hard lessons is how to be honest with ourselves. We can't learn if we cannot recognize truth.

The hard truth is Chenango County was not well placed to deal with a pandemic.

The county government, like many small local governments, often operates with a lack of strong central leadership and in 2020, agency department heads mostly weathered the storms of the pandemic and financial crisis on their own.

Though experts in their field, sharing information with the public has not always been a priority for those non-elected leaders. Rural health departments were especially used to being low-key before the pandemic and typically were more concerned with medical privacy than transparency.

Elected leaders have often shunned technology upgrades and are used to minimizing expenses and information sharing.

It saves money and helps keep taxes low, and unless residents complain, nothing changes.

Local governments were initially overwhelmed

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Tyler Murphy, Evening Sun Managing Editor

# UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital: Investing in the future of health care while navigating a pandemic —



Despite the pandemic, improvements are underway at the Norwich hospital. The hospital started 2020 on an optimistic note, celebrating the success of the Chenango Medical Neighborhood Capital Campaign raising more than \$6 million, representing the largest concentrated investment in the healthcare facility in more than 50 years.



Chenango Memorial Hospital staff unload cases of hand sanitizer and other needed supplies provided by Chenango County's Emergency Management Office in April 2020.

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knowing when it would arrive at our doorstep, but we knew it would," said David Finney, Vice President of Clinical Services at UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital.

Weeks before the first lab-confirmed case was reported in Chenango, the Norwich hospital and its peers around the state were already feeling the early warning signs through their supply chain.

"Personal protective equipment, such as masks and exam gloves, as well as cleaning supplies became increasingly hard to procure," Finney said.

At the same time, health care workers and community members alike were seeing images of overcrowded intensive care wards in European hospitals and the weary medical teams fighting the virus on the front lines in major U.S. cities.

There were many unknowns, but that didn't stop the rural hospital from doing everything it could to ready itself and its staff.

"Long before the first COVID patient came through our Emergency Department, we had taken steps to protect our most vulnerable patients and

residents," he explained. "Some of those early precautions – visitor restrictions, daily staff screenings, negative pressure rooms and surge plans – remain in place in some form nearly a full 12 months after they were first instituted."

On an early call with the New York Department of Health, Finney recalled the governor himself describe the state agency as "Gumby," in its bid to make things as flexible as possible for hospitals to meet the demands of the pandemic. What followed were a number of executive orders that gave healthcare organizations the ability to be more nimble.

That included clearing the barriers that had previously slowed the hospital's launch of virtual care options for its primary and specialty practices. In a matter of days, Chenango Memorial was able to launch these telemedicine services - which became increasingly necessary as stay-at-home orders went into effect.

That flexibility did come at a cost, according to Finney. One of the executive orders put a halt to all elective surgeries across the state.

"It was necessary to ensure staffing, supplies

and beds to meet the surge, but it did hurt hospitals financially," he explained.

Thankfully, the Norwich hospital was able to qualify for the federal Payroll Protection Program. Additional financial assistance was provided through the Provider Relief Fund and other federal stimulus programs.

"Those funds helped keep us whole, and meant that we could re-deploy displaced staff rather than furloughing employees like many hospitals had to do," Finney said. "It also enabled us to both prepare for COVID and maintain services so we could continue to meet the regular health needs of our community throughout the crisis and beyond."

At the same time, the hospital experienced an outpouring of support from the very patients and community it serves.

"Our community stepped forward to help us like never before," said Chris Kisacky, Vice President of Service Delivery and Development.

According to Kisacky, a number of local businesses and manufacturers donated personal protective equipment and supplies, including Raymond,

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**Chenango Memorial Hospital staff member adds a new ceremonial check to the wall to celebrate the success of the hospital's first capital campaign in close to three decades. The more than \$6 million raised in the historic fundraising effort will help build a new Emergency Room and Walk-In Center as part of the largest concentrated investment in the facility since the 1970's.**

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Norwich Pharmaceuticals, Kerry, Chentronics, Progressive Dental and Ford Motor Company.

"These deliveries bolstered our supplies of key items such as N95 and other masks, gloves and face shields at a time when they were difficult to procure through our normal channels," she said.

Meals arrived from many sources, including hundreds purchased from local restaurants through Commerce Chenango's Fueling the Frontline program. Community members contributed thousands of hand sewn cloth masks. School children drew pictures and local churches sent prayer videos.

"People were so generous and thoughtful," Kisacky said. "It's hard to put into words how much that meant to all of us, knowing how much the community was behind us as we faced this pandemic together."

