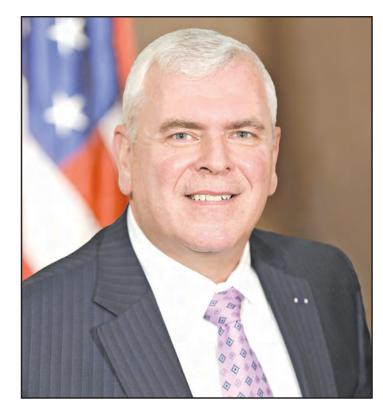
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IN YOUR OWN WORDS



Progress of region means defending our priorities in the capital

By Rep. Joseph Angelino NY Assemblyman (R,C,I-Norwich)

'Neighbors helping neighbors': Sharing support between the Chenango **SPCA** and the community

By Sarah Genter Sun Staff Writer

CHENANGO COUNTY - The Chenango SPCA has made great strides in the last few years, although they were not immune to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The nonprofit, no-kill shelter has faced their share of obstacles, but the load was made lighter thanks to members of the Chenango County community.

The Chenango SPCA was first founded in 1907. In 2000, the facility located at 6160 County Road 32 in Norwich was acquired by the organization, and still houses the Chenango SPCA today. The current staff is made up of a shelter manager, animal attendants, and executive staff.

Volunteers are also utilized, to assist with walking



This January marks my second year as your Assemblyman. It has been a great privilege to get to know you and the issues you find most important, and it is an honor to represent all of you in at the State Capitol. I appreciate that the Evening Sun asks others to reflect on the coming year and what progress means for the year ahead for our region.

There are many issues we all face, but "progress" for me and many residents in the area means we get a handle on the impact of COVID-19 on the daily lives of all New Yorkers—young and old. So many of us are at a point where we wish to face this virus with a clear plan on how to move our communities forward. We can no longer hide from it, but we can certainly plan a way to live with it.

Here are some things we know: those who wished to receive the vaccine already have and those who, for their own personal reasons, have not, have learned to live in a way to protect themselves, their families and community. Today, we have better treatments and a better understanding of the emerging variant. This year, I will be advocating that we do follow the science, which is now stating we can shorten quarantine to five days with a negative test.

I will be advocating for the state to also increase access to the important rapid COVID-19 tests to help New Yorkers return to work, school, friends and family when it is safe to do so. New York cannot continue without a lack of a plan to resume life. People aren't built for years of isolation and idling.

Although I am your assemblyman, I can't stop being a police officer at heart. The safety of our communities remains one of my biggest priorities. Sadly, our once incredibly safe state has been rocked by violent criminals and repeat offenders. In part, the steep rise in crime can be attributed to the failures of bail reform. I will continue to fight for its repeal, because what is in place now is not working. Why shouldn't the courts weigh in on those who are at risk of high recidivism or fleeing justice and impose bail, and in some cases hold a defendant in pre-trial confinement? These conversations are very important in all parts of our state. Just look at Democratic Mayor Adams, who wishes to curb crime in New York City.

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dogs, socializing cats, office duties, cleaning, yard work, and more. Foster families

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Employees and volunteers at the Chenango SPCA. The facility is a nonprofit, no-kill shelter that aims to provide care for animals, education to pet owners, and find loving homes for cats and dogs in the Chenango County area. (Submitted photo)

As pandemic challenges grow **Chobani continues to thrive**

By Shawn Magrath Sun Contributor

SOUTH EDMESTON - The last two years have been a game changer across the board. For Chobani, the change seems to be for the better. The company has not only weathered the pandem-

ic, but touts itself as a stronger organization with new products hitting the market, greater incentives for its employees, and a renewed emphasis on community and what executives say is "most important."

No doubt Chobani is seeing the same pandemic setbacks as any other industry, mainly pressure on the supply chain and shortfalls in the labor market. Nevertheless the company touts a silver lining through it all, with greater demand for its products and a push to broaden its footprint in the food industry, according to Chobani Vice President of Corporate Affairs Mark Broadhurst.

"We've launched some new innovations. There's been a lot of great innovation and growth through this period," said Broadhurst.

Among those innovations is a ready-to-drink cold brew coffee and a line of natural dairy and plant-based creamers that "disrupt the creamer market," Broadhurst said.

