

PROGRESS CHENANGO



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More than just a show: How the Chenango Arts Council is connecting the community

SHAWN MAGRATH
EVENING SUN

NORWICH — Over the last four decades, the Chenango Arts Council in Norwich has sought to promote local arts, even when the arts industry as a whole has been challenged by economic uncertainty. Leaders of the organization are continuing those efforts heading into 2026, carried by a sense of optimism about the importance of the arts and all that Chenango County has to offer.

The Chenango Arts Council (CAC) exited 2025 with a list of ambitions for the coming year, including a vision to expand membership by offering fresh incentives for new members. CAC now touts a 100-plus member roster, but executives aim to broaden membership in the coming year by offering discounted theater tickets and promotional pricing for arts classes and workshops. Moreover, they're weighing the possibility of "joint membership" with other area nonprofits, where becoming a member of one company offers automatic membership into another.

Of course, CAC is also con-



Chenango Arts Council Executive Director Alicia O'Neill and Programming and Development Coordinator Mary Beth Miller hang artwork inside the Maria Brown and Raymond Loft galleries. (Submitted photo)

tinuing its quality theater performances, gallery exhibits, and ongoing educational workshops for hobbyists and aspiring artists.

"We always have something going on," said CAC Director Alicia O'Neill who oversees Arts Council pro-

gramming and the organization's two full-time staffers. "We have a lot of things to offer to our community. We strive to improve the quality of life of our neighbors, not only by providing affordable entertainment, but also remaining very affordable to arts education."

O'Neill promotes the

Chenango Arts Council as an outlet for people of all ages to release their creative energy after the daily 9-5 grind. The CAC facility, located at 27 W. Main St. in Norwich, houses the historic 500-seat Martin W. Kappel Theater, in addition to the Maria Brown and Raymond Loft galler-

ies which showcase new art exhibits year-round. What's more, CAC hosts ongoing workshops in pottery, stained glass, sculpting, and painting, among others.

"We like to offer a variety so someone can try something that they've always wanted to try," said Chenango Arts Council Programming and Development Coordinator Mary Beth Miller.

"We encourage people to come see what we do," said O'Neill, pointing especially to CAC's partnership with the Norwich Theatre Company to pique a wide variety of interests. "A lot of the perception of theater is that it's just acting, singing and dancing," she said. "But there's so many other job opportunities for electricians, carpenters, painters, and work with sound and new technology. It's really important for career exploration and finding something that you enjoy doing."

The Arts Council took tremendous strides in 2025 to bolster its programming and rekindle public interest in the arts. A bus trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Chenango County is a beautiful place to live

TYLER MURPHY
EVENING SUN

We live in a beautiful county. Nowhere is perfect, but in these rolling green hills and river valleys you can find a peaceful home and become a meaningful part of the community. There are things that could be better, there are things we hope won't change, but it will be decided by those who get involved.

This year's Progress edition continues the work of exploring how local organizations and public resources are being invested to enhance quality of life,

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The Chenango County Historical Society is dedicated to sharing and preserving local history

KELLI MILLER
EVENING SUN

NORWICH — The Chenango County Historical Society (CCHS) is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of the local region.

For more than eighty-five years, CCHS has collected a wide range of information and objects related to the preservation of Chenango County history.

"We have a collection of between 75,000 and 150,000 artifacts and archives," said Chenango County Historical Society and Museum Executive Director Jessica Moquin. "Artifacts are three-dimensional objects and archives are paper materials."

The museum's flagship facility is in Norwich Ward School No. 2, located at 45



Students enjoy learning about Chenango County history at the CCHS hosted field trip. CCHS hosts local students every season. (Submitted photo)

Rexford Street in Norwich, all 21 towns of Chenango County. The campus consists of The Flanagan Research Center, the Ross School House, a Privey, the Lillie Ross School Exhibit, a collections storage

facility, The Loomis Barn and the Miller Pavilion.

"We also have three sites that are not on our campus that we steward. They are the Chapman-Turner Clock, the Railroad Watchman's Tower, and the Maple Sugar Shack, part of our Maple Sugar Heritage Collaboration with the Friends of Rogers Environmental Education Center."

