



Pictured left to right are business partners and owners of Wild Owl Café Stoyana Petkova and Mike La Croce.

Progress Chenango

02

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City of Norwich: A place to live, or a place to leave?



Grady Thompson Photo

Norwich Mayor Christine Carnrike and Senator Fred Akshar meet following Election Day in 2016.

By GRADY THOMPSON
Sun Staff Writer

After one year in office, City of Norwich Mayor Christine Carnrike says that she believes the city is in the transition of once again becoming a place to live, and not a place for people to leave.

While that may seem a tough order to accomplish in just a year or even two, Carnrike says the city is moving in the right direction in terms of improving its quality of life and reputation.

“My goal was to restore Norwich to its former glory, if you will,” said Carnrike. “Rome wasn’t built in a day. And I inherited—well, I chose to inherit it—and I don’t think anybody realized really how bad [financially] it was.”

Since taking office in January of 2016, Carnrike says that her main goals in restoring Norwich were to adopt a more conservative budget for 2017 and maintain a firm handle on the operation of the city.

To do so, the mayor says that it was crucial that the city controlled their spending in 2016 to provide for funding in the future.

“Right now, we’re doing a lot better than we had been. In September 2015, the City of Norwich was labelled as ‘Susceptible to Fiscal Stress’ based on criteria in place at the New York State Comptroller’s Office,” said Carnrike. “We’ve since moved up in that rating, and we are hoping to come off that list entirely in 2017 and 2018.”

As for how they plan to do so, Carnrike says that the key is to remember to save money for a rainy day—something that she says previous administrations seldom did.

“In the past we were spending our ‘fun’ money,” said Carnrike. “It’s easy to say,



File Photo

Norwich's Kurt Beyer Pool is expected to open in 2017 upon the city's hiring of a Pool Operator.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

‘In Your Own Words’

A. Wesley Jones: Chief Dispatcher, Director of Emergency Management, Photographer

From a young age I always wanted to be where the action was. My parents had a store on East Main Street in Norwich with a large display window and any time the fire horn rang, I was right there to watch the trucks leave the station. As I got older I would ride my bike to fires to watch the guys in action. At the age of 12 I got a radio scanner for Christmas and decided I didn't really think it would happen, that's not how life usually

works. In high school I got into journalism, helping run the student newspaper and working in the news department at WCHN/WKXZ. Later I worked for a couple years at a newspaper in Schoharie County, specifically handling the police, fire and court beats. I really liked it, especially working in a small area very similar to Chenango County. What I didn't like though was being broke and I quickly realized if I wanted to eat something other than frozen

“I decided to return home to my hometown and in 1995 I joined the Chenango County Sheriff's Office as a part-time Public Safety Dispatcher.”

A. WESLEY JONES

pizza or ramen noodles every night I needed another career. There are still times I miss being a journalist, especially covering

courts and being able to carry a camera everywhere.

So after some soul searching, I decided to return home to my hometown and in 1995 I joined the Chenango County Sheriff's Office as a part-time Public Safety Dispatcher. Sticking with the same theme of being part of the action, I also took another part-time job as an assistant with the City of Norwich Emergency

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Wild Owl Café and 41 North Salon: Rejuvenating downtown Norwich



Grady Thompson Photo

Photographed is a mural within Wild Owl Café.

