

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

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SUCCESS STORY

Chenango Health Network

In March 2018 a young man came into Chenango Health Network with two bills that he had received from an extended stay at UHS/Wilson Memorial Hospital. On June 18, 2017, he was a passenger in a car that was involved in a serious motor vehicle accident (MVA). He was taken to the hospital in Binghamton from Norwich due to the seriousness of his injuries and was in a coma for several weeks.

At the time of the accident he was uninsured. His mother obtained Power of Attorney (POA) and was able to get him insured through Fidelis and the Medicaid was back dated to June 1st, 2017. After weeks in the hospital he was discharged on July 7th, 2017.

In January he received bills from UHS Hospital. He had one bill for \$139.48 for "miscellaneous" changed and another for \$212,530.31 and that was for labs, diagnostics, surgical procedures, anesthesia, therapies and accommodations while he was in ICU.

I called the UHS billing office to ask what insurance had been billed because it didn't look like anything had been paid at the time of the bill was sent out. We were informed that the drivers' Progressive auto insurance had recently paid \$28,964.41. She also stated that the balance had been sent to Medicaid on January 2nd, 2018. She was aware that the individual could not be billed for the balance even if the claim was denied by Medicaid. I was able to assure my client that the \$212,669.79 that he was billed for was not going to be his responsibility.

Client Quote:

"On June 18th, 2017, I was involved in a MVA that nearly took my life. I have no memory of the accident. I woke up tied to a bed in the hospital not knowing where I was, why, or how I got there. I was put into a medically induced coma due to the seriousness of my injuries. Once I was out of the coma, my mother who took over as my POA, told me everything that happened.

I had no insurance at the time. I was told by the insurance company that NO Fault had paid for nearly \$130,000.00 towards my medical costs. Then I got a bill in the mail for \$212,530.31.

I had no idea where to go or who to talk to. I went to the only place that I could think of and that was Chenango Health Network. I had no idea if they could help me but I took a chance. I went in and spoke with a Community Health Advocate (CHA) and without hesitation she took me in her office and immediately started making phone calls. She was determined and settled the issue in no time at all. She was very professional and made sure that I knew that I was not responsible for the amount I was billed. She helped me out so much and I can't thank her enough."

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Norwich's Alvogen security and technology investments

BY ZACHARY MESECK
The Evening Sun

NORWICH – Alvogen is a global pharmaceutical company with a deep history in Chenango County, and throughout 2018 the company continued to strive for bigger and better security and technology.

The current Alvogen manufacturing facility is located just north of Norwich on State Highway 12 and was constructed in the late 1970's. In recent years, there has been significant investment in the facility, bringing it into modern standards of pharmaceutical production.

Alvogen is the latest rebirth of Norwich Pharmaceuticals, having its origination in the town of Norwich in 1887.

According to Norwich Alvogen's Vice President of Human Resources Ric Festarini, in 2007, Norwich worked hard to attract a new buyer with global ambitions. Festarini said ten years into the company's story, Alvogen became a global organization with its headquarters in Reykjavik, Iceland.

"Alvogen has grown from



Norwich Alvogen's Vice President of Operations Charlie Andrews, Norwich Alvogen's Human Resource Manager Luke Murphy, and Vice President of Alvogen's Human Resources Ric Festarini. (Zachary Meseck photo)

its Norwich employee base of 300 to a strong international team of just under 3000," he said. "Sales have followed suit and the 2007 sales target of \$35 Million are now exceeding \$1 billion globally."

Alvogen has sales in 35

countries and some of the fastest growing are those of Russia and the prior Soviet bloc republics. 2018 saw significant business agreements being reached in China and Japan as Asia became a strategic focus.

Festarini said, "As Norwich

demonstrates its effectiveness as a manufacturing facility, Alvogen continues to invest at our site."

An area which garnered significant focus and investment in for Alvogen in 2018 was that of product serialization. In most

Continued on page 38

New York Central Mutual Insurance a year of growth and advancement

BY ZACHARY MESECK
The Evening Sun



NYCM Insurance writes insurance through over 1000 independent agents throughout the state of New York. (Zachary Meseck photo)

EDMESTON – A year after providing many of their employees an early retirement program, New York Central Mutual saw 2018 as a year for education, expansion, and technological advancements.

