

# 2023 PROGRESS

## CHENANGO

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### Chenango SPCA stays hopeful amid post-pandemic struggles



Nonprofit, no-kill shelter the Chenango SPCA is located at 6160 County Road 32 in Norwich. 2022 was another challenging year for the shelter, but SPCA staff remain vigilant in providing the best care possible for the animals they house. (Photo by Dustin Genter of 5th Dimension Photography)

**Sarah Genter**  
Evening Sun Writer

NORWICH — Rising supply costs, lingering effects of a pandemic, and a near-constant influx of animals have led to a challenging year for the Chenango SPCA, and new state mandates have signaled even more trials on the horizon. However, employees of

the no-kill, nonprofit shelter remain hopeful and continue to do what they do best: find loving homes for stray animals in the Chenango County area.

Armed with community support, generous donors, and a love of animals, the Chenango SPCA is ready to tackle whatever new challenges come their way and continue to provide for the dozens of animals in their

care.

#### Challenges

“[It’s been] just another year of struggle,” said Chenango SPCA Executive Director Annette Clarke. “A lot of animals. The price of all of our supplies skyrocketed. So it was a challenge once again. I mean, I think that’s the bottom line is that it’s been another challenging year, and it’s like the third year in a row.”



Chenango SPCA Executive Director Annette Clarke. (Photo by Dustin Genter of 5th Dimension Photography)

Annually, it costs the Chenango SPCA \$370,000 to keep the shelter running. With an already steep cost

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### Morrisville’s Norwich Campus invests in wellness center, increases programming

**Zachary Meseck**  
Evening Sun Contributor

NORWICH — With a renewed goal of reconnecting with the community after the pandemic and continuing to provide a quality education while remaining affordable - SUNY Morrisville worked hard for a breakthrough in 2022.

According to Interim SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus Dean Jason Zbock, the Norwich campus serves as a regional higher education institution and has done so since 1969. Zbock said 2022 highlighted the continued need to stay connected with the community, and continue to be a partner for any local organization that may need it. “For anyone who isn’t

familiar with us; the campus serves students in multiple ways which includes high school concurrent enrollment programs, early college online courses, associate and certificate programs, workforce programs, and community events,” said Zbock. “Some of our academic programs include nursing, human services, criminal justice, business administration, and individual studies.”

He said the campus is run by approximately 30 individuals, and housed in Roger W. Follett Hall, which is named in recognition of a donation made by the Roger Follett Foundation.

“Currently the college has approximately 100 students in academic pro-



Interim SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus Dean Jason Zbock stands in the Norwich Campus’ recently renovated Nursing Simulation Lab with one of the artificial patients awaiting treatment nearby. (Submitted photo)

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#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### Community appreciation for the return of high school sports

**Morgan Golliver**  
Evening Sun Sports Editor

Since the return of sports after the COVID pandemic, many teams have found themselves in a rebuilding season or just picking back up the success they’ve found before. But, all in all, everyone is grateful to share a team bond and play their respective sport(s) again.

With almost a full year under my belt this April, I’ve certainly picked up quickly on all the teams I’ve seen and covered.

I will say this winter season has been my most challenging yet with so much going on. I’m appreciative of everyone who has been willing to help, even some photographers who know how important photos can be for a story.

I’ve struck a friendship with various teams, athletes and coaches, who love seeing support at their games.

So with these bonds it’s easier to overcome times of stress. I see my time with the Evening Sun not as a job rather a home away from home in a sports atmosphere I enjoy.

I’ve also been rather sad due to watching my first set of seniors move on to bigger and greater things. Those players who took a quick liking to me in my brief time with the paper and those athletes who also play multiple sports and have seen me pretty much all year. But, I’m excited to watch the growth of the freshmen who will eventually turn into seniors, like my brother Braden who attends Unadilla Valley. I love feeling so sentimental about athletes who make my time worth it every game and every night.

The hardest part has truly been covering multiple schools, which is expected of me in my duties as sports editor.