The Norwich hospital had started 2020 on an optimistic note, celebrating the success of the Chenango Medical Neighborhood Capital Campaign. The more than \$6 million raised in the historic fundraising effort is helping fund the largest concentrated investment in the healthcare facility in more than 50 years.

"Even with our focus on COVID-19, work has continued with this important investment," Kisacky said.

The new Emergency Department and Walk-In Center that are the cen-

terpieces of the project are scheduled for completion in late 2021.

"It's a testament to our contractors and facilities team that we were able to push forward with this work despite the demands of COVID," she said.

The rise of the novel coronavirus did push back another important investment Chenango Memorial had planned for early 2020: the implementation of a new UHS system-wide electronic medical record system.

"We had planned to go live with EPIC in April, but due to COVID, that date was pushed back to September," Kisacky said. "This is really the premier system of its kind, and was a very large investment made by our system partners at UHS."

For Kisacky, one of EPIC's most exciting features is the MyChart patient portal.

"MyChart allows patients access to their test results, treatment plans, information on past and future appointments and so much more. It also allows them to easily communicate with their care team," she explained.

Going live with a new system-wide EMR in the midst of a pandemic was a challenge, according to Finney. He credited the commitment of the staff and providers at UHS Chenango Memorial for the success of the implementation.

"There were many months of preparation and many hours of training put in to this process.

Yes, there were challenges, but our team rose to meet them and worked through them together," he said.

Not that he or any of his fellow leaders would have expected anything less after the way that same team had responded to the challenges presented by the pandemic.

"Our staff and providers have shown us time and again the true meaning of teamwork," Finney said. "COVID has impacted every aspect of our work and our personal lives. We deeply appreciate the many sacrifices and contributions each individual member of our team has made."

If anything, COVID is even more of a concern at UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital now than it was last March.

"When this started, we didn't have the tests, the PPE or even the clinical experience to battle COVID-19. Now, we have those things and a vaccine," he said. "But none of those things are going to stop the spread of this virus in our community. The only thing that will be a change of behavior."

According to Finney, the hospital is seeing higher numbers of COVID positive cases now than at any point in the last year. Many are a result of workplace exposures, or gatherings of friends or family.

"We're all ready to put COVID behind us, and we know what to do," he said. "Wash your hands. Wear your mask. Avoid gatherings. If you are sick, stay home."

## The Fight for Progress

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by the sudden dependency on technology caused by COVID and the public outcry that followed it.

Years of neglected investment in the county's technological infrastructure became apparent, including a lack of basic cell phone service and internet for those living outside the Route 12 corridor and main population centers.

Despite a number of bipartisan efforts to rectify this in 2020, many still struggle to have reliable access. In today's reality of remote work demands and health uncertainties, this has cost some people their livelihoods, hurt education and increased exposure to COVID.

County leaders have been aware of the issues for years. In the past, some even questioned the need to update the infrastructure, while others admitted to hardly even using a computer or smart phone themselves.

This was compounded by the worst cyber attack in Chenango County's history in October. It added to the woes of a contentious election with a handful of ballots not properly counted and faith in our local election process being depleted. Luckily New York State stepped in and helped stabilize the systems.

The crippling loss of emails and other computer services added more stress on public employees and stalled or slowed the county's ability to provide public services during a time when that was already being impaired by the pandemic.

The county board meets regularly, but health and technology officials rarely appeared at the 2020 meetings to give regular updates, even in the middle of a crisis. Though the department heads sent out some information, the county board never released updates about any of the issues themselves. Only a few even returned phone calls.

Being a rural county with limited means has always made reform tough.

Workers do the best they can, but a number of

issues including the pandemic, a loss of ambulance services and technology investment, have reduced the county's ability to aid local residents.

County and local governments are growing increasingly alarmed about just staying financially solvent.

These issues have led to a number of opportunities for positive change, including the ousting of the decade-long tenure of the former board chairman at the start of 2021.

The appointment of George Seneck as county chairman has been seen by many as a significant turning point in moving the county forward.

Seneck has promised reform, education and transparency, but an entrenched, minimalist, status-quo system decades in the making is hard to turn around, especially during a pandemic. He needs all the help he can get.

Heading into 2021, many things already show signs of improvement as departments release more information at Seneck's urging. A former teacher, Seneck also has a solid understanding of technology and what it means to the success of our youth in the area. As Guilford supervisor he was also at the center of the controversial project to build windmills in the town and is not shy about sharing information or responding to the public even when people are upset.