According to Samantha K. Harrington, Marketing Specialist for New York Central Mutual (NYCM) Insurance is a property and casualty insurance carrier that has been providing coverage to residents and businesses in New York since 1899. The company offers automobile, homeowner, mobile home, umbrella and commercial policies and is rated A by A.M. Best Company.

"NYCM Insurance writes

Continued on page 34

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Chenango County's median household income from 2013-17 was \$48,657. Median individual income was \$25,233.

New York Central Mutual Insurance —

Continued on page 34

insurance through over 1000 independent agents throughout the state of New York," said Harrington. "With the growth of technology in today's society, many people want to get insurance at the touch of their fingertips using online media."

She said NYCM wants people to recognize the benefits to meeting face-to-face with an agent to fully understand their coverages and what is protected when the unexpected happens.

We have had many developments and updates to adapt to the technological advancements of society, said Harrington.

"Products such as our Mobile App, interactive and mobile-friendly website, social media and our InControl product have been hubs of more efficient communication and flexibility for our customers," she said.

NYCM has offices all throughout New York State, and feels it's important to stay up to date and adapt to changes occurring all over the world.

"We plan to continue to strive to make our customers happy and fulfilled. We want the public to realize that we are New York insurance, meaning we only write in New York, we work in New York and the large majority of our employees all live throughout New York," said Harrington. "Because of this, we can relate to our insureds and potential customers on a more personal level than



New York Central Mutual Brand Development Supervisors Kelly Pylinski and Emilee Jamitz. (Zachary Meseck photo)

nation-wide companies."

She said the company hopes that all employees and future employees will live by the values of being the best version of themselves, smiling and being friendly, embracing community and striving to succeed as a team.

In 2017, NYCM offered early retirement to employees who qualified for it, said Harrington. She added in 2018 the company saw what they consider to be a huge hiring year. The increase in new employees meant it was a transition year for education and expansion.

NYCM Insurance has four branch locations throughout New York State: Edmeston, Sherburne, Amsterdam and Orchard Park.

"With the home and largest office being located in rural Edmeston, challenges

include commuting to and from work in the winter months, and encouraging people to travel from more urban or suburban areas to work at the company," said Harrington. "The benefits of this type of location are endless, however."

She said the support of the local community is incredibly beneficial to the overall success of New York Central Mutual, and the company hopes to continue giving back to them in the upcoming years.

NYCM Insurance continued to prove its dedication to community involvement in 2018 by participating in events such as Meals on Wheels, Casual for a Cause, America's Greatest Heart Run and Walk, #GivingTuesday, and more.

The company delivered

over 150 meals to the elderly and disabled in Norwich as part of the Meals on Wheels program.

NYCM raised over \$5,445 for the Alzheimer's Association as part of its Casual for a Cause month long fundraiser.

It raised \$99,245 for the American Heart Association as through the company's participation in America's Great Heart Run and Walk event.

NYCM's Edmeston Office collected over 300 items that were donated to the Compassion Coalition in Utica New York.

Every Wednesday NYCM's Sherburne Office purchases breakfast sandwiches in which all money raised is donated to the Chenango County SPCA.

The company also took

part in other types of volunteering events like a car-seat inspection and installation day where they installed carseats in vehicles free of charge, or in their partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension when they hosted four different Teen Driving Awareness events to educate and prevent distracted driving among teens in New York State.

"The company is constantly submersed into local events, fundraisers, events and organization to help in any way they can," said Harrington. "In 2018 alone, NYCM documented some type of donation (money, goods, volunteer time) to over 560 organizations and events throughout the state."

She said it's important for individuals who work in Edmeston travel from Utica, Oneonta, Binghamton, Norwich and Cooperstown areas to be able to give back to their communities through NYCM. She added that by volunteering in the area, NYCM plans to continue supporting the communities it's based in the future.

When asked why NYCM is dedicated to supporting its local communities, Public Relations Business Unit Manager Bob Snyder responded, "Giving back to our communities is part of our core values."

The core values are part of an internal corporate campaign that NYCM is gradually revealing to its employees, and they were made to answer its 'why statement'

and give employees a better idea of why we do what they do and what they stand for as a company.

