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VOL. 8

AN EVENING SUN PUBLICATION

FEBRUARY 9, 2023

UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital expands access to care close to home



UHS CMH has invested \$26 million in completing its Phase 1 building project, the Chenango Medical Neighborhood plan. (Submitted photo)

Melissa Stagnaro Evening Sun Contributor

NORWICH – Four months ago, Patty Roma couldn't walk without pain. "Walking is one of the things we do every day. If you can't walk comfortably, life gets really hard," the Norwich woman said. Now, following

knee replacement surgery, Roma's outlook has changed. "I have a new lease on life," she said. That Roma chose to have her joint replacement surgery at UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital may come as no surprise. After all, she retired from the hospital in 2021 after nearly four decades in nursing and

nursing administration. In fact, she once lead the Surgical Services team. However, it wasn't the proximity of the hospital or her familiarity with the surgical team that solidified her decision. It was because of ROSA – the robotic 'assistant' Dr. Tariq Hussain and his orthopedic surgery team employ in knee replacement surgeries.

"I chose UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital because I wanted to have the latest technology for my surgery. I wanted the best outcome for me. And I think I got it," she explained. According to Chris Kisacky, Vice President of Service Coordination and Development, the addition

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Norwich Garden Club: 90 years of serving the community



The Norwich Garden Club elected new officers in 2022. Pictured is Secretary Debbie Wheeler, Second Vice President Rohimah Sarpin, President Della Ericksen, First Vice President Jane Coddington, and Treasurer Jean Hayes. (Photo by Sarah Genter)

Sarah Genter Evening Sun Writer

NORWICH – The Norwich Garden Club is a civic organization that has been serving the Norwich

area since 1932. For 90 years, club members have been beautifying the City of Norwich by providing and maintaining beautiful gardens and flowers. Many years ago, the

Garden Club installed the fountain and garden on the corner of South Broad and West Main Streets, and have been caring for it ever since. They also plant, mulch, prune, and weed a rose garden on the street behind the

Guernsey Memorial Library and a garden bed in front of Minty's Candies and Treats, and they put up the hanging flower baskets that line South Broad Street every year.

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SUCCESS STORY

J&J Furniture: Fond memories, service and a dream come true

At J&J Furniture we look back on 2022 with fond memories of a dream come true of opening our furniture stores in North Norwich, Oneonta, and Unadilla.

A lot of work went into the preparation for our opening at the end of November 2022. We have a great team of employees at J&J that will help take care of all your needs.

We would like to take a moment and introduce the management team of our company:

Joseph Danner- President.

Jeremy Danner- Operations and marketing manager.

Terri Slater- General Manager

John Tammero- General Manager

Our owner and president of our store brings over 25 years of experience in the furniture business.

Joe's passion is to find the best values and styles and bring them to our customers. He invites you into our showrooms to complete your home furnishing design dreams.

Jeremy brings nine years of experience in the furniture industry and prides himself on being able to bring his background in technology as well his knowledge of furniture, and offers delivery methods and products to reach the millennial generation that he is a part of.

He wishes to offer the first-time buyer a comfortable, low-pressure sales environment. The customer can come in and try things out prior to bringing it into their home. John's excitement was to be able to help see the vision of all three stores and the warehouse to be ready and open by Black Friday 2022.

John said he wants to "bring fun back into the process of furniture shopping." John has over four years of furniture experience as well. He wishes to keep the process local and have a relaxing, informed furniture experience for the shopper.

His vision is of bringing back that old mom and pop feel into today's world. This will enable our stores to continue to grow into 2023 and beyond. Terri has come to the company bringing seven years of previous furniture experience and over 35 years of community involvement. She wishes to take the visions of the owners to the next level. She feels that in today's ever-changing world, the one thing that should never change is the service and commitment that we have to our customers and communities.

We have great products at fair prices, and we stand behind what we offer. Come on in and meet us and you too will say that you now have a friend in the business.

J&J Furniture will be having their grand opening in the first quarter of 2023. We will have great specials and savings options for this event. The best thing that we will offer is the best shopping experience you will ever have. Let's shop locally and build our relationship one room at a time!

UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital expands access to care close to home -



The hospital's multi-year project redesigned ambulatory services through construction of a new Emergency Department and Walk-In Center, consolidation of Diagnostic Imaging, leveraging technology to expand telehealth capacity, and the relocation and updating of supporting utility infrastructure. (Submitted photo)



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of the ROSA robot is just one of numerous investments in equipment, medical practice and to the Norwich hospital's environment of care made in the last few years.

"We are committed to offering a diversity of services that align with the health needs of our community, and are highly reliable, easy to use, and which coordinate care around the multiple needs of individual patients and their families," she explained.

Most visibly, of course, has been the \$26 million invested in completing Phase 1 of the Chenango Medical Neighborhood plan. The multi-year project redesigned the hospital's ambulatory services through construction of a new Emergency Department and Walk-In Center, consolidation of Diagnostic Imaging, leveraging technology to expand telehealth capacity, and the relocation and updating of supporting utility infrastructure.

"Since 2019, we've relocated our laboratory, relocated and expanded UHS Cardiology Norwich, introduced Cardiac Rehabilitation services, expanded Nuclear

Medicine and installed an MRI within the four walls of the hospital. That's all in addition to the new Emergency Department and Walk-In Center," Kisacky said.

At the same time, UHS Chenango Memorial has invested an additional \$10 million in infrastructure, staffing, and services to support that work, she explained.

"We've relocated and expanded our Women's Health Center, and added a certified nurse midwife to the practice to further enhance our birthing and patient care services," Kisacky said. "We've also restored Oncology Services, and are now in the process of expanding our infusion capabilities so that we can offer these services seven days a week."

Extensive upgrades have also been made to the facility's electrical, air handling, and physical plant, including the installation of new boilers and two roof replacement projects, which repaired and replaced more than 25,000 square feet of roofing.

While this work was started - and some of it completed - before the COVID pandemic, accord-

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UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital expands access to care close to home -

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ing to Kisacky, the lessons of the pandemic have been an important learning opportunity for the nation's health care system and rural hospitals in particular.

"The last three years have given us a new level of appreciation and understanding of our role in the community," she said. "It's deepened our level of collaboration with new and existing partners, and reinforced our need for flexible spaces and workforce innovations."

Health care workforce issues have made national headlines for much of the last year. According to David Finney, Vice President of Clinical Services, UHS Chenango Memorial has not been immune to the challenges hospitals are facing across the country.

"We've had to rely on contract labor, such as traveling nurses, to help us fill critical vacancies," Finney explained.

According to the nursing leader, this has added close to \$6 million in unexpected expenses to the hospital's bottom line.

"That's not an expense we can absorb in our normal operating budget," he

said.

FEMA funding, which has been extended to hospitals to cover COVID-related expenses, helped the Norwich hospital close what would have otherwise been a crippling budget gap.

With that helping to meet the immediate need, Finney said UHS Chenango Memorial is focusing its efforts to grow as well as recruit staff for current and future vacancies.

"We partner with local and regional educational institutions including DCMO-BOCES, Morrisville State College, Mohawk Valley Community College, Hartwick College, SUNY Broome, Binghamton University, and more," he said.

Now, more than ever, they are encouraging existing staff to take advantage of tuition reimbursement benefits, as well as offering additional opportunities for staff to advance their skills.

These efforts to recruit and retain staff while grooming the health care workforce of the future - as well as the investments being made to increase access to safe, quality care on the local level - have a ripple effect, according to Finney.



UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital introduced Cardiac Rehabilitation services in 2019, an early milestone in the \$26 million Phase 1 investment that has transformed ambulatory services at the Norwich hospital. (Submitted photo)

He pointed to the way in which regional resources became overwhelmed in many parts of the country during the pandemic as an example.

"Everyone benefits when rural hospitals like UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital remain strong," he explained. "It's good for individual patients and their families, it's good for the community, and it's good for the health care system as a whole."



UHS Chenango Memorial's workforce is a diverse mix of clinical and non-clinical staff, all of whom play an important role in the experience of individual patients and their families. (Submitted photo)

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Norwich Garden Club: 90 years of serving the community -

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In addition to providing the City of Norwich with plants and flowers, the Norwich Garden Club also engages in civic work throughout the year, gets involved in the community through several local events, and touts not only a welcoming group of members, but fun and educational monthly meetings.

