

### In Your Own Words



## Mike Chrystie

Norwich High School  
Social Studies Teacher and  
Football Head Coach

### Home Sweet Home

As a kid, my parents always tried to take my sister and I on an annual vacation. Whether it was Florida, Virginia, or just a weekend getaway to Great Escape, we looked forward to these trips each year. However, as much as we loved getting away, pulling into our driveway after a long ride home was always a nice feeling.

Home to me has always been Chenango County. I attended Colgate University, where I received my Bachelor's and Master's degrees. After graduation I was lucky enough to get a job teaching at the Windsor Central School District. After a year in Windsor, there was an opening at my alma mater, Oxford Academy. Missy, my wife and high school sweetheart, and I, knew we wanted to settle down and raise a family in this area. We always knew Chenango County was good to us, and we wanted our kids to have the same experience growing up as we did. We would eventually buy a house in the village of Oxford and we started to grow our family with the birth of our twin boys, Cooper and Carter. We couldn't have been happier!

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## BOCES celebrates another year of educational leadership

By ZACHARY MESECK  
The Evening Sun

NORWICH – With a 100 percent passing rate of the certified nursing assistant program, plans of pushing for state approved funding, and the possibility of even more program availability is on the horizon, Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otesgo Board of Cooperative Educational Services (DCMO BOCES) representatives celebrated 2018 as another year of great progress in its communities.

According to DCMO BOCES District Superintendent Perry Dewey, BOCE's goal as an educational institution is to deliver high-quality educational programs and services that are diverse, innovative, and cost-effective.

"Our vision is to propel regional growth as a premier provider of educational service," said Dewey. "We believe that all individuals can learn and grow, and we embrace col-

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DCMO BOCES District Superintendent Perry Dewey. (Zachary Meseck photo)

## With new CEO, sfcu looks forward to future

By GRADY THOMPSON  
The Evening Sun



sfcu Vice President of Marketing Keith May and sfcu CEO Jim Reynolds. (Grady Thompson photo)

SIDNEY – With the addition of a new CEO and 1,800 members in 2018, sfcu has made plenty of strides forward with more to come in the future.

At the end of 2018, former sfcu CEO Jim Doig retired after 22 years as the credit union's leader. On December 3, sfcu brought on Jim Reynolds, who took over as CEO on January 1.

"A big initiative from the board perspective was finding a replacement," said Reynolds. "Obviously Jim [Doig] was well-renowned in this area; great reputation in the community, great business leader. So with his retirement that was a major initiative for the board, which, luckily for me I was chosen."

Reynolds brings with him 22 years of experience in the credit union industry, most recently serving as Chief Operating Officer at Empower

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87.8% of Chenango County residents have graduated high school or higher.  
18.6% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

# sfcu looks forward to future —



sfcu's headquarters in Sidney. The credit union has three branches in Chenango County: one in Norwich, one in Greene, and one in Bainbridge. (Grady Thompson photo)

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Federal Credit Union in Syracuse.

"When the opportunity came open, I started applying and going through the process and was fortunate enough to be granted this position," said Reynolds, noting his experience in different lines of business within the credit union industry.

"I really view myself as a steward of the credit union

so that when I retire, the next person comes in and keeps moving the ship forward. And it's not about legacy building, it's about doing what's right for the membership."

In 2018 sfcu saw a number of developments including the implementation of remote deposit capture for checks, the employment of a new tagline, increased loan services including auto-de-

cisioning with car dealers, and expanded skip-a-pay options.

sfcu Vice President of Marketing Keith May said the credit union spent years working on providing offering deposit capture for checks, which allows a member to deposit a check into an account simply by photographing it with their cell phone. The feature went live in 2018.

"It seems to be going very well," said May. "Our members really like it. And people say, 'Well, you don't get that many checks anymore.' Well, you probably don't get as many checks as you used to, but we are still seeing that that service is being used quite a bit. We're finding that the younger generation really goes along with that."

Remote deposit capture

for checks is one way sfcu is attempting to fulfill its new tagline, adopted in January 2018: "banking. easier." At the same time, credit union staff said banking easier should not mean less security.

"Security is obviously paramount," said Reynolds. "That's kind of the mantra for everybody in the organization, is protecting members' information."

In 2017 sfcu converted 40,000 cards to MasterCards with an EMV chip in order to better protect its members from fraud. May said this has been successful in decreasing some fraud, but noted future transactions will probably move toward near-field communication, which is more secure than EMV chip cards.

Near-field communication allows transactions to occur by essentially having your MasterCard, credit, and/or debit cards on a smartphone. The smartphone can then be "swiped" to complete the transaction.