Snyder said as a company NYCM often wishes that it could do more to assist groups of people in need, and caring is one of the three core values of the company.

"The company focuses on three main values, hope, courage, and caring," he said. "We build a positive atmosphere in our work places by focusing on those values, and in return we try to spread each of them."

NYCM Insurance is also present throughout the entire state, so it feels it is important to stay up to date and adapt to changes that occur all over, not just near the locations of its offices.

"One of the major goals in our 5 year plan is to continue to focus on our customer experience by investing in people and technology to provide that experience," said Harrington. "This will continue to increase in importance as new generations enter the consumer segment."

She said while Edmeston hasn't really changed much over the last 10 years, society has.

"Technology has become such a large part of life and all businesses and organizations have had to find ways to keep up with this evolution over time," said Harrington. "Keeping up with that involvement is one of our company's goals for 2019."

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In Your Own Words

Jamie Maistros
 Assistant Principal at
 Sherburne-Earlville High School and
 long-time Norwich resident

Progress Chenango: Education

As a graduate from Norwich High School in 2004, it is not a coincidence that I returned home to build my family in Chenango County. These exact schools helped to raise me. I broke my first bone at the Sherburne Pageant of Bands, gave my first performance in the auditorium at Stanford Gibson and waited on my first table at the Old Mill in Mount Upton. The people here taught me to advocate from the ground up, coaching me through my awkward teenage years and equipping me with many of the tools I now use to help make change for others. I have no doubt that, with our help, this community can and will provide the same level of opportunities and support for my children and the thousands of other future leaders currently developing in our midst.

As a foster family, September greeted my household with the unique situation of having eight people spread across three districts and in six buildings. Although there are slight systematic differences between the schools (and enough variances in pick up and drop off times to give me a whole head of grey hair), at the heart of each of our meaningful educational experiences lives relationships. Across educational organizations, our shared strength resides in our people. From my decade in the classroom to my current roles of mom, administrator and school board member, I know deep in my bones that our schools are stocked full of dedicated, intelligent individuals who are constantly working to better the lives of those around them.

If anything is certain in the field of teaching and learning, it is the inevitability of change. In order to meet the needs of a perpetually shifting population, our curriculums and methods must continually stretch and adjust. From standards based grading to standardized tests to shift-

ing the mindset, our educators are constantly navigating the next step in educational practices. In the last decade, schools have morphed from academic standalones to one stop shops – tending to the social, emotional, and even physical needs of those they serve. We feed, counsel, transport, refer, treat and care for thousands of children, all in addition to preparing students for everything from trades to careers to secondary education. As needs change, services adapt. Starting with our universal pre-kindergarten offerings and lasting far past the pomp and circumstance of graduation, we have districts moving day in and day out towards the shared vision of molding successful contributors to our society.

Despite the forward progress, there are plenty of real, tangible concerns when it comes to the future of education. Our local populations are shrinking, making it increasingly hard for schools to offer the variety of programming needed to prepare our kids. Graduation rates are not rising at the speed required to account for the exponential level of importance society currently puts on having a high school diploma. Funding has plateaued while costs continue to rise. Mental health concerns are increasingly visible while adequate services remain nearly impossible to access. We haven't yet built the scaffolding needed to ensure all students have equal access to the various facets of education. Many structures, from the school calendar to universal measures of success, have remained

stagnant to a point where they are no longer working in favor of forward progress. It is clear that school today is not what



school was ten years ago and, if we are smart, not what school will be in ten more years. As any innovator can tell you, change is very rare-ly comfortable. Learning to find meaning and build connections in the midst of our ever evolving educational landscape will be our saving grace. Again, we must return again and again to the positive power of people and relationships as we shape the next generation of thinkers.

In 2019, my youngest will finish pre-kindergarten and my oldest will graduate from high school. In May, we'll welcome a new member, bringing in tow a whole new set of joys, challenges, schedules, and needs. Just like our family, education is ever changing. The success of our tribe will not depend only on the logistics, but will come instead from the strength of each of us. I am confident that our community is going to make forward progress for the same reason I believe my family is going to make it through a year of a newborn spit up and a sleep deprived haze - we are comprised primarily of good people who are committed to helping those around us. Having met many of the teachers, students, support staff and families that make up our local schools, it is obvious our future is bright. Like John Dewey, I know that "education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform." We have the tools, right here in Upstate New York, to build a better outlook for ourselves. By believing in one another and continuing to make progress in the midst of continual change, we will best prepare our students for a future we cannot yet fully imagine.



