

# PROGRESS CHENANGO



VOLUME 4 • FEBRUARY 10, 2026 PUBLISHED BY THE EVENING SUN

## Both sides of Gilligan’s business thrive in Sherburne

JESSICA BENSON  
EVENING SUN

SHERBURNE – Outside of Chenango County, people recognize Sherburne for two things, Pageant of Bands and Gilligan’s Ice Cream. Even though the business split into two separate entities in 2021, people still think of Gilligan’s as one, family-owned operation.

“Gilligan’s has been Gilligan’s since 1984,” said Gilligan’s Restaurant owner Mike Lagoe. The restaurant, previously owned by Lagoe’s uncle Matt, was purchased by twin brothers Andy and Mike and Mike’s wife Kristen in 2007. “We’ve owned it ever since,” said Mike. “We’ve had a lot of support in the community and that’s what keeps business up and running.”

Gilligan’s Restaurant has a full menu of food and a variety of home-made ice cream. “We try to be as involved in the community as we can be. We’ve been serving home-made ice cream since 1994,” Mike said. “It’s a great business to be a part of in this community and the surrounding communities.”

When asked what made Gilligan’s such an integral part of Sherburne, Mike said that they try to be as involved



Gilligan’s Ice Cream, run by Andy Lagoe and Gil Hodges, manages the wholesale ice cream manufacturing and distribution side of the business. While Gilligan’s has been producing ice cream in Sherburne for more than 30 years, they started offering their products to other vendors around New York State in 2018. (Photo by Jessica Benson)

as they can be. Ten years ago, Gilligan’s Restaurant started holding Gilligan’s Give Back Nights. Over the years, the events have grown in popularity. “We’ve hosted hundreds of organizations. Each year, we have between 45-47 fundraisers and have raised approximately \$20,000 a year that goes to those organizations.” Mike did not take all the credit for the assistance Gilligan’s has been able to give to those local organizations. “It’s really a testament to the community. We



Gilligan’s is an integral part of Sherburne with a long history of offering soft ice cream and weekly specials at their iconic drive-in restaurant. (Photo by Jessica Benson)

Continued on page 2 ▶

Rentals To Go, NBT recognized for community involvement by Commerce Chenango

TYLER MURPHY  
EVENING SUN

NORWICH – Community and business leaders held a ceremony in September at Rentals To Go in Norwich for Commerce Chenango’s 2025 Business Appreciation event, which drew more than 120 attendees.

Rentals To Go and other businesses were recognized for their community involvement.

Commerce Chenango President and CEO Sal Testani praised the Brightman family, owners of Rentals To Go, for

Continued on page 3 ▶

## Aunt Mary’s House celebrates wins with a pathway to independent living

KELLI MILLER  
EVENING SUN

NORWICH — Aunt Mary’s House is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing emergency and transitional shelter for pregnant and parenting mothers.

Serving women aged 18 and older and their children, from pregnancy through 18 months, the home offers a safe, judgment-free haven for those facing homelessness or crisis in Chenango County.

“The organization’s mission extends beyond housing,” said Aunt Mary’s House Executive Director Kisten Giglio. “It aims to empower mothers to achieve long-term independence.”

“The key components of



Aunt Mary’s House is very thankful for the many volunteers before, during and after their opening. In 2025, CV free church members helped with household chores inside and out before opening day. Some of their duties included organizing cupboards, putting together bedrooms, painting, weed-whacking bushes, mowing the lawn, and clearing steps and walkways. (Submitted photo)



In November 2025, Aunt Mary’s House welcomed their new Executive Director Kisten Giglio. Giglio has over 30 years of experience in the education field and brings with her a servant’s heart and passion for supporting women and the community. (Submitted photo)

