

PROGRESS CHENANGO

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UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital, working to transform healthcare in our area



Left, Chenango Memorial Hospital will spend \$20 to \$25 million on upgrades. The project has already redesigned how care is provided, including newly renovated lab facilities. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

Right: Chair of Chenango Medical Neighborhood Capital Campaign Martin A. Dietrich presents a \$6 million check to CMH President and CEO Dr. Drake Lamien during a celebration honoring the community donors. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)



By TYLER MURPHY
The Evening Sun

CHENANGO — After successfully saving money and raising millions of dollars from local business and community members, the Chenango Memorial Hospital is working to transform healthcare in the area.

The planned upgrades taking place at the hospital

in the coming year and a half will be equal to a decade's worth of normal capital investment.

According to CMH President and CEO Dr. Drake Lamien the hospital invested on average just under \$2 million a year over the last 10 years and the proposed projects in 2020 will spend between 20 and 25 million on the facility.

Out of the last 15 years, CMH has had a positive bottom line. This is something that is exceedingly rare in healthcare, particularly for a small, rural hospital.

"We're going to be spending 20 to 21 million in the next 18 months, as opposed to over the next 10 years, the new space is going to be very excellent space," he said. "It is a huge opportunity for the

community, it is transformational."

The hospital is operated by United Health Services, which is the largest regional not-for-profit healthcare provider serving the Southern Tier.

UHS aims to improve healthcare at the CMH and meet the needs of growing

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YMCA: Not just a fitness club, a hub for the whole community

By SHAWN MAGRATH
The Evening Sun

NORWICH — For nearly 160 years, the Norwich Family YMCA has had an indelible presence in the community as a nerve center for healthy living, youth

development, and social responsibility. And for the same time, little has changed in the organization's mission of encouraging better living.

Today the Y offers more than 30 individual programs to its 3,500 members and, in spite of several new peo-

ple stepping into program leadership roles over the last year, the organization stays true to the core values which have driven it for so long.

"I think that's what makes the Y stand out," said Bridget Dexter, assistant executive director at the

Norwich Family YMCA. "We aren't just a fitness club. We're here for the whole family. We're here for the community. We're really designed to be the hub of the community, and to meet the

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A crowd of more than 200 wait in line outside the Norwich Family YMCA during the organization's first collaborative event with Helping Hands in January. The two organizations distributed free essential needs to the community, including food and hygiene products. (Photo by Zachary Meseck)

In Your Own Words



Martin A. Dietrich 2019 Chenango Medical Neighborhood Capital Campaign

For more than six decades, I have chosen to call Chenango County my home. It is where my wife and I have raised our family, and where we have enjoyed fulfilling careers with organizations founded right here in Norwich. We have many reasons to be grateful for all our community has provided us. In turn, we feel we have a responsibility to support and give back to those organizations and causes that contribute so much to the quality of life here in Chenango County.

When I look around at what makes Chenango so special, I see the businesses and non-profit organizations that keep our community strong and vibrant. Our hospital is one of those cornerstones, perhaps the most important. For more than 100 years, UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital has been where we've turned for our health care needs. And now, for only the fourth time in its history, our hospital is reaching out to us, the community, to support a major capital campaign.

I believe strongly that it is incumbent on each of us to do what we are able to support our community. That is why I have pledged my support for the Chenango Medical Neighborhood Campaign. This campaign will leverage \$9 million in state funds and the hospital's own resources to transform the delivery of care at UHS Chenango Memorial, and position our hospital to better meet the evolving needs of our community for decades to come.

This project will help build a new Emergency Room and a new Walk-in Center, as well as make strategic investments in Diagnostic Imaging and the hospital's infrastructure to support the growth of future services. These are investments that will improve the health of our community, and ensure the sustainability and vitality of this institution

Today I ask: Will you join me in investing in the future of health care in our community?

Your pledge will help ensure UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital can continue to meet the evolving health care needs of our community for generations to come, and that our friends, neighbors and loved ones always have access to the quality care they need, close to home.

*With gratitude,
Martin A. Dietrich
Chair, 2019 Chenango Medical
Neighborhood Capital Campaign*

Thank You



Thank you to the Greater Chenango Community for your tremendous support of the Chenango Medical Neighborhood Capital Campaign.

We are humbled by your generosity, your support of our hospital and your commitment to making our community a better place for all those who call Chenango home.