"Let's face it, most people don't let that phone out of their sight. With near-field communication — you'll see it at gas stations soon — you'll swipe your mobile device and it automatically goes to your MasterCard, debit card, or credit card," said May.

May said sfcu just about

doubled its loan growth last year, a majority of which came in the form of automotive loans. In order to provide some leniency toward members who take out a loan with sfcu, May said they expanded their skip-a-pay option to twice a year.

In years past, sfcu's skip-a-pay would allow members to skip a loan payment in the months of November or December to provide them some more money during the holiday season.

"We found that a lot of members said, 'You know what, could you do that in the summertime too?' And we said, 'Yes, as long as you pay on the back end.' We had just as many members skip-a-pay in the summer, which was a new program, than they did in the fall," said May, while estimating that roughly 75 percent of people who took part in skip-a-pay opted to skip one payment in both the summer and winter.

While things are looking stable at sfcu for years to come with \$500 million in assets and about 48,000 members, there is always concern in the credit union industry when it comes to national and global economics.

Reynolds said, "I think probably for us the biggest

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sfcu —

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challenge is the economy, what's happening there nationally and globally. You saw the markets pull back in September and there was some concern about a recession.

"I think the concern globally is, is there an impending recession when you look at how well the market's done historically since the great recession? Is it just a matter of time and are things cycli-

plete but will be more on par with the times and easier for members to use.

"We want a very intuitive, convenient, slick site that is intuitive in nature so it's easy to use and you don't really need to explain for members to understand it," said Reynolds.

Currently, Reynolds estimated about 55 to 60 percent of sfcu's member base is utilizing its website, and over 50 percent of members are utilizing its mobile

ed strictly in-person, sfcu is committed to staying with the times without sacrificing any of its branches, where members often come in for advice on financial literacy.

In December 2018 sfcu staff moved into a new call-center in Bainbridge, which serves as a contact center and a newly developed e-services department. May said staff at the call center can help members with anything, from electronic questions to work with loans, and everything in between.

Moving forward Reynolds said sfcu is currently fine-tuning its five-year plan, working closely with its board of directors. He said his goal is for sfcu to grow from \$500 million in assets and 48,000 members to \$1 billion in assets and 100,000 members in 10 years. But in the meantime Reynolds is still getting acquainted to his new role at sfcu.

"I'm using the term 'absorb,' and really bring in as much as I can, and observe the business today before we make the final decisions," said Reynolds. "I really need to get my finger on the pulse of who we are and who we want to be. Probably the next six months are going to be focused on inside-out, looking internally, and then starting to look to expand."

*A new development in 2019 will include rebuilding sfcu's website, a development that's expected to take a few months to complete but will be more on par with the times and easier for members to use.*

*"We want a very intuitive, convenient, slick site that is intuitive in nature so it's easy to use and you don't really need to explain for members to understand it," said Reynolds.*

cal? So if that's the case what's the impact locally? Does that affect a lot of the local manufacturers and businesses in the area? Does that slow their growth down and affect, again, the population and taxpayer base? That's always going to be a concern to look at as we move forward."

A new development in 2019 will include rebuilding sfcu's website, a development that's expected to take a few months to com-

app. One portion of the website that sees a lot of traffic is devoted to keeping members up-to-date on current scams.

May said, "We do have a section of our website where people can read about scams that are happening now, and scams that have happened way back; what to do and what not to do. It's a well-read section on the website."

As time goes on and more people become dependent on the internet for services that once were provid-

In Your Own Words

## Mike Chrystie —

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I worked at Oxford Academy for two years, but due to budget cuts my position was eliminated. I knew I did not want to uproot my family so I looked for a teaching position that would be as local as possible. I applied for a position at Norwich City School District. After going through the interview process and meeting so many welcoming people, I was offered the job. Knowing I wanted to stay in the area, I quickly accepted the position.

Athletics have always been a big part of my life growing up. Not only did I find athletics extremely enjoyable, but it was also a way that my whole family bonded with one another. Every family get together resulted in some form of athletic contest. Growing up as a young kid, I was fascinated with the success that Norwich had with just about every sport. Norwich's achievements made me want to bring the same success to Oxford in the sports that I played. I found myself working to emulate their success as I grew older. I remember watching their back-to-back state championships in Glens Falls, NY. My dad understood how special those teams were and he made sure I was there to witness their glory. Traveling and watching their success is a vivid memory of my childhood. Attending those

games in Glens Falls caused us to revisit the state championships year after year, and it is a tradition that I have started with my own family.