Continued on page 3 ▶



# Both sides of Gilligan’s business thrive in Sherburne..

Continued from page 1 ▶

facilitate it, but it helps the organizations and it helps us too.” Since the Give Back nights began, the popularity of the events has increased drastically. Gilligan’s now hosts Give Back nights every Monday and Wednesday from October through March. While the weekly specials and featured ice cream flavors may change a bit, Mike said there are no plans to make major changes to the restaurant in 2026. “If you have something that works, don’t alter it,” he said. “We are committed to good food and great service.” He added that there may be some cus-

tomers generated specials and some new merchandise available in the coming year. “We have been blessed by the amount of great employees we’ve had over the years. This will be the 36th summer I’ve worked here. We never have a shortage of good reliable help,” Mike added. **Gilligan’s Ice Cream** Gilligan’s Ice Cream, run by Andy Lagoe and Gil Hodges, manages the wholesale ice cream manufacturing and distribution side of the business. While Gilligan’s has been producing ice cream in Sherburne for more than 30 years, they started offering their products to other ven-



**Gilligan’s Fresh Market:** This year, Gilligan’s plans to add one more business to the community in the form of a fresh market in the Village of Sherburne. They plan to offer local meats, dairy product, ice cream and other items year-round. (Photo by Jessica Benson)

dors around New York State in 2018. Since then, business has been steadily growing. Andy explained that

Gilligan’s Ice Cream sells Gilligan’s brand products to farm stands, stores, scoop shops, garden centers, and as fund raisers for a variety of schools and non-profit organizations. At first, Andy and Hodges said, they were seeking out customers to carry Gilligan’s products, but this year, customers have started reaching out to the pair in search of Gilligan’s Ice Cream. “The brand recognition has gotten bigger,” Hodges said. Hodges and Andy have participated in a variety of shows around New York State in order to build brand recognition, including Taste of Syracuse. “The best way to build our customer base, is having people try our ice cream,” Andy said.

“We’ve been fortunate to get into retirement homes, colleges universities and hospitals,” Hodges said. He explained that the pair plan to hit the streets more in the next year to continue expanding their customer base. “We’ll work with anyone who wants to try to sell our product,” Andy explained, noting that Gilligan’s Ice Cream is even available at a local pet store. “We want to continue to build the Sherburne brand,” Andy said.

Andy attributed the business’ success to customer attention and the quality of their products. “We are small enough that we can create custom flavors or customers can create flavors of their own. For fundraisers, organizations can create their own flavors and name it themselves. We can control the quality more than larger operations too.”

Gilligan’s Ice Cream sources as many ingredients from New York as they are able to. “We are inspected by New

York State Agriculture and Markets and we follow their guidelines to insure safety. Over the last year, Gilligan’s Ice Cream launched an online store via Shopify where customers can purchase ice cream and other products and have them shipped for home delivery within New York State. Andy and Hodges said they hope to expand the shipping footprint over the next year. Customers can visit [GilligansIceCream.com](http://GilligansIceCream.com) for information on distribution or [gilicecream.myshopify.com](http://gilicecream.myshopify.com) to shop for home delivery.

### Gilligan’s Fresh Market

This year, Gilligan’s plans to add one more business to the community in the form of a fresh market in the Village of Sherburne. Hodges and Andy recently purchased property at 45 South Main Street in Sherburne with the intention of moving their ice cream manufacturing to that facility. However, when Sherburne’s only grocery store went out of business, Hodges and Andy pivoted, deciding instead to create a fresh market to meet the needs of the community.

“We are looking to work with New York Farms and Taste New York to bring New York grown and certified products to the area,” Hodges said.

When asked why the plan for the property changed, Andy explained, “The community has always supported Gilligan’s. This way we can give back to the community.” Andy and Hodges plan to partner with local farms while produce is in season to bring those products directly to consumers. During the off season, they will work with produce suppliers to make sure customers still have

what they need. They plan to offer local meats, dairy product, ice cream and other items year-round. “This is not a corporate, big-box business,” Hodges said. “We will have hands-on involvement with the community.” The partners said this business model will allow them to better meet the needs of their consumers. They plan to offer things like home delivery to help the senior population and those who have transportation struggles. The fresh market will also accept SNAP benefits. “We can react to what the community wants and needs. We encourage people to tell us exactly what they are looking for, so we can cater to those needs,” Andy said.

