

PROGRESS CHENANGO



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Colorscape Chenango continues to thrive in 32nd year

JESSICA BENSON
EVENING SUN

NORWICH — The Colorscape Chenango Art Festival debuted in Norwich 32 years ago. Since its inception, the festival has grown in size and popularity. Now featuring 116 different artists and vendors in Downtown Norwich's East and West Park, the festival showcases the best artists, musicians, and food around.

Colorscape Director Michele Erickson explained that Colorscape is a juried show, meaning that people apply to be a part of the festivities. A peer jury reviews applications and scores applicants to determine which ones will make the cut for the next year. "We look for a high level of artistic quality in our show. The show represents the best of the best in the North East," Erickson said.

Colorscape began in 1995. Since then, Erickson said, it has often been recognized as one of the country's top 200 fine art and design classic and contemporary craft shows by Sunshine Artist Magazine. Last year it was recognized as number 25 in the country and number one in New York State in the category of fine art. Colorscape includes a variety of artists



Colorscape is made possible each year due to the hard work of their volunteers. (Submitted photo)

specializing in painting, drawing, jewelry making, ceramics, basket making and other fine art.

artists. Finally, the Art Zone Stage features acts for kids and families such as puppet shows and juggling acts. There are also two art zones where participants can create their own works of art to take home with them.

In addition to the visual arts, the festival includes three stages for performing arts as well. The main stage features the biggest performing acts, with artists coming from Boston, Baltimore, Rochester and Buffalo to showcase their talents in Chenango County. Peggy Stage, named after long time volunteer Peggy Finnegan, features smaller more local

"One of the things we try

to do is bring experiences and things that people in Chenango County don't have access to in other ways," Erickson said. She explained that they search for new artists, bands, and performances that people couldn't easily access if they were not coming to Colorscape. "We try to bring artistic opportunities that people wouldn't have otherwise."

Each year between 10,000 to 12,000 people attend Colorscape Art Festival. "The festival brings commerce

and people to the county for the weekend. They frequent restaurants and stay at hotels and see what Chenango County has to offer." Because of the increase in traffic to the area, Colorscape works with other area agencies such as the Chenango County Historical Society and the Northeast Classic Car Museum to promote those venues as well. "The Historical Society has a historic architecture tour the weekend of Colorscape,"

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Winners of the 2025 Home Beautification contest announced

TYLER MURPHY
EVENING SUN

NORWICH — The Evening Sun and the Norwich Building Tomorrow Foundation have announced the winners for the 2025 Home Beautification Contest.

The contest aims to revitalize the City of Norwich by identifying, encouraging, and rewarding property owners for making improvements on their homes. Judges look for exterior improvements to homes, such as siding and painting, windows, doors, landscaping, fencing, shutters, walkways, roofing, and more. They also consider how significant the renovations were, and how much the renovations positively impact the neighborhood.

This year's contest included 10 entries for the single-family,

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Chenango Valley Technologies recognizes employees as key partners

KELLI MILLER
EVENING SUN

SHERBURNE — Chenango Valley Technologies (CVT) is a family-owned plastic injection molding and tooling manufacturer based in Sherburne.

With over 50 years of experience, they specialize in precision mold building, custom injection molding, and production support for a wide range of industries.

CVT Owner and President Shawn Baker said the company has grown to become an injection molding company offering several services under one roof with tool and die along with injection molding services and cur-

rently has about 40 employees.

Their state of the art tool room allows them to build and maintain molds quickly and efficiently.

"Few companies of our size offer an in-house tool room and design services and I'm proud to say we do and have for over 30 years," Baker said.

Baker said they also produce their own line of Volt Protector Battery Boxes, designed for high-durability applications in marine, industrial, and renewable sectors.

"All manufacturing is done under one roof," said Baker. "Giving us full control over quality and lead time."

He said they operate with

the responsiveness and flexibility of a hands-on manufacturer, backed by the experience and infrastructure to support large-scale production needs.

