

The Evening Sun, presents Progress Edition 2019. A look at the community's recent past and future.

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The one constant in this world, change

Change was unavoidable in 2018, both right here in Chenango County and in the world at large. We saw it in nearly every facet of life – politics, business, education, religion – everywhere you looked there was a new obstacle to surmount, a new challenge to solve.

While the human race saw sweeping global changes, Chenango County was a microcosm of the world around us – reacting to both internal and external forces, dealing with triumphs and tragedies, enjoying successes and mourning failures. Through it all, we maintained our sense of community pride, we faced adversity with wit and innovation, we fought to maintain the status quo even as we took risks which could irrevocably alter it.

We made 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.

This highly-anticipated publication gives readers a look at how local businesses and civic organizations fared in the year past, and forecasts what lies in store for the year ahead.

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.

What has the last year been like for you professionally or privately? What are your general observations of our area and how might it be improved? You can read what we heard.

This year's progress theme is “Fresh Perspective,” and we were keenly interested in hearing how Chenango County can prepare for a successful future for those who will build and live in it.

We discussed challenges, accomplishments, major topics of interest and asked those building our community for their personal insights.

We hope you find this section educational, informative and entertaining. If you have one interesting conversation during your day about something we wrote, we have done our job.

Thank you from all of us at the Evening Sun,

— Tyler Murphy
Managing Editor

Major overhaul coming for UHS, Chenango Memorial Hospital



President and CEO Dr. Drake Lamien explains a plan for expansion to Dr. Kenneth Herman, Director, Emergency Medicine. Chenango Memorial Hospital is planning a multi-million dollar expansion that will relocate, renovate and update the emergency room, create a new lab facility, build an expansion to accommodate a new ambulance drop-off point and will reopen the hospital's walk-in clinic. (Tyler Murphy photo)

TYLER MURPHY
The Evening Sun

After a decade of success and savings, and a tough few years behind them, Chenango Memorial Hospital is looking at a major overhaul and renovation of its main facility in 2019 and the years ahead.

The \$15 to 20 million proj-

ect will completely redesign how the public interacts with the hospital. The project will relocate, renovate and update the emergency room, create a new lab facility, build an expansion to accommodate a new ambulance drop-off point and will re-open the hospital's walk-in clinic. It will also bring new cardiac services.

“To get \$9 million toward \$20 million project, it's a whole new world for Chenango Memorial. It's a great opportunity,” explained President and CEO Dr. Drake Lamien.

The capitol expenses are saved and spent separate from the day-to-day operations. The hospital has been saving a small set of funds for capi-

tal reinvestment almost every year since 2005. As the facility begins upgrading itself it must continue to provide constant care. A challenge that can take at least a couple years to complete.

“We are also going to have a massive renovation and relocation of our emergency department which will be a completely different experience,” said Business Development Director Melissa Stagnaro.

“You're going to have increased access to services, so as part of this, not only are we expanding cardiology services, but introducing cardiac rehab. A service not available anywhere in Chenango County, so people who have had a heart attack and need rehabilitation they have to travel an hour and a half each way to get that,” she said.

“And we will have the walk-in clinic again,” Stagnaro added. The clinic will be built as part of the hospital so it can share some services within range of the emergency room, saving some costs.

The project has already broken ground with a new lab facility in the hospital basement level nearing completion.

The lab should be in opera-

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Building from the ground up at Principle Design & Engineering

GRADY THOMPSON
The Evening Sun

NORWICH – Principle Design & Engineering, PLLC in Norwich had its fair share of projects in 2018, ranging from residential additions to the construction of an apartment building in an old ward schoolhouse, and the two brothers behind the scenes say more of the same is in store for this year.

Mike and Dan O'Reilly, of Norwich, created Principle Design & Engineering, PLLC in 2017, and since then the brothers have completed projects for Ommegang Brewery, Raymond Corporation, Sidney Federal Credit Union, Pathfinder Village, and the towns of Bainbridge, Greene, and Hancock, to name a few.

But if you ask the O'Reilly brothers they'll say they're just getting started, undertaking projects both large and small as their way of reinvesting in



Principle Design & Engineering Project Engineer/Manager Dan O'Reilly and Managing Partner Michael O'Reilly, PE inside the old Ward 5 Schoolhouse. (Grady Thompson photo)

the community in which they grew.

