

Being all I.N.N. can change Chenango County for the better



Improve Norwich Now has worked with organizations to provide ongoing education opportunities, such as the Youth Mental Health First Aid course offered in 2019. (Submitted photo)

By **ZACHARY MESECK**
The Evening Sun

NORWICH – After just under a year of rallying local organizations towards improving their community, Improve Norwich Now (I.N.N. pronounced as “in”) continues to promote cohesion, housing initiatives, Fostering Futures, and area literacy.

According to Improve

Norwich Now Co-Founder Jen Westervelt, the organization’s first year’s worth of efforts to gather community resources and push towards improving the area are only the beginning.

“One of the things that’s really motivating for me is that Norwich and Chenango County are small enough that we can take ownership over our community, and we can absolutely make a

difference,” said Westervelt. “We’re not so large that it’s beyond the scope of possibility to effect real lasting change, and we’re not too small that we lack the needed resources. We are absolutely just right to be able to really improve our community and make a difference.”

She said Improve Norwich Now was created as a joint partnership between herself and Norwich Police

Officer Brandon Clarke, and has continued to grow since then.

“At the onset, there was an idea that we have a police officer and a pastor being able to come together and create the effort,” said Westervelt. “Then that’s expanded to involve businesses, community members, local government, organizations, and schools so that the reach of I.N.N. – which started with two caring people who wanted to make a difference in our community – has expanded to a group of people who are willing and able to promote positive change.”

“Our job becomes growing the organization to the point where all of those different entities take ownership and really get involved.”

Westervelt said within its first year Improve Norwich Now has supported several initiatives including free educational seminars, literacy events, and more.

“We did help facilitate the reinstatement of the behavioral health clinician at Perry Browne and Gibson schools,” she said. “We also

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THE EVENING SUN

Change happens but progress is made

Change was unavoidable in 2019, both right here in Chenango County and in the world at large. We saw it in nearly every facet of life. With change comes new challenges and accomplishments.

Chenango County is a small part of the world around it and how we adjust to these internal and external changes defines what kind of community we become. Through it all though we try to maintain our sense of community and face adversity with wit and innovation. In many ways we instinctively fight to maintain the status quo even as we take risks to irrevocably alter it. We move forward and we try to make progress.

Each year, during the last week in January, The Evening Sun publishes a five-day series of special sections devoted to, and called, Progress Chenango. Our 2020 Progress Edition will be published from Jan. 27 through the 31.

This year we attempted to pay attention to our community-involved businesses, government programs and the non-profits. We wanted to focus on volunteerism and community participation.

Progress Chenango is our premier publication, a comprehensive picture of the Land of the Bullthistle as seen through the eyes of the individuals and groups who are guiding the course of our future – and making Progress every day.

Besides our staff-written articles you will also find “In Your own Words” and local “Success Stories” as part of this endeavor.

These words represent the thoughts and opinions of the organizations, businesses and members in our community.

This highly-anticipated publication gives readers a look at how local businesses and civic organizations fared in the year past and what may lie ahead in 2020.

We want our readers to better understand the links between businesses and community, and how it might affect them.

We sought detailed profiles about our local non-profits, what holds them together, who contributes and what these groups do to help the community. Also, how do we get involved?

We wanted to know what the needs are in our area, if they are accelerating, and what are the positive results of addressing these issues.

It is our hope you find this section educational, informative and entertaining. If you have one interesting conversation during your day about something we wrote, or better yet someone decides to get involved, then we have done our job.

Thank you from all of us at the Evening Sun

– Tyler Murphy
Managing Editor

Commerce Chenango focuses on the future with new leadership

By **ZACHARY MESECK**
The Evening Sun

CHENANGO COUNTY – Commerce Chenango has spent the past 60 years helping businesses grow in Chenango County, and has big plans to help see that mission continue in 2020.

One of the biggest changes for the organization this year is the appointment of its new President & CEO Kerri Green on August 12, 2019. Green was appointed following the retirement of former president Steve Craig.

Organized in 1959, Commerce Chenango is a not-for-profit, community-based organization dedicated to enhancing the economic growth of Chenango County and the surrounding area.

The new president, Green, has been involved with Chenango County with her work at a WCDO radio station in Sidney since 2000, and her love for the area only grew from there.

