

# 2023 PROGRESS

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### Chobani continues to innovate and put people first



America's number one yogurt brand Chobani was founded in 2005 by Turkish immigrant Hamdi Ulukaya. Pictured is the company's plant in South Edmeston, where they produce yogurt, oat milk, dairy- and plant-based creamers, and ready-to-drink coffee. (Submitted photo)

**Sarah Genter**  
Evening Sun Writer

SOUTH EDMESTON — America's number one yogurt brand Chobani has continued to produce high-quality foods while also maintainING their mission

of elevating their community and making the world a healthier place.

Founded in 2005 by Hamdi Ulukaya, a Turkish immigrant, Chobani sold its first cup of yogurt in 2007 and from there has expanded to produce yogurt, oat milk, dairy- and plant-

based creamers, and ready-to-drink coffee.

The company manufactures its products at their plant in South Edmeston, as well as Twin Falls, Idaho and Melbourne, Australia. Renowned for their employee care, Chobani currently employs over 2,500 people,

900 of which work at the South Edmeston plant.

Chobani strives to "use food as a force for good in the world — putting humanity first in everything we do," and in 2022 they maintained that mission.

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### The Chenango Greenway Conservancy: Stone Quarry mysteries, the Norwich Greenbelt returns and wetland restoration



Left: Runner Katina Sayers was the winner of the 2022 Mountain Goat Challenge, the first person to reach the Stone Quarry overlook and ring the bell during the first annual Race to the Face with a time of 14:25. The race was the first of its kind put on by the Greenway Conservancy. (Submitted photo)

**Tyler Murphy**  
Evening Sun Editor

NORWICH — When the Chenango Greenway Conservancy led a successful community fundraising effort and acquired the hill-top Stone Quarry property in Norwich in December of

2021, it also found renewed interest from the public and welcomed new membership.

"We had been focusing on the trails along the Chenango River in the city, and then when the Stone Quarry came up for sale we really became more focused

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### Rolling Antiquer's Old Car Club: Biggest car show in town

NORWICH — The Rolling Antiquer's Old Car Club (RAOCC) is the local Norwich Region of the national Antique Automotive Club of America (AACA).

RAOCC will hold its "Car Show Weekend" during the 2023 Memorial Day weekend. Saturday, May 27 will be the 32nd Muscle Car and Street Rod "Cruisin' Again" Show. Sunday, May 28 will be the 56th Antique and Classic Car "Rollin' Again" Show.

The Club encourages folks show off their vintage vehicles or "future classics" at the Chenango County Fairgrounds in Norwich.

Like its parent organization, the Club promotes interest in and working with automobiles from many eras. "Automobile" includes all self-propelled vehicles designed for passenger use and powered by gasoline, diesel, steam, or electric sources. Hence, a "Show Car" could be a car, race vehicle, truck, bus, fire vehicle, motorcycle, etc.

The RAOCC has complete local autonomy in planning and running its own events and programs, which include the Annual Car Shows and its Automotive Scholarship Awards.

Each year RAOCC offers \$1,000 scholarship awards to DCMO BOCES students. The eligible students are those interested in either furthering their education in the automotive field or pursuing a career in the automotive industry. These scholarships may be applied to the tuition of the college selected by the student or the purchase of a set of automotive tools. One award is given to a senior student in Automotive Technology and one award to a senior student in Automotive Collision and Refinishing Technology.

Saturday, May 27, will feature Muscle Cars and Street Rods (2018 and older) such as Mustang and Camaro. Sunday will highlight the Antique and Classic Cars (1998 and older) from Model A to Studebaker. Restored and original condition show vehicles are drawn from every decade and include motorcycles, trucks, and vans. The RAOCC Shows draw several hundred vehicles and their proud owners from across New York State, and further afield from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, the New England region, and the Mid-Atlantic States.

Alongside the RAOCC Car Shows, the local NY-PENN Military Vehicle Collectors Company exhibit restored military vehicles and equipment. The Tractor and Antique Engine display presents gas powered hit-and-miss engines used in the early days of agriculture and industry. Several local food vendors will serve their summer-time menus, all against the musical backdrop of a DJ service. Rain or shine, the show runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. General admission: \$10 each day per person. Admission is free for children under 12 years old! The Car Parts and the Antiques and Collectibles Markets run both days.

AACA Members take note! This July will be the inaugural RAOCC hosting of an AACA Nationals event, the Classics at White Eagle, in Hamilton, NY, Wed., July 26 through Sat., July 29.