“We've been fortunate this past year,” said Dan, Mike's

younger brother. “We've been busy doing work and have been able to expand. We'll get a storefront [in Norwich] short-

ly and really plant our roots. It's a sense of pride in the community, but it's also, for us, Norwich was just a good

Continued on Page 2

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 899 square miles, 894 square miles is land and 5.1 square miles is water.

Principle Design & Engineering —



A rendering created by Principle Design & Engineering depicting what of one of the apartments in Studios East will look like. (Submitted photo)



Continued from Page 1

place. We're young, it's local, and we see a lot of potential here."

A highlight for the brothers in 2018 was kicking-off a project at the former Ward 5 Schoolhouse in Norwich, located at 125-127 East Main Street.

In summer 2018, the brothers submitted a proposal to the City of Norwich to renovate the vacant building into a modern apartment building and were selected in the RFP process.

Built in 1920 and renovated in the early 1980s, the building has long since been vacant. The brothers said they decided to turn it into a modern apartment building, dubbed Studios East, with 10 to 12 units after driving by the property for 10 years and wondering what would come of it.

The brothers estimate they are roughly 80 percent complete with the project and hope it to be operating in the next six months. The apartments will be fully furnished with stainless appliances, full kitchens, washers and dryers, with heating, air conditioning, TV and data, all included. They have also completed renderings illustrating what each apartment will look like upon completion.

"We gutted the entire building, put in all new insulation, new studs, all new drywall everywhere, it's all brand new" said Mike. "It's cool because all the materials have been local, so everything's come from Curtis [Lumber], Sherwin-Williams, the electrician's local, all the appliances are from S&S [TV and Appliances]. S&S sold 10

By working with local partners, the brothers said they are able to get quick answers to questions while also supporting local businesses.

A third perk, Dan said, is a lot of local businesses are competitive with big box stores.

kitchens out of the deal." By working with local partners, the brothers said they are able to get quick answers to questions while also supporting local businesses. A third perk, Dan said, is a lot of local businesses are competitive with big box stores.

"It's kind of a misconception that we had," said Dan. "We learned they're

Continued on Page 3



Thank you New York!



nbtbank.com/highscores



The old Ward 5 Schoolhouse located at 125-127 East Main Street, which Principle Design & Engineering are transforming into Studios East apartments. (Grady Thompson photo)

Continued from Page 2

extremely competitive. You can go to these big box stores in Binghamton or Syracuse, but if you give the local guy the opportunity, they're generally just as capable of matching prices, or a lot of times beating them."

In building the apartments, the O'Reilly brothers said they are attempting to fill a void present in the community: a lack of quality housing for younger people working in local businesses.

"We've heard a lot of people leave the area because, for younger people, there's not a type of living that attracts them," said Dan. "So that's really what we're going after is the younger guys, and also retired couples."

Mike said, "We've heard that [local businesses] hire someone young and there's no place in Norwich, so they end up getting a place in Binghamton or getting a place in Oneonta, Hamilton. And then next thing you know they don't want to

move back to Norwich so they commute. When we don't have some place for them to stay immediate to where they work, you lose in the long run."

The Ward 5 Schoolhouse is not the first project undertaken by Principle Design & Engineering that strived to turn a long-vacant building into a new housing option for area residents. In 2017, the brothers were named recip-

"We've heard a lot of people leave the area because, for younger people, there's not a type of living that attracts them," said Dan. "So that's really what we're going after is the younger guys, and also retired couples."

ipients of a \$500,000 CFA grant to transform a former SUNY Morrisville building, located at 16 South Broad Street, into a new hotel.

While they originally set a completion date for the hotel to open 2019, the brothers said the project has been put on the back-burner the last year as they've focused their attention on the Ward 5 Schoolhouse.

"[The apartments] are our main focus right now," said Dan. "Once we finish the apartments we're really going to push hard on

the hotel. It's one of those things that everything has to mesh and there's a lot of red tape."

Dan said he feels confident that things look promising for the hotel project and that a big push will ensue in the next year to year-and-a-half. He said they still have the grant, investors, and a brand in mind.

"I can tell you with confidence once the school's done, the focus is back on that," said Dan. "[The apartment project] is one of those things that lets the community know that we're serious. And that's why

we're doing it quick, getting it done right, and making sure [the apartments] are nice as our main focus. This isn't just something that we're talking about, we're going to get it done, and it's going to get done somehow."