I am able to find Schedule Galaxy a great resource to try to equally share the love with every team by attending “important” match-ups. Important being the games between neighboring Oxford-Greene or any conference games, where most teams reside in the MAC league with Norwich, Sherburne-Earlville, and Otselic Valley being the odd balls in other divisions. I make my presence known as fairly and as much as I can for all schools and I get positive feedback in return, which I’ve appreciated greatly.

Over the last year, it has been evident how all schools have done throughout athletics. For Oxford and Sherburne-Earlville, athletics have been seen as a “rebuilding time,” with teams being thankful of progression shown and knowing that success will come at the right moment. The S-E football team was able to come out with a playoff game while Oxford girls soccer went to Sectionals. The Oxford girls basketball team is also pushing through with a successful season, where they pulled off an upset against an undefeated Greene Trojans team. With the rebuilding effect for both schools, academics have been strong with many scholar athletes doing well in the classroom.

Greene continues to achieve greatness in sports with last year’s softball team accomplishing an undefeated regular season before falling at States. In the

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of operation, the organization then had to contend with rising supply costs throughout 2022.

“The price of litter went up, the price of vaccines doubled,” she continued. “We’re getting hit like everybody else. You get hit at the grocery store, we get hit at the suppliers. So really that’s what it’s been. 2022 was just another challenging year.”

Adding to those rising costs is a steady stream of animals coming through the door year-round.

In 2022, the Chenango SPCA took in a total of 505 cats and 248 dogs, and of those 439 cats and 117 dogs were adopted out. Additionally, 14 cats and 91 dogs were returned to their owners by the SPCA after being lost. As of January 3, 2023, the Chenango SPCA had 82 cats and 17 dogs in their care.

Although the shelter was able to find homes for so many animals in 2022, the organization is still facing daily intake of cats and dogs.

“We have a lot of animals, and usually the animal population ebbs and flows based on the season. It hasn’t done that this year, it’s stayed up there. So usually by this time we’re at a low point, but our low point was around 50 animals, and

I think we’re close to 85 to 100. So it hasn’t dropped like we had hoped. And kitten season is no longer a season, it’s all year long,” Clarke explained.

The overpopulation of animals leads to the shelter often bringing in many more animals in a day than they adopt out.

“We’ve adopted out five cats that day, but what you don’t know is that we probably got 15 in,” said Clarke. “So we never have it so that adopting them out is a bigger number than what we’re getting in.”

One of the biggest challenges to the overpopulation of animals is unspayed and unneutered cats and dogs.

Cats prove to be a particular challenge for shelters. Clarke explained that a female cat can begin having kittens as young as six months of age, and produce three litters per year. Over the span of nine years, a single unspayed cat can produce around seven million cats.

While dogs don’t produce quite the same numbers, unspayed and unneutered dogs still contribute to the overpopulation of dogs in animal shelters.

Clarke said the best way to combat this problem is by spaying and neutering pets. However, many pet owners shy away from the idea.



One of the many cats available for adoption at the Chenango SPCA. The shelter faces a near-constant influx of animals, with 505 cats and 248 dogs taken in in 2022, and 439 cats and 117 dogs adopted out. (Photo by Sarah Genter)

Clarke said reasons range from the often high cost of spaying and neutering, and overwhelmed and understaffed veterinary offices, to pet owners wanting their animal to experience motherhood.

Ultimately, though, she said until a better solution is found and more animals are spayed and neutered, the animal population will continue to grow and the shelter will continue to see high numbers of stray animals.

“If their dog has a litter of eight puppies, and they find homes for all eight, that’s eight puppies that may

not get adopted from us,” she explained. “So really, they’ve not only added eight more to the population, but they’ve added eight more to our population here. So we just try to discourage that and make them understand that the best way to control our overpopulation of pets is spay and neuter.”

Compounding the issue of the high animal intake is the fact that Chenango County is a relatively small area. Clarke said this can make it even harder to find people to adopt over time.

“A concern is that eventually this area will run out of the ability to adopt ani-

mals. It’s a small population, so that’s our concern,” she said. “So we broaden our information out there. We try to put it out, and Facebook has helped that a lot. So we do get adopters that come in from other states.”