“When I was at the radio station in Sidney from 2000 to approxi-



Director of Communications and Tourism Audrey Robinson, Administrative Assistant and Program Aide Megan Brennan, President and CEO Kerri Green, and Economic Development Coordinator Alex Larsen. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)

mately 2012, Norwich and Chenango County was my sales area,” said Green. “The first thing I did was connect with the Chenango County Chamber.”

“I became a volunteer, I was an ambassador, I became really involved with what they were doing here

because I understood what kind of an impact a chamber can have on a community,”

Green said she was very involved with the Sidney chamber, and she knew chambers were the heart-beat of the business community.

“I knew early on that if I

wanted to network and get a good reputation with new businesses and have them know that I was looking out for them and their interests, I knew I had to give back,” she said.

Green resides in Sidney with her husband, Blake, and

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Chenango Health Network dedicated to a tobacco and drug free community

By CATHERINE SASSO
The Evening Sun

The Chenango Health Network (CHN) is working on new programs to improve health standards for community members of Chenango County. With program dedicated staff, newly trained instructors, and expanded financial aid programs, CHN is looking forward to a year of better serving the community.

"We really try to work as an agency and look at the needs of the community so we're able to change up programs that we have in house to assist and better work with the needs of the community," said Deputy Director Chris McAvoy Paul.

After recently receiving a federal Drug Free Communities grant, CHN melded the program with the Tobacco Free Communities program to create peer advocacy groups in local schools.

"We are trying to mobilize youth and community members to try to reduce the impact of tobacco marketing on youth. We're creating youth committees to



Deputy Director Chris Paul and Finance Director Tina Baker stand center with Jessica Shull and Kyli Osterhout who coordinate the tobacco free and drug free communities programs. (Photo by Catherine Sasso)

try to spread awareness through the schools. They will be advocating to their peers," said Tobacco Free Coordinator Jessica Shull.

Shull said the Network has many activities planned for the peer advocacy groups. Not only will students in the group be educating their peers about the effects of vaping and tobacco use, but they will also have the chance to have their

voices heard by government officials.

"The vaping industry has really targeted kids in their advertising. They are on social media like Snapchat and Instagram, where the kids are. A lot of kids don't realize that there's even tobacco in the vape product they're smoking," said Shull. "The kids get to go to Albany to talk to legislators in February to have their voices heard on this

matter."

Two student-based groups have already been recruited, one in Bainbridge-Guilford and one in Norwich school. They hope to expand the program to all schools in Chenango County.

"Tobacco usage has increased so much that it's become an epidemic," said Shull. "In 2014 tobacco use in youth was down to the lowest levels its ever been. Since then it's increased by 56 percent. The vape market has had a major effect on that number."

CHN is also working to spread mental health education to the commu-

nity by having three staff members become certified instructors.

"We're able to go out and teach the community, educate and bring awareness to mental health first aid for adults, youth, fire and EMS, and public safety. It's a real big thing in our area that's needed," said Paul.

They also have about five staff trained to provide health management classes for community members. The classes cover chronic pain, diabetes, and chronic disease health management. Classes are a one day seminar that take about two and a half

hours to run, and are open not only to people facing those health issues, but caretakers, family, and anyone who may find the knowledge helpful in their day to day life.

According to the National Council for Mental Health, reviewed studies show that individuals trained in the program grow their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental illnesses and addictions. They can identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for individuals with a mental illness or addiction, as well as increase their confidence in and likelihood to help an individual in distress.

Additionally, CHN has opened its Financial Assistance Program to help insured and uninsured individuals with cancer related costs. The program was previously restricted to breast and gynecological cancer, but is now opened up to any form of cancer.

This change was sparked when Finance Director Tina Baker experienced a sudden loss with the passing of her husband, Ron, who lost a brief battle with Lymphoma.

"In keeping with Ron's spirit, Tina, along with her sons, Jake and

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In 2019, three middle school students came up with a plan to make bracelets with the intention of donating the proceeds to charity. Emma Urgo, Amanda Smietana, and Emma Cressi sold the bracelets at local events like Music in the Park and Blues Fest. The girls raised \$450 by the end of the year, and the proceeds benefitted the Chenango Health Networks Financial Assistance program for individuals battling cancer. (Submitted photo)

In Your Own Words

Jen Westervelt



Each week, I have the honor of sharing my words with our community from the platform of cvfree church, and each month, that honor is extended as I share updates on the effort to Improve Norwich Now. (Those who attend a multitude of meetings along with me on a regular basis also know I am rarely a silent presence...sharing my words

does seem to happen often.)