Because of the life lessons that athletics taught me, I knew I wanted to share those with future generations through coaching in some capacity. As the current football coach at Norwich, I am extremely thankful for the opportunity to coach commitment, dedication, teamwork and selflessness to student athletes. I'm beyond grateful to do so in a community where there is so much support for its coaches and players. The players, parents, and community members want to see all the student athletes succeed on the athletic fields, as well as in the classroom.

Today, my wife and I have added a beautiful daughter to our wonderful family and we currently reside in Norwich, NY. We never once thought of moving out of the area. Chenango County may not be a metropolis, but it is a great place to raise a family. I enjoy walking into Tops and hearing my students yell, "Hey Mr. Chrystie," or shopping at Wal-Mart and hearing employees say "Nice game last night, Coach!" It will always be a special place to me and my family. It will always be home.

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# Economic and community development a priority at Commerce Chenango

By GRADY THOMPSON  
The Evening Sun

NORWICH - After a bustling year in 2018 Commerce Chenango is looking ahead at a number of initiatives to continue the economic development of Chenango County's businesses and municipalities for years to come.

One such initiative was made possible by a \$10,000 planning grant to create an economic development plan for Greene, which was received by Commerce Chenango's local development partner, Development Chenango Corporation.

Commerce Chenango President and CEO Steve Craig said of the grant, "The goal is to come up with a prioritized list of initiatives that will solidify the relationship between the community and the Raymond Corporation, the largest private-sector employer in the county, and the major economic driver in Greene."

The project is one indication of Commerce Chenango's vision to revitalize areas in need in Chenango County. On behalf of downtown Norwich in 2019, Commerce Chenango will apply for a \$10 million Downtown Revitalization



In 2018 the chamber unveiled its new website, VisitChenango.com.

Initiative (DRI) grant. "This is a program that aims to give incentives to private investments to improve the viability of a community's downtown area, as a center for retail, restaurants, and other amenities and attractions," said Craig.

Although it's a competitive grant, other steps are also being made in the City of Norwich to improve the streetscape and the viability of the city as a tourist destination.

A museum district was solidified and approved by the City of Norwich

Common Council in 2018 in the Rexford Street area, which is home to the Chenango County Historical Society Museum, the Northeast Classic Car Museum, and the Bullthistle Model Railroad Society.

Craig said the Chenango Foundation will serve as the non-profit vehicle to pursue and secure grant funding for the Norwich Museum District Streetscape Improvement Project, along with partners including Friends of the Museum District, and the Norwich Building Tomorrow Foundation.

The Foundation, which

aims to aid research and development contributing to the community development of the Chenango County area, will also offer a new Leadership Chenango class beginning in October, Craig added.

Another significant development in 2018 for the chamber included the unveiling of its new website, VisitChenango.com. As Chenango County's designated Tourism Promotion Agency, Craig said Chenango County government remains the chamber's single largest customer.

"Keeping county leaders apprised of our activities, successes, and frankly our failures, is vital to sustaining this relationship," said Craig.

The website includes a calendar of upcoming community events, as well as pages devoted to listing the things to do, places to stay, places to eat, and places to shop in Chenango County.

Although Commerce Chenango is working hard to foster a prosperous business climate in the county, that mission does not come without some challenges.

"The main challenge for most local employers is finding appropriate employees to join their workforces," said Craig. "Chenango County has actually outpaces most upstate counties when it

comes to job creation in the last 10 years."

Craig said thanks to growth at local businesses like Raymond Corporation, Chobani, NBT Bank, Unison, GOLDEN Artist Colors, and Alvogen, private-sector jobs in the county have increased by 1,400 since 2008.

"Filling these jobs with Chenango County residents is the best way to maximize the local, positive impact of this job creation," said Craig. But employers in Chenango County are now looking for different qualifications for their workers.

"Nowadays, you hear the term 'advanced manufacturing' all the time," said Craig. "That means factories that have integrated automation, robotics, data systems and other technology. Employees who are qualified to add value in this environment must have had more and different skills than were required even 10 years ago. This is the ongoing workforce development challenge, here and across the country."

A positive effect of this is local school districts and DCMO BOCES are now embarking on programs that help students identify potential career paths as soon as middle school. Craig said SUNY Morrisville is even launching a mobile advanced manufacturing training lab that will enable instructors to deliver industry-approved training directly to workplaces.

Another challenge specific to the Chenango County area, Craig said, is a scarcity of affordable energy. Out of all the municipalities in the county, natural gas is currently delivered via pipeline to just Plymouth, Norwich, Oxford and South New Berlin.

"The pipeline is old, and too small," Craig said. "Therefore in cold weather, several of our employers are forced to switch to more costly alternative fuels. Projects that would

have improved our supply of natural gas were killed at the state level, including the Constitutional Pipeline, and a compressed natural gas terminal."