A year in review

The Norwich Garden Club meets once a month from April through November each year, and finishes the year with an annual review meeting and officer initiation in December.

Norwich Garden Club President Della Ericksen said the monthly meetings are a mix of guest speakers, garden tours, and fun crafts and activities.

"We try to have some on horticulture, some are education, some are just workshops," said Ericksen.

"We usually start off with lunch and go from there, and we work on different projects. We also have fun. This year we made cement vases out of bath towels and cement," she continued. "From time to time we have flower arranging classes and stuff. So we have fun too, as well as the work that we do."

In addition to crafting their own vases, Garden Club members also learned how to press flowers, turned gourds into birdhouses and bird feeders, and made bookmarks out of their pressed flowers.

Guest speakers in 2022 included Marilyn Wilhelm, who gave an informative talk on lilacs, and Karen Blackman, who educated the group on gourd growing, drying, and decorating.

Plus, members also had the opportunity to tour the gardens of Norwich resident Luke Murphy, who hosted the Garden Club's summer picnic. In July the Garden Club toured Hillcrest Lavender Farm, and both learned and witnessed how lavender is produced and picked commercially.

At the end of the year, club members gathered at the Wild Owl Cafe in downtown Norwich to appoint their new officers.

Della Ericksen was selected for her second



Every year at the Chenango County Fair, the Norwich Garden Club helps to organize a flower show. Last year's exhibition included a horticulture division, and two themed categories: ring toss and tractor pull. The exhibition also included a fireworks companion class (pictured). (Photo from the Norwich Garden Club Facebook page)

term as President, Jane Coddington was selected as First Vice President, Rohimah Sarpin was chosen as Second Vice President, Debbie Wheeler was appointed Secretary, and Jean Hayes was chosen as Treasurer.

Garden Club officers may serve two consecutive terms before taking a break from the position for at least one term. Term lengths for president and vice presidents are one year, and secretary and treasurer terms last for two years.

Monthly meetings and fun activities weren't the only thing the club did in 2022, though. The group also places a large focus on civic work and engaging with the community.

Community involvement

"We are mainly a civic type organization, so we try to do things for the community," said Ericksen.

The club of course aims to beautify the city through their multiple downtown gardens and flower baskets, but they also support various organizations throughout the year.

Christmastime is perhaps the busiest season for the Garden Club. In addition to their final review meeting and officer appointment, each year the club arranges for poinsettias to be delivered along with meals for Meals on Wheels recipients, and they collect donations for the Our Daily Bread food pantry at the Emmanuel Episcopal Church.

"We also do a little game where everyone brings a nonperishable food item wrapped up," said Ericksen. "You get one of those and you have to guess what's in it, and if you guess you get a little prize. And then all the food items go to the food pantry. So it's kind of a fun game, and yet it benefits the food pantry."

Club members drive through Norwich to judge decorated houses for the Home for the Holidays decorating contest, a collaboration between the Norwich Garden Club, the Town and Country Garden Club, and the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID).

This year's Home for the Holidays winners included 9 Newton Avenue for Best Door; 25 Hillview Drive for Best Wreath; 62 West Main Street for Best Use of White Lights; 67 Canasawacta Street for Best Use of Colored Lights; 46 Canasawacta Street for Best Live Trees; 56 Plymouth Street for Best for Children; 2 Gerald Street for Best Religious; 18 Grove Avenue for Best Artificial Trees; 10 Francis Avenue for Best Porch; and 18 Locust Street as the Garden Clubs' Choice.

To support area students, the Norwich Garden Club also provides a scholarship each spring to a graduating senior entering the conservation or horticulture field.

The summer months bring along the Chenango



Meetings for the Norwich Garden Club are held once a month from April to November. The club aims to provide a mix of guest speakers, garden tours, and activities at their meetings throughout the year. Pictured is a Norwich Garden Club member making a flower planter out of bath towels and cement. (Photo from the Norwich Garden Club Facebook page)

County Fair, and for the Garden Club that means their annual flower show.

"There's horticulture where you can just enter one flower from your garden in a class, or the other section is a design where you do an arrangement with a theme," said Ericksen. "That's open to anyone in the county, so you don't have to be a Garden Club member to exhibit. Some people think you have to, but you don't. We encourage anyone to enter."