This is another problem that Clarke said would be mitigated by pet owners spaying and neutering their animals, as it stops the growing population at the source.

The Chenango SPCA offers a spay/neuter assistance program called SNOOP to help area pet owners with the cost of getting their pets fixed. But the shelter can only help so much, and there just aren’t enough resources to tackle the magnitude of the problem.

“We understand, it’s expensive, and a lot of people can’t afford it. And we try to help in what ways we can, but we can’t pay for it all,” said Clarke.

The best solution, Clarke said, would be low-cost spay and neuter clinics set up across the state. However, instead of implementing a solution like that, New York State recently passed the Companion Animal Care Standards Act.

Although the act aims to curb “fly-by-night” animal shelters and rescues, many of the mandates it will

impose will be difficult for shelters like the Chenango SPCA to implement.

## Companion Animal Care Standards Act

The Companion Animal Care Standards Act for Shelters and Rescues received overwhelming support from the New York State Assembly, with a passing vote of 149-0 on May 31, 2022. It was later signed by the governor on December 15, 2022.

According to the Act, the legislation will “provide comprehensive standards of care for municipal shelters, not for profit humane societies, SPCAs and animal shelters, and not for profit animal rescues.”

It outlines several measures that must be implemented in all New York State shelters and rescues over the next three years, including mandates related to licensing with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets’ Division of Animal Industry, personnel training, record keeping, facility standards, animal housing, sanitation, management protocols, animal husbandry, veterinary care, behavioral protocols, transportation standards and vehicle requirements, and foster care provider requirements.

Although the bill includes important mea-

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Our official new name is **Norwich Wealth Management**. In addition, one of the many steps we have taken to serve you better is to add another advisor and client associate to our team. We now have seven individuals working for you. Lastly, we personally designed a new website that puts your needs in the forefront. You can access your online account from this page and search timely research pieces.



We are excited about these new changes and encourage you to schedule an appointment or just stop in and say hello. As always, feel free to reach out to us if you have questions or if we can be of assistance.

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sures to provide adequate care for stray animals, such as the prohibition of physical force as punishment and proper feeding guidelines, there are sections of the bill that don't seem feasible for shelters like the Chenango SPCA.

"We had an assessment done, and they have already made recommendations that we need to get rid of half of our cat population. Well how do we do that?" said Clarke. "They said, well, transfer them. Transfer them where? We all have the same problem. We all are overloaded with cats. So there are things like that that don't make sense to me."

A guideline under the "Facility Standards" section of the Act states that shelters must "minimize continuous exposure of personnel and animals to sound levels exceeding 85 decibels." While it seems reasonable on the surface, Clarke said it's another measure that doesn't make a lot of sense in practice.

"If the staff walks back there, the dogs are quiet. If I walk back there the dogs are going to bark, because they don't see me on a regular basis," she explained. "They feel that the staff should wear earplugs. Well, we gave the staff that option, and they choose not to because

the dogs really don't bark much for them."

However, failure to comply with the mandates laid out in the bill could result in licensure denial, revocation, suspension, or refusal of license renewal, plus anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000 in fines.

Other measures such as 20 minutes of one-on-one interaction with people for every animal each day would be difficult for the Chenango SPCA, which only has a staff of about 12.

The New York State Animal Protection Federation, which began working on the bill more than ten years ago, created a Companion Animal Capital Fund to assist shelters statewide with capital projects that will allow them to reach the standards set forth in the bill. In 2022 they were awarded \$8 million in funding for the 2022-23 state budget.

The next step for the SPCA will be to determine if additions need to be put on the shelter, or if the facility needs to be rebuilt entirely.

"So I think going forward, we know that the kennels need to be revamped and upgraded. We have a lot of things that just need some help back there. Tile work that is coming off. More cosmetic stuff," said Clarke.