"Our focus is on quality, reliability, and building long-term value for every customer we work with," he added.

Baker said most of their work is sold outside of the county but what they do to better the quality of life in Chenango County is to pay their employees the most they can to sustain the business.

"We had an employee appreciation event last year that included a retirement



Chenango Valley Technologies President and CEO Shawn Baker and New Business Development Tom Baker with the Empire Award given by New York State Senator Joe A. Griffio. (Photo by Kelli Miller)

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Colorscape Chenango continues to thrive in 32nd year -

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Ericksen said. She added that the Classic Car Museum raffles a car off at the event every year as well.

In 2025, Colorscape worked to highlight cultural diversity and bring in performances that highlighted quality performances from a range of different cultures. One performance featured

Chris Thomas and the Ongwe'hon:wehkah Smoke Dancers from the Onondaga Nation. "Everyone loved their performance," Ericksen said. She explained that they hope to bring in a different cultural aspect every year. They are not yet sure what cultural act will be highlighted in 2026.

2025 also saw the inclusion of the Airigami Balloon Muralist Company out of Rochester. The community was able to participate to create a 20 foot by 10 foot bubble mural. The first day a bubble mural featuring the locally famous Lily Rivrboat was created. The second day a large mural of a duck was created and displayed at the YMCA the following weekend.

For 2026, Colorscape hopes to expand their efforts to offer more projects throughout the year. "We are looking for ways to be represented more in the community through art installations and classes throughout the year," Ericksen said.

A major change coming this year will be in terms of the organization's coordinator. For the past 26 years, Ken



Colorscape began in 1995. Since then it has often been recognized as renowned fine art and design classic and contemporary craft show. Colorscape includes a variety of artists specializing in painting, drawing, jewelry making, ceramics, basket making and other fine art. (Submitted photo)



This year's Colorscape Arts Festival will be held on September 12 and 13, 2026. (Submitted photo)

Lay has served as the musical coordinator and curator for Colorscape, however this year, Lay has retired, and

Colorscape just announced that Nate Gross will be taking over the role. "Ken has done a great job for the last

26 years," Ericksen said, "but we're excited for this moment in time and the new blood, new vibe and new acts that

Nate will bring." Ericksen said one of the things she is most excited about in the coming year is the addition of demonstrations by glass makers from the Corning Museum of Glass. "We have been trying to get them to come for a couple of years now," Ericksen said. Glass makers will be working all weekend to do demonstrations, torch work, and creating glass items that will be raffled off during the event.

Colorscape is made possible each year due to the hard work of their volunteers. Ericksen said she was the first employee that Colorscape had in 16 years. "For over 30 years Colorscape has been run by volunteers and board members. It's a working board. Everyone takes on one area of the festival. While the festival performed well with an all volunteer staff, Ericksen said bring on an employee has made a big difference in the depth and breadth of the responsibility.

"There is someone at the helm and it has helped bring Colorscape into the next level of work. I'm excited to see where it goes in the next ten to twenty years."

Ericksen gave credit to all of the board members and volunteers who have made Colorscape possible, especially Lay and Peggy Finnegan. "Peggy has held every role with the festival since year two. She still oversees all visiting artists applications and welcome packets. She has kept Colorscape run-

ning over the last 30 years." Volunteers are the backbone of Colorscape, Ericksen explained. Every year about 250 volunteers take part in Colorscape over the weekend, beginning on Thursday and continuing through Sunday night. "It's so important how people come together to put in the time and effort," she said.

While Colorscape has continued to grow over the last 30 years, Ericksen said there is only so much more room for growth. "The number of artists has grown from 70-80 to about 120. We could maybe add 1-2 more but we can't grow much more without expanding our footprint."

Ericksen said one of the best parts of Colorscape is seeing the families enjoy all the art and festivities. "This is a festival that brings families together," she said. Ericksen said that Colorscape is here for the community. She said anyone with ideas for what they would like to see or hear at future festivals is welcome to reach out on the organization's social media pages or through email.