During 2023, the Club will meet the third Sunday of each month at the North East Classic Car Museum. Guests or prospective members are welcome. For show registration forms, scholarship information, and other Club information, visit the website [www.raocc.org](http://www.raocc.org); email [raocc@frontiernet.net](mailto:raocc@frontiernet.net); or write to RAOCC, PO Box 712, Norwich, NY 13815.

## Chobani continues to innovate and put people first -



The cold warehouse at the Chobani South Edmeston plant, where finished product is stored before it's shipped out. Chobani had a great year in 2022, with over 400 million pounds of food produced. They also launched Chobani Plant-Based Coffee Creamers, and Chobani Zero - a zero-sugar, low-calorie line of yogurt - saw a steady increase in sales. (Submitted photo)



A Chobani employee working in a yogurt production line. Chobani prides themselves on a "people first" company culture, and in 2022, they continued to put employees first. Wages were increased in both their South Edmeston and Twin Falls, Idaho plants by 20 to 30 percent, they enhanced healthcare benefits to include out-of-state care for employees and their dependents, and pledged to hire 200 refugees company-wide over the next three years. (Submitted photo)

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Not only does the company produce healthy, delicious food, they work hard to ensure food is accessible to all and their communities are supported.

### New products and employee support

2022 was another year of innovation and growth for Chobani. The company added to their catalog of products by launching

Chobani Plant-Based Coffee Creamers, which is available in four flavors: caramel macchiato, chocolate hazelnut, sweet and creamy, and french vanilla.

Chobani Senior Vice President of South Edmeston Plant Operations Nate Gundlach said the company also saw a steady increase in their Chobani Zero yogurt, which touts zero sugar and is under 70

calories per cup. Instead, the product is sweetened with natural, non-GMO alternatives, contains no lactose, and has plenty of protein. Gundlach said the product is "having a significant impact on the yogurt category."

Gundlach added the company worked hard to streamline production lines to increase efficiency — a move that seems to have

paid off: in 2022, Chobani produced over 400 million pounds of food.

But producing and launching products wasn't the only focus of Chobani last year. Vice President of People Team at Chobani Brandon Dansie said continuing to support their employees was a high priority.

"2022 was about responding to labor market

changes — recruiting and retaining the best talent in the market," said Dansie. "As a result, Chobani increased wages at both its plants in New York and Idaho by a total of 20 to 30 percent, making starting hourly salary for entry-level manufacturing employees at least \$18.50 per hour, resulting in an approximate average hourly wage of \$23.50 an hour."

In addition to increasing wages, as part of the Tent Partnership for Refugees Chobani committed to hiring 200 refugees company-wide over the next three years.

Healthcare policies were also adjusted for all employees as well as their dependents to include out-of-state care. Dansie said the change was to "ensure

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## That's teamwork... working for you!



# Chobani continues to innovate and put people first -

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that everyone, no matter where they live or travel, has access to healthcare.”

“Chobani has amazing, talented employees and we do an amazing job to put our people first all the time,” he added.

Putting their employees first is something Dansie says Chobani will continue to do in the future, just as they have since the company’s inception.

“Since day one, Chobani has always implemented a people first culture, and this is something we pride ourselves on,” said Dansie. “In 2023 we will remain focused on putting our employees first and continue to provide them with the tools and resources to excel both at work and at home, whether it is training courses or adequate healthcare.”

Although operating post-pandemic has brought on challenges for many organizations and businesses, Gundlach said Chobani has focused on staying true to their values first.

“The last year was a challenging year for so many people and businesses, as we continued dealing with the effects of the global pandemic and geopolitical issues. Staying

true to our values, putting our people and customers first, and working diligently helped us overcome the challenges and deliver one of our best years yet,” he said. “Sometimes when the waters are rough, staying the course and staying true to yourself can be the best choice.”

Chobani has always valued putting people first. The organization is known in the Chenango County area not only for providing excellent compensation and benefits to their employees, but also for supporting the community in whatever ways they can.

### People first

Chobani places a big emphasis on philanthropy. The company says their efforts “prioritize giving back to our communities and beyond: working to eradicate child hunger, supporting immigrants, refugees and underrepresented people, honoring veterans, and protecting the planet.”

Although much of Chobani’s philanthropy efforts are nation-wide, Gundlach said being in Chenango County provides the opportunity to have a major impact on the community.

“Being surrounded by

smaller, tight-knit communities also gives us the opportunity to have a huge impact in our ongoing efforts to give back and make a difference in the places in which we live and work,” he said.

Their support is shown through their involvement with charitable organizations, as well as seasonal events that are a staple of the Norwich area.