The O'Reilly brothers first created Principle Design & Engineering, PLLC in 2017 using revenue earned from their first project: renovating the visitor's center at Ommegang Brewery. At first the brothers were just concerned with making

enough money to make it through the end of the year.

"This past year flew by," said Dan. "We made it through the year, we did a lot of cool projects, and we have a couple - three, four big ones - lined up this year. I think we finally have our footing and we're pretty comfortable now."

Mike received his degree in civil engineering and became a licensed engineer in 2015. Dan's degree is in mechanical engineering.

Dan said, "Engineering-

wise, Mike is what we consider an architectural engineer, so buildings, bridges, civil work, all of that is what his degree encompasses. Mine, as a mechanical tech, encompasses HVC, electrical, lighting, things like that. So the two of us when we combined, we now have the ability to pretty much build a building from the ground up."

In the year ahead the O'Reilly brothers say they have plans to open a storefront for Principle Design

and Engineering, PLLC in the City of Norwich. They plan to hire employees this year as well, and noted that a perk to being based in Norwich is all of the trade schools within driving distance of the city.

More information on Principle Design and Engineering, PLLC can be found at www.principledesign.com, or by contacting the O'Reilly brothers at moreilly@outlook.com, doreilly@outlook.com, or (607) 204-0609.



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In Your Own Words



**Reuben Roach,
long-time resident and
police officer**

As we lumber through the near-zero temperatures of 2019, there seems to be ample time to huddle in the warmer parts of our homes and reflect on 2018. A thing of the past! A time when things were better! Well I digress; I am merely practicing the usual discourse we allow ourselves for time immemorial. Instead however, maybe a few observations from 2018 which was only a few yesterdays ago.

Thinking back on the last year, one thought seems to pop up more frequently than others, and that is community. Through the hurdles of the bitter cold in the first few months of the year, to the humid summers and expressive falls, we have something most places don't. We have real community.

When I visit family in Los Angeles and Dallas, I notice a detached kind of existence. Towns and cities where a usual face is unusual and where you are unlikely to get a "You're welcome," after a "Thank you." Most places are missing what we have in Chenango County.

Granted, we may not have the luxuries of a more densely populated area, but we have what most people never will.

We have Gus Macker, Music in the Park, Blues Fest, Colorscape and Pumpkin Fest just to name a few. Events where people actually do know your name (throwback

to Cheers), and where friends are easily made. Homes that are older than a hundred years and a colorful history to go along with them. A place where generations of family members are born and raised, married and eventually laid to rest.

In June of 1902, Mark Twain, then 66-years-old, returned to his boyhood town of Hannibal, MO, on his way to Columbia, MO to receive an honorary doctorate degree. His stop was unannounced and the people in the small town soon gathered around him. He was exuberant to be back in the place where he had been raised since the age of four.

That night however, it is recorded that Twain broke down and sobbed, like he hadn't in years. It is speculated that Twain had met his boyhood ghosts and had come to terms with them, on this, his last visit to the childhood home that had fueled classic novels. I am hopeful that our young men and women, who were raised here and leave for the great-big-world beyond, will someday return home and feel as nostalgic as Twain did for his.

The great American Author Charles Portis wrote, "Time just gets away from us." As we peer into 2019, I am optimistic that our county and our people will hold onto the richness that we have; a richness most people only read about in fiction."

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SUCCESS STORY

Rolling Antiquer's Old Car Club



The Rolling Antiquer's Old Car Club (RAOCC) will hold its Annual Car Shows during the 2019 Memorial Day weekend. Saturday, May 25th will be the 30th Muscle Car & Street Rod Show. Sunday, May 26th will be the 54th Antique & Classic Car Show. The Club encourages folks to bring and show off their cherished vehicles. The two day event will bring flashy chrome and bright auto colors to the Chenango County Fairgrounds in Norwich, N.Y. AACA National Award Winners have displayed their vehicles at the annual 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 Program and one award to a Senior Student from the Automotive Collision Program.

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 classic and antique automobiles. "Automobile" includes all self-propelled vehicles designed for passenger use and powered by gasoline, diesel, steam or electric sources. Hence, an "Old Car" can 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.