Moquin said unique to CCHS is the complete company archives from the world-famous Norwich Pharmacal Company, along with other industrial artifacts from Borden Dairy Company, Chobani, Golden Artist Colors, Hayes Piano Forte Manufactory, Lyon Iron Works & the Raymond Corporation, and the Maydole Hammer Factory.

She also noted artwork in the collection includes

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More than just a show: How the Chenango Arts Council is connecting the community -

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in New York was organized last summer- a first for CAC. Given its success, Miller said she hopes to organize another trip later this year. CAC additionally sought out music enthusiasts last May when it partnered with local musician Nate Gross to pay tribute to the Fender Stratocaster, the guitar of choice for famed musicians the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Buddy Holly, Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy, David Gilmour, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and more.

CAC organizers also put together four shows to take center stage during CAC's 2025-2026 performance season, with two of those shows set to take place this spring: Celtic Angels Ireland (featuring award winning Irish and world champion singers, dancers, and musicians) and Mutts Gone Nuts Unleashed (featuring a dozen of the world's most amazing canine athletes). The company aims for at least four performances each season inside the Martin W. Kappel Theater. O'Neill said filling seats for theater shows is critical, not only for the financial stability of the Arts Council, but also to retain public interest in arts programming.

The Arts Council also continues an ongoing search for local artists to exhibit work at its two art galleries, be they seasoned artists hoping



Inside the historic 500-seat Martin W. Kappel Theater at the Chenango Arts Council in Norwich. (Photo by Shawn Magrath)



Art enthusiasts attend a summer gallery opening at the Chenango Arts Council. (Photo submitted by the Chenango Arts Council)

to sell their work; or novice artists who simply want to show off what they've done. In keeping with its mission to connect arts to the community, CAC kickstart-

ed its Grants for Teachers program last year which had been put on hold at the start of the COVID pandemic six years ago. Grants for Teachers awards Chenango County educators grants of up to \$500 to incorporate the arts into their curriculum. CAC executives dolled out 15 awards to local teachers in 2025 and promptly put student work on display inside their galleries. The Grants for Teachers program, O'Neill noted, isn't only for arts and music teachers, but for any teacher exploring various forms of arts in the classroom. "Adding arts into the curriculum not only helps kids enjoy learning, but retain it as well," she said.

In late 2024, CAC received a financial boost for its 2025 season. The organization was awarded \$40,000 from the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) to support the nonprofit arts and culture sector.

To support the ongoing recovery of the arts across New York State, NYSCA budgeted grants totaling \$162 million in 2025, serving organizations and artists across all 10 of the state's regions.

Looking ahead, O'Neill said she's optimistic about what's in store for 2026, albeit slightly apprehensive when it comes to cash flow - something she acknowledges goes hand-in-hand with

the arts. The Chenango Arts Council attains tremendous financial support from private sources, including NBT Bank, Preferred Mutual, Golden Artist Colors, Cottage Bakery, and Norwich Wealth Management. Nevertheless, CAC donations are jeopardized when private industry feels a financial pinch, explains O'Neill, which typically leads to an indirect fiscal impact on the arts.

In the meantime, Miller and O'Neill insist that Chenango County remains a great place where the arts can still thrive. Miller stays positive about what the area has to offer and keeps an open mind because "there's always different ways to reach people and different ways of working with other groups."

"There's a lot of really talented artists and organizations to work together with," Miller added. "Just being able to feature so much different artwork is a big perk."

"I love reaching out to local artists and doing collaborations with other great local organizations," said O'Neill. "We're fortunate because in a bigger area, you might not get that support and collaboration."

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Norwich, NY 13815
(607) 336-ARTS (2787)
www.chenangoarts.org

The Chenango Arts Council supports life-enriching art throughout the greater Chenango region. Theater and gallery on site. Classes, performances, and more.

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Jericho Arts Council

15 N Main St
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www.jerichoarts.com



In addition to all the local artists and craftspeople in the area all year. Colorscape Chenango returns for a weekend of creativity, music, and community on September 12-13, 2026. The art and music festival is open September 12 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and September 13 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Evening Sun file photo)

Our season runs from September to May each year, and our Town Hall Opry series brings in the very best in bluegrass music. We also present other musical genres in diverse styles, and live theater performances produced by the Out of the Woodwork Players.