When asked about the affordability of the items they will stock, Hodges said they are aware of the financial constraints that everyone is under these days and the business will try its best to provide the best value for the people in the community.

Hodges and Andy hope to open Gilligan’s Fresh Market on February 1st. They plan to be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week. “If people need hours to start earlier, that’s a change we can make,” Andy said.

In addition to carrying fresh products, Andy and Hodges said they also hope to host outdoor events on the grounds in the spring and summer. “We’re hoping to have chicken barbecues, craft sales, and bottle drives for local organizations on the lawn,” Andy said. “We really want this to be a part of the community.”

While Hodges and Andy will be stocking New York State grown and certified products from Taste NY, they also hope to team up with local farmers and producers to give back to the farming community. Andy explained that many area farm-stands and stores have started selling Gilligan’s Ice Cream. “The farm stands and stores are big customers in our wholesale market. They supported us. We want to support them.” Those interested in offering their goods at Gilligan’s Fresh Market can reach out to Andy or Hodges for more information.



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN

# Buying or Selling?

Choosing the right broker is key for your success. Find an agent with the expertise and skills to market your home effectively. We had the privilege of helping 165 Sellers and Buyers in 2025 navigate the process.

Please contact our office for your Real Estate needs.  
607-336-8080

**HOWARD HANNA**  
REAL ESTATE SERVICES

6095 NYS 12, Norwich, NY. 13815

# Your Neighbors are using Blueox.

## Are you?





[www.BlueoxEnergy.com](http://www.BlueoxEnergy.com)



# Aunt Mary’s House celebrates wins with a pathway to independent living -

Continued from page 1 ▶

the program include skill development, individualized care and holistic support,” Giglio said.

Giglio explained guests are connected to local resources for prenatal care, child-care and workforce development and begin a journey of learning about financial literacy, parenting & life skills, healthy eating, relationship dynamics, and the importance of physical & mental well being.

She said each guest works on personal goal setting through a case management model as she works toward transitioning to independent living.

Aunt Mary’s House, along with 30 volunteers, provides a stable foundation, rooted in promise and hope to help mothers break the cycle of instability and build a self-sufficient future for their families.

## Quality of Life

“To us, making Chenango County a “beautiful place to live” isn’t just about our rolling hills or historic streets,” said Giglio. “It’s about the heartbeat of our community. It means living in a place where no expectant mother has to face the uncertainty of where she will sleep tonight.”

Giglio noted, Aunt Mary’s House contributes to this beauty by acting as a sanctuary of hope in the midst of crisis and said, “When a

young mother walks through our doors, she leaves behind judgment and fear, finding instead a warm embrace that says, ‘You matter.’”

“We do not just offer a roof; we offer a family. We nurture the quiet confidence of a mother learning to care for her newborn and the pride of a woman mastering her finances to build a lasting future,” she continued.

“True beauty is found in compassion. It is seen when babies take their first safe steps in our living room, and when mothers transition from surviving to thriving,” said Giglio.

She said they model how to be supporting and positive members of the community at every level.

“Our volunteers are committed to enhancing our community through their active participation with AMH,” Giglio said.

“By restoring dignity and breaking the cycle of instability,” she continued. “We weave love and resilience into the very fabric of Chenango County, making our county a truly beautiful place for every family to grow and thrive.”

## Major Developments

Giglio said their biggest development in 2025 was the opening of their doors to guests, and the proudest moment was celebrating their first graduate.

Continued on page 4 ▶

# Rentals To Go, NBT recognized for community involvement by Commerce Chenango-

Continued from page 1 ▶

hosting the annual event at their ranch, and thanked NBT Bank, the event’s sponsor.