As Pastor of cvfree and Co-Founder/President of Improve Norwich Now (I.N.N.), much of my time is spent working alongside community members who give of their time, talents, and resources in order to support an ongoing effort to bolster fellow community members and provide opportunities for individuals

and families to reach their full potential.

Some of the barriers we work to remove are straightforward, and the solution seems to easily present itself. Putting books in the hands of children, for example, is a strategy I think we can all agree is simple yet strong in its potential to yield successful results.

"Potential" is such a key word to consider as I reflect upon 2019 and look to 2020. In all the work I do, I strive to

help people reach their full potential. Solutions, such as giving children books to read, have such great potential to remove barriers that could hinder children from success as students and into the future as job seekers and then employed adults working to provide for themselves, their families, and enhance our community.

BUT...that potential is

only realized if the people surrounding those children value and commit time for reading. The ability to read is just one value I hold, and I am so grateful to the many volunteers, donors, businesses, and community organizations who share that perspective. It is because of this team approach to help community members, starting with our youngest ones, that Norwich will be improved.

When all is said and done, it is what we value and what we are willing to commit to that determines just how improved we become: within ourselves, our families, our friendships, our workplaces, our activities, and our community as a whole.

Regularly, I interact with people who have good intentions of wanting to do the right thing and to put the right values into action. Sometimes, life gets in the way and distracts us from those values to which we have committed.

We are blessed to be in

a community where many do step up and realize your potential to be part of the solution, and you are the ones who keep optimistic leaders like me going! I would just like to take this opportunity to invite each of us to reflect: what do we value, to what are we willing to commit, and what tangible next steps are we willing to take? What are we willing to do to effect real, lasting change that we can own? Are we willing to go "All I.N.N." (pronounced 'in')?

I pray this will come into focus for us, Norwich and Chenango County, as we seek a clear vision (20/20, if you will) for what is in our future. Personally, I have high hopes, and I will do all I can to equip others to join the effort to make this community a place we are proud to call home. Together, we will start by Improving Norwich Now; then, with a larger shared vision, we will see that progress extend throughout Chenango County.

Chenango Health Network —

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Matt, requested contributions in Ron's memory be made to the Chenango Health Network Financial Assistance Program. Through this generosity, the funds can be used for individuals with a cancer diagnosis of any type, not just breast and gynecological cancer, as previously established by the Financial Assistance Program," said Paul.

Examples of the type of assistance include gas vouchers to assist with travel costs, co-pays for prescriptions or health care providers, wound care systems, prostheses, post-surgical clothing and wigs, treatments not covered by insurance such as acupuncture or massage therapy for pain management, and medications not covered by insurance.

Individuals with a cancer diagnosis are encouraged to contact Chenango Health Network to see if help is available. All services are provided at no charge, however, there are certain eligibility requirements that apply. CHN will continue to assist

individuals with a breast cancer diagnosis but funds for their assistance will be through the St. Agatha Foundation.

"While we receive some donations specifically for breast cancer patients, it is important to note that we receive adequate funding from St Agatha Foundation to cover the needs of our breast cancer patients in the Financial Assistance Program. We would like to encourage donations for non-breast cancer patients, if possible. In honor of Ron, the Financial Assistance Program for non-breast cancer patients has been renamed Baker's Benefits," said Paul.

Donations come by way of memorial contributions, CHN's website, United Way and Amazon smile.

"We would like to recognize the continuous support we have received from Sherburne-Earlville Mad Hatters Cancer Fundraising Team, the Lein Family at Rosebud Tattoos & Tanning, First United Methodist Church, and the Pennysaver and Evening Sun. Since we do not do a full-fledged fundraising campaign and just rely on donations that come in from individuals, groups and businesses, our donations vary from year to year," said Paul.

Deputy Director Chris Paul and Finance Director Tina Baker have been overseeing the Agency's operations while they search for a new Executive Director. They were named co-Interim Executive Directors by Chenango Health Network's Board of Directors and have over 29 years of experience with Chenango Health Network. They are accepting applications for the position and will be starting the interview process in January.

The objective of the CHN is to increase access to health and wellness information and to health care services. They serve individuals and work to effect change at the community level.