Sincerely,

The Caregivers, Leadership and Board of Directors of UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital.



For more information on the Chenango Medical Neighborhood project or to make a donation to the Capital Campaign, please contact Melissa Stagnaro, Director of Fundraising & Business Development, at (607) 337-4183 or via email at melissa.stagnaro@nyuhs.org.



YMCA: Not just a fitness club, a hub for the whole community —

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needs of the community.”

Under direction of its all-volunteer board, the Y sells itself as a place where members can experience a sense of belonging; and Dexter believes its members recognize that. Dwindling membership in 2019 didn't stop the organization from collecting more than \$150,000 during its annual fundraising campaign — an astounding amount of money for a Y of its membership size, Dexter noted. What's more, member support is allowing the Y to continue staple programming and events into the next year, including the Turkey Trot 5K in the fall, and the Gus Macker three-on-three basketball tournament in the summer. Dexter pointed out that many of its popular programs and events will reach noteworthy milestones this year.

“This marks the 50th year of the YMCA Camp Thompson, so we're making plans around that. The Gus Macker tournament also turns 25, and it will be the 38th annual Turkey Trot,” said Dexter. “As a Y, we've been continuing a lot of these programs for a very long time, and now

we're seeing people come back because they used to participate as kids. Now, in a lot of cases, their kids are doing it.”

The Y may also embark on new efforts to create more teen-friendly programming in 2020. True, the organization has always centered on youth development; but there's more to be done to prepare today's teens for today's demands. To meet these demands, the Norwich Y started talks with local partners, including Commerce Chenango, to execute ideas that teach teens some of the soft skills needed in adulthood.

“My focus is on teen programming, to come up with new ideas for teens,” Dexter said. “Right now, they just come here after school. Some of them play basketball and some of them hang out. It's unstructured time, and sometimes they need that. But we also came up with an idea of a ‘teen university’ where we can collaborate with businesses in the community to teach them marketable skills they need to go out and get jobs.”

Dexter said hopes are to run with this idea in the coming months.



A member of the Norwich community gets help from volunteers during the first partnered event between Helping Hands and the Norwich Family YMCA. The event, held in January, provided hundreds of community members with free essential goods, like food and hygiene products, in an effort to make life better for folks who call the Norwich area “home.” (Photo by Zachary Meseck)

In the meantime, the Y has already embraced new programs that foster responsible work habits among teens. In 2019, it launched a mentorship program geared toward underclassmen and middle school students that nurtures the skills they need to become camp counselors when they turn the working age of 16.

So what about the Y's mission to reach out to the broader community? That's where Dexter said she would like to see more “Christian”

initiatives from the “Young Men's Christian Association.” Early this year, the Y partnered with Helping Hands, an organized group of volunteers whose mission is to bring good to the community. By mid-January, the Y and Helping Hands hosted their first collaborative community event, handing out essential needs like fresh foods, hygiene items, and clothing — all free to the community. The affair drew more than 200 people. The two organizations say they'll continue the event on the

third Thursday of every month.

Of course the Y would have only a minimal impact if not for its volunteers. Fact is, although the Norwich Y averages roughly 120 full-time and part-time employees year-round, none of what the organization does could be accomplished without its members pitching in. All sports and events are carried on the backs of volunteers. Even the Y's Board of Trustees is filled with unpaid members.

“The core of who we are is our volunteers,” Dexter said. “We definitely wouldn't be able to run our big events or many of our programs without them. We really rely on them to continue doing what we do.”

To understand the true significance of volunteerism, one need look no further than the Norwich YMCA website.

“Volunteers come in many shapes, sizes, colors, ages, religions, cultures, and more. Volunteers are the canvas of what the YMCA stands for,” the Y states. “Focused on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility, our YMCA volunteers give men, women, and children of all ages and all

walks of life the resources and support they need to be healthy, confident, connected, and secure.”

While the Norwich Family Y looks to grow its volunteer base in 2020, it's also looking to expand its impact. In order to do that, YMCA staff and administration are thinking outside city limits. The organization has set a goal of increased outreach to smaller communities over the next year. As community demographics change and YMCA membership declines, it's important now more than ever to reach people in all outlying areas of Chenango County, said Dexter.

“We feel it's important to invest in our entire community ... We're trying to give back to our members and appreciate the members we do have. We want to provide quality, solid programs,” Dexter said. “We want people to come to the Y, and we want them to know that we're available to the entire county, not just Norwich.”