BY GRADY THOMPSON
Sun Staff Writer

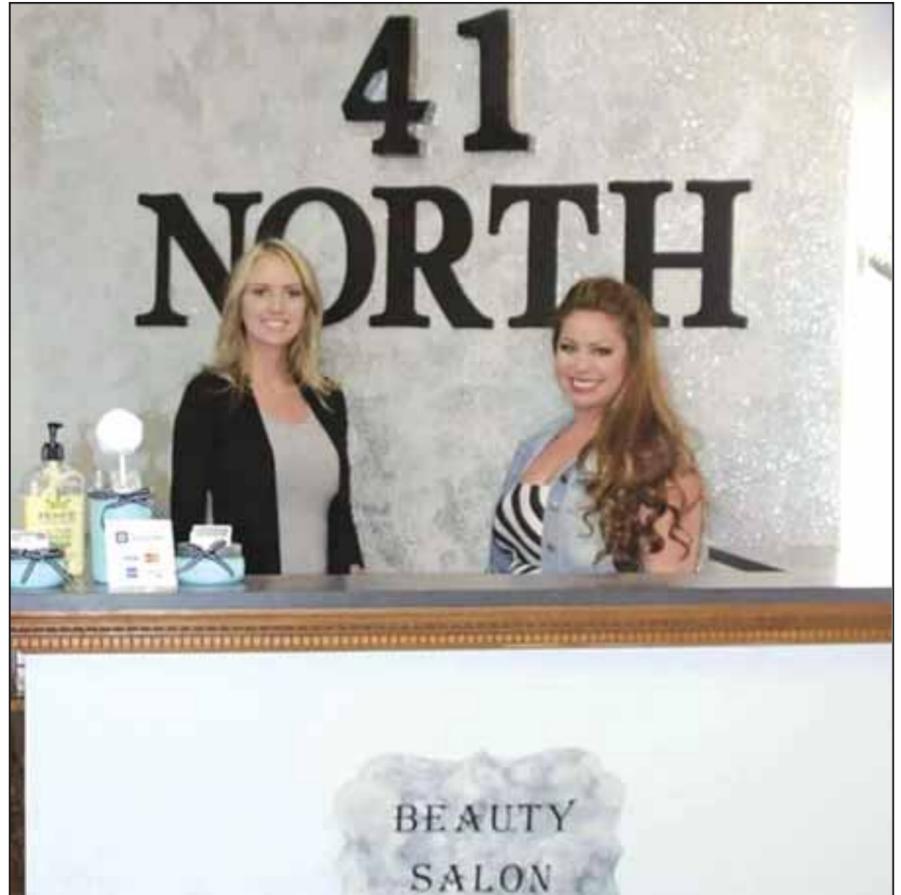
Two new City of Norwich businesses have set their sites on breathing new life into the downtown area by bringing their modern services to citygoers at convenient, accessi-

ble locations.

Wild Owl Café—a flourishing new restaurant located at 28 South Broad Street—is run by partners Mike La Croce and Stoyana Petkova, who's mission to their guests is “to provide a welcoming, clean, warm, and hip ambiance that

uses the freshest ingredients available to create unique entrees with sincere and memorable service by our dedicated team.”

La Croce and Petkova met in 2012 when Petkova was an exchange student working in a restaurant for La Croce in



Submitted Photo

41 North Salon hair stylists and business partners (L-R) Sarah Hunter and Kaila Lucero.

Old Forge. When Petkova first came to the United States from Bulgaria, she didn't speak a word of English. But she had a dream of one day running a restaurant where their customers were seen and treated as family.

“I don't treat the people as a customer, I see you as my family,” said Petkova through a thick Bulgarian accent. “I'm trying to remember everybody's name, I want them to be welcome. It's not just a place to eat, it's a place to have an experience and be part of my family. I think that

the people like it, that's why they keep coming back.”

Petkova went on to explain that La Croce handles the menu and the behind-the-scenes business aspects at Wild Owl Café. As for her?

“I'm just having fun!”

Wild Owl Café opened on November 5, 2016, and both partners agreed that they were not expecting their restaurant to take-off quite the way that it has.

“Most of our success is due to word of mouth,” said La Croce. “People are talking about us, and people keep

coming back.”

Petkova says that her and La Croce were well aware of the many different restaurants that Norwich has to offer, and they were also aware that in a small city, people are used to their routines, which can sometimes make it difficult for a new restaurant to succeed.

“You can get food anywhere, but we focus on the experience that a restaurant can provide,” said Petkova.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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Success Story Wilson Funeral Home

2016 was a busy year at the Wilson Funeral Home.

The front porch was completely replaced and updated in a way that maintains the historic look of our home while keeping our families and friends safe when paying their respects. We felt it was important to keep the porch looking as original as possible to maintain Norwich's charm. The front landscaping was also replaced. With the aid of local landscapers, gardens will now bloom from early spring to late fall, keeping Norwich beautiful for all who visit and live here.

In May 2016, our resident, John Antonowicz, a Norwich native, graduated from Hudson Valley Community College with a degree in Mortuary Science. Since his graduation, he successfully sat for and passed the National Board Exam for Mortuary Science. He is now completing his state required residency here at the Wilson Funeral Home. John is proud to call Norwich his home and we are pleased to have him continue his education by helping those who call on us to serve.

Also in 2016, we began to offer a more expansive line of cremation options and continue to offer green funerals. In fact, we are the only funeral home in Chenango County that offers locally-crafted ceramic urns. We also changed our casket suppliers to keep costs down while maintain our high standards of quality. These casket products continue to be manufactured only in America. More recently, we began offering veterans' flag cases made here in Norwich. All of these developments are intended to support our local community. In addition, we relocated and updated our arrangements room to make a more private setting for the families we serve, especially during a most difficult time.