"Whether it's getting someone health insurance, whether it's getting someone signed up with a primary care provider, whether we are doing education with first aid or tobacco free or drug free communities, even with our community health advocates who are trying to help people with medical or similar issues, with billing and things they can't afford, I just think that all of our programs assist people every day. Even the smallest things are a success," said Paul.

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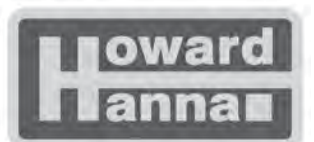
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Commerce Chenango focuses on the future with new leadership —

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their daughters Rachael and Grace.

"This was the most intense hiring process I've ever been through," said Green. "But I understand why, because it's such an amazing opportunity, and I'm so incredibly proud and excited to be able to make a difference."

"I also want to work on attracting and retaining businesses and employees in our area."

According to Commerce Chenango Director of Communications and Tourism Audrey Robinson, Green is a U.S. Army Veteran, and is no stranger to Chenango County; for over a decade she worked in sales and marketing at CDO Broadcasting (WCDO Radio) in Sidney.

Green was an active Commerce Chenango volunteer helping to develop programming, volunteering at numerous events, and working to help increase membership, serving as an ambassador and even received the Commerce Chenango "Volunteer of the Year" award in 2007 and "Ambassador of the Year" in 2011.

She is a past president and current director of the Sidney Chamber of Commerce; has served on



Commerce Chenango's Headquarters is located on 15 South Broad Street in the City of Norwich. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)

the Delaware County and Otsego County Chamber Boards; is a graduate of Leadership Delaware; and worked on various committees to promote the local economy through programs, events and advocacy.

"I am thankful for the opportunity to lead an amazing organization like Commerce Chenango," said Green. "I feel so honored that the board has chosen me to continue the forward momentum of the county. I look for-

ward to working closely with the business community, local organizations and our partners to achieve economic growth. We can do this by working together to grow our business profile, encouraging innovation, attracting and retaining a solid workforce and growth of programs that will positively impact the county."

Robinson said Green had previously worked as the Senior Assistant to the President, Assistant Secretary to the Board and

Coordinator of Campus Rentals and Events at Hartwick College in Oneonta.

She said during her tenure at Hartwick College, Green worked closely with the senior administration and the board of trustees on many projects and initiatives regarding board organization, policy creation, strategic planning and program development.

She added that in her role as coordinator of campus rentals and events, Green created an alternative source of revenue for the college by developing a program to rent unused campus space and overnight accommodations in the dorms during the summer months.

"I feel like Commerce Chenango was in a solid place when I took over, but I feel like we're ready for the next phase, and I know I'm the right person to lead this," said Green. "You can't keep doing business the way we've always done it, times are changing, the workforce is changing, and we have to change to stay relevant, competitive and grow."

She said the business community and local government offi-

cials have been incredibly supportive, and that she will continue to promote Chenango County's businesses with new programs and events planned for 2020.

"We're looking to add programming for 2020 that is relevant, including a workforce-focused summit," she added. "The summit will focus on: population recovery, what our current workforce looks like, what resources do our employers need, and what do we need to do to encourage professional development, growth to attract the employees that our companies need".

She said Commerce Chenango is currently discussing a partnership with DCMO BOCES to help make the workforce summit happen in the spring. She added that in the fall her organization hopes to have a "Legislative Breakfast."

"We want to have an event in the fall that we're calling a, "Legislative Breakfast," which would be a way for everyday businesses who don't have that opportunity to have that face-time with elected officials and give them an opportunity to sit in small groups to dis-

cuss the issues that are important to them," said Green. "We're also going to change up how we do our annual dinner and membership luncheon."

Green said she is able to be innovative and make changes with the organization because of the overwhelming support she has received from the board, the members and the community.

"Everybody has been so supportive, they get what I'm doing, they understand where I'm going, and they've been incredibly supportive of the initiatives that I've been proposing," she added. "We've been advocating for local businesses, and looking for ways to give back the most to our members."

Green said she understands that membership is an investment given to Commerce Chenango from the business community, and that it's up to them to ensure that businesses are getting returns on those investments.

"They're investing into us, a portion of their financial resources and investing in us because they support what we do," said Green. "We want to show them that their investment is valuable, and that we are working for them."

She said not every business needs the same thing from her organization, and that Commerce Chenango is developing ways to help businesses of all sizes.