"We would love to hear what things people would like to see to make the festival bigger and better," Ericksen said. This year's Colorscape Arts Festival will be held on September 12 and 13, 2026.

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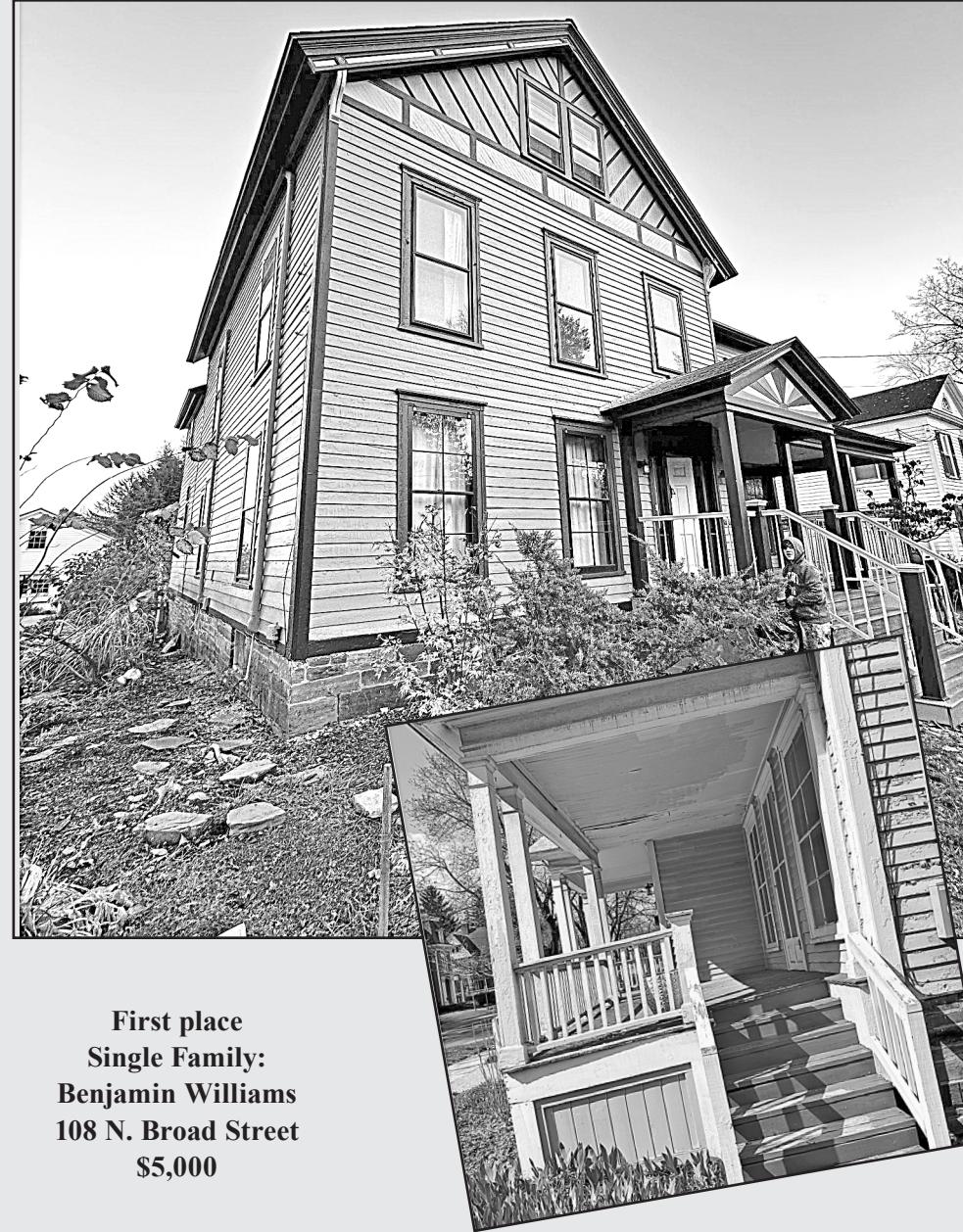
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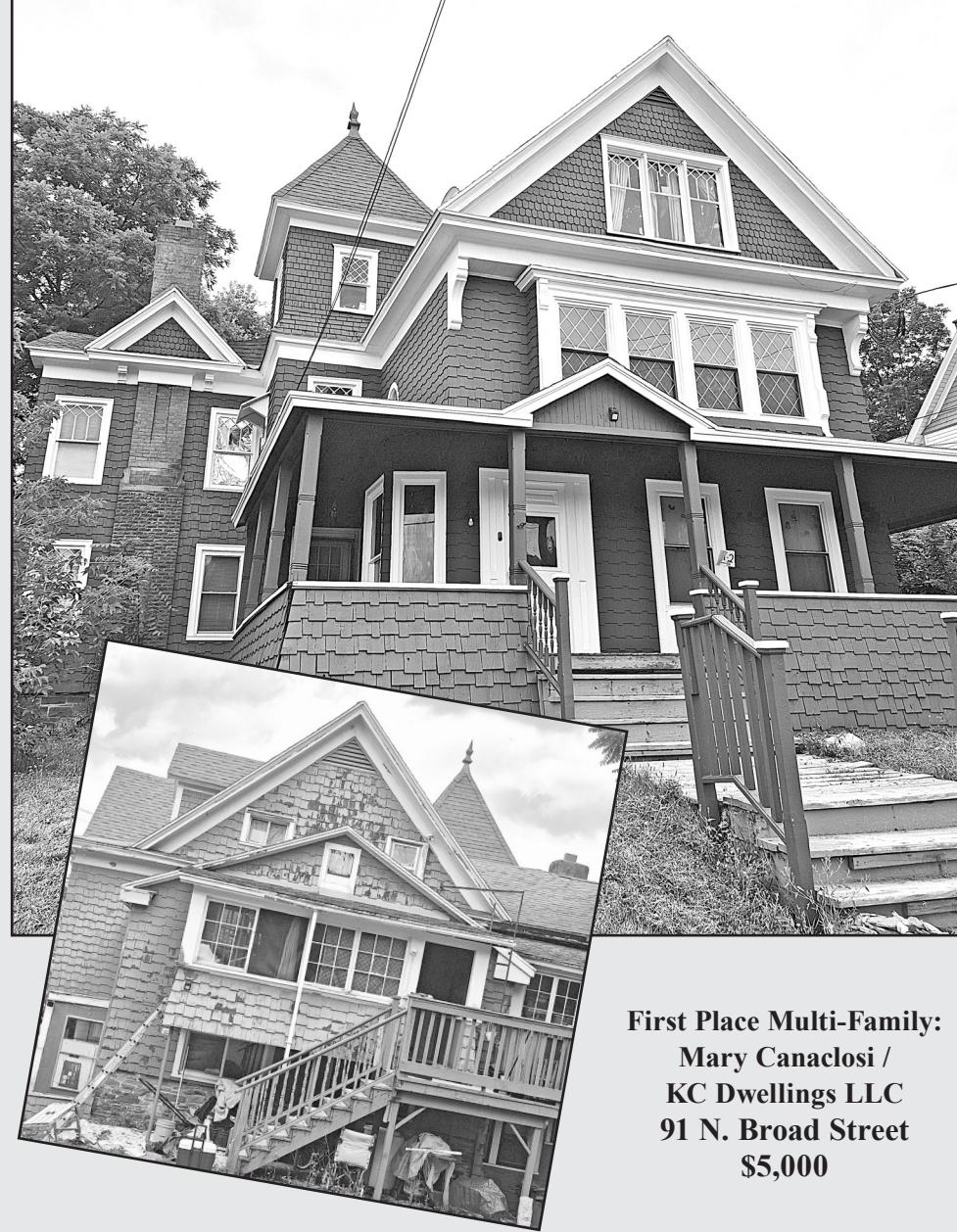
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Winners of the 2025 Home Beautification contest announced -