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Chobani has long been involved in the community, providing grants, donations, and sponsorship to many local organizations and events. Pictured is Chobani employees handing out products during the Saturday in the Park and Norwitch Fall Festival event on Saturday, October 30, 2021. (Photo by Sarah Genter)

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As pandemic challenges grow Chobani continues to thrive –



Chobani Continuous Improvement Manager Emmanuel R. Foko said the company's plant in Edmeston was working on a new product launch for Chobani Zero Sugar, and shipping hundreds of thousands of cases of yogurt a week. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

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Seeing 120 percent growth in the creamer market over the last year, the company's now going toe to toe with some big names in the creamer business. And while Chobani's name is still synonymous with Greek yogurt, piercing the creamer market underlines the company's push to become more than a yogurt company.

"We're humbled and proud of that growth, and I think we're poised for more of it in the future," Broadhurst said. "Growth during this time has been amazing and that's thanks to the incredible workforce that we have."

lic. The move could lead to an IPO valued as high as \$10 billion. It may be a financial boon for many of the company's plant workers in South Edmeston who were promised financial stake in the company back in 2016, when Chobani Founder and CEO Hamdi Ulukaya offered employees shares worth up to 10 percent.

"We've always been a people-focused company," Broadhurst said, highlighting Chobani's continued efforts to retain workers in the Chenango County region. "We're proud of the opportunities we can offer. There are too many counts of kids growing up and moving out of the area. We don't access to the food they need.

cut down on hunger among millions of children and families.

"Chobani has long championed its belief that access to nutritious food should be a right, not a privilege," the company said in a statement. In it, Chobani Founder and CEO Hamdi Ulukaya said ending child hunger "isn't a choice, it's a responsibility."

"Our goal is to unite business, policymaker, and child hunger advocates to take urgent action to address this heartbreaking epidemic," said Ulukaya. "It is essential we do everything we can to ensure all children and their families have It's Chobani's workforce want that to happen. We We won't rest until we end child hunger in America."

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that Broadhurst said comes first and foremost. The company increased wages for its 1,000-plus Chenango County employees to \$15 an hour in 2020 - nearly \$2 above the New York State minimum - and it's considering further wage increases in the near future. What's more, company incentives have been offered to employees during the pandemic to help with childcare needs.

Many Chobani employees saw tremendous potential benefits last year when the company filed documents with the New York Stock Exchange to go pubwant them to grow up, stay in the area and find gainful employment and a great future. We think we can offer that."

On top of incentivizing employees, operating during the COVID era has created opportunities for Chobani to extend its philanthropic reach. The company prides itself on a people-first, values-driven approach that takes care of communities when commu-

nities are most in need. In February, Chobani joined leaders from the non-profit, private and public sectors to advocate for public policies and private partnerships to

Furthering its efforts to squash food insecurity, Chobani also hosted a college hunger summit in October, citing statistics that one in three college students face hunger on campus. Chobani insists that college campuses are among the "most affected, yet overlooked, communities" in the nation.

"It's not something talked about often," said Broadhurst. "People don't realize it's an issue, but it is. We made some grants to a number of SUNY schools in our region to put food pan-

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tries on campus and help eradicate food insecurity on college campuses."

Chobani funded food security efforts at 23 colleges and universities with Swipe Out Hunger. As a result, Swipe Out Hunger was able to broaden consultation efforts at college campuses surrounding Chobani's manufacturing sites in New York and Idaho.

While efforts to end hunger are ongoing, Chobani's charitable reach doesn't doesn't stop there. The company continually extends help to local communities. In June, the Village of New Berlin held a ribbon cutting ceremony for its newly constructed \$1 million fire station and community center - made possible through financial backing from Chobani, in addition to corporate donations from local employers and funding from New York State. The 7,000 square-foot fire station replaces the village's 50-year-old facility while the community center provides space for events for the fire department, community members, and local businesses.

Chobani's generosity also reached the Sherburne Fire Department in the form of a \$150,000 ambulance gifted for the village's EMS service. The gesture offered some relief to a department struggling to keep up with repairs to its current fleet of ambulances. The ambulance will serve the roughly 2,500 residents of Sherburne and the contracting townships of Smyrna and Columbus, in addition to the employees at Chobani's New Berlin plant (which is also covered by Sherburne EMS).