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SUCCESS STORY

NBT

NBT Employees Embrace Community Causes



NBT Employees donate to CSPCA

NORWICH – Community involvement is one of NBT's Bank's core values. Across the bank's six-state footprint, employees are actively engaged in the communities NBT calls home. The more than 550 NBT employees based in Chenango County clearly

demonstrate that commitment through their volunteer and financial support of many local events and organizations. In 2018, hundreds of Norwich-based employees from NBT Bank and NBT Insurance Agency raised over \$11,000 through month-

ly "Campus Casual Days." Through this initiative, NBT employees provided financial support to causes like the American Cancer Society's local Relay for Life event, the Chenango United Way's Foster Kids Backpack program, Liberty Resources and many more. Employees also

collected "in kind" gifts for Chenango County SPCA and the area Toys for Tots drive. These campus-wide activities represent just a portion of NBT employee giving. Through similar initiatives in Chenango County and across the bank's footprint, employees collected nearly \$30,000 for various charities.

NBT's recent United Way Campaign was also a huge success with NBT employees raising over \$120,000 through their individual pledges and contributions. NBT's Campaign Co-Chairs Joe Skundrich and John Stafford described the campaign results as "mind blowing" and reported that NBT employees exceeded the company's "aggressive" local campaign goal by nearly 15%!

NBT employees were proud to be out and about supporting many community activities and events throughout 2018 from volunteering at the Chenango Arts Council's Allegro 5-K Run to constructing the Parade of Lights' first-ever

Flintstone-themed holiday float!

The NBT Bank Summer Concert Series put on by the Chenango Blues Association welcomed national touring blues artists and thousands of concertgoers to downtown Norwich every Thursday in July and August. NBT employees were happy to support this bank-sponsored series with a team on hand each week to assist the organizers with merchandise sales and other support.

NBT Bankers also staged Community Shred Days—one in April and another in October—to help local residents safely dispose of confidential documents and protect themselves against identity theft and fraud. Employees were on hand at both events to share information about best practices for protection against these threats. NBT Bank's October event was hosted in conjunction with the Harvest Market held in East Side Park.

Supporting the organizers of the 20th Norwich Pumpkin Festival offered yet

another opportunity for NBT employees to show support for the community. During a day-long pumpkin carving event the Thursday before the festival, NBT employees carved 250 pumpkins to help festival organizers fill their scaffolding with jack-o-lanterns of all shapes and sizes.

Whether they're going casual for a cause or stepping out to lend a hand with a local community event, local NBT employees are passionate about supporting the community that NBT has been proud to call home for 163 years!

About NBT Bank

NBT Bank offers personal banking, business banking and wealth management services from locations in six states, including New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. The bank, its parent company NBT Bancorp Inc., and NBT Insurance Agency, LLC are all headquartered in Norwich, NY. More information about NBT is available online at www.nbtbank.com and www.nbtinsurance.com.

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Alvogen —



Alvogen Day is a day Norwich's Alvogen has dedicated towards helping the community, where the company closes down its business, pays its employees for the day, and assists its community with a variety of tasks to help improve its communities. (Grady Thompson photo)

Continued from page 33

industries it has become common practice to place barcodes on products, so users can track the origins of the product back to a manufacturing facility and a production lot.

"Typically, however, a production lot will have thousands of individual packages of product associated with it, but the regulations governing the pharmaceutical industry have changed, to provide even more accuracy to this process," said Festarini.

He said the Norwich facility has invested in technology which now allows tracking of single bottles of product, with each bottle has a unique identification number. He added that bot-

tles are accumulated into cases, each with a unique identification number.

Cases are accumulated onto pallets, each with a unique indentation number.

"All this effort ensures that every bottle can be tracked and the product inside of it authenticated as being manufactured under the strictest standards of the industry," said Festarini. "Additionally, the industry is actively taking these steps to ensure that every patient can be confident that the medication they are taking is exactly as represented on the label."