To learn more about the Norwich Family YMCA, find it on Facebook or visit its website, www.NorwichYMCA.com. Or call 336-YMCA (336-9622).

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Chenango Memorial Hospital with UHS, working to transform healthcare in our area —

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generation by building new medical facilities, restructuring operations and expanding staff and technology.

In 2012, CMH conducted an analysis of its facilities and operations that grew into an in-depth examination of infrastructure, care delivery and the hospital's ability to meet both the current and future health needs of this community.

Since then, CMH convened more than a hundred meetings with constituents, stakeholders, and community organizations as part of a collaborative planning process.

That process led to the creation of the Chenango Medical Neighborhood Plan.

Describe by the hospital as, "A solid, multi-phase plan to reconfigure, redesign, and redeploy CMH resources in a way that assures continued access to essential services, increases access to specialty care, improves health outcomes, and ensures the continued viability of the hospital for years to come."

"The capital improvements outlined in the plan will replace aging and dysfunctional infrastructure with state-of-the-art, ver-

satile and multifunctional spaces that may be reconfigured based on emerging needs and changing medical practices. This versatility will improve the quality, safety and efficiency of care delivery and ensure CMH's operational and financial sustainability."

The changes can already be seen, but in the coming years they will be impossible not to notice.

"A \$20 - 25 million project, it's a whole new world for Chenango Memorial. It's a great opportunity," said Lamén.

It is a watershed moment for the hospital and healthcare in rural Chenango County, and many, including residents and businesses, are glad for it. Many said there is a fundamental need for improved local healthcare that only UHS and the hospital can begin to solve. This need was reflected in a capital fundraising campaign that collected more than \$6 million in donations from area businesses, foundations and community groups.

The Chenango Medical Neighborhood Campaign will use the funds to leverage \$9 million in total state funds through the NYS Department of Health's Statewide Healthcare Facility Transformation



Cardiology Dr. James O'Brien shows a member of the hospital staff how the new examine room smart boards function.

Program, plus an additional \$1.5 Million from through the Regional Economic Development Council.

CMH has committed \$4.5 million of its own funds for the completion of the first phase of the project in 2019. It is preparing to commit an additional \$3 million in cash and borrowing to begin the next phase

"As a community-based organization we need to be a community leader. We need to figure out how to bring service to the community based on community needs and be creative to get talent into the community," said Lamén. "Having health

services available helps local business and the economy."

Chenango Memorial's impact extends beyond patient care. As the county's fifth largest employer, CMH plays a key role in the regional economy. The hospital supports 700 paychecks, and generates \$118 million in economic activity.

According to Hospital Director of Fundraising and Business Development Melissa Stagnaro., "Health care routinely ranks as one of the key areas businesses and families investigate before deciding to relocate to an area. An investment of this scale at CMH will

better position Chenango County to recruit major employers and executive-level employees as well as support the health and wellbeing of the current workforce and, by extension, vitality of local business and industry."

"We want a hospital not keeping up, but moving toward the future. We want to thrive. Not everyone will get everything they might need but we ask ourselves, 'how do we address that?' The Chenango Medical Neighborhood is more than bricks and mortar, it's about the people of Chenango County," said Lamén.

CMH like many rural hospitals has always faced additional challenges in providing care but a decreasing reliance on hospital services was adding additional pressure for change.

Hospitals were once the central hub for most medical care but a growing trend of technology and medical advancements in recovery are changing things, reducing hospital stays and dependency getting patients home faster.

Lamén explained, "Everything used to be hospital-based but more and more care is less dependent on hospitals.

Less care needs to happen at hospital, there are a lot more out-patient treatments."

"Either you need to redefine yourself as a hospital, or you're going to be out of business," he said. The whole opportunity here is to transform who we are, what we do and how we do it. It's still the same community-based care and service, but we need to define that by the needs of the community."

After a decade of savings, and the successful community fundraising campaign the hospital is looking at continuing a major overhaul and renovation of its main facility in the coming year.

Due to some rising cost and new state requirements the estimated cost of the improvements has risen from an initial estimate of \$15 to 20 million to \$20 to 25 million. The last time many of the facilities had a major update was in 1990's, or before.

One of the major challenges has been keeping all these services operational and available to patients while they are in the process of being relocated and upgraded.