We also continue to offer families the option of pre-funding their funerals in the New York's PrePlan trust fund. More and more families have learned the value and continue to be aware of the benefits of pre-funding one's own funeral.

Most importantly, we remain Norwich's only locally-owned funeral home. Since 1891, we have been family-owned and -operated. We reside in Chenango County, and support all it has to offer. Being locally owned means that every family has the right to choose a service that best fits them and their needs. We are not guided by corporate headquarters in another state, but dedicated to the families we are honored to serve, and we invest our earnings back into our community. Doug Wilson and his family have been assisting Norwich families in their time of need since 1949. More recently, with the management of John Gawronski, since 2009, and John Antonowicz's assistance, the families we serve will continue to be cared for with compassion and dignity at their time of loss, and with the highest standards of service.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve Norwich families in need, and we wish our friends and neighbors a successful 2017.

A place to live or a place to leave?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

'We want this' or, 'We want that' but nobody was asking, 'Do we need this?' or, 'Do we need that?' Now we are trying to prioritize things in our spending. What is the minimum to do the job? That's where we need to start. In past years, we were not thrifty. To use a phrase, we were spending like drunken sailors. But saving for a rainy day is a priority moving forward."

A challenge, Carnrike says, is that services cannot be cut in order to save money because taxpayers are entitled to these services. An example would be the protection and services provided by the Norwich Police Department.

In 2016, NPD saw the termination of an officer, resignations of other officers, and a number of retirements. As a result, the department hired five new officers to fulfill personnel shortages.

"One of the things that hit us right-off-the-bat in 2016 were some personnel issues within the department that we have been in the works of handling," said Carnrike. "I wasn't expecting that coming into office. So we are working on a more positive approach moving forward, and instituting some checks-and-balances that apparently were missing."

When asked to further explain, Carnrike said, "If there were problems—or I should say, perceived problems—within the department, we wanted to rectify that with these new officers coming in. The climate had to change, and they have the tasks at hand."

Among other changes at NPD, 18 body cameras were purchased thanks to a grant from Senator Fred Akshar of the Senate's 52nd District.



Evening Sun File Photo

The Norwich Fire Department remains an option for the re-location of the Norwich City Hall.

According to the mayor, the cameras are currently in commission, and the only obstacle in instituting them was reserving the required amount of data for storage of the footage. Carnrike noted that after every shift, officers are docking their body camera footage, and the city has to be able to consult that

footage at any moment.

In order to do so, Police Chief Rodney Marsh has made an arrangement with the maker of the body cameras to make the necessary storage available.

"It just makes thing easier for everyone," said Carnrike. "And it protects everyone too: the city, the officers, and

obviously the people, given the current police climate within our nation unfortunately."

The heroin epidemic is a problem that NPD officers are well-aware of, and Carnrike says they are doing all they can to contain the epidemic.

"The Norwich Police Officers are in touch with the situation and doing all they can, we don't want people to come to Norwich for that kind of stuff. We want them to come because of the unique attractions we have to offer," said Carnrike.

She also went on to note that one of Senator Akshar's top priorities in his campaign is doing everything the state can to combat the heroin epidemic, and she would certainly yield to his expertise and support in terms of the issue. Without the support of Albany and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, though, Carnrike says there is only so much to be done.

As for the unique attractions Norwich has to offer, Carnrike says Kurt Beyer Pool located at 91 Cortland

Street is a huge component of the quality of life in Norwich.

"Kurt Beyer Pool has been around since 1958. As a kid, I used to go every single day in the summer. It contributes to the downtown look and it's important to the city. But it needs a lot of work," said Carnrike.

The options for restoring the pool include either implementing a new liner, or complete refurbishment. A grant from the Greater Norwich Foundation allowed a new filter for the pool in year's past, but Carnrike says because promises were not kept on the city's behalf in terms of saving for future, future grants are unlikely.

Nevertheless, City of Norwich Public Works Superintendent Carl Ivarson maintains that the pool will be up-and-running once again in 2017 once the city hires a Pool Operator. Carnrike says that the open position is currently being advertised.

Ivarson—who was recognized as 2016 Public Works Leader of the Year by the American Public Works Association—retired as Public

Works Superintendent at the year's close, but was reinstated by the City Common Council on January 2, 2017.