“We’re extremely fortunate to live in a community like this where we have the types of members that come together at events like this,” Testani said. “It truly is the endorsement of the work that the chamber tries to do and we’re extremely proud of that.”

Testani highlighted that chamber membership has doubled in the past three years, and said the growth reflects the strong partnerships between local businesses and the community.

Rentals-To-Go owner Grant Brightman said, “We’re especially proud that more than 100 of our employees call Chenango County home, and those people are the reason we’re able to serve our customers across the country while staying rooted right here in our community.”

Attendees participated in tours of Rentals To Go’s facilities and equipment after the ceremony and were introduced to a newborn calf.

The event highlight was a presentation of the Member of Distinction award to Brian Burton,



Rentals To Go owners and operators, Grant Brightman, Cole Brightman, Carter Brightman, Gary Brightman and Holly Brightman stand with Commerce Chenango President and CEO Sal Testani and this year’s award recipient Brian Burton. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

NBT Bank’s Chenango County Retail Market Manager and vice chair of the Chenango County Industrial Development Agency. Burton, who has served with Commerce Chenango in various roles since 1996, including as chair of the CCIDA board, was recognized for his long-standing commitment to community service.

“He truly embodies what it means to care about your community and as importantly to give back,” Testani said. “Tonight we should celebrate that by recognizing somebody like Brian.”

Burton said he was humbled and embarrassed by

the honor, he credited mentors, family and colleagues for encouraging his community involvement.

“One of the things I’ve always believed is that you can help your community if you get involved. If you sit on the sidelines that’s not going to help anybody,” Burton said. “I work for a company, NBT Bank, who the community is very important to, and they encourage you to get involved.”

He thanked his wife, daughter, and team at NBT for their support. “You don’t need money to help your community. You need to be able to get involved,” he added.

The evening also served

as a showcase for Rentals To Go, founded in 2000 by Gary and Holly Brightman. Originally launched with 53 portable toilets and a single service truck, the company has since grown to more than 225 employees, offering nationwide services ranging from restroom trailers to bunk houses, mobile command centers and disaster relief support.

Burton closed remarks by thanking members and encouraging others to become involved in efforts to make Chenango County “a better place to visit, work and live.”

# Chenango County Historical Society

Experience our cultural heritage through the exploration of unique traditions and noteworthy stories.

## Visit Us

45 Rexford Street  
Norwich, NY 13815

ChenangoHistorical.org



(607) 334-9227



@chenangohist



@chenangohist

Chenango County Historical Society programs are made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



# Aunt Mary’s House celebrates wins with a pathway to independent living -

Continued from page 3 ►

“2025 was a pivotal year where our organization transitioned from preparation and renovation to fully operational,” she said.

“The most significant development was the official opening of Aunt Mary’s House in late January 2025, marked by a community open house,” she continued. “After opening, the house welcomed our first guest in May 2025.”

She said the program saw their first major success story when the inaugural guest successfully graduated from the program in October 2025.

“This individual transitioned to living in a local apartment with her fiancé and newborn, demonstrating the program’s effectiveness in fostering independence,” Giglio added.

By the end of 2025, Aunt Mary’s House had supported five women, two babies, and one toddler.

“A key measurable outcome for the year was helping guests secure local employment, which is a critical step toward the goal of financial freedom for each woman and her family,” said Giglio.

Giglio also noted collaboration is a major theme for Aunt Mary’s House as they work with community partners and volunteers to provide services they alone cannot offer.

“In terms of workforce development, connecting one of our guests with The CDO Workforce led to a paid work experience at The Place,” she said.

She said Hale Street Medical and Norwich Copies Plus each employed one of their guests and continue to be avid AMH supporters.

“Norwich Copies Plus helped organize an “Angel Tree” that was supported by our local community and provided gifts for our guests and their children at Christmas,” Giglio said.

There are also weekly goal-setting meetings that identify and support the needs of their guests, including participation in life skills activities, such as cooking their own Thanksgiving dinner, Giglio added, “a significant achievement for some who had never cooked a meal before.”