"For some people its advocacy, for others its networking or professional development opportunities. We are always looking at ways we can continue to add to the value of a membership and add to what we do here at Commerce Chenango. We have an open door and welcome feedback from the county that we serve" she added.

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Administrative Assistant and Program Aide Megan Brennan helps bring a warm atmosphere to Commerce Chenango by greeting guests at their headquarters in Norwich. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)

Success Story

Rolling Antiquer's Old Car Club

The Rolling Antiquer's Old Car Club (RAOCC) is the local Norwich Region of the national Antique Automotive Club of America (AACA). Like its parent organization, the Club promotes interest in and working with automobiles from many eras. "Automobile" includes all self-propelled vehicles designed for passenger use and powered by gasoline, diesel, steam or electric sources. Hence, a "Show Car" could be a car, race vehicle, truck, bus, fire vehicle, motorcycle, etc. The RAOCC has complete local autonomy in planning and running its own events and programs, which include the Annual Car Shows and its Automotive Scholarship Awards.

RAOCC will hold its "Car Show Weekend" during the 2020 Memorial Day weekend. Saturday, May 23rd will be the 31st Muscle Car & Street Rod Show. Sunday, May 24th will be the 55th or "The Double

Nickel" Antique & Classic Car Show. The Club encourages folks to bring and show off their vintage vehicles or "future classics." The annual two day event brings flashy chrome and bright auto colors to the Chenango County Fairgrounds in Norwich, N.Y. AACA National Award Winners have displayed their vehicles in the RAOCC Shows. The Car Parts and the Antiques & Collectibles Markets run both days.

Each year RAOCC offers \$1000 Scholarship Awards to DCMO BOCES students. The eligible students are those interested in either furthering their education in the automotive field or pursuing a career in the automotive industry. These scholarships may be applied to the tuition of the college selected by the student or the purchase of a set of automotive tools. One award is given to a Senior Student from the *Automotive Technology*



The 55th annual Rolling Antiquers Auto Show and Flea Market will roll into town for Memorial Day weekend, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday at the County Fairgrounds, along East Main St., in Norwich. (submitted photo)



John and Kathy Haddow won Best of Show in their custom-street rod category in 2018. John poses with the couple's car. (Submitted photo)

Program and one award to a Senior Student from the *Automotive Collision Program*.

Saturday will feature *Muscle Cars and Street Rods* (2011 and older) such as Mustang and Camaro. Sunday will highlight the *Antique and Classic Cars* (1995 and older) from Model A to Studebaker. Restored and original condition show vehicles are drawn from every decade and include motorcycles, tractors and trucks. The RAOCC Shows draw several hundred vehicles and their proud owners from across New York State, and further afield from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, the New England region, and the Mid-Atlantic States.

Alongside the RAOCC Car Shows, the local NY-PENN Military Vehicle Collectors Company exhibit restored military vehicles and equipment. The Tractor and

Antique Engine display presents gas powered hit-and-miss engines used in the early days of agriculture and industry. Several local food vendors will serve their tasty summer-time menus. All against the musical backdrop of a DJ service. Rain or shine, the show runs 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. General admission: \$5 each day per person. Admission is free for children under 12 years old!

During 2020, the Club will meet the third Sunday of each month at the North East Classic Car Museum. Guests or prospective members are welcome. For show registration forms, scholarship information, and other Club information, visit the website www.raocc.org; email raocc@frontiernet.net; or write to RAOCC, PO Box 712, Norwich, NY 13815.

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worked alongside the suicide prevention coalition to co-sponsor the Glow Run for Recovery.”

She added that a mentoring program has also been in development, with several struggles and successes occurring throughout the process.

“The mentoring program has been a roller-coaster; we’ve seen successes and we’ve seen challenges come our way, but I think it’s really important as a new organization that we don’t get discouraged just because things aren’t successful the first time, and that we learn from them.”

“What we have learned from our mentor program is that people have to truly want to change, and be ready for the change in order for the mentoring to be beneficial.”

Westervelt said the organization realized that it can’t force people to want something different from what they have.

“They have to be intrinsically motivated to seek a different path than the one they’ve been on already,” she said.

The group has seen success in individuals attempting to achieve sobriety, she added.