Carnrike expressed gratitude for all that Ivarson has done, and continues to do, for the city, stating, "It's an important role. The city needs Carl a lot more than Carl needs the city."

Ivarson will stay on-board for the year of 2017 to ensure that a transition will be in the works for the future Public Works Superintendent. Carnrike says that a plan will be formulated in the first quarter of the year.

Among other happenings in store for the city in the new year, Carnrike says that they are weighing-in on selling the current city office building and moving into the third floor of the firehouse, where the codes department is already stationed.

"We wouldn't move out of this building unless it was officially bought," said Carnrike. "It's a historic, neat building. But it's too big for us and it's not really too energy efficient. It would be a savings to the city to put this building on the tax roll."

Carnrike went on to say that while there are interested buyers, she is not at liberty to say who they are, or what the building could become. She did say, however, that it would be a "viable, overall good thing for the community."

Carnrike noted that an issue for taxpayers right now is that the majority of the city—including the city office building—is tax exempt and so those who do pay taxes are carrying a lot of the weight. Considering this fact and the previous fiscal state of the city, Carnrike says the completion of the 2017 budget before December of 2016 was important to her.

"We worked many long hours on that budget, and ultimately came back with 0 percent increase for the taxpayers. When we were working on it, somebody said, 'When are we going to schedule the public hearing for overriding the property tax cap?' and I said, 'Who says we're overriding it?'" said Carnrike. "I think that's what the taxpayers need. I would like to give something back to the taxpayer—they deserve it."

Success Story Hi-Skor Lanes

Entering Earlville from either North or South, motorists' pass a sign for Hi-Skor Lanes on which the big, bold lettering is more pronounced than even the village's welcome sign. Rolling down Main Street one won't see the bowling center, because the establishment itself is located on a side street, quietly doing its own thing.

A 'small side street mom and pop operation' best describes Hi-Skor Lanes, located at 21 Clyde Street, Earlville. The center opened in 1948 with sanctioning men/women and couples leagues; something that continued for the past 69 years into a thriving family establishment. For the last 41 years, Bruce and Donna Stratton have added a variety of programs, including sanctioned Saturday morning Junior Program for ages four through high school, with scholarships for the graduating seniors. Hi-Skor Lanes has many volunteers that worked with the Junior Program, who have gone on to support Hi-Skor Lanes long term success.

Hi-Skor Lanes is the proud home of the Sherburne-Earlville high school bowling teams, which for the last several seasons have bowled in the Center State Conference, bringing home consecutive Championships.

Hi-Skor Lanes continues to be the proud home, for the past 43 years, to the Earlville Fire Department Bowling Tournament. 80-100 teams of firefighters, EMTs and auxiliaries, from around New York State, travel to the small establishment during the first few weekends in March on an annual basis.

Birthday party packages are also a strong part of Hi-Skor Lanes, as the belief that all activities over the years have increased due to the AMF-Boss computerized automatic scoring system along with the instant bumpers on every lane. Hi-Skor Lanes has seen kids from their early days of operation, now grown these kids are now bringing their families back to their home base or visiting their parents over the holidays – including Bruce and Donna Stratton's very own grandchildren.

Hi-Skor Lanes has a full service bar in their relaxing lounge, a snack bar that features autofry, homemade pizza and a variety of other items available.

There have been many highlights along the way, including their men's and women's leagues which have had many 800 series and 300 games throughout the years – Jen Caloia, the first woman to bowl a 300 game in league play – due to the new technologies.

Going in the main entrance on a mid-week league night, about twenty feet in from the main door is a sign that reads 'no wet shoes beyond the pool table.' One immediately gets the feel of how many bowlers are inside. To the side of the entrance, a seating area stores a collection of boots and sneakers. They are lined neatly in rows along the wall, with errant misfits poking out of line.

Hi-Skor Lanes is an inviting community gathering place that caters to all ages. A place where everyone is welcome. Stop in to say 'Hi' and visit our friendly staff while you enjoy a fun family time.

Hi-Skor Lanes is open seven days a week. Glow in the Dark bowling is offered Friday nights at 9 p.m.; with open league bowling Saturday evenings at 8 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 1-5 p.m.; Tuesday mornings are reduced rate from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. For any questions on birthday party packages, adult leagues or your company's next outing, contact Hi-Skor Lanes at 315-691-3211.

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Rejuvenating downtown Norwich

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Wild Owl Café strives to provide modern, café style food and atmosphere. Owls are a prevalent theme throughout the restaurant, and they feature artwork by Oxford native Ryan Warner, who's work is available for purchase.