But Craig said in addition to improving existing roads, bridges, and water and sewer systems, the most crucial infrastructure need is the expansion of broadband - or high-speed internet - to unserved and underserved parts of Chenango County.

Keeping all these challenges in mind, Commerce Chenango is currently in the works of updating its five-year strategic plan.

In the meantime the chamber will continue to present informational programming, including the annual Economic Forecast Breakfast on February 28 and an on-going series on Human Resources-related issues, including one on workplace problems created by opioid abuse on January 31.

Commerce Chenango will also continue its major events like its annual soiree, golf outing, job fair with SUNY Morrisville, and the 5&10K Chobani Chamber Challenge trail runs.

In its efforts, Craig said Commerce Chenango consistently works with a number of local organizations and municipalities including Chenango County, the Town of Norwich, the Town of North Norwich, the Town of Greene, Oxford Academy Central School District, Unadilla Valley Central School District, DCMO BOCES, SUNY Morrisville, Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council, Southern Tier Region Economic Development Corporation, Southern Tier 8, the Center for International Business Advancement at Binghamton University, Norwich Merchants Association, Bainbridge Chamber of Commerce, and Afton Chamber of Commerce.

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They are also delighted to announce the addition of yet another board certified bariatric surgeon to their practice – Dr. Ransford Commey. Dr. Commey comes to our community with a wealth of expertise and experience in advanced surgical techniques, having completed a fellowship in bariatric surgery – which is highly specialized training in minimally invasive surgery and care for those affected with severe obesity.

The practice also helped contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of bariatric surgery by taking part in completing and publishing a research study titled "Taste and odor preferences following Roux-en-Y surgery in humans", published July 2018 in PLOSOne.

This year, William A. Graber, MD, PC also helped yet another 1000+ people take

a great step toward better health, with procedures such as the gastric bypass, gastric sleeve, and revisional bariatric surgeries. This practice remains one of the most experienced for bariatric surgery in all of New York State, with an impres-

sive and dedicated team of caregivers- bariatric surgeons, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, registered dietitians, certified bariatric nurses and many more talented staff devoted to the task of caring for the weight loss/metabolic surgery patient. They perform surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center in Syracuse, NY and Mohawk Valley Health System in Utica, NY – both of which continue as accredited centers by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP). The MBSAQIP standards ensure that weight loss and metabolic surgery patients receive a multidisciplinary program, not just a surgical procedure, which improves patient outcomes and long-term success.

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# BOCES —



BOCES is focused on the importance of students building and maintaining networking foundational skills, learning how to apply for and keep a job, how to prioritize, and discovering what individual student's predisposed talents. (Zachary Meseck photo)

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-laboration and shared decision making."

BOCES has several strategies to make their vision and goals a reality including, meeting current and emerging needs through innovative and diverse programs and services, implementing consistent, transparent internal communications plans, and building vital partnerships with school districts, businesses, industries, higher education, legislators, public agencies, and other community organizations.

Dewey said as of the end of 2018, his school has 14 different career and technical education programs, over 250 contacts in businesses and industries throughout the

region, and an adult education program for individuals who are seeking skill training in specific fields.

"We are working extensively to keep them modern and moving forward," he said. "We are however facing some challenges."

DCMO BOCES spreads across four counties and spans from Sherburne Earlville to the Pennsylvania border, and relies on a large number of staff members to keep everything operational.

"In upstate New York, especially in the rural areas, there is an attrition of population and I believe last year we just hit the 1 million mark of people leaving the region," said Dewey. "We employee a lot of people, and as people tend to leave so does the

employment base."

He said in the next 10 years approximately 20 percent of BOCES workforce is scheduled to retire, and the institution is currently researching ways to effectively fill that void.