Made in Chenango

25-27 North Broad Street
Norwich NY, 13815
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Made in Chenango Gallery, Inc. is a Gift Shop and Gallery that was established in 1997 as a small business owned and operated by local artists and artisans exclusively from the Chenango County, New York area. The Gallery/Gift Shop offers a unique array of original handcrafted products and creations in several styles, mediums, and materials.

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Music festivals like the annual Chenango Blues Festival and NBT's Summer Concert Series are also big hits with area residents. The 33rd Annual Chenango Blues Festival will run from August 20 to 22 this year. (Evening Sun file photo)



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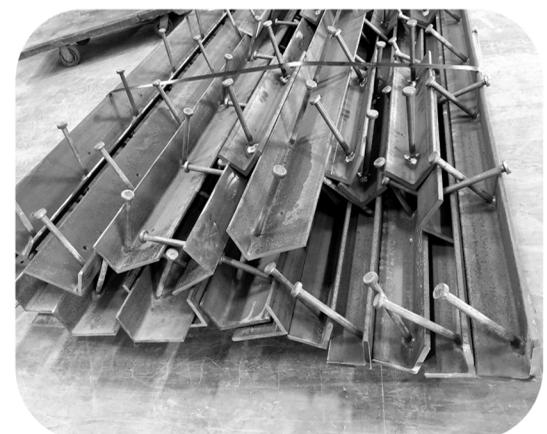
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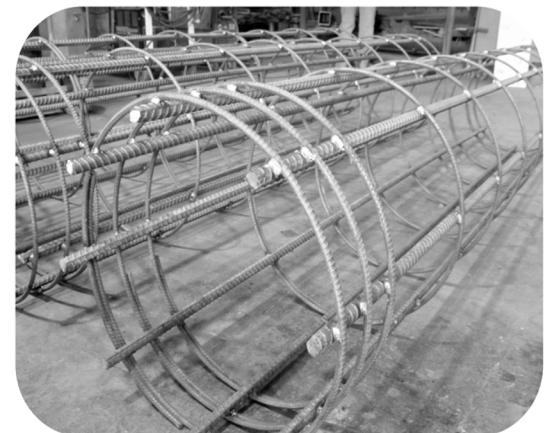
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Chenango County is a beautiful place to live -

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through infrastructure, workforce development, housing, and public services, across Norwich, Sherburne, Greene, Oxford, Bainbridge, New Berlin, the Otselic Valley, and the other towns that make up Chenango County.

We will look at the area through the lens of people making the best of it and share their constructive perspectives, so we can better understand what draws people here, what convinces them to stay, and how anyone willing to get involved can have a positive impact.

The 2026 Progress Chenango series will be printed from February 9 to February 13 and included with the Evening Sun regular newspaper.

Chenango County has always been inspired by people who decided to get involved, to build, volunteer, invest, and argue for what should improve and what should be protected.

The same is true of its local newspaper, The Evening Sun. The daily paper is a product of two centuries of local publishing, mergers, name changes, and daily deadlines; an institution built by the same communities it covers.

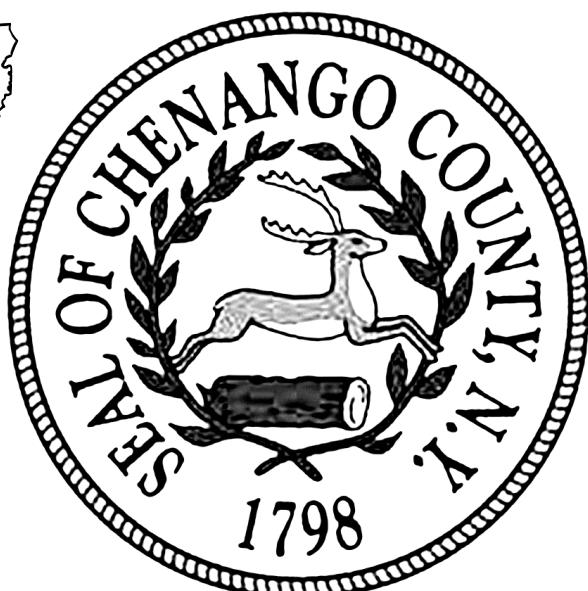
The story began in Norwich on Nov. 14, 1816, when J.F. Hubbard began publishing The Norwich Journal for 2 cents a copy. The Journal con-

tinued successfully for years, changing hands numerous times as Norwich and Chenango County grew. By 1877, publisher B. Gage Berry shifted the operation into a new phase, renaming it The Chenango Semi-Weekly Telegraph, printing editions issued every Wednesday and Saturday at a cost of two dollars per year. What started as a small-town paper at pocket-change price became a more regular, subscription-based organization, reflecting the growth in the local community that increasingly relied on printed news as a practical necessity.