This year's theme was "A Grand Celebration," in honor of the Chenango County Fair's 175th anniversary. The exhibition included a horticulture division and two themed categories: ring toss and tractor pull. The exhibition also included a fireworks companion class.

In the fall, the Garden Club set up shop at the Saturdays in the Park with Chobani events, where they sold spring bulbs, hydrangeas, perennials, houseplants, tickets for a lottery raffle, and the pressed flower bookmarks they made at a club meeting earlier in the year.

"I think Saturdays in the Park were very good. We got to talk to a lot of people, we got to answer a lot of questions about gardening, found out some things and

some gardens we'd like to visit," Ericksen said.

They also used Saturdays in the Park as an opportunity to recruit new members. Ericksen said the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their membership, and in the past year several members have also moved or passed away.

"We took quite a hit this year. So it was good to get some new interest and be able to build back up, because it takes hands to do these gardens and things to help out," Ericksen explained.

"It's hard to keep an organization like this going because it's not something that we're constantly out there asking for people, but we'd like to get more members. The more people you have to help [the better], plus some of our members are getting older and can't do the work in the gardens," she added. "But we like to keep them going because we think it adds a little something to downtown."

Future plans

Overall, the Norwich Garden Club aims to beautify the City of Norwich, and help out wherever they can.

"From time to time we help things like The Place, if they're doing a garden and want some help," said Ericksen. "At Saturdays in the Park we were

approached to help pick the flowers or get some information on some plants for a garden at Kurt Beyer Pool, but then they had to shelve it for next year; It was getting quite late in the fall. But we'll probably be working with them on that."

"So we're constantly doing things that may be only a one time deal, but if we can help with them we're willing to."

The club is looking forward to another year full of activities, educational meetings, events, and community support.

Meetings will start back up again in April. In the interim, however, Ericksen said the group will be meeting to plan out guest speakers and activities for the upcoming year.

"January and February is when we start working on lining up speakers and programs and stuff for the coming year. So we will continue our basic ones we do like the three gardens downtown and the baskets on the poles downtown. Things like that that we do every year. And of course fundraising is a big thing, because it takes quite a bit of money to do the baskets," Ericksen explained.

"We try to do that in the very first part of the year so we have time to get our booklet printed up," she added. "It's a small booklet, it tells each month what the plans are for the meeting, and where it's going to be, and who's on the committees for refreshments and so on for that."

They will also continue their recruiting efforts. 2022 brought in six new Norwich Garden Club members, but the group is always looking to add more people to their team.

Those interested in joining the Norwich Garden Club can contact Ericksen at 607-334-7404 or Norwich Garden Club Treasurer Jean Hayes at 561-758-3696.

For more information on the Norwich Garden Club, visit the Norwich Garden Club, NY Facebook page.



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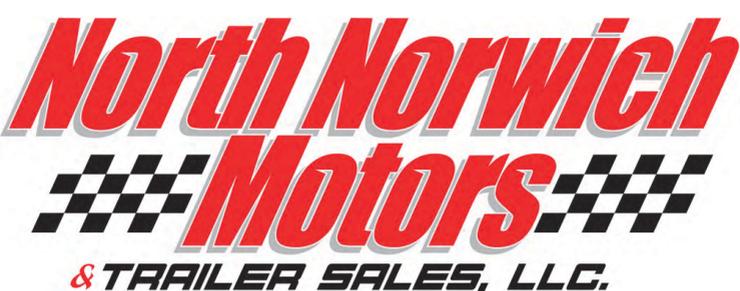
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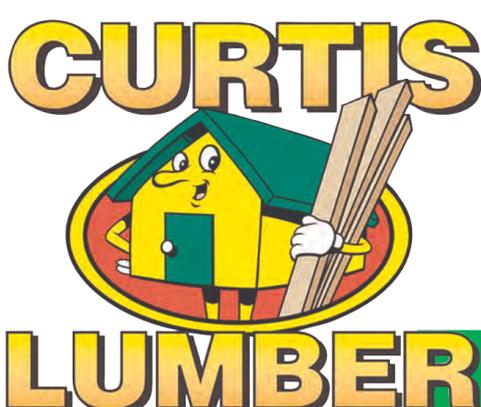
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