Saturday will feature Muscle Cars and Street Rods (2010 and older) such as Mustang and Camaro. Sunday will highlight the Antique and Classic Cars (1994 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 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 of these events will occur with 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 2019, 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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United Health Services, Chenango Memorial Hospital —

Chenango Memorial Hospital, UHS in 2018

- 380 Full-time employees
- 176,000 outpatients visits
- 18,000 Emergency Room visits
- 300 babies delivered
- \$27 million spent on payroll expenses
- \$20 million for hospital expansions in 2019+
- 47% of patients cost paid with Medicaid and Medicare
- 33% of all Chenango children rely on Medicaid
- 66% of Chenango nursing home residents rely on Medicaid
- 64% of Chenango births rely on Medicaid



The project has already broken ground with a new lab facility (above) in the hospital basement level nearing completion. The lab should be in operation by Spring. The last time the lab had a facility upgrade was in 1991. (Tyler Murphy photo)

Continued from Page 1

tion by spring. The last time the lab had a facility upgrade was in 1991.

"It will be a shift in how we are providing care," Stagnaro said.

The project will relocate the women's care health facility and include a diagnostic imaging suite. It will also have spaces for pregnancy support services.

Another important development is the creation of an Oncology infusion center, a service not available elsewhere in the county. It will allow cancer patients to receive an array of treatment locally said Laman.

As the business takes these significant steps forward, it has not been achieved without reflection and sacrifice. The hospital is on track to be profitable in 2019, bucking a trend of decline in the last couple years.

"To illustrate some of the realities we are dealing with is that we have done very well over all for the last 15 years," said Laman. "We have had a positive bottom line from 2005 through 2016, which highly unusual for hospitals in upstate New York."

In 2017 a visiting politician asked representatives from Chenango Memorial Hospital about their concerns and officials warned of a possible pending Medicaid

crisis in the county, with more patients being dependent on the program but fewer and fewer local services accepting it.

Dedicated to filling community needs the hospital was spending millions to maintain unprofitable, but popular services. It was unsustainable they warned.

In some areas, such as dental, they provided the only available services left in the county.

Providing this service cost more to run than was earned in return, costing the hospital millions in losses to operate over the years.

For this reason, many if not all the private providers in Chenango had stopped accepting or limited Medicaid for many services years before.

Administrators were distraught over the choices they faced, something they have unfortunately become accustomed to as a rural hospital: the demand to provide needed services to the community, but at what cost to the stability of hospital's bottom-line and long-term future?

Under the guise of United Health Services, the hospital had profitable years from 2005 to 2016, but losses from changes in the Affordable Care Act altered the Medicaid formula of reimbursement and losses caught up with the hospital

over time.

Of the 176,000 visits from outpatients in 2018, and the 18,000 emergency room visits, and the 300 babies delivered, about 47 percent of all patients depended on Medicaid or Medicare to pay their bills. Of nursing home residents in Chenango, 66 percent rely on the programs.

With nearly half of the hospital total volume dependent on those programs, as many upstate rural hospitals are, any changes to the payment formula can cost millions of dollars in lost compensation - and it has.

CMH projected a loss of between 20 to 40 million over 10 years since the law went into effect. Those losses are occurring and officials are now eight years into that projection.

Laman reported on average, a rural hospital like CMH, had lost about 39 percent of their revenue from Medicaid since the measures were past about eight years ago. Though the worst jumps in lost income may have already occurred, they are still occurring and the hospital expects them keep growing over time.

"Between 2016-2017 we had a net increase of 1.1 million from one year to next. So our net revenue went up

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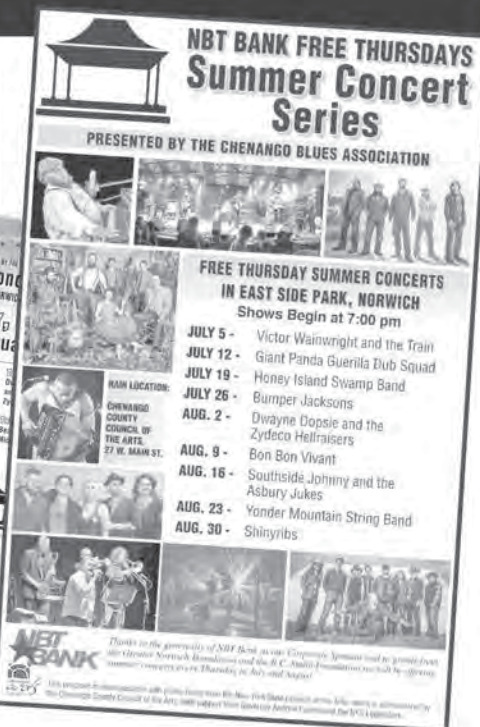
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Continued from Page 6

by 1.1 million. Our expenses went up by four million," explained Lamen.