While Chobani continues its outreach, it's keeping an eye on the future of the key industries it relies upon: food and agriculture. That's why in 2022, Chobani expanded its scholarship program with Cornell University and the University of Idaho, pledging \$1 million to support underserved students who are pursuing agricultural interests. The program has helped dozens of university students pursue ambitions in the dairy industry. It now offers the same opportunities on a broader scale, awarding eight \$20,000 scholarships (\$5,000 each year for the next five years) to historically underserved students interested in studying agriculture, dairy, food science, or food entrepreneurship.

"This is something we're really excited about," Broadhurst said, adding that Chobani encourages people of a minority background and those from underserved apply. communities to "We're looking forward to broadening the program a bit going forward."

"The last two years have highlighted for Chobani, and I think for a lot of values-driven organizations,

the need to step up and do the right thing on some of the issues of the day," Broadhurst added. "These are some of the issues that have risen to a national level of concern. We try to do our part in not only raising awareness about some of them, but also doing our part to make a difference."

Looking ahead, Broadhurst said Chobani understands the challenges in store as the pandemic and its effects linger. But the company's in a good place to address those issues headon, be it for the good of the company or the good of the community, he added.

"The challenges we face are not just things that are issues for only Chenango County. I think they're challenges that many are facing all over the country. There's confusion from the government. There's confusion about the virus and when it will end. There's so much uncertainty," said Broadhurst. "Despite that uncertainty, I think it's really causing us to double down on what's most important. I'm sure there's going to be challenges, but I think we're stronger than ever. We've been growing, and we have the certainty of a workforce that has gone above and beyond. They continue to go the extra distance to get the job done and make a difference. Those are good certainties and they're certainties we can rely on."

Progress of our region means defending our priorities in the capital —

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Even he is facing opposition from the new and highly progressive District Attorney Bragg, who doesn't plan to prosecute many types of felonies. Progress for our region means we have to continue to fight on the side of safety and justice, or even more problematic policies could be down the pike. I hope to be a part of these conversations on how we resolve the problems created by bail reform, and I will continue to be vocal in favor of protecting public safety.

Further, I will continue to urge New York State to be cautious about the legalization of recreational marijuana. It is still a drug which has had little study and can cause problems, especially in the cases of those who chose to drive while intoxicated with marijuana. The state must remember that there is a consequence for its legalization.

Progress in our region means defending also the heritage industries in our region, the industries that have provided jobs to Central and Southern Tier New Yorkers for generations and support the way we live life here in the region. There are policies which are being touted in Albany which would do much to hamper our job creators, especial-

would raise the cost of heat- interest of New Yorkers. New ing fuel for families. These discussions have included possibly banning wood burning, which for many is a primary source of heat for homes. Assembly bill 6967, a staggering 40,000 word "climate change" bill, would impact the prices of gasoline, diesel and natural gas. While most anyone would agree, shifting to renewable sources of energy would be a benefit to society; I believe that the free market would be best to determine this. Right now, I don't think families and job creators can afford this bill because the technology just isn't there yet. New York is among the most environmentally forward states in the nation, we just have to be sure our policies won't hurt the very people who love this

beautiful state. Continuing to think about progress also means looking at health in our state. The Legislature will likely be debating health care coverage this year. There is a distinct divide over how this should be accomplished. For me, I still believe the free market is the best place for the negotiation of health care prices. I do agree for the need for more transparency; however, I will oppose a single-payer health care bill, like A.6058.

I do not believe socially those in agriculture, and ized medicine is in the best linoj@nyassembly.gov.

York is not exactly known for its efficiency, excellence or competence in government administration. It is too easily swayed and impacted by the prevailing politics of the day. I think many would agree New York bureaucracy should not be managing health care for every single resident. Also concerning, the cost would be so big I don't think New York taxpayers could even afford it.

Progress in our region and in the state sometimes means being in opposition, but by being in loyal opposition to concerning policies, it means I am diligently working in favor of our region. The divide between Democrats and Republicans sometimes seems to be a great chasm, but as you will see, I heartily enjoy working with my Democratic colleagues that represent upstate. And I have shared the perspective of our region with them. I hope to continue building those bridges so they can listen and understand the negative impact of progressive policies. Regardless, I am honored to be a strong voice for you who always votes in favor of our region.