Eventually, the county's newspapers consolidated. The Telegraph eventually merged with The Norwich Sun nearly a century later, part of an evolution toward a more enduring publication. Out of that longer line came the county's first and only daily newspaper: the Morning Sun, the direct ancestor of today's Evening Sun. The daily paper's identity also changed with the era. It was known as The Morning Sun until 1904,

then became The Norwich Sun, and in 1961 it was renamed The Evening Sun, a shift that marked a change in the rhythm of how people consumed news in their day-to-day lives.

What has remained consistent is the pace and commit-



weekday of the year.

If roads are closed, if the power is out, the newsroom is still open and the staff is still working. The writers, sports editor, design artists, press workers, and delivery people are here every morning before the sun even rises. The writing staff often ends the day late at night, covering after-hours meetings, sporting matches, and weekend events. There is always another deadline. Nothing is ever truly "done," only reported.

The paper has also been a pipeline for local talent. Over the years there have been dozens of local writers, and many staff members became well known and pursued professional careers within the community. The result is not only a newsroom, but a space that is con-

tinuously training and networking the people who help define our community.

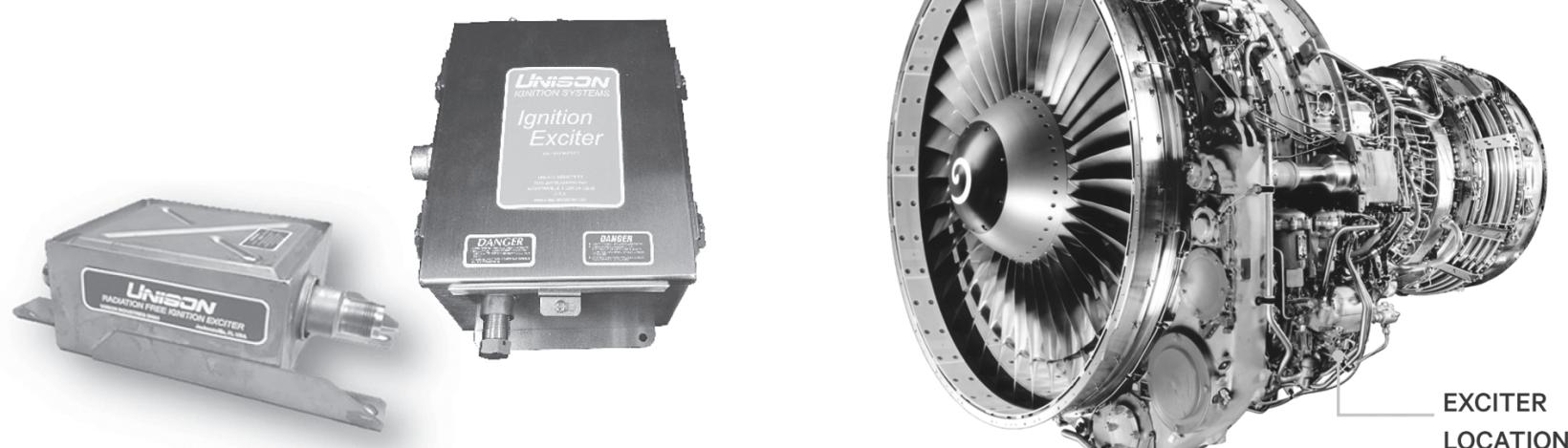
The Evening Sun was purchased by Snyder Communications on May 2, 1994, and for the first time in 15 years it was locally owned. It remains independently and locally owned to this day, sustained by the support of readers and advertisers who support local journalism as a shared asset rather than a disposable product.

Most recently, in 1996, the newspaper moved headquarters from Hale Street to Lackawanna Avenue.

That history matters because Progress Chenango 2026 is not just a special edition, it is part of a tradition of documenting what is changing, what is working, and what requires attention.