In 2021, Chobani partnered with the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) as a sponsor for the beloved Parade of Lights. An annual event, the parade draws massive crowds of spectators and a slew of businesses, organizations, churches, fire and police departments, and families that drive stunning floats down Broad Street in Norwich.

The organization continued to support the parade, and in 2022 it saw its biggest year yet with thousands of attendees and close to 100 participating groups.

After the parade, Chobani employees set up shop in Norwich’s East Park to give away free cases of yogurt to the swaths of area residents who came through the line.

For several years Chobani has also been partnering with the Norwich BID in the fall to provide Saturdays in the Park with Chobani, an outdoor market that supports dozens of Chenango County area vendors. The “Cho Truck” parks in Norwich’s West Park every Saturday morning to hand out free cups of Chobani yogurt during the Saturday in the Park season.

But the giving nature of Chobani doesn’t stop there. Employees make monthly trips to the Norwich Family YMCA as well to provide free products during Helping Hands giveaways.

Helping Hands is a Norwich-based nonprofit that hosts giveaway nights at the Y on the third Thursday of each month, where volunteers hand out free food, cleaning supplies, and hygiene items to those in need.

Gundlach is proud of all Chobani does to support the people in their community, and he said that’s a part of the company culture that is here to stay.

“As a company, we will continue to be a disruptor – finding ways to bring healthy products to more people to impact their lives

positively,” said Gundlach. “As we’ve grown, our philanthropic work has also grown, and it’s one of the most exciting parts about working at Chobani – seeing all the good we do both in our local communities as well as nationally.”

Beyond providing products to the community, Chobani also strives to support the education of local students. In 2022, the company continued their Scholars Program, which helps local college students “pursue their ambitions in the dairy industry.”

Their Community Impact Fund is another pillar of support for the community. Gundlach said the fund “helps to promote entrepreneurship and expand educational and economic opportunities in the local community.”

### Continuing to thrive

Moving forward, Chobani plans to focus on those three pillars of their company culture: putting employees first, developing new products, and continuing to produce delicious food.





“As a company known for innovation, we are always exploring new product ideas and variations. In 2023 I expect us to contin-

ue to explore, while remaining focused on making delicious, high-quality, accessible food for everyone,” said Gundlach. “While I can’t share all our plans, I can promise you our future is bright and exciting!”

While challenges are inevitable no matter the location, Gundlach said adapting is something they do well and will continue to do in the coming years. Plus, thanks to the community in Chenango County, he said any challenges are easily offset by the many benefits of the area.

“Any challenges are far outweighed by the positives of being located here: a rich and abundant supply of milk, a community of true craftspeople and deep-rooted traditions in family, work ethic, and ingenuity,” said Gundlach.

“Like all upstate Central New York communities, Chenango County has seen its share of changes over the years. Change is inevitable, and welcomed – it’s how you deal with it that really counts,” he continued. “What’s always been striking to us is the resilience of this community in the way it bands together to overcome obstacles and forge new paths to success.”

			
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# The Chenango Greenway Conservancy: Stone Quarry mysteries, the Norwich Greenbelt returns and wetland restoration -

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on that. It became a very inspiring event for the community and the organization," said Chairperson of the Chenango Greenway Conservancy Sharon Pelosi.

"Our membership grew tremendously and our board members doubled in size when the stone quarry initiative came on. People were just coming out of the woodwork to help us get the quarry. So that was a very, very important acquisition for the conservancy," she said.

The conservancy has kept the property open to the public and it owns others in the Norwich area. It is currently working on projects that include a wetland restoration effort and wildlife refuge. Another project is a community nature walkway along the Chenango River aimed for use by residents of nearby elderly care facilities.

## Who we are

The Greenway Conservancy is a not-for-profit charitable organization formed in 2006.

"Before we existed there was a group of community activists who were working for a very long time to create a trail system circling the city of Norwich, dating back to the 1970s when

Frederick Mirabito was the mayor. He had a vision for a connected park system in the city called the Greenbelt Park Project," explained Pelosi.

Even after Mirabito was no longer mayor the group of citizens who had been involved at the time stayed connected and tried to advance the park project.

In 2006 that group incorporated giving it the ability to do some fundraising and seek grants the municipality could not.

"So in 2006 when we incorporated, that was a real game changer for this vision of the Greenbelt Trails," said Pelosi.

Pelosi moved back to Norwich in 2005 with a background in public access and law. As an intern she also worked for the Chenango County Planning Department and helped work on the Chenango River Corridor Study.

"Through that study I was in touch with the group of volunteers who were involved with trying to advance the trail system," she explained.

## Norwich Greenbelt: Patsy's Riverview

The Stone Quarry purchase was completed in December of 2021.