"Why we can't expand the emergency room where it is currently?"

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One, it's in a 1920 space, which would be questionable, but also we need to provide services 24-hours a day. We need a seamless change-over," explained Stagnaro.

The hospital will complete the project in designated phases. The first part of the process was completed earlier this year. CMH upgraded and relocated its laboratory services in February. In July it also successfully completed the relocation and expansion of the cardiology services. This included the creation of a new Cardiac Rehabilitation Center. Most recently the hospital finished the relocation and expansion of Nuclear Medicine in November.

"You're going to have increased access to services as a part of this," said Stagnaro. By expanding cardiology services at hospital and cardiac rehab, Chenango County residents will no longer have to travel an hour and



A number of community leaders attended a Chenango Medical Neighborhood Capital Campaign event at the Northeast Classic Car Museum in January to help raise funds to drastically upgrade and expand the Chenango Memorial Hospital. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

a half way to get to the next closest medical office that provides the service.

Another important development has been the creation of an Oncology infusion center, a service not available elsewhere in the county.

In 2019 the hospital also welcomed a new certified nurse midwife into the Women's Health Center and hired a new primary care medical director, Dr. Kurt Harding, who has previous experience at CMH. There was also an expansion of pediatrics, with the addition of Dr. Ma Khin Khin Win.

A new roof was also installed to replace a section over a wing that was built in the 1970s.

In the coming year CMH will be drastically

redesigning the emergency room. The change will reduce waiting times, enhance current services and offer more flexibility in responding to crises.

The project redesigns how care is provided to the public. It will relocate, renovate and update the emergency room, create new lab facilities, build an expansion to accommodate a new ambulance drop-off point and will re-open the hospital's walk-in clinic.

The hospital has been saving a small set of funds for capital 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.

Lamen said, "It is very

hard to recruit, especially in the currently low unemployment market. We think in long terms of multi-talented staff and we want flexible-use spaces, because no one knows what the future will be. We need teams that will help each other and communicate well.

Lamen said the hospital's investment in personnel had helped in recruiting seven new providers this year. CMH recently added a retention bonus for staff who stay here for more than four years.

"Appreciating your employees is crucial to having dedicated people," he said.

According to Stagnaro, "The new, contemporary spaces created as the Chenango Medical

Neighborhood plan is realized will make CMH a more appealing place to work and practice medicine, as well as receive care. This will give the hospital a competitive edge as it seeks to attract qualified clinicians and staff, and grow its market share."

He said CMH also hopes to complete the creation of the walk-in clinic's urgent care, to respond more efficiently to non-emergency needs.

Work will also begin on the expansion of the radiology department.

New technology will also be installed to better support the use of remote, tele-health capabilities.

Along with implementing new technologies and service the hospital is also taking the opportunity to improve or replace aging infrastructure systems.

The improvements to the hospital's basic infrastructure will help make it more energy efficient and safe.

Lamen said the hospital needed changes to a number of infrastructure utilities that were overdue for an upgrade, such as the boilers, roof and fire repression system. All those and more would see improvements in 2020.

"We really needed to replace those boilers someday soon with new ones and we found a way

to get that in and raise a little more money for it" he said.

The decision to tackle these issues in addition to the expansion added some to the increase in costs but would be more affordable in the long run if done during the other reinvestment projects.

"The 15 things that needed to be fixed to begin with, like air handlers, light safety, fire alarms—we spent almost a million on new fire alarm system and a million on building automation to monitor building temperature, humidity and air flow," he said. "a lot of that is utility stuff."

The hospital had 18,393 emergency room visits in 2019, and 77,523 primary or specialty care visits. They delivered 231 babies and had 1,334 inpatient discharges.

According to Stagnaro Chenango's population leans toward averages that are both poorer and older than the state and nationwide averages.

She said this was evidenced by the high percentage of CMH's patients that qualify for Medicaid or Medicare. In 2018, 65 percent of all outpatient visits and 73 percent of inpatient discharges were paid by these government programs. She said 2019 was similar, official numbers were not yet available.



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In Your Own Words

What does volunteerism and community mean to me?

Volunteers certainly play a significant role in our organization here at the Norwich Fire Department as well as the community as a whole. Volunteers in our community annually pull off great events like Gus Maker, the Colorscape Arts Festival, Bluesfest, Parade of Lights, the Halloween Parade and Little League just to name a few.