The ultimate goal is to save lives and reduce the spread of the virus, but lockdowns come at a cost too.

At the onset of the pandemic many in the private sector, especially small businesses in Chenango County, were left to fend for themselves. Many were forced to close their doors and deal with the harsh reality of lost income, laying off staff, cutting budgets, tapping into rainy day funds or closing forever.

Heavily partnered with small businesses and public events, *The Evening Sun* experienced this up close and directly felt the dire impacts.

Eventually, federal

relief loans made a big difference.

There has been a different reality for many depending on how you have been afflicted by the virus, what you do for a living, and how essential your job was determined to be.

Dollar stores, Wal-Mart and many others never closed, while small businesses that provided similar products or services were punished if they did not.

Low wage staff were expected to carry on and take the risks at many of these places. They couldn't afford to stay home anyway. Yet seemingly more essential public service workers were paid to stay home.

Similar to the 2008 recession, there has been a delayed reaction between the private and public sector. Many local governments are hoping a federal bailout will spare them from the pandemic's harshest economic realities in 2021.

Overworked local health officials and their staff stepped up behind the scenes, working longer hours and taking risks most of us do not have to take.

Those of us who can recognize these hard truths learned from the pandemic and are working harder than ever before to help our community. The pandemic will reach far into 2021 but the effects of COVID may echo for a decade, especially with our local youth, affecting educational opportunities and substance abuse problems.

Now is the time for positive change - we simply have no choice. The fight for progress has only begun and we at *The Evening Sun* are committed to informing the public as best we can. We will work with anyone who hopes to build a better community.

Rising to these challenges is already making Chenango County stronger and is an investment for the next generation.

*Tyler Murphy,*  
*Evening Sun*  
*Managing Editor*

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# Chenango County Health Department responds to COVID-19 —

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Department the county also began contact tracing. Flindt said without a vaccine the best way to slow the spread of the virus is with contact tracing, social distancing and wearing a mask.

County health officials reported a spike in local cases following the recent Christmas and New Year holidays. Deaths in the county, many of them in nursing homes, also significantly increased in recent months. The county reported a total of 30 deaths on January 15, 2021, but just 10 days later they reported five more.

The health department tracks COVID activity in Chenango County in many ways, including a weekly average. They also use figures to calculate how many people with respiratory infections are actually turning out to be infected with COVID.

Just after the holiday officials grew concerned when they calculated that on average 7.6 percent of those with respiratory illnesses had COVID in the county. The average across the state is 5.8 percent. Flindt said he is hopeful the figures are in decline — and as of January 25 the county's average was down to 5.9 percent.

He said there is no

trend to those getting ill and primarily infections were spreading within households across all groups. However, most deaths have involved people with serious pre-existing illnesses and many were elderly and lived in care facilities, he said.

“I think people really, truly should have hope and the hope lies in the vaccination process. In other words, the vaccine is going to get us back to normal. It's going to take a while. It's going to take six months to a year to get us back to normal. The more people we can get vaccinated — that's the key to solving this whole thing, this public health emergency we're in, COVID-19 — is vaccination,” said Flindt.

### What is contact tracing?

When a person tests positive for COVID their local health department is notified and then staff from the department reach out to the infected person to get an understanding of how they contracted the illness and who else may have been exposed. Officials hope by gaining such information they can get ahead of the virus and contain an outbreak.

Anyone in close contact with a person who has been infected is also contacted. Health officials refer to the initially diag-



The Chenango County Health Department's nursing team during their drive thru flu clinic in the fall of 2020.

nosed COVID patient as an index case, and close contact is often defined as anyone who has been within six feet of a confirmed case for 20 minutes or more, explained Flindt, though other factors may also play a role.

Those suspected of being exposed are put on home quarantine until they are tested.

Those who have an infection confirmed by a lab are put on mandatory quarantine and become a new index case, with officials then beginning the process of contact tracing additional people who may have been exposed.

Those put in quarantine are told to wait at

least 14 days, which is the average period of time COVID remains active and contagious.

Initially contact tracing in Chenango County was solely done by the health department's nine nurses, who had to complete a special training course through Johns Hopkins University to qualify.

“So, we've spent the last 10 months really putting an awful lot of effort into contact tracing and as we're speaking, (on Jan. 26) I have 647 people in home isolation and quarantine,” Flindt said.

Since the early months of the virus, the Chenango County Health

Department has noticed an unfortunate trend, that those having the virus are exposing it to more people than they were a few months ago.