The conservancy began

fundraising in March of 2021, with a goal of \$300,000 to cover the cost of purchasing the Stone Quarry and improving accessibility with parking, signage, and trail construction.

"We are grateful for the tremendous support of the community in making this acquisition possible," said Pelosi at the time. "This beautiful property will now remain open for public use for future generations."

Speaking this month she said, "So we've owned it for just a little over a year now. The quarry is a 200-acre lot. There are around 500 acres in the City and Town of Norwich that are under our control and management. Some of it we own and some of it we manage trails on."

At the same time the conservancy was completing the quarry purchase, two very important donations of property were also made to the organization.

One was from Patsy Smith, who donated a parcel of land at the end of Sheldon Street. In her honor it is named Patsy's Riverview.

"It's a grassy field on about five acres in the floodplain, and it has never been developed. It's a big open

field that sits up a little bit higher than the properties around it, so you have a beautiful view of the river and the hills to the east of there," said Pelosi.

"When Mirabito was mayor they had the vision of creating the Greenbelt as a very accessible park that was available to senior citizens, with easy access to a pretty spot, because there's a nursing home right nearby. We're really building that vision out this year."

The organization is going to build a small parking area at the end of Sheldon Street and create some crushed stone-dust trails that are going to lead along the property and river.

Last year workers poured a concrete patio with a compass stamped in the middle of it. Next to come are concrete benches.

Another big part of that property is planned as a monarch butterfly station.

"It will be a big community planting of milkweed sometime this year. It will be a really beautiful spot," said Pelosi.

## Three Amigos wetland restoration

The other parcel received by the conservancy is behind Pet Street Station Animal Hospital on County Road 32 in Norwich.

"We call that Three Amigos, because it was owned by the Three Amigos, LLC. They are the ones who donated it to us. It's about 55 acres of floodplain," explained Pelosi.

The conservancy won a grant and is working with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, a not-for-profit that works in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, to restore the river wetlands.

The grant will help restore the soil and river banks of the Three Amigos parcel and volunteers planted about 1600 trees and shrubs in November.

"The idea here is in part related to flood control and in part related to groundwater recharge. So the purpose is to have the water that comes from storms to infiltrate the ground and not rush into the river and cause a flooding problem downstream," said Pelosi.

"The stream bank work is going to allow some of the fields on this piece of property to flood and allow the water to be retained and absorbed into the vegetation. The idea is to create a habitat with some trails and a public educational display so people can understand what's going on there," she said.

They hope the parcel

will be publicly accessible and available for recreation.

"Birders especially we think are going to be happy to go there. That's an exciting project that we're working on this year. The project was started in 2022 and they're going to finish all the planting and the stream bank work this year. Then it's mostly just maintenance, keeping an eye on it to make sure everything is working well and the vegetation is surviving," said Pelosi. "We have a lot going on this year."

## What next for the Stone Quarry?

The conservancy has owned the quarry for about a year now, and the group spent the year formulating a plan for development and ensuring public accessibility. They built a new parking area on Wheeler Ave. with an entrance driveway that is wider and less steep. The idea was to make a roadway school buses could navigate.

"Our goal in building this out is to preserve a lot of the nostalgic feelings about the quarry. We don't want to make huge changes to it, we don't want to develop it like a big state park. We want it to have that natural, and almost a bit mythical