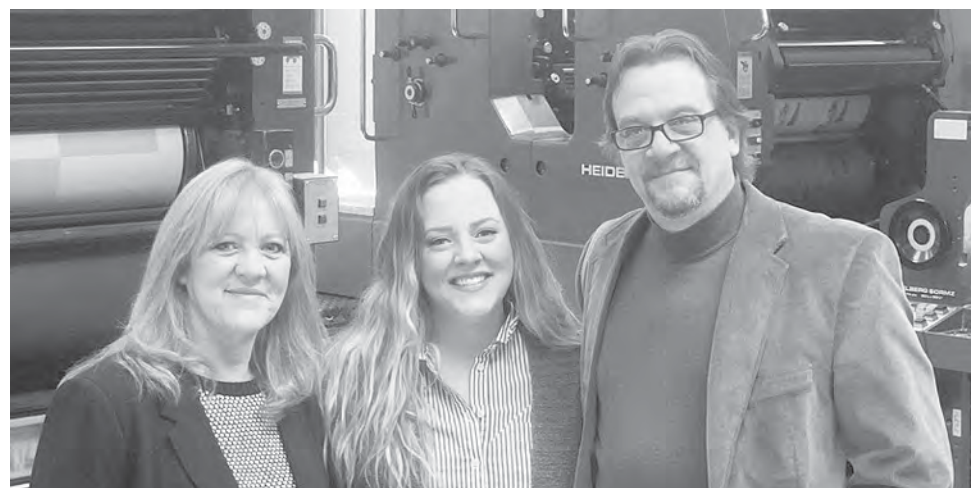
"We've created awareness of the issues due to loss of population, we're losing our employees, we're losing the ability to support our schools, because our school districts have lost about 23 percent region wide of their students in that timeframe as well," said Dewey. "In order to solve that issue we need new families moving into the region, or graduates staying in the region and filling the jobs that are available."

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# BOCES —

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He said to help establish a plan that would work for this region, BOCES reached out to, “Answer Why,” author Mike Perna.

“He focuses on folks in the younger generation, what they’re looking for in a lifestyle, what they’re looking for in careers, and how to attract them to the workforce,” said Dewey. “We used those concepts in building a model for several of our schools.”

Three different schools are involved with piloting and establishing the model, and over a three year period BOCES going to integrate workplace based learning programing from the elementary grades all the way up to the high school.

“What we’re doing in the lower grades is trying to develop relationships with employers within the careers that the students are interested in,” said Dewey. “So when they graduate they’ll already have a connection in the region that wants them to come back and work for their company.”

He said it’s important for students to have certain foundational skills, an understanding of how to get and keep a job, how to prioritize, and what their predisposed talents are.

“We want to be able to create career portfolios for every students so they can go through mock interviews, get a resume, a cover letter, and those types of things which are essentials,” said Dewey. “We’re really looking at opportunities for employment for our special needs students in the region, and there’s

actually a career tree developed by Mark Perna to help with that as well.”

He said by working with the students and creating an open line of communication between students and potential employers, it allows BOCES to stay informed of the wants and needs of both groups.

“Our adult education program when I came here several years ago wasn’t doing very well, so we made some switches and made it as efficient as possible,” said Dewey. “Now we’re completely running in the black.”

BOCES offers an adult education course, and one of its programs allows students to become a certified nursing assistant, and in 2018 the school had a 100 percent passing rate.

“We want people to know that BOCES can provide them with opportunities that are cost effective, and programing that’s going to allow for the success of this to be spread across all schools, not just the schools that have significant resources,” said Dewey. “The research shows that if students are successfully reading at grade level in third grade, there predisposed to being successful in life, graduating high school, going to college, being successful at college, and then getting into different careers.”

He said thanks to New York State’s increase in funding for science-technology-engineering-mathematics (STEM) certified schools, BOCES may be able to offer their programs to all students in high school grades 9-12.

“In the past we’ve been limited to grades 11-12, but it’s possible

that if we become a STEM certified institution, we could offer programs to all high schoolers which would be a big win for education,” said Dewey.

He said if STEM becomes a reality for BOCES, then students would be able receive two certifications instead of one, making them more valuable to a potential employer.

“I’m pretty excited about moving in that direction, and some of the other things we’re looking at in the future would be more entrepreneurial programs,” said Dewey. “There’s a lot of interest in start-up companies, mechatronics, and an equine program on both campuses.”

BOCES is also interested in increasing its involvement in its communities.

“We’re one of the biggest employers in the regions, and as every employer knows reaching out and being part of a community creates sustainability and good relationships, said Dewey. “In 2018 we were involved with the Bandaro Christmas Dinner, where several staff members from BOCES helped feed approximately 1,000 people.”

He said it’s important for the school to continue to build relationships in the four counties DCMO BOCES resides in, and he wants to ensure that those communities know BOCES is there to help.

“We care about our kids, we care about the parents, and we care about our communities,” said Dewey. “BOCES is a service oriented organization, and community interaction is incredibly vital to the success of our organization.”



BOCES provides classes to students and adults with a variety of different programs and certifiable skills to learn. (Zachary Meseck photo)

One of the adult education programs offered by DCMO BOCES, allowing students to become certified nursing assistants, had a 100 percent pass rate in 2018. (Zachary Meseck photo)



Students are able to learn about and get hands on experience with auto painting and collision repair through BOCES’ auto body program. (Zachary Meseck photo)



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