"We lost \$2 million in 2017, so this four to five-million-dollar gap had to be closed. And so we have made lots of changes, part of which was taking unprofitable services we had supported unprofitably for a decade and it just got to a point we had to make choices," he said.

These financial issues contributed to the decision to close the dental offices at the Eaton Center in 2018, the last location in Chenango to accept Medicaid for such services. The move generated outcry from many local patients who must now commute to Broome or Otsego Counties.

The hospital contact-

ed every other provider in Chenango before the closure, no one else was willing to provide coverage, citing costs.

He compared being forced to prioritize available services to medical triage.

"We reduced the work force by 25, 30 positions as part of this response, to get a 2019 budget," he said.

A several million-dollar short-fall is difficult for the approximately 70-million-dollar hospital to absorb. Their budgeting for 2019 is out of the red but only by about \$400,000 for services, and a lot of that depends on getting properly reimbursed by the state. It is a small margin when you consider the possible expenses and size of CMH.

With 380 full-time employees and 105 contract staff, in a profession of spe-

cialists, attracting qualified staff can be difficult for rural hospitals, and more expensive. Laman said poorer hospital actually have to pay more in staffing in order to fill those positions.

"Something like 65 percent is salary and benefits for people who work here," he said of expenses. An area of cost that is difficult to reduce or control. He said these costs only go up over time.

"All of the country is a tough place to operate a hospital, but upstate communities have more challenges than urban centers," said Laman

"In the bigger urban centers, there are a lot of mergers. Lots of consolidation, lots of leveraging very expensive resources that can be shared across a large population. When we get into

Continued on Page 8

A map for the planned CMH's reorganization and renovation. "We are also going to have a massive renovation and relocation of our emergency department which will be a complete different experience," said Business Development Director Melissa Stagnaro. (Tyler Murphy photo)



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CMH Patient Care Pharmacist Rachel Reed aids Nursing Supervisor Kelly French during training in the hospital's newly developed Oncology infusion center, a service not available elsewhere in the county. It will allow cancer patients to receive an array of treatment locally. (Tyler Murphy photo)

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small communities like this, we are what you call a low volume facility," he said.

"60 percent of the population here is within eight-mile radius of Norwich," he said

Laman compared CMH to a general practitioner, because it was expected to attend to almost any or all needs in the area, with little support and few alternatives in Chenango.

"Look at home care-as

an example of how tough it is, and for the home care companies that have tried to serve Chenango County. To go see one patient over near Cincinnatus and go back and see someone over in New Berlin, you are going to spend a lot of time in the car."

"It's a low population and yet we need to provide a basic set of services, and there are others we choose to do here, like maternity, that other people have aban-

done because it doesn't pay for itself," said Laman.

"Every time someone quits doing it we feel more committed to doing it," he said.

It was common he said for CMH to be the last to abandon services and that the hospital felt more pressure from the community than many others, a pro and a con.

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HERE ARE FIVE WAYS WE CONTRIBUTE TO CHENANGO COUNTY:

- ✓ Stimulate and promote the assets of Chenango County to support economic growth.
- ✓ Offer education and training programs that will help businesses become more productive.
- ✓ Act as the business voice for Chenango County and take the initiative to communicate and address issues that are significant to business.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for businesses to initiate and enhance relationships with customers and suppliers.
- ✓ Work with community and regional partners to achieve maximum results.

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PLACES TO EAT No trip to Chenango County is complete without a little local cuisine. Hidden gems abound in the rolling hills and small towns around here. So, if you're looking for a bite, have a peek at these listings covering a wide range of tastes.

PLACES TO SHOP From fine wine to one-of-a-kind gifts, Chenango County has the shopping experience covered. Personal service and attention are the hallmark of hundreds of individually owned small businesses located throughout the county. Shop owners are very knowledgeable about their products and are anxious to make sure that you are comfortable during your shopping experience.

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