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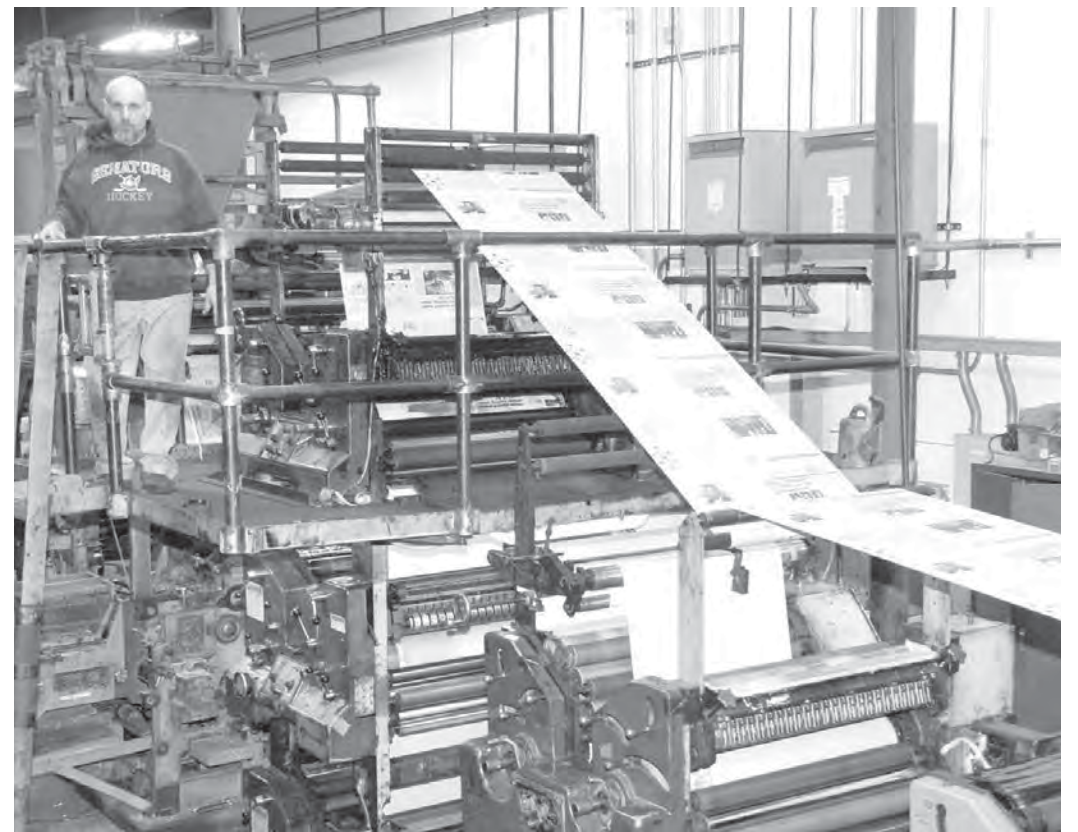
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# The Chenango Greenway Conservancy: Stone Quarry mysteries, the Norwich Greenbelt returns and wetland restoration -

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feel to it when you get up there,” said Pelosi.

The Stone Quarry has been the subject of local legends and mysteries over the decades. One of them being a strange, small, stone cave complex built on the grounds. A number of other intriguing sites can be found, many relating to stone constructions from creative visitors over the years.

“Due to the publicity from the stone quarry purchase a university working on a national inventory of runic inscriptions came to Norwich and recorded video of all of the markings,” said Pelosi. “So now the Stone Quarry is going to be part of this big national inventory.”

Going forward, the conservancy is working on a plan to improve the trails.

“We want to make a trail to the face of the quarry - the overlook area, that’s less steep than the one that’s there now, so that people can navigate the trail with strollers or wheelchairs and what-not, just to make it more accessible,” she said.

The conservancy has also considered overnight camping options at the property but have shied away from the option in the near future, due to legalities and other



Volunteers from the Greenway Conservancy work on the creation of new entrance and parking area for Stone Quarry property from Wheeler Ave. (Submitted photo)

factors. They are focusing on improving the grounds and making them more accessible to the public.

### All are community volunteers

The conservancy has about 30 to 40 regular volunteers.

“You can visit our website and join as a member, or we certainly appreciate volunteer help. We’re 100 percent volunteer run, we don’t have any paid staff,” said Pelosi. The group’s website is [chenangogreenway.org](http://chenangogreenway.org).

Pelosi said the organization is lucky to have so much support.

“I think that people recognize one of the ben-



Greenway Conservancy volunteers planting trees at Three Amigos wetland restoration project. In Norwich. (Submitted photo)

efits of living in Chenango County is how beautiful it is here. We’re really lucky. We have all of these wonderful natural resources here, it’s easy to take them for granted I think. When the

Stone Quarry was in jeopardy of being closed off and lost, people really sprung into action to protect it,” she said.

“People here have a very strong sense of communi-

ty service. There’s a really dedicated group of people here who are willing to give their time and money to community projects in order to make Norwich a better place. I don’t think that’s

common everywhere,” said Pelosi.

Pelosi added, “Our biggest challenge is finding enough manpower to accomplish the buildout of all of the properties that we have. We really can’t do it alone. It’s definitely a community project.”

“For example, every time we have a big storm that blows through, there’s a lot of trees that come down, especially at the quarry. We have about 18 miles of trails between the stone quarry and the county property to mow and maintain, and if a tree comes down and people can’t get through, then someone needs to go up there with a chainsaw. That’s a fairly simple thing, but it’s time consuming and it can be challenging,” she said.

“The Greenway Conservancy is a very meaningful and rewarding organization to be involved in, because we’re really making a difference here.”

Pelosi added, “We’re always looking for people to come and join us to help with either a specific project or to become a regular volunteer. We’re really all about community engagement here, and we can’t do it without a team effort.”

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