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The Chenango County Historical Society is dedicated to sharing and preserving local history -

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original pieces by Julie Borden, George Cook, Alice Hudson, Tompkins Harrison Matteson, Danny McCarey, Henry Grant Plumb, and David Wilson.

CCHS is home to carefully curated archives and artifacts representing the heritage of Chenango County, from pre-colonial Haudenosaunee origins to modern traditions.

CCHS seeks to instill pride of place while offering perspective on a variety of narratives and the campus welcomes all ages and backgrounds with admission of a free-will donation left up to each visitor.

"Approximately 80 percent of programming is offered free of charge," Moquin added.

Quality of Life Impact

CCHS contributes to making Chenango County "a beautiful place to live" by connecting regional residents and museum visitors to our past, enriching local identity, fostering community engagement, and preserving cultural heritage.

"In practical terms, "a beautiful place to live" like Chenango County is one that embraces our shared local identity," said Moquin.

Major Developments in 2025

Moquin said at the beginning of 2025, two CCHS staff members were recognized for their consistent service and competence with elevated titles.

"Joe Fryc, who has served as Operations Manager since October 2020, became Operations Director," she said. "Zachary Greenfield, who began as Archives & Collections Coordinator in 2023, now serves as the Archives and Collections Manager."

She noted one of their most significant achievements in 2025 was the launch of their digital guide through "Bloomberg Connects."

"This free app, which highlights cultural organizations from around the world, makes it easier for CCHS to distribute content through mobile devices, anytime and anywhere," Moquin said. "The app allows museum patrons from across the globe to experience our mission virtually."

She explained the partnership also includes a wide variety of promotional pieces for CCHS, such as large poster boards, mailable postcards, and leave-behind rack cards.

"Another partnership with 4imprint's "one by one" program provided additional branded materials, including pens and silicone wristbands, she added.

Moquin said they also received general operating support from the New York Council of the Arts and it was their greatest financial volume, giving them a baseline of where they are headed and how they will grow.

In addition to the generous financial support, Moquin said she now has an execu-



Together with the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus, CCHS hosted the fourth annual "National Author's Day," including the launch of local writer Christian Vischi's first full-length book, "Stitched Together: A History of the Norwich Knitting Co. and Walt Disney."

tive coach that helps guide and lead the organization, adding, "It's truly amazing."

She said the coach helps support in stewarding the memories and they work together, bouncing ideas off of each other to strategize to better solutions.

"It's a tremendous help," said Moquin.

"Our work last year was also supported by one Summer Field School Fellow from Colgate University's Upstate Institute, two Summer Youth Employment participants from The Place, and three Cooperstown Graduate Program interns from SUNY Oneonta," she said.

"These experiential learning opportunities were in addition to two seasonal Museum Assistants," Moquin added.

One-Year Reflection

"I would have told myself a year ago that the year may feel much like a trip to the amusement park," said Moquin.

It will be a combination of many colorful Carousel characters, the unpredictability of a Rollercoaster, the whirling frenzy of the Teacups, and a jolt of Bumper Cars. Hang on and enjoy the ride."

She said some of the jolts would come from the wondering of where they will find funding.

"You can spend hours on a grant but in the end, you may not receive it," Moquin said. It's an experience in humility, but not to be taken too seriously, as the mission must stay in the forefront and leap from there."

She said grant funding is all about the right fit and can be up in the air until the moment of approval or denial.

"Everyone tries to do their best and you see how things shake out in the end. It can take a while to hear back and other times it can be within weeks," she said.

"In my case, I try for as much funding as possible because we have a lot to manage," she added.

Moquin noted they received about \$75,000 in grant funding in 2025, and their annual budget for all of facilities, staff members and utilities, etc was over

\$300,000.

Plans for 2026

Moquin said this year begins the commemoration of the nation's semi-quintennial, or 125th anniversary.

"Our primary focus at CCHS over the next eight years will be discovering all that this means for our communities," she said.

"We've been planning this for over four years and we want to be intentional as to how we interpret the eight year," she added.

Moquin explained the American Revolution lasted eight years, and so will their commemorative activities. A range of themes will be explored, such as the American Experiment, Changing Interpretations of the Revolution, Choose Your Side, Doing History, Indigenous History is New York's History, Power of Place, Unfinished Revolutions, and We the People.