“When we first started this, we were in touch with an index case and they had anywhere from two to three, up to maybe five or six contacts that we had to investigate. I think that was because this was a relatively new thing. At that point, people were very concerned,” Flindt said.

He thinks that in the beginning months of the virus a lack of information led to people exercising additional caution, unsure of just how contagious or deadly it may be.

“Now, I think people are getting COVID fatigue. Maybe they're not quite as careful as they used to be. And now we're seeing an index case reporting anywhere of up to 20 contacts,” said Flindt.

“People do need to remain vigilant and the masking and social distancing are going to be important. Through the summer and probably until fall, even if this is what we need to do, you need to be careful.”

Flindt also said due to COVID fatigue, residents were now less willing to talk to officials than they were six to eight months ago.

“We really would appreciate when you get a call from the health department if you would speak with us.”

### The toll on health professionals

Contact tracing takes a toll on the health department's nurses who have worked seven days per week for about the last ten months. In the last month they sought aid from local departments.

Health officials began training around a dozen more contact tracers from the local Department of Social Service and Mental Health Department. Flindt thanked Chenango County DSS Commissioner Daniel Auwarter and Director of Mental Health, Ruth Roberts, for their aid.

Tracing just one positive COVID case can take up to 21 hours or more to complete.

“Right now, number one is the contact tracing. We're getting 30 to 35 new cases per day. So, if one of them calls in and the average initial index case takes an hour to an hour and a half, and then that index case gives 20 other people, each one of them has to be called. And each of those can be anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half. The time is just amazing. There's twenty other peo-

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ple that need to be called, determined if they're put in to quarantine or not and given advice."

"So, one case could take 21 hours and we have, say 30 cases a day, every day. I mean that's a huge number of hours potentially," said Flindt.

"My staff, I feel very proud of them. They are true civil servants. There's been really no complaints. There's a heavy workload, 10 months of seven days a week. Anywhere from eight to 14-hour days. They take a day or two off if they can, or if they need to."

"They are really amazing. Other county health departments have actually had staff resign. It's just too much of a workload but I've had no one resign," said Flindt.

Two of the health department staff have fallen ill since the pandemic began and both recovered.

The health department requires staff to wear masks, except when they are distanced and sitting in their office or at their desk.

"I think the rule of thumb that I use for my staff, and I think it's good for any business or any other department, is if you're up on your feet you need to wear a mask. If your up on your feet it means you're going to be walking around, you're going to be within six feet of other folks. I think it's a good rule to adhere to."

In addition to the nurses, the health department also has about 25 staff checking on those who are in quarantine. Flindt said he took the challenges of quarantine very seriously and it was the department's duty to help those who needed it during that time.

"They make calls to the people who are legally put into isolation or quarantine on a daily basis to see if they need anything such as groceries or a prescription picked up," he said.

Health officials sought help from the United



**Chenango County Sheriff's Office Deputy Krista Baxter and Patrol Sergeant Dustin Smietana after receiving the Moderna vaccine in late January as part of the Health Department's vaccination program for frontline medical and emergency workers.**

Way and formed a partnership with the Director Elizabeth Monaco.

United Way volunteers and department staff picked up needed items and delivered them to people in isolation.

"I remember a patient. They were not along the Route 12 corridor - in a rural town. It was a young family, young children at home. We provided groceries for them. There was a prescription that needed to be picked up," said Flindt.

"There are a lot of details. The goal, the mission, is to protect the community. That is our overall mission to protect their family and their friends and the community, the residents of the Chenango County."

**Vaccine shortages could extend pandemic further into 2021**

"What's become our second mission? Vaccination. Vaccination is going to allow us, eventually, to ramp back, and ultimately, do very little contact tracing."

"It is also going to provide a way for all of us to get back to a near normal lifestyle that we had before COVID-19," said Flindt.

However, that could take several months, as vaccine shortages slow distribution.

The health department received its first allotment of vaccine on January 11, 2021. Since then the department has

administered 615 doses.

The plan was for county health departments to vaccinate the top tier of their eligible residents, such as front-line health workers and the most vulnerable to the virus. The departments request a certain number of vaccines every week from New York State that they need and can dispense, and state officials do their best to meet those requests.

Around Jan. 21 the Chenango County Health Department requested 600 doses for nursing homes, emergency responders and health-care workers, those in the top vaccination group. None were sent by the state.

"So, it's really important to know that there is a national shortage of vaccine," said Flindt, "I'm not holding back any vaccine. I'm not storing it or saving for anything, as soon as I get it - we have shot clinics and out it goes."