I welcome your input on these or any other state topic. Please contact me at 607-648-6080 or ange-



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Mutual support between the Chenango SPCA and Chenango County community –

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help to raise kittens and get them socialized with other people and animals.

"We all work hard to ensure the animals get the best care they can," said Executive Director Annette Clarke. "Our Mission is to provide and promote care, compassion and respect for our animals and our community. But we also like to simply say that we give animals a better tomorrow."

Community support

Clarke described the several ways in which the community has helped the organization, both over the years and throughout the ongoing pandemic. She said Unison, Alvogen, and Verizon have sent in volunteers to assist with projects, such as installing new cat condos.

Support also comes from Pet Street Station, a veterinary clinic across the street from the shelter, Oliver's Campers, Gilligan's Ice Cream, the Bissell Foundation, Subaru, Tractor Supply, and a local donor who has helped the SPCA fund adoptions of cats.

Burrell's Excavating gets involved by snow plowing the SPCA driveway in the winter, and delivering cat litter throughout the year.

"They take care of our plowing, they help us pick up the litter from Tractor Supply and they haul it here. And it doesn't sound like that would be much, except for they haul 70,000 pounds of litter for "I am constantly impressed by this community because despite the fact that this community has a lot of poverty to it ... they are still generous," said SPCA Director Annette Clarke. "Even to the point where we got in the mail yesterday an envelope. Now it was anonymous, they didn't put who it was from, but there was three one dollar bills in there. So, probably, that person was hurting and didn't have much money, but still wanted to give to the animals, so they gave three dollars."

us, so it's a lot," said Clarke. "They don't charge us anything for the snowplowing, they do it all as a volunteer. So we are really appreciative because that helps us. Like I don't have to call them every year and say, Matt, will you plow our driveway? They just do it."

The community also provides funding to help cover the \$370,000 annual cost of running the shelter, by donating cash funds, supplies, and other goods.

"I am constantly impressed by this community because despite the fact that this community has a lot of poverty to it ... they are still generous," said Clarke. "Even to the point where we got in the mail yesterday an envelope. Now it was anonymous, they didn't put who it was from, but there was three one dollar bills in there. So, probably, that person was hurting and didn't have much money, but still wanted to give to the animals, so they gave three dollars."

"It always impresses me that when they have nothing, they still give," she added.

The Chenango SPCA also participates in the annual Staffworks Save a Life Campaign, a fundraiser created by Staffworks owner and animal lover Anita Vittulo. Individuals can send in donations to the shelter throughout the month of December, which Staffworks will match depending on given criteria.

In 2020, the Chenango SPCA received \$90,000 from nearly 500 donors during the campaign, according to Clarke, and \$26,000 in matched funds from Staffworks.

In 2021, the Save a Life Campaign matched the first \$10,000 raised, and provided an additional \$500 for every \$5,000 donated by the community. The campaign brought in \$120,066.72 to the SPCA from community donors and matched funds.

Chenango SPCA Shelter Manager Kathy Wyder said even local children get involved, and elect to donate their allowance, or money earned through things like lemonade stands.

"It's funny when the kids come in, or the mothers call. Who had a bake sale, who had lemonade, who's giving us their allowance for the month. And they come in with a bag of change and their dollars, and they're proud. They're doing it for a reason, you know?" said Wyder. "We're talking from as young as six, to like their teens. But it's the little ones who want to do it. You know, it's amazing. Their parents are teaching them well."

"Animals do touch everybody's hearts, and I think that's what's so positive too, is that people love their ani**mals and so they want to** help," Clarke said of the adults and children who support the SPCA. "Because they know we take in the stray animals, and the ones that have been abandoned or abused or unwanted ... So I think that they recognize that, and I think that's really positive."

Local merchants and creators also pitch in to help out the SPCA by donating handmade goods to be sold at the merchandise area within the facility. Wyder said leashes, collars, and T-shirts are bought by the SPCA to resell,

SPCA makes sure they return the favor, a relationship that Clarke described as "neighbors helping neighbors."