“The tough part is that’s happened on more of a short term scale than

the long term scale we’d really like to achieve, but our struggle in that area paved the way for other connections with peer recovery coaches, Friends of Recovery, and other entities and relationships including “Grandma’s House” which is a model we are exploring,” said Westervelt. “So I think it was actually advantageous that we hit those walls, and then found out that in order to break them down we needed to seek support that could bring tools to the table that we, ourselves, didn’t have.”

She said there are multiple issues that Improve Norwich Now is tackling, with the mentoring program allowing the group to recognize local barriers to mentees and area residents.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN OUR AREA

“What we have found, is that when individuals come to us for mentoring and they are actively struggling with a substance abuse disorder, our ability to help them be successful is really diminished,” said Westervelt. “In one case we tried to help an individual, but one of the walls we hit was said individual wants to have a better life, wants to stop using, and wants to be a positively contributing member of society but has no clean, safe, and sober place to

live.”

“Instead of saying, oh well that’s a problem, it’s always been a problem, it will always be a problem, we can’t do anything about it, we have created teams of people who are brainstorming options to solve the unstable housing crisis that we face in this area.”

She said the need for transitional housing for area residents looking to better their lives is one of the big concerns I.N.N. is working towards developing a solution.

“Once we have established a successful transitional home for individuals with unstable housing, that’s going to increase the success of the mentorship program because now we’re not left with people who don’t have a clean and safe place to stay,” she added. “We have a problem, we have people who are being released from the Chenango County Correctional Facility and inpatient rehab with nowhere to stay.”

“They want to be able to come back home, but unfortunately staying in the exact same place with the exact same people is not necessarily going to lead to better choices.”

In the meantime, the Improve Norwich Now mentor pool has been able to be mobilized through Fostering Futures NY, which is a volun-



2019’s Glow Run for Recovery 5k was another example of Improve Norwich Now working with the community to help break down barriers. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)

teer-based program for supporting foster families. Coordinator, Cathleen Albrecht, is an asset to this initiative, which is made possible through a partnership with the Department of Social Services.

IMPROVING AREA COHESION

According to Westervelt, the cohesion of resources is key to Norwich and Chenango County’s success.

“All too often, people who are coming to us with struggles don’t know where to go for help, and the people they go to for help aren’t familiar with the breadth and depth of resources that could be available to them.”

“This has been a key part of the larger vision to see our county become more cohesive in our awareness of those resources,” said Westervelt. “That’s where having the organizations and the agencies all seated at the table is really going to help improve not only Norwich, but Chenango County as a whole.”

ENCOURAGING LITERACY

As part of its effort to encourage all forms of literacy, Improve Norwich Now has organized several literary focused events including its “One Community, One Book” event.

“We’ve launched our

very first “One Community, One Book” effort, and with local author Suzanne Bloom coming alongside us we were able to have an event that reached 50 families at Guernsey Memorial Library involving 10 local businesses in a scavenger hunt that was interactive and enjoyable,” said Westervelt. “As part of the event, each child who came got a necklace to wear at the Parade of Lights that night.”

“Let’s promote literacy and be cohesive with our businesses.”

She said without the partnerships Improve Norwich Now has with local entities including the Emmanuel Episcopal Church, cvfree church, SUNY Morrisville, Chenango Health Network, and the Impact Project, I.N.N. wouldn’t be able to have the community effect for which it strives.

“We need resources, we need people, we’re going to need finances,” she added. “We’ve done a lot on this shoestring budget, but it’s important to note that we’ve hit a ceiling.”

“We don’t have the financial backing that we’re going to need, and because we’re a volunteer based organization with board members and leaders who are plugged in to many aspects of our community, it is all that

more important for people to take action and show tangible support for the effort.”

Westervelt said every single person in Chenango County can make a positive difference.

“People can volunteer for particular events, attend our monthly meetings at 6 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the Norwich High School Room 1, and can buy t-shirts or lawn signs to display the visible message, “I’m a supporter of Improve Norwich Now,” Westervelt added. She added that any support is beneficial, and those who wish to assist monetarily may visit improvenorwich-now.org.

Westervelt said the continued dedication and efforts of INN’s board members including: Co-Founder Brandon Clarke, Secretary Eric Wich, Treasurer Kristen Giglio, Mike Genute, Lorri Race, Tom Vincent, and John Trottier made their first year of success possible. According to Westervelt, “Even though Brandon has had to step away at this time, we continue to be grateful for his many contributions, and we look forward to seeing how the foundation that was laid will support further improvement to our community.”