First place
Single Family:
Benjamin Williams
108 N. Broad Street
\$5,000



First Place Multi-Family:
Mary Canaclosi /
KC Dwellings LLC
91 N. Broad Street
\$5,000

Contest Winners:

SINGLE-FAMILY
First place:
Benjamin Williams
108 N. Broad Street
\$5,000

Second place:
Cheryl Kennedy
16 Park Street
\$3,000

Third place:
Calvin Conifer
9 King Street
\$2,000

Fourth place:
Jeremy McKenna
31 Prospect Street
\$1,000

Additional Prize:
Tara Wheeler
7 Barnes Street
\$1,000

Additional Prize:
William Scranton
124 N. Broad Street
\$1,000

MULTI-FAMILY

First Place:
Mary Canaclosi /
KC Dwellings LLC
91 N. Broad Street
\$5,000

Second place:
Don Kelly /
DGK Management
LLC
34/36 Park Street
\$3,000

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owner-occupied category and two entries for the multi-family category.

Benjamin Williams took first place in the single-family category with beautifully detailed improvements to the exterior of his home located at 108 N. Broad Street.

A falling front porch, peeling paint and much needed repairs due to weather and time made these improvements challenging but also rewarding.

"I was incredibly impressed with the construction work on the front porch by CNY Building Group of Norwich, New York. The porch was literally falling off the house.

And, the exterior painting by Kolb Family Painting," said Williams.

Williams purchased the home approximately 5 years ago. And, finally had the opportunity to move here two years ago.

The Home Beautification Contest is modeled after the original contest promoted by

Smith Ford Norwich in the 80s and 90s, and began in 2019. The contest has become an annual tradition supported by community sponsors working in partnership with The Norwich Building Tomorrow Foundation and The Evening Sun. To date, the Home Beautification Contest has awarded cash prizes to 46 homeowners totaling \$123,600.

The Norwich Building Tomorrow Foundation is a local not for profit with a mission to improve the quality of life in the City of Norwich, primarily through seeking opportunities to improve and preserve housing and other property development opportunities.



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Chenango Valley Technologies recognizes employees as key partners -

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of a 25 year employee and still have a few 25 plus year employees on staff along with 10 year plus employees," Baker said.

"Once we find we are a good fit with an employee, they tend to stay around," he said. "We take good care of our employees."

Major Developments 2025

"The last 12 months have been great for CVT," said Baker. "We grew with a few of our customers and that helped us maintain a healthy level of business."

He said the biggest event in 2025 was the employee appreciation and the recognition of the long term employees.

"We had prior events to that but I pulled out all the stops and gave them a week off as a sign of my appreciation for their efforts," Baker added.

He noted CVT recognized three 25 year employees, five 10 year plus anniversaries, and two retirements.

The three 25 year employee anniversaries were shared by Jean Davis, Veronica Pittsley, and Norm Wynn.

Each received a one ounce silver bar with the CVT logo etched on one side, a glass trophy and cash bonus for every year employed.

Employees with 10 plus

years received a glass trophy and bonus. They were Dereck Nelson, Kathy Paul, Linda Brown, Cole Williams and Jimmy Peckham.

"Once we find we are a good fit with an employee, they tend to stay around," he said. "We take good care of our employees."

- CVT Owner and President Shawn Baker

Baker said. "On June 1st, he retired."

Baker said he still comes in to assist part time and he values the decade of dedication

but that comes with owning a business," he added.

Plans for 2026

The last few years we've grown with existing customers and we reach out to new customers but in keeping with our regular customers, we can better service them.

"I would say about 75% of our business is in New York State and the other 25% is in bordering states. The majority of our customers are more than 50 miles away but less than 200 miles," Baker said.