"But, given that the



The Chenango SPCA hosted the second annual Paws and Pints fundraiser in 2022. While the COVID-19 pandemic put a hold on in-person fundraising efforts, the SPCA is getting back to hosting in-person events. The annual Fur Ball fundraiser will be making its comeback this year on February 11. (Photo by Sarah Genter)

mandate is there, we're going to be looking at possibly putting an addition on, or doing something to add to our kennel space, because we're going to need to. So the question becomes, will we need to rebuild a shelter, or will we be able to satisfy everything with some additions? And if so, where?"

Clarke said she's concerned about what these mandates will mean for the shelter's future, both in terms of complying with the bill and the potential swarm of animals it will bring to their door.

"The idea behind it is to

take all these kind of fly-by-night rescues, or people that just don't do things in the best way possible, and to close them down. But what happens when that happens is the shelters, like us, will get an influx of animals, probably," said Clarke. "I just see a lot of things coming down the pipe that may be problematic in the next year or two or three for shelters like ours."

Representatives from the New York State Animal Protection Federation did not respond to the Evening Sun's request for comment by press time.

### Staying positive

Despite the challenges of the past and those expected in the future, the Chenango SPCA is doing all they can to support the community and its animals, and Clarke said the community has done much in return to support the shelter.

The shelter was able to replace their 22-year-old HVAC system, largely in part due to the generosity of the Higley Foundation.

"When we started having animals in the brick section ... we didn't have central air," Clarke explained. "We would put window air

conditioners, but that didn't always do the job. So we now have central air for the animals as well as the humans."

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the SPCA's in-person events and fundraisers to a halt. In 2021 and 2022, some of those events came back, and more are expected to return in the upcoming year.

This past summer saw the second annual Paws and Pints fundraiser at Hidden Springs Brewhouse in Norwich. Animal lovers from across the county stopped by the brewery to enjoy live music, delicious food and drinks, and support the Chenango SPCA.

In February, the annual Fur Ball fundraiser will make its return after being put on hold for three years due to the pandemic. The event at the Canasawacta Country Club will feature live music by Crushing Midnight, a cocktail hour, hors d'oeuvres, and a silent auction.

The easing of COVID restrictions has also allowed the shelter to start bringing in volunteers again. A group of Colgate University students visit the facility to play with the cats, some volunteers walk dogs, others clean, and some help out at fundraising events.

Clarke said the shelter is

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always looking for an extra set of hands, and interested individuals 18 years or older can contact the shelter to discuss volunteering opportunities.

The Chenango SPCA returns the generosity of the community by providing various assistance programs, their pet food pantry, a monthly community garage sale, and activities that benefit local children.

They have continued their Book Buddies program, where children learning to read visit the shelter and read books to the animals, as well as their Story Time program in the cat room.

“One of the mothers of one of the kids that came in and read said the teacher told her that since her child was doing this that she raised a whole level in reading, from the time she started until now. So it’s working,” said Clarke.

In addition to their spay/neuter assistance program SNOOP, the Chenango SPCA also provides medical emergency assistance through the Kirby Fund.

“We have our medical emergency fund, so a lot of people don’t realize that but if you have an animal that goes in for what you think is going to be routine and it turns out to be a very large medical bill from your vet, that we can sometimes help,” Clarke explained.

“We can’t always help fully, but we can sometimes help, or at least give something towards it.”

Kirby Fund money is also used to assist low-income pet owners, or pet owners on public assistance, with topical flea medication provided at cost.

Ultimately, the Chenango SPCA hopes to continue providing the best care they can for the stray animals in Chenango County. The organization remains proud of one of its biggest achievements of all: becoming a no-kill shelter in 2015.

While being a no-kill shelter doesn’t mean animals are never euthanized — as sometimes the SPCA brings in animals that are too young or too sick to survive and must put them to sleep — the shelter no longer euthanizes animals for space.

The impact of that change has been monumental. In 2010, only 26 percent of the animals taken in by the Chenango SPCA were adopted back out, and 64 percent were euthanized. However, in 2022, 77 percent of the animals brought in were later adopted and less than five percent were euthanized.

“It’s an important thing to us to show that we are doing the right thing. We are taking care of the animals, we’re finding them homes,” said Clarke.