As a history and heritage institution, she said part of their role in strengthening the quality of local life is to find new ways of inspiring others to become more civically engaged.

"We honor those who came before us by learning about them and making a positive difference for our world today and into the future," she said.

"We encourage all to join us for upcoming Chenango 250 Conversations, when staff from CCHS and the Chenango County Historian's Office share ideas on how to collaboratively commemorate this major national milestone," Moquin said.

On March 6, Moquin said they will open this year's Community Gallery exhibit, "Chenango County's Better Half - The Life and Works of Randy Glasbergen." This retrospective will feature art and artifacts related to Sherburne's beloved cartoonist and humorous illustrator, best known for three decades of newspaper syndication.

The syndicated strip The Better Half from 1982 to 2014 was produced by Glasbergen and thanks to his family, his legacy continues to be shared around the world - in presentations, textbooks, newsletters, social media - and this

exhibit.

Educational programming and school field trips for local districts and other youth-oriented organizations will continue to center on Chenango County heritage.

Moquin noted this season's focus will mostly be on civics education and Chenango 250.

Milestones and Growth

Over the years, Moquin said CCHS has successfully shifted their focus from simply curating local heritage to serving as a community partner, an educational resource, and a regional destination.

She said on August 26, "Women's Equality Day" celebration brought together people from across the region to honor the Haudenosaunee culture and its impact on American women securing the right to vote.

"It was very exciting and meaningful," Moquin said.

Museum guests were treated to an Oneida meal, learned about suffragette Matilda Joselyn Gage, made music with indigenous Smoke Dancers, and crafted beaded souvenirs.

"It was a truly interactive and inspiring program," she added.

One of the most exciting opportunities last year continues to provide the museum with the ability to overcome one of our most significant challenges.

Moquin said they now that they are a part of a pilot cohort model through the Community Foundation of South Central New York,

they will thrive with general operating support, along with training and capacity building initiatives.

"We are able to collaborate with other regional non-profits and executive leaders to explore new ways in nurturing sustainable impact for the communities we serve," she continued. "We are delighted that this program is continuing for the 2026 season."

She gave thanks to generous community supporters that helped CCHS expand traditional programming and add new initiatives, which allowed them to accomplish their mission more fully.

"Our funding streams as well as our audience engagement both demonstrate con-

sistent and steady growth," said Moquin.

"As an organization, we use our mission and vision, along with our strategic plan, to make decisions and move the organization forward."

Chenango County Advantages and Limits

Moquin noted Chenango County, as a rural area located within the Appalachian region, faces challenges that many similar Appalachian communities do.

She said it has been noted by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) that the population of rural Appalachian counties is older and less diverse, and has been declining in number faster since 2010 than the population of rural counties in the rest of the country.

"The lack of public transportation is a big challenge," said Moquin.

With the exception of health insurance coverage, rural Appalachian counties continue to lag behind rural counties in the rest of the country and she also noted the lack of public transportation is a big challenge.

"However, the benefits of being based in this area far outweigh the challenges. There is a deep commitment to community in Chenango County, and that generosity of spirit helps overcome any circumstances we may face," Moquin said.

"This deep commitment and community spirit inspires all of the work we do here at CCHS," she added.

Workforce and Talent

Moquin said securing financial resources is a perpetual challenge for non-profit organizations, and one of her greatest concerns around employee retention is related to fair and equitable compensation.

"Finding the means to offer competitive industry wages and benefits is one of the primary issues we are working on addressing through our continued involvement with the capacity building pilot cohort being sponsored by the Community Foundation for South Central New York," said Moquin.

Improving quality of Life in the County

"The Chenango County Vision 2050 Plan identifies several areas that, with sufficient attention, could dramatically improve the quality of life here in Chenango County," said Moquin. "This includes increasing housing options, supporting children and families, and expanding broadband access."

Key Partners

Moquin said all of their community partners are key to their success.

"Without them, we wouldn't be able to accomplish anything sustainably significant," she said. "We're a modest regional museum with limited resources, and we are only able to share our local history and heritage thanks to community collaborations."

Community Programs and Events in 2025

"We involve ourselves where we can and if an organization says we have this opportunity, we try to be a part of it," said Moquin. "We strive to maintain enough energy to listen to every voice that needs to be heard."