Baker noted most of our business is done outside of Chenango County and he would like to see additional businesses come into the county so everyone can all thrive.

He said they keep a neat facility and pay the team as much as they can to bring support to the local community.

"We also try to support local events as much as we can," said Baker.

Baker explained his father started the company as a tool and die shop with a handful of employees and over the last 50 years they have grown to 40 plus employees with three shifts, five days a week.

"Our products are typically sold to other manufacturers or businesses and with the trickle down effect through payroll or charities, there is a limited amount we can do to improve the community,"

Baker said.

Highlights a Meaningful Outcome

Baker said the employee appreciation event was one of the biggest highlights of 2025.

"For people to dedicate so many years of their lives to a small company in Sherburne NY, that means a lot to me," he said.

"One of the phrases I heard was how few employers offer this type of event filled with so much effort and cost," said Baker. "There were large bonuses and the costs involved were substantial."

"It was very well appreciated and each employee took the time to thank me," he said.

"When I've shared this with other business friends of mine, they remind me how uncommon this type of event is," Baker said. "I'm inspired to do more events like this."

Baker said another highlight was when he was honored with an Empire Award given by New York Senator Joe Griffi.

Chenango County Advantages

"There are challenges in our county, but low cost real estate and low cost electric in the village is an advantage," said Baker.

"Finding and retaining industry experienced employees can be difficult. We have been able to find and retain experienced pro-

fessionals but I believe it may come to an end in the next years," he said.

"Sherburne used to have a medical facility that did injection molding. Norwich used to have ShopVac and there were a decent amount of plastic professionals in this region," Baker continued.

"But the people that were once young are unfortunately retiring soon."

"We will train in-house or will expect people to travel from larger areas such as Utica and Syracuse, he said. "If we get lucky, they'll live mid-way between."

"Our newest trained technicians have been trained in-house," Baker added.

He said manufacturing in general will have challenges with staffing in the future.

Baker said it is challenging to find the more experienced professionals and noted entry level is easier but ten plus years is difficult.

"We place ads in Indeed, Facebook, Craigslist, The Evening Sun, and PennySaver and are fortunate, the first time we run the ad it works out well," Baker said.

"Word of mouth is also effective and we hire family, friends, mostly everyone in the area has a relation of some sort," he said.

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Chenango Valley Technologies recognizes employees as key partners -



Chenango Valley Technologies employee Jim Peckham is monitoring a HAAS CNC milling machine as it cuts new mold components. (Photo by Kelli Miller)



Jean Davis is inspecting fresh parts from the BOY vertical press. (Photo by Kelli Miller)

Continued from page 4 ►

Attention Needed for Improvement

"We need more businesses, and if we had additional manufacturing businesses, we would have more customers, we would have more employees, and build off of one another," Baker said.

"It would create a stronger county with more money in, more money to spread around," he said.

"I discussed this earlier with my son, what problem would you fix by moving to Chenango County, what problem could you possibly solve by moving your business here," said Baker.

"Low cost real estate and power are the most evident

but being in a rural area some people think it may be more challenging to get trucking in and out, but it really isn't," Baker added.

"When you say community, I think of Sherburne, Chenango County," he said. "Most of our business is outside that radius."

"But our biggest community partners are our team of employees," he said. "The

team has a job to do and they do it well."

"Our team is successful in everything that comes through that door," Baker added.

Living the Dream

"We strive on helping where we can," Baker said.

"We do the Rotary music in the park in Sherburne, we help school organiza-

tions, the STEM program and attend Rogers Center events."

"We try to help with charities and at times sponsor bands but try to help when we can," he said.

"This is my community, this is where I was born and raised and although I've branched outside some, this is always going to be home," he continued. "Looking at

the big picture, I'm glad I was raised here and glad I raised my children here."

Baker said has worked in Chenango County his entire life, and couldn't think of a better place to live. He also noted his son has come back home from the city life and is now working with him, carrying on the Baker Technology tradition.

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