“Ten years ago we were

considered the last place anyone would take an animal,” she added. “It was very, very negative, and maybe they had good reason because we euthanized so many animals. But we’ve turned that around. We’ve turned the community’s perception of us, I think, around to something better.”

Even animals that are ill or injured are given the best chance possible to survive. Clarke said the animals are taken to a vet, sometimes more than once, in an effort to cure or heal them.

“We call it the second chance. We give them a chance and if we can fix it, we do,” she explained. “Ten years ago if an animal came in and had an ulcerated eye, the animal would have been put down. Today, we take it to the vet, they remove the eye, and the animal continues to live.”

“One of the first cases here was, the animal had come in and had been hit by a car, and one of its back legs was dragging,” she continued. “By the time the person found this animal, this animal’s leg was dead. So we had the leg amputated. The cat did really well, got adopted two weeks later and went home with the family and did really well. They said the cat never acted like it didn’t have a fourth leg, it just would run around the house chasing things. So it’s things like that. We do the things that we can.”

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

# Community appreciation for the return of high school sports

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fall, the field hockey team had made a Regionals run while both soccer teams and football team fell in Sectionals. Currently, the Greene Lady Trojans basketball team is doing well with their only loss to Oxford this season while the boys remain strong with a 10-4 record. Success continues to roam for Greene Athletics under Athletic Director Bryan Ayres and Assistant Dave Gorton, who coaches both football and girls basketball.

Norwich and Unadilla Valley are two schools that share the same purple color and share some of the same athletic characteristics. Norwich has seen tremendous success with its football program, falling out to Maine-Endwell in the championship this past fall, which has been a reoccurrence over the last several seasons. Both UV and Norwich have also been known for their basketball programs, but have seen a rather challenging 2022-2023 season. UV and Norwich boys each have four wins on the season,

which seems usual as both teams have shown success in prior seasons. They’re looking to pick up a few more wins with the season winding down. A season each team can learn from to better themselves next year.

The UV girls basketball team has been playing consistently and doing the best they can this season. The MAC league remains tough with Greene, Oxford, Bainbridge-Guilford, Delhi, Sidney, Unatego and Walton excelling this season, which have come as challenges on the Storm’s schedule this year.

The Unadilla Valley bowling team has been a sight to see from the time I’ve stepped into my role. In my full year of covering them, under the direction of head coach Matt Bleyle, the Storm has been dominating almost every match. The boys lost their undefeated campaign in the middle of the season, but continue to reign the MAC league. The girls remain undefeated through two consecutive seasons (at least to my knowledge) and have a strong team of

ladies that perform well in every match.

All teams certainly have a lot of strengths and weaknesses that they can look back on at the end of the season. Losing seniors is always the hardest for teams, but the offseason allows them to regroup and figure out what could be the best lineup/situations for next year and the years to come.

You can continue to look out for all local teams in the daily edition of the Evening Sun sports section with stories and content from yours truly.

Also, be sure to look out for our special “Best of Winter Sports” section coming at the end of April.

April marks one year I’ve been at the Evening Sun, but it feels like I’ve been here longer with the amount of work I’ve done.

A special shoutout again to all the coaches, athletic directors, athletes, and parents who have made my job much more enjoyable and for all the support. I love working with all of you and appreciate the feedback in the results of my work.

### Chenango SPCA

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- Paper Towels
- Bleach
- Pine Sol
- Dish Soap
- Laundry Soap
- Garbage Bags
- Peanut Butter
- Dog Toys
- Cat Toys

**Shelter Services**

- Pet ID Program
- Lost and Found Pet Registry
- Education & Outreach
- Pet Memorial Wall
- Nature Trail
- SNOOP - Spay Neuter Program
- Kerby Fund (Emergency Medical Assist.)
- Full-Bellies Pet Pantry
- Volunteer Opportunities





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# Morrisville's Norwich Campus invests in wellness center, increases programming -

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grams, with the largest being the Nursing A.A.S. program," he added. "High school concurrent enrollment is roughly 142 students in multiple general education courses and agricultural and environmental science courses."