Since opening in November, Wild Owl Café has provided Norwich goers with lunch and dinner options. Looking ahead to 2017, they are in the works of acquiring their liquor license and expanding their services to include catering, delivery, and breakfast.

Just down the road at 41 North Broad Street, 41 North Salon is a trendy new beauty parlor run by business partners Sarah Hunter and Kaila Lucero. 41 North opened on September 1, 2016, and ever since, the partners say that they're very happy with the strides they've made.

"The beauty industry is constantly changing, and we believe that our passion and personal interest in the craft is what sets us apart," said Hunter.

Another thing that sets them apart, says Hunter, is that they have focused on creating an elegant atmosphere to contribute to the salon experience.

41 North's services include hair and nail, eyebrows, eyelashes, make-up, and waxing. They accept clients via walk-in and appointment.

The duo says that they believe their location on North Broad Street makes



Grady Thompson Photo

Pictured left to right are business partners and owners of Wild Owl Café Stoyana Petkova and Mike La Croce.

them accessible and easy to find, and that their salon in turn has also influenced to the downtown vibe.

"I feel like the location of our salon has been a major blessing considering the high amount of walk-ins," said Lucero.

The partners report that events like the Pumpkin Festival have brought a number of walk-ins to their salon to inquire about their services and experience the new aura the salon strives to have.

The partners estimate that roughly 90 percent of their customer base has returned for their services.

"Our location, and just word of mouth, has been a big factor in people finding out about us," said Hunter. "Also, the transformations that we are able to give people makes other people want to try it for themselves. We have the power to make

someone feel good about themselves instantly."

While the majority of 41 North's clientele is women, they report that more and more men are seeking their services as people become more open-minded and realize that taking care of yourself is not something that varies by gender.

"Men are becoming more hygienic nowadays, and people are also more open-minded," said Hunter. "It's absolutely a positive for them, and also for our industry."

Social media has also impacted their line of work, as they promote their work on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

To learn more about the new downtown Norwich establishments Wild Owl Café or 41 North Salon, both businesses can be found on Facebook.

'In Your Own Words'



A. Wesley Jones

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Management. To that point I had never been in a job over two years and so while I was enjoying the work, I never imagined those would be my careers.

Fast forward almost 22 years later and I've turned childhood dreams into a career.

I went full-time with the Sheriff's Office in 1998 and for the past five years have been the Chief Dispatcher, responsible for the day-to-day management of the 911 Center. While I rarely answer 911 calls anymore, it's an incredibly rewarding experience still being where all the action starts. I'm incredibly proud of my staff and truly believe we have one of the most progressive 911 Centers in New York State. The 911 industry is changing - a lot. Responders are demanding more information when sent on emergencies and people needing assistance now reach us through all sorts of devices. When I started 911 was new and almost every emergency came over a land-line phone. Now most 911 calls come in via cell phone. The 1970's technology that is the backbone of the national 911 system has to be upgraded to real world technologies, and fairly quickly. There's

been more change in the last five years than in my previous 17 combined and the next few years will be at an even more expeditious pace.

In 1997 I became the director of the City's Emergency Management Office and while still a part-time position (most days), I put a lot of time and effort into making sure our citizens are prepared. Over the years we have developed a joint Emergency Operations Center with the County in which we can leverage each other's resources to benefit all. Being surrounded almost 90% by water, the City is particularly disaster prone. We have had two 300-year floods and a 500-year flood in just the past 11 years, each impacting large portions of our population. I'm proud of the work we've done, backed by the support of the common council and mayors, who have understood the importance of emergency preparedness. We were the first City in New York State to become StormReady through the National Weather Service, we have been the state leader in social media and the one of the first emergency management agencies in the national to develop a smartphone app. I'm also active in emergency management throughout the state, serving on the executive

board of the New York State Emergency Management Association (NYSEMA).

Besides my two full jobs, I have a photography business on the side, Pinstripes Photography. My parents put a camera in my hands at the age of two and from that moment I've loved photography. I walked away from it in the early 2000s as cameras transitioned from film to digital, but I got back in about 10 years ago and in the last five years I started and have continued to grow my business. While my love is with nature photography, the business part is centered around sports and event photography, family and senior portraits. When I'm stressed and need a release, I grab my camera, hop in my vehicle and just drive the countryside looking to capture the beauty surrounding us.