Being a volunteer firefighter myself here for 39 years (joining the department in 1979, prior to accepting the paid Fire Chief's role on June 1, 2018) my perspective has me appreciate the time commitment volunteers make. As a volunteer at the NFD, I have held many line officer positions at the company level and then was elected to be an Assistant Fire Chief in 2001 and held that position until accepting the role I have now.

One of issues that many organizations face, is the required time commitment for their volunteers. Community volunteerism has been on a downward trend for years, while charitable non-profit organization annual volunteer hours and donations are up, but with less actual volunteers and number of donations. The Volunteer Fire Service is no different in trending

downward as a community volunteer entity. Within the fire service, tactics, strategies, health and safety improvements, training requirements, guidelines etc. are constantly being updated by OSHA, PESH and NFPA just to name a few. Almost all these updates and subsequent training requirements mean more time required of fire service personnel. Not training and not meeting requirements can put the firefighter in harm's way as they may not know the latest or updated guidelines set forth, leading to an injury or worse, death. Training shouldn't be doing it until you can perform a task, it should be doing it until you can't do it wrong. There are times when a firefighter may not get a second chance.

In the 41 years I have been in the fire service a lot has changed but the basic premise of "put the wet stuff on the red stuff" has not. With that said, certainly the detail required of documentation has significantly increased and material to back it up is also required. If it is not documented, it didn't happen. Add in the duties of regular documented equipment/truck checks and much of a firefighter's time is spent preparing herself or himself and their equipment for the next fire. Yes, there are less fires due to improved

Norwich Fire Chief Jan Papolino

code requirements, but the health hazards, rapid fire spread and heat intensity that firefighters face are much worse today due to all the hydrocarbons and man-made materials contained in today's homes.

In the Fire Service, whether Career or Volunteer, there are family events that you will miss, nights/days that you will get little to no sleep and personal sacrifices you will make to fulfill your duty and oath that you take. Each and everyone who has been a part of the Fire Service for some time has their own stories and sacrifices made as well as their families.

From a community standpoint, being a part of the Fire Service and helping your neighbors in a time of need, whether it be a fire, a flood or some other natural disaster, can be very fulfilling as anyone that has done it for a period of time will tell you. This is certainly the reason most volunteer firefighters undertake the training and commitment to be a member of their community and make a difference in a time when a complete stranger needs help. In an effort to recruit new and retain volunteers, currently, NYS has a tax credit of \$200.00 for volunteer firefighters. There has been some effort to increase the dollar amount to assist communities and

departments. To be honest, for most volunteers, the tax credit is nice but not a deciding factor for them to stay or join the first place. For many it has been a tradition in their family to serve their community through the Fire Service.

Yes, there are people out there that know very little to nothing about the Fire Service, don't try to get educated by asking good questions, yet constantly voice a negative opinion about what we do, what we have or what we need to fulfill our commitment to the public we serve. I would encourage these people to step forward, serve your community, make the commitment to the training and join your local Fire Department.

For those that have considered being a volunteer firefighter, stop by your community's firehouse and inquire. It could very well be one of the most life fulfilling steps you could make. On April 25-26, 2020 many departments will participate in RECRUITNY which is sponsored by the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY). Those participating typically will have special events, demonstrations and/or tours. It's a great opportunity to learn more about helping as a volunteer and being an integral part of your community.

THE GAZETTE

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Storm takes second in S-E Tip-Off Tournament
By Melissa Strickland
The second round of the annual S-E Tip-Off Tournament was held on Saturday, Dec. 14, at the Norwich Community Center. The event was a success, with many teams participating and a large crowd of spectators.

Writers announced for New Berlin Art Forum's holiday decorating contest
The New Berlin Art Forum is excited to announce the winners of its annual holiday decorating contest. The contest was held at the Norwich Community Center and was a great success.

Suspect caught after high speed chase
By Tracy Messer
A suspect in a high-speed chase was caught after a long pursuit through the town of Norwich. The suspect was arrested and charged with several offenses.

New Berlin welcomes new judge
By Zaccaria Messer
The town of Norwich is pleased to welcome a new judge to the bench. The judge will be serving the community for many years to come.

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25th Annual Parade of Lights

In 2019 Norwich's Parade of Lights marked its 25th year. Next year's parade will take place on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Nov. 28, 2020.



Photos by Tyler Murphy



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