Guests also work closely with PACT, WIC, SNAP, SFCU and the Women’s Health Center.

Giglio said through the leadership and guidance of their board of directors, executive director, guiding committees, collaboration with community partners, the overwhelming community support and the dedication of many volunteers, Aunt Mary’s House is now an active service provider in Chenango County.

“None of this, he safe nights, the job offers, the first steps of a toddler, graduation dreams would have been possible without our local community,” she said.

“Because of your support, we didn’t just open our doors; we opened pathways to independence for mothers in our community,” Giglio added.

## One-Year Reflection

Giglio said as the dust set-

tled after the renovations and ribbon cutting in January 2025, additional questions and concerns came to mind.

She said the gap between opening and welcoming their first guest was unsettling but looking back at those times, she would give advice of trust and timing.

“Trust the timing, we don’t have to do it alone,” she said. “The soft skills are the big wins and have faith that the model works.

She recognized timing is a gift that allows for transition and changing career hats from construction manager to program directors and when the first guest walks in the door in May, the pace will change instantly.

“Trust that the need is real and the women are coming. Keep leaning into the community. Our partners are our superpower,” Giglio added.

She would also remind herself some of their biggest wins will come from outside their walls as they help to weave a powerful network of support and encouragement for mothers.

Also, Giglio noted they will spend a lot of time thinking about logistics, security, and fundraising but those moments aren’t as important as the support for their guests.

She said she would advise the big wins are when we look into our guests eyes when they look at their new little one they hold in their arms, it’s the first time a guests cooks a meal, it’s the confidence seen in a job interview, it’s in the joy on their faces as they open gifts provided by others and it’s in watching guests give back to the program and the community.

“There will be hard days where progress feels slow,” Giglio continued. “We will wonder if the transition to independence is really possible for people in crisis but the truth is, in October, you will watch your first guest move into an apartment with her fiancé and baby.”

Giglio note it will be the proof of concept they’ve been working toward for years and to stay the course. “It will all be worth it, she added, “beyond your wildest dreams and imagination.”

## Plans for 2026

“We need every resident of Chenango County to be our eyes and ears. Aunt Mary’s House is fully operational and successfully helping pregnant and parenting mothers build independent lives, but we can’t help those we don’t reach,” said Giglio.

“We currently have an immediate opening for a pregnant or parenting mother who is over 18 years old,” she continued. “If you know a woman in our community who is ready for a fresh start, a safe home, and a supported path to financial freedom, please tell her about us.”

“Help us ensure that no bed in our house stays empty while a family in our county is in need,” Giglio said.

She said with growth, they anticipate specific hurdles as they work to strengthen the quality of life locally.

“In 2025, we proved our model works. In 2026, we are investing in the people need-

ed to sustain it,” said Giglio. “Our major development for the coming year is the strategic expansion of our team to include a dedicated Grant Writer and a Case House Manager.”

“We hope to create a “three-legged stool” of funding to include grants, donors and events, she said. “The knowledge and expertise of our grant writer will continue to propel our sustainability long into the future.”

Giglio said with the addition of a case house manager in February, they will strengthen the daily connection with their guests, oversee daily house operations, support guests schedules and their evolving needs, and strengthen the focus on individual budgeting.

These new positions will allow the executive director to focus on strengthening financial sustainability, donor relationships, and community advocacy.

“As many in our county will acknowledge, the biggest barrier to our guests “graduating” is not a lack of readiness, but a lack of places to go,” she added.

“Affordable, safe housing in Norwich and Chenango County are scarce,” said Giglio.

She said with the state focusing on rural housing initiatives, there are opportunities to partner with regional players to advocate for more transitional housing solutions.

“In addition, we must prepare guests for the financial obligations that come with independent living through aggressive budgeting and savings plans while they are still at Aunt Mary’s House,” Giglio said.

Giglio pointed to their program and said they do not want their guests to be successful for a day or a month but for years into the future. Their goal is to position Aunt Mary’s House as a leader in the local care ecosystem for many years to come.