The department must follow the distribution guidelines set by the state for how and who gets vaccinated.

"It's a phase system. The pharmacies in the area are being expected to do the 65-plus population. I am expected to do Phase 1B, which includes law enforcement and teachers," he said.

Going by state surveys, the public health officials only expect about half of the population will

choose to take a vaccine, even when it is available.

With that trend the health department will need to vaccinate about 25,000 people in Chenango County.

"I would strongly encourage people to learn about the vaccine. There's been a special panel put together of scientists and physicians for the New York State Health Department that have evaluated the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines to see if they believe independently that it's safe and effective, and they have determined that it is safe and effective," explained Flindt.

Optimistically he hopes up to 70 percent or more of the county will get a vaccine within a year from now. That would be enough to create a herd immunity in the local population.

"That will protect the people who are vaccinated, and the amount of disease will be so low in the county that those folks who choose not to be vaccinated would even be protected," said Flindt. "So I would encourage everyone to consider vaccination."

Those getting the Moderna vaccine, which takes two doses, need to make sure they get the two required shots about 28 days apart. He said according to research the first shot offers about 50

percent immunity, and the next rises immunity to 95 percent.

**How do I get a vaccine?**

If you have a primary care provider or a regular doctor you can contact them to find out more information. However, people who do contact private providers will likely be billed for the vaccine. Residents can also visit state sites that distribute the vaccine for free.

Though there were some locations in Chenango and Binghamton that offered the vaccine to those 65-plus and others who qualify, Flindt hesitated to recommend an area site to visit because things were changing quickly and he had recently been informed those that were available had stopped or slowed distribution down greatly due to the shortages.

"I don't know their status now, but they should continue receiving vaccine in the future," he said.

He said the department would continue to take requests and inform the public if locations became available.

"The health department is going to be vaccinating until everyone who wants a shot is able to get a shot, and if it takes a year it's going to take a year," he said.

Flindt said improvements in the pandemic in the next three to six months is going to depend on how much vaccine Chenango County is sent

by the New York State Health Department.

"I think we're all going to be vaccinating into the summer and into the fall. Be patient, wearing your mask does work. Do social distancing, it does work," he said.

Residents can register to take a vaccine with the Chenango County Health Department by emailing COVID19@co.chenango.ny.us. Provide your name, email address, phone number, where you work, and job title. When the department receives vaccines and you are eligible, they will email you a link to schedule an appointment. So far more than 1,000 residents have signed up.

**What to do if you may have COVID**

Immediately go home and isolate yourself. Then contact the health department at (607) 337-1660. Don't go to the hospital unless you need emergency help. If you have to go to the hospital or call 911, inform them of your condition so staff can protect themselves.

"We will then discuss your symptoms. We will assist you in obtaining, testing, send you information on how to register to be tested for COVID. We will follow up with you if you're positive. We will talk with you about home isolation and give you support," said Flindt.

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**SUCCESS STORY**

# Northeast Classic Car Museum has reasons to be optimistic and excited about 2021



The Northeast Classic Car Museum held the drawing for a 1968 Black Mustang Convertible on Thursday, Oct. 8 and selected this year's lucky winner, Mike Johnson of Milton, WA. He was selected as several officials looked on, including Norwich City Mayor Shawn Sastri, Museum President Richard Schutt, Mustang Sweepstakes Chairperson Milton Shepler, Museum Vice President Edward O'Reilly and Museum Executive Director Robert M. Jeffrey. (Photos by Tyler Murphy)

In May 1997, the Northeast Classic Car Museum (NECCM) located at 24 Rexford Street in the City of Norwich opened its doors to the public with one building and just over 50 classic cars on display. Thanks to the efforts of a local businessman, George E. Staley and his family, the Museum has grown into a major first rate world class tourist destination and celebrates its 24th anniversary with over 200 classic cars, motorcycles & tractors on display in five connected buildings.

The Northeast Classic Car Museum's vision for 2021 is to focus on marketing to host outdoor events this summer such as Car Shows, Cars & Coffee Cruise-ins, Ice Cream Socials, and business events to promote economic commerce that will benefit the City of Norwich and Chenango County. The Museum's future plans include the development of a first rate multi-functional parking lot with decorative period lighting and landscaping that will be used to host outdoor events that will attract visitors to the Museum, which will benefit the entire Museum

District.