## New programming and redefining spaces

Although the college has faced many of the same challenges other colleges are facing across the United States, the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus was able to secure grant funding from the SUNY system and develop a wellness center.

"Following the pandemic the needs of many students changed, and we had to get creative with what we can offer on campus," said Zbock. "One of the newest additions to the campus is our wellness center which we hope will provide students with a space to relax and destress throughout their semesters."

"The space includes full sized massage chairs, bean bag chairs, a large wall mounted television, electric fireplace, and numerous board games."

He said that in addition to the wellness center, the campus has also partnered with a community member to provide wellness programming.

Another change in pro-



**Chenango County DSS Supervisors participated in the Human Services Institute Leadership Academy, which was organized by SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus Facility Lead Dr. Julie Burton, and held from June 2022 to November 2022 as a 16 week program. (Submitted photo)**

gramming was the addition of a leadership program that the Chenango County Department of Social Services recently participated in.

"With enrollment still down from before the pandemic, it was vital for us to remain innovative and keep looking for ways to partner with other community members," Zbock added.

He said one of the biggest additions to the facility were upgrades to the Nursing Simulation Lab which are filled with lifelike equipment to work on. He added that the renovations were completed throughout the summer and will be in use for years to come.

"We have one section of the simulation lab where students enter without the professor and are tasked with performing a medical procedure that they've been practicing beforehand," said

Zbock. "It's a great way to increase the practicality of our education, and our professors are able to see everything through cameras in the room to help evaluate their work."

"These are just a few of the ways we continued moving forward last year, and we look forward to doing more as we head into 2023."

## Planning for the future and partnering with the community

While the campus did make strides in several ways throughout 2022, it is still searching for a new dean, and battling reduced population and enrollment from before the pandemic.

"We are facing a declining population across the state, along with reduced high school graduates and fewer students who wish to go to college after graduation," said Zbock. "We continue to expand pro-

gramming development to non-traditional populations through course delivery methods with videoconferencing and online course offerings."

"We are also working towards the development of a Human Services Leadership Bachelors of Professional Studies degree for the fall, and workforce programs in human services and early childhood education."

Zbock said while the college continues to work on new educational opportunities, it's also just as important they work on community partnerships as well.

"It's imperative that the college continues to support students by working with the Liberty Partnership Program (LPP) and the DCMO BOCES New Visions Program as well," he said. "LPP serves middle and high schools students with

support programs for college readiness at multiple school districts. DCMO BOCES provides early college courses at the Norwich Campus in academic pathways focusing on legal and medical."

"Currently our program led by Kisten Giglio works with six school districts and has approximately 480 students involved with its success."

## Ensuring opportunities for all

According to Zbock, the Norwich Campus supports SUNY Morrisville's Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP).

He said CSTEP is a program designed to prepare minority and economically disadvantaged students for careers in scientific, technical, engineering, mathematical, health-related and licensed professions. He added that the program emphasizes academic preparation and achievement, and career awareness.

There are numerous benefits including additional tutoring, workshops, and financial assistance.

Those who are interested in joining CSTEP must be in good academic standing and enrolled full time, a New York State resident, planning to study in the fields of science, technology, mathematics, engineering, or licensed professions,

and economically disadvantaged (as defined by New York State income guidelines) or African American, Latino, Native American, or Alaskan Native.

"We have numerous opportunities at the Norwich Campus to save students money and provide them with a great education," said Zbock. "In the future we plan to continue expanding college courses off campus in the community to increase access to courses that the campus previously couldn't offer such as education in trades, fitness, and the arts."

"Finally, another great opportunity which will start in February is reconvening the Norwich Campus Community Advisory Council to strengthen partnerships and increase opportunities with business, industry, and educational partners locally."

Zbock said the college is fortunate to be located in Chenango County where there is a network of partners that allows for development of programs for students and community engagement to spur personal and organizational growth.

He added that those who are interested in learning more about the college may visit its website at [www.morrisville.edu/norwich](http://www.morrisville.edu/norwich) or call (607) 334-5144 for additional information.

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