"We've had cases where somebody calls us, you know, such-and-such a person just had a fire. So we go through our blankets and our sheets and towels, and put together what we can," said Clarke. "If they've had an animal we put

they've had an animal we put together dog beds and dishes, or cat beds and dishes, and food and everything."

The shelter also holds garage sales throughout the year. While the money raised from these sales benefits the facility and animals, Wyder said they also largely benefit low-income members of the community.

"To me, when I do the garage sale, it's for the community, not just for us. Because this community does not have much money, and they come knowing they are going to get something that they really need for two or three dollars," said Wyder. "Even if it may have cost \$80 in the store, I don't care. I see the same people season after season, and I know they're hurting. So if I can sell them someone's used Dust Buster for two dollars and they need it, go for it. So yes we do well at it, but the community does too."

There are also several programs available at the SPCA to assist local pet owners with the costs and supplies needed to care for their animals.

"We will continue to provide the community with our

said Clarke. "You know, getting people here to do the Putt Putt for Paws, or come to the Furball, or to do some of our other big fundraisers that draw people in so that they feel like they're a part of us. And that community involvement just isn't there with COVID."

She added that the Furball, usually held every February, has been canceled for 2022 as board members did not feel it would be safe for the community.

The impact of COVID-19

In addition to the cancellation of several fundraising events, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Chenango SPCA. In 2020, guidelines and restrictions forced the shelter to adjust the way they did things.

"When COVID originally hit, we chose to go to an appointment basis for adoption and for viewing of animals. We implemented a strict mask mandate, and once vaccinations were available we mandated that all staff be vaccinated. Volunteers were not allowed, their services were taken on by the staff," Clarke explained.

There were also fears of what would happen if staff members were quarantined, and a plan was established in the event of this happening.

"We were first concerned that if we had to quarantine our entire staff, who would take care of the animals?" said Clarke. "When you have 180 animals it is not a simple task. The shelter manager and I decided that we would look for as many fosters as we could to take on all the animals. Fortunately, we did not have to resort to this." The pandemic also brought on the shutdown or reduction in services for non-essential business. Clarke said this led to the spaying and neutering of pets to be delayed, creating an uptick in litters of dogs and cats. "We also found that with veterinary services reduced that we received many more puppies and kittens. Spaying and neutering were not considered essential and were often put off," she said. "Now



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On top of the items being donated, Wyder said residents purchasing the products are often generous with what they pay for them.

but everything else is donat-

ed, such as jewelry, plaques,

"A lot of the stuff from the gift shop, it's really hard for us to put a price on it. So a lot of that stuff I tell them, any donation you want to make," Wyder explained. "You'd be surprised, they're not offering two dollars, they're paying ten dollars for this little whatever. Cause they know it's a donation. And we always tell them, 100 percent goes to the animals."

Giving back

With all the generosity of community members, the

Pet Food Pantry, our Kerby flea program, our Kerby medical emergency program, and our Spay Neuter program (SNOOP). These programs help those in need whether they are on public assistance or just low income," said Clarke.

Unfortunately, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the SPCA has not been able to hold many of their usual events that provide both needed funds to the shelter, as well as an opportunity for community involvement.

"There are just all these fundraisers that we would do. But it's not just from a monetary standpoint, it's from the community involvement,"

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we are just challenged by vet practices that are backed up with the services they offer. Since we are required by law to have all animals spayed and neutered before leaving the shelter, an adopter may have to wait several weeks."

"Our biggest challenge is to fully educate the community on the importance of **spaying and neutering your** animals, giving them the protection of vaccines, and regular vet visits," she added.

Despite these challenges, intake and adoption rates remained largely steady. What's more, Clarke said that the Chenango SPCA did not see a high rate of animal returns after adopters went back to work, something other shelters have experienced.

"A lot of shelters were complaining that people came and adopted during COVID because they were lonely, and then they turned around and brought the animals back because they had to go back to work," said Clarke. "But we have not seen that."

In 2021, the Chenango SPCA brought in 197 dogs and 555 cats, and adopted out 113 dogs and 487 cats.