Robert M. Jeffrey, Executive Director of the Northeast Classic Car Museum stated "We have reasons to be optimistic and excited about the year ahead of us in 2021. The NECCM is a world class Museum and we have been busy continually investing in major capital projects to upgrade the appearance of the Museum and the aesthetics of the Museum's surrounding property, thanks to generous community support."

Jeffrey added "At this time the Museum's highest priority is the safety, health and well-being of our volunteers, visitors and staff. The Museum has developed and implemented a comprehensive health and safety plan in accordance with guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and New York State to ensure cleanliness, physical distancing and reduced contact for both visitors and staff."

The Northeast Classic Car Museum's Exhibit Committee was busy in 2020 updating the Museum's Exhibits in the Pre War, Post War Exhibits as well as the new special exhibit "Tribute to

Tractors". The "Tribute to Tractors" Exhibit teaches about the history of tractors and farming in America. Agriculture is a significant part of American history. The Northeast Classic Car Museum has 30 tractors on display along with other related educational story boards that highlight the history of tractors and farming. Each tractor in the collection illustrates a different aspect of how farming has changed over time.

The number one factor to the Museum's success is the level of dedication displayed by the volunteers, staff and the Museum's Board of Trustees. The Museum has over 75 volunteers who generously donate over 8,300 hours annually of their time and energy to make the Northeast Classic Car Museum a great place to visit. Without the volunteers, the Northeast Classic Car Museum would not succeed.

If you would like more information about volunteering at the Museum, call (607) 334-2886 or visit our website at [www.classiccarmuseum.org](http://www.classiccarmuseum.org).



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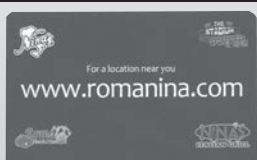
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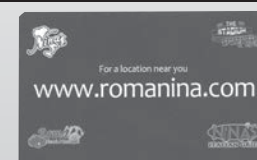
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# Meet Our Team

Moving CHENANGO Forward



**Mary Miner**  
**Director, Membership & Programs**

607.334.1402 • mminer@chenangony.org

I joined the team in early 2020. I am responsible for **ATTRACTING & RETAINING MEMBERS** through events, outreach, networking, professional development opportunities and more. In addition, I am the **LEAD PLANNER** for all events, webinars and programs, and work collaboratively with the team from concept to execution. Looking to join Commerce Chenango? Contact me today!



**Kerri Green**  
**President & CEO**

607.334.1404 • kgreen@chenangony.org

I am so proud of what we accomplished this past year, and I can share that we are empowered, hopeful and excited the future! Please take a few minutes to learn more about the programs and organizations that make up **COMMERCE CHENANGO**. Through our website you can find out more about the **CHENANGO COUNTY CHAMBER, THE CHENANGO FOUNDATION, DEVELOPMENT CHENANGO CORPORATION AND THE CHENANGO COUNTY IDA**. Together, we find opportunities that will enhance all of **CHENANGO COUNTY**. Reach out directly to myself, or a member of my team for more information.



**Audrey Robinson**  
**Director, Tourism & Communications**

607.334.1429 • arobinson@chenangony.org

I have been on the staff of Commerce Chenango for 21 years. My key job functions consist of **TOURISM** Administration, **PROMOTION** of tourism assets and administering the NYS Matching Funds program for the County. I am also your 'go-to' staff member for Commerce **COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLICATIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND MARKETING**. Be sure to check out our website and other social media platforms for more information on Commerce Chenango and Chenango County.



**Joanna Cacciola**  
**Economic Development Coordinator & Grant Writer**

607.334.5532 • jcacciola@chenangony.org

As the newest staff member, my daily activities pertain to **REVIEWING BUSINESS PLANS AND LOAN APPLICATIONS, RESEARCHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUNDING**, and as the **GRANT WRITER**, pull together pertinent information for Commerce projects. If you want to start a new business or expand your current one, need demographic information, or business resources, I can **ASSIST YOU WITH THE BUSINESS PROCESS**, and help you move through the steps to get your project moving ahead. I look forward to meeting with you!



**Megan Brennan**  
**Administrative Assistant & Programs Support**

607.334.1400 • mbrennan@chenangony.org

I'm Commerce Chenango's **GREETER!** On the phone or in the office lobby, I can be your first point of contact. I can help you with **INFORMATION REQUESTS AND INQUIRIES** in regards to almost anything Chenango County. A favorite part of my job is collaborating with the Programs Manager to pull together successful programs and events for our members. Around the office, I am a technology guru 'of sorts' and assist the President & CEO with **ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES**.

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