And if all that wasn't enough, I've also in the past year become an ambassador for Plexus Worldwide, selling all natural supplements for weight management and healthy lifestyle. While I certainly didn't need another job, I started using the products late last winter and after losing 30 lbs, sleeping better, having more energy and just feeling better in general, I felt I wanted to share these amazing products to help others with their goals.

In my "free time" I enjoy spending time with my wife, Olivia, my son Tyler and our four dogs. I'm a volunteer firefighter with the Norwich Fire Department and volunteer in the community on different projects.

I'm a firm believer that the glass is always half full and while our community (and Upstate New York as a whole) continue to struggle, I still firmly believe our best days can be ahead of us. We need more people to believe the same thing. While I love local history, what will move this area forward is not what got us here, but what still lies ahead. Norwich and Chenango County must continue to change, find and cultivate people willing to invest in our future and tackle new technologies and opportunities. All these things will improve the lives of all our citizens. I'm happy to be a part of this community and that I'm able to contribute in even a small role.

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Scott Clippinger

Success Story

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Teaching the importance of growth and success through youth and adult programs

“Maintaining partnerships is the key to success in many organizations.”

KEN SMITH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By **MICHAELA WATTS**
Sun Staff Writer

Since Cornell Cooperative Extension celebrated an important bicentennial birthday, other improvements have been made to the organization. The CCE has completed a major construction project since moving into the historical building back in 1961. The building houses many other agricultural business along with CCE and because of that, Executive Director, Ken Smith noted that modern regulations and energy efficient accommodations needed to be done. “When constructing this huge project many things had to be corrected to fit today’s society. Such as updating the heating and cooling system, making the bathrooms more handicap assessable, rewiring the lighting fixtures, and meeting enough space for offices, with 14 employees alone working for the CCE. The building will still maintain its historical victorian view but with a modernized touch,” said Smith.

Although the CCE has undergone a new project, its still maintaining its mission and playing a decisive role in cultivating programs for agriculture, youth development and nutrition. The organization continues to provided the community with after school activity programs with maple production, promoting social and life skills through educational opportunities, such as, 4-H and reintegrate outdoor recreation programs to the public with the fish and float program, kayaking and shooting sports.

The most important thing when promoting these community involved programs is the collaboration with partnering entities. “Maintaining partnerships is the key to success in many organizations,” said Smith. The CCE currently in collaborations with the Chenango Farm Bureau, the Agriculture Development Council, county government, Friends of Rogers, and many school districts throughout the county. “The leadership of this county relies on the

collaboration from one agencies to another to make the most out of our economical hardship. It has been from my experience that while working together the atmosphere is more enjoyable and positive,” said Smith.

The CCE along with the Chenango Farm Bureau and the Agriculture Development Council participate in numerous events during the fair season to spark a interest among the community and local farmers. A new event was introduced to the public on the first day of the fair called “Farm to Fork”. Farm to Fork allowed local farmers to display and prepare their freshly grown ingredients to the public. “This event was a huge success and the fair board asked if we could continue it in next years fair program with the possibility of expanding it to a two day event. Other successful event that the CCE is proud in continuing is the dairy days and the 4-H program here in Chenango County. “4-H is something that has been around forever and it really teaches our youth the importance to display self confidence and use the tools that they learn while being apart of 4-H to achieve future success,” said Smith.

In previous years, the CCE has partnered with Eat Smart New York to raise awesomeness to nutrient education to individuals who qualify for and/or receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). ESNY provides nutrition education materials and sponsors education events and classes in local communities on a variety of nutrition topics like: healthy eating on a budget, smart shopping for vegetables and fruit, healthy meal planning, basic cooking and food safety skills, weight control and physical activity. The goals of the Eat Smart New York program are to eat more fruits and vegetables, drink less sugar-sweetened beverages and exercise more as part of a healthy lifestyle.

While grant make up a majority of the CCE’s fund-



Submitted Photo

Ken Smith preparing blue berries for farm to fork.

ing, Executive Director Ken Smith assures that programs are will continue on for another successful in 2017. Smith also stated, that he would like to continue the success of 4-H, outdoor adventure for youth and adults, and establish new programs.

Previous programs such as farm to fork, dairy days, ag in the class and after school river based activities ready to be tackled when the warm weather approaches. Smith also mentioned to have a good majority of the offices re-organized and back in full operation since the remodel. In addition Cornell Cooperative Extension, Executive Director Ken Smith was presented with the “Advocate of Agriculture” award in 2016. Every year this award goes to someone(s) who has demonstrated the willingness and fortitude to promote and advance the knowledge of the agricultural industry.

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