Programs included:

Black Family Connections Between Peterboro & Chenango County - Black History Month, February 8, was presented and researched by Smithfield Town Historian Donna Dorrance Burdick, chief researcher for the Madison County Freedom Trail Commission.

Be My Neighbor Day, March 14, was inspired by WSKG Education and PBS Kids. The day was based on the principles of "Mister Rogers" and focused on bringing people together to

celebrate kindness and consider what it means to be a good neighbor.

Guests had the opportunity to celebrate kindness, enjoy family-friendly activities, and connect with local community organizations.

History Where You Eat, May 18, was in collaboration with the Lincklaen Town Historian, Madison County Historian's Office, and Apple Creek Country Club. The evening provided participants the opportunity to discover a bit of local history while enjoying menu items unique to Central New York.

Path Through History, June 15 was a special Summer Barn Picnic that offered families the opportunity to celebrate Father's Day at no charge. Visitors had the opportunity to create "A Mighty Fine Time Machine" with children's author and illustrator Suzanne Bloom.

Using found objects like beads, dials, gears, mirrors, tubes, and twine, this community masterpiece was featured in last season's Community Gallery exhibit, "Creativity in Bloom: The Storyteller Illustrations of Suzanne Bloom."

Worldwide Day of Play, September 20, was dedicated to experiencing joyful learning through play. Our annual

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“Caroling with Jennie and Friends” was one of the festive events during the museum’s annual Holiday Open House. (Submitted photo)



CCHS participated in the semi-annual statewide commemorations known as ‘Path Through History’ weekend. The Haudenosaunee singers and dancers featured interactive music and movement. (Submitted photo)

Chenango County Historical Society -

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celebration focused on getting kids and families up, out, and playing around.

In collaboration with Improve Norwich Now and “One Community, One Book,” the day offered readings and book signings, with local community organizations hosting free craft projects and games. The festivities culminated with an interactive program featuring local favorite “Jenni’s Music.”

Path Through History, October 11, included ‘Trains, Tractors & Traditions’ and ‘Day of the Girl Child.’ A

highlight of the day was the Homer Couture Fashion Show, featuring Mary Homer of Beading Wolves, a fourth-generation bead worker.

The first Indigenous fashion designer to show collections during New York City Fashion Week, Homer brought her blend of modern flare and Haudenosaunee-style inspired garments, connecting her work to these traditional Oneida homelands.

The day also featured the debut of the Lyon Brook Trestle Bridge, a scale model researched and hand-crafted by architect Jim Johnson. Guests also celebrated

“International Day of the Girl Child” with the Zonta Club of Chenango County by participating in its “Computer Coding Couture” workshop.

National Author’s Day, November 1, was a collaboration of CCHS and the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus, hosting our fourth annual tribute in celebration of the dedicated authors who research and record meaningful local histories.

This year’s event featured the launch of Christian Vischi’s “Stitched Together: A History of the Norwich Knitting Co. and Walt Disney.”



Inspired by PBS Kids and featuring Suzanne Bloom, “Be My Neighbor Day” brought families together to learn about kindness, giving back, and the incredible organizations that make our neighborhood a better place. (Submitted photo)

Coming Early 2027

Extending Care. Preserving Independence. Keeping Families Close to Home.

Chenango Valley Home is expanding to meet the growing needs of seniors in Chenango County—bringing assisted living to our community for the first time. To date \$1.9 million has been raised toward the expansion from generous donors and foundations. Every gift brings us closer to opening our new Assisted Living. **Please consider donating at www.chenangovalleyhome.org/donate**



For nearly 130 years, Chenango Valley Home has cared for older adults in Chenango County with compassion, dignity, and deep community roots. Today, we are taking the next step. As our population ages, families are facing a difficult reality: seniors who need just a little more support are

often forced to leave the county for care, or move too quickly into nursing homes far from home. Chenango Valley Home is changing that. Our campus expansion will create new assisted living services designed to support people as their needs evolve. This project allows residents to age in place, remain close to family, and receive the right level of care in a home-like setting.

This is not about building bigger, it is about caring better.



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Chenango Valley Home is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization

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SERVING
CHENANGO COUNTY
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MAKING CHENANGO COUNTY A BETTER PLACE TO