Considering the costs of prescription medication, this area has become the targets of international counterfeiting organizations, he said. Without the assurances

guaranteed by serialization, patients could be at risk of taking ineffective counterfeit products. Festarini said pharmacies and hospitals can now rely upon authenticated drug product and not be concerned with suspect products entering their inventories.

Norwich's Alvogen spent much of 2018 modifying its packaging lines to be able to identify every bottle it produces. The data is captured electronically, and files are sent to the regulatory authorities of the Federal government as permanent records of production. "Our facility is the leader within the Alvogen organization on product serialization and we are sharing our expertise with facilities in Europe and Asia," said Festarini.

"The larger Alvogen organization has built much of its success on sourcing products from the most cost effective and reliable producers."

He explained that this means that the Norwich facility must compete with others to gain the right to manufacture Alvogen products.

"Norwich is extremely pleased to be able to say that both its quality and efficiencies have been recognized and rewarded with new product placement," said Festarini. "In December of 2018, a new product to the Alvogen pipeline received FDA approval."

Hopes are to manufacture this product in the Norwich facility, he said, but this will require new

production equipment and renovation of our manufacturing suites.

The Norwich team is currently making the business case to Alvogen global leadership regarding the benefits of assigning the manufacture of this new product to the Norwich facility, and a decision is expected in the first quarter of 2019.

"This kind of investment helps to ensure the viability of the Norwich facility going forward and preserves career opportunities for residents of Chenango County," said Festarini. "Research is at the heart of the pharmaceutical industry and as new products are developed and introduced, older products become less attractive and

lose their place in the market."

He said Norwich must continually position itself to be ready and able to manufacture new products in its portfolio. Gone are the days where a commodity product like aspirin could sustain a US based manufacturer.

Norwich must be focused on higher value products which are difficult to manufacture. Today, simple generic product almost exclusively come to Alvogen from offshore. To effectively compete, Norwich must stay one step ahead on technology and the skills of its workforce.

Alvogen also needs to invest heavily in the development of its workforce. The company sets a very

Continued on page 38



Norwich Alvogen has invested in technology which now allows tracking of single bottles of product and cases of their product to help increase security and product accountability. (Zachary Meseck photo)

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Alvogen's Norwich Factory was built in the late 1970's, and in recent years there has been significant investment into the facility, bringing it into modern standards of pharmaceutical production. (Zachary Meseck photo)



In December of 2018, a new product to the Alvogen pipeline received FDA approval, and is scheduled to begin manufacturing in the near future. (Alvogen photo)

Continued from page 33
 high standard on the capabilities of its employees. The business is continually striving to be an employer of choice for the County, offering opportunity for career growth and advancement as well as a very attractive reward package.

The company is committed to the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. It has been a longtime supporter of the United Way and represents one of the largest contributors to the annual campaign.

According to Norwich Alvogen's Vice President of Operations Charlie Andrews, each year in September the global organization celebrates "Alvogen Day."

"99 percent of our employees are right here from this area, less than an hour's drive away," said Andrews.

He said Norwich participates by shutting down production for the day and has all employees join in the effort of revitalizing the downtown core through

pulling weeds, raking leaves, washing storefront windows and a variety of other activities.

"They all form teams and sign up for the different outside community activities in not-for-profit organizations, parks, and small businesses that need help," said Andrews. "We also do a number of activities on the inside of buildings in libraries, painting rooms in the place, just to name a couple."

He said over the last couple years Alvogen has

expanded their volunteering efforts to North Norwich and Sherburne to assist as many people as the company can.

"Alvogen employees are committed to the community in which they live and work," said Andrews.

Employees are members of important Boards of Directors, includ-

ing Chenango Memorial Hospital and Commerce Chenango.

Festarini said the company is actively developing future leaders through its participation in the Leadership Chenango program, sending participants to the biannual delivery of the training and holding high expectations of pro-

gram graduates within the business.

"With strong leadership, Alvogen continues to evolve its business model and has every expectation to continue to celebrate major anniversary milestones as a regional employer," he said. "2019 represents 132 years of contribution to the economy of Central New York."

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