Supply issues were another struggle faced by the SPCA amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The shelter often relies on donations from the public for cleaning supplies, but have been purchasing their own during the pandemic. "We also, like many others, had supply issues. We use a tremendous amount of cleaning supplies, particularly bleach, paper towels, and PineSol," said Clarke. "We used to depend on the generosity of the community to donate these items, but since the pandemic we have been purchasing them which impacts our budget."

Clarke said government assistance would be helpful with these challenges, as the Chenango SPCA is not a government-funded organization.

"We receive no funds from local, county, state or federal governments. We must raise the \$370,000 a year to run the shelter with only the community's help. Government funding would certainly be a plus," she said.

Other developments

Although the Chenango SPCA saw many challenges throughout the pandemic, they were also able to incorporate several developments and improvements to the facility. Developments for 2022 are in the works as well.

"Due to the generosity of the Higley Foundation we were able to replace our roof, replace windows in our old building, replace flooring that had deteriorated, and upgrade our lobby area as well as new landscaping," Clarke explained. "Our 20 year old HVAC system will need to be replaced, which is a very large project."

They also implemented Little Free Libraries in 2021,



Chenango SPCA Shelter Manager Kathy Wyder and an SPCA employee check over Giblet the kitten before sending him to his new home. Giblet's brother, Gobble, had been adopted just a few days prior, and his new owner reached out to the SPCA to say she wanted to bring Giblet home, too. (Photo by Sarah Genter)

a national program that aims to promote reading, community togetherness, and expand book access. Funding for the libraries was provided by the Otis Thompson Foundation, which allowed for the purchase of two units, as well as books to stock them with.

"This is in kind of coordination with our book buddies program, where people can come and read to our animals. So this just goes along with that, and we just want to encourage people to read, and kids especially," Clarke explained. "We have an adult one and one for children. When I say adult, it's adults and teens. It's just typical novels but there's also some novels with animals in it ... We just are trying to help promote reading."

The shelter has also been utilizing Facebook to promote adoption and get lost pets back home, according to Wyder, who runs the Chenango SPCA Facebook page. She said she took over the page around 2017, and since then it has boomed.

"We had someone who worked on the social media aspect, and when she left we were trying to contemplate **putting someone in her posi**tion, because she did a couple different little things, and we couldn't find someone. So I started doing social media," Wyder explained. "It's the

stories you write, and the photos. So at that time I got a different photographer who works here. So she can get sometimes awesome shots of them, and I can make up the story."

The Chenango SPCA Facebook page had just under 6,000 followers in 2017, and in those four years the follower count jumped to 13,000. Wyder said the boost in followers has spread the word about the shelter, and the SPCA is now seeing adopters coming in from cities further away, and even out of state.

This larger following also helps the shelter reunite lost pets with their owners.

"We used to never return cats to owners, owners never used to come. We do a fair amount of them now," said Wyder. "I sent home 17 cats this year, 20 last year. Which, when I started here, I don't think we sent home any."

"It's a world of a difference for us. Utilizing that has gotten animals back to their owners. It really has," she added.

Moving forward

The Chenango SPCA continues to persevere while the pandemic lingers on. Employees and volunteers at the shelter keep their focus on helping the animals in the Chenango County area, and keeping to their mission statement: "to provide and promote care, compassion, and respect for our animals and our community."

started doing social media," A large part of that focus Wyder explained. "It's the is finding loving and forev-

er homes for the hundreds of dogs and cats that come through the facility each year.

"Our challenge is always finding enough caring individuals to adopt our animals. As a no-kill shelter they stay with us until they are adopted. So many just need to find homes," said Clarke. "We offer specials all the time and have worked with the Bissell Foundation, Subaru, Tractor Supply as well as a local donor who has helped us fund cat adoptions."

Luckily, in spite of the challenges, the SPCA sees many success stories. For instance, two kitten siblings named Giblet and Gobble. Gobble had been adopted, but his new owner called the shelter a few days later to say she decided to adopt his brother Giblet as well.

"We have someone who adopted a few days ago, she just called and said 'I think I want his brother, too. I'm gonna take a pair.' Which is awesome. We love to keep siblings together, that's the best thing for them," said Wyder.

Most importantly, there truly is a furry friend for everyone at the Chenango SPCA, according to Clarke.

"There's something for everyone here, there really is," she said. "You can't tell me that if you walked in and wanted a cat, that you couldn't find one that would speak to you."



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