Improve Norwich Now is involved with a number of organizations including the newly formed Foster Futures, which is lead by Director Cathy Albrecht and designed to help foster families be successful. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)

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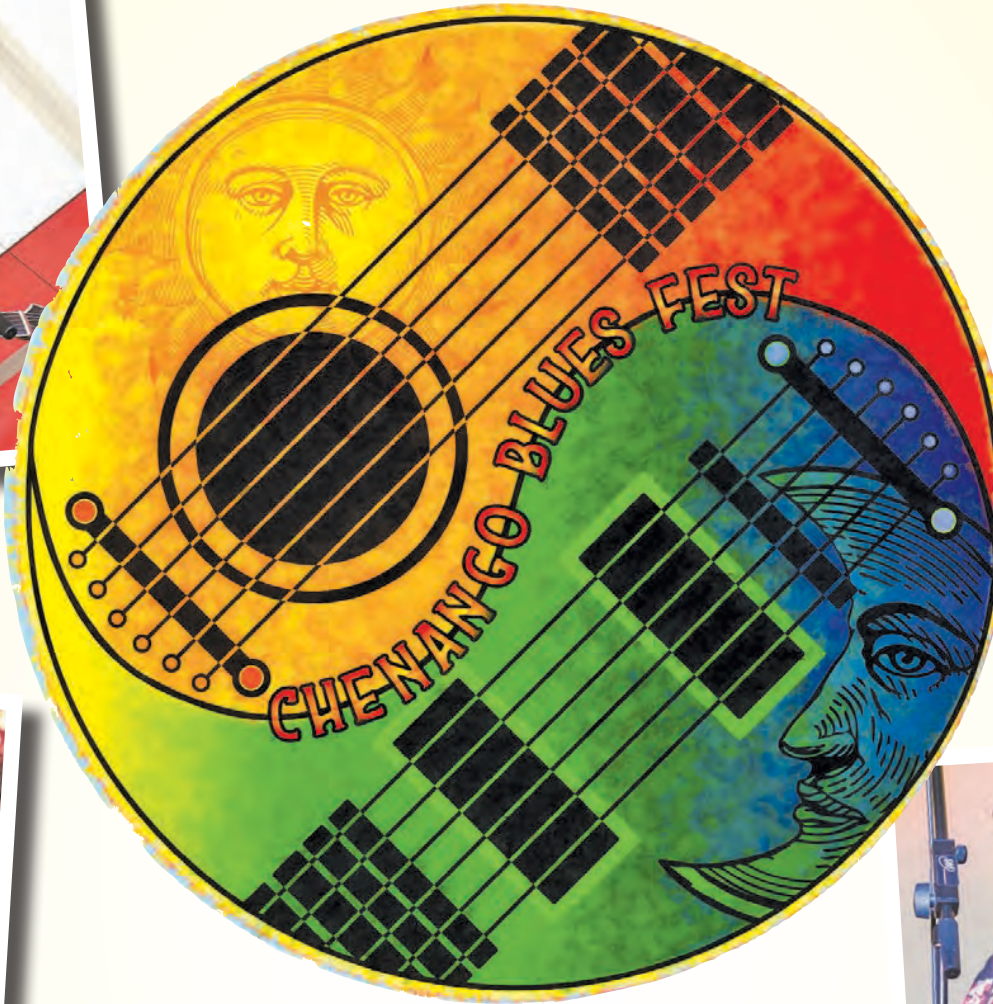
2019 CHENANGO BLUES FEST



The crowd cheers the Johnny Sansone band. (Photos by Frank Speziale)



Pokey LaFarge plays under the Tent Stage. (Photo by Frank Speziale)



The Downchild Blues Band was an inspiration for the Blues Brothers. (Photo by Frank Speziale)



Guitar master Jontavious Willis. (Photo by Frank Speziale)



Joanna Connor and band rock the stage. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)



The crowd. (Photo by Frank Speziale)



The tent where most the organizers, artists and public get to mingle. (Photo by Frank Speziale)



Friday's performance with Rick Estrin and the Nightcats. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)



Danielle Nicole said this was her first Chenango Blues Fest and "It was great." (Photo by Frank Speziale)



Johnny Sansone (Photo by Frank Speziale)

Blues Fest 2020 will be held August 21 and 22, 2020



What a difference a year makes!

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