## Milestones and Growth

Giglio said Aunt Mary’s House was born out of a specific community need identified by Improve Norwich Now. Recognizing a gap in services for homeless pregnant women, the initiative was formed not just to provide shelter, but to break the cycle of poverty.

“From the start, the vision was ‘transformational housing,’ meaning guests would not just receive a bed, but a pathway to independence through education and life skills,” she said.

She noted 2024 was defined by sweat equity and said tThe organization relied heavily on community volunteers to create a beautiful space for living and get the doors open.

“Thanks to these efforts, the house was transformed from a renovation project into a warm, welcoming home ready for families,” said Giglio.

Additional growth came in 2025 as they welcomed five women into AMH, shared in the birth of two beautiful little ones and continue to support their pregnant and parenting moms.

“Safe housing is the first

step in the journey for our guests, but that alone isn’t the solution,” she said.

Giglio explained AMH has fostered countless partnerships with local community agencies and foundations that allow us to help meet the complex needs of our guests and the addition of our grant writer and case house manager mark the maturity and growth of our organization as we continue to invest in infrastructure and programming to ensure long-term survival, evolution and expansion.

## 2025 Highlight

“Aunt Mary’s House has proven its concept and filled its rooms,” said Giglio. “In May 2025, we welcomed our very first mom. She arrived pregnant, facing housing instability, and uncertain about her future.”

“Over the next five months, she became the living proof that our model works,” she added. “Through our community partnerships, she continued in her employment, grew her passion for baking and gained personal confidence.”

Giglio said in October 2025, they celebrated their most significant victory of the year when she graduated from the program, moving into a local apartment with her fiancé and newborn baby.

“While her graduation was the highlight, she was just the beginning, said Giglio. “As the year progressed, the quiet hallways of Aunt Mary’s House transformed into a vibrant, busy home.”

She said they had four more women who sought refuge and support within their walls and the nursery and play areas are no longer silent concepts and are in full use.

“We welcomed another baby and a toddler, bringing the chaotic, wonderful sounds of family life to AMH,” Giglio said.

By the end of 2025, Aunt Mary’s House had served five women, two babies, and one toddler.

AMH is now a home where a toddler learns to walk, mothers cook Thanksgiving dinner together, and families find the stability they need to thrive.

“As we celebrate our first graduation, we honor the journeys of the other women and children in our home who are now safe under our roof,” she said.

“They are each living proof that the Aunt Mary’s House model works and the path from crisis to stability is real and achievable,” Giglio continued. “we are honored to see it each and every day as our guests grow in confidence and maturity.”

Giglio said these stories are about more than one family finding a home; they represent a meaningful outcome for the entire Chenango County community.

## Chenango County advantages

“Chenango County is a place where it is easier to build a support system but harder to build infrastructure,” Giglio said. “Operating a non-profit in a rural community like Chenango County presents a unique set of circumstances.”

She said the close-knit

nature of the area is their greatest asset, while the rural infrastructure remains their steepest hill to climb.

“We have the people, the love, and the partnerships, but we constantly fight against the lack of physical housing and transit,” said Giglio.

“Aunt Mary’s House is not just another non-profit, we are neighbors,” she said. “When we ask for help, the community answers immediately.”

“Our donors can literally see where their money is going. This tangible connection builds deep trust and loyalty that is harder to achieve in larger markets,” Giglio added.

She explained because resources are scarce, local agencies realize they must work together. Their relationship with local organizations is seamless and noted there is no “turf war”; instead, there is a shared mission to lift families up.

“We don’t have to be experts in every facet of life,” she said. “We have each other to lean on to support our guests, and our partners are just a phone call away.”

While their guests work hard to save money and become ‘rental ready’, the actual apartments often don’t exist.

“Chenango County faces a severe shortage of safe, affordable, and quality rental units. We are also geographically vast, and public transportation is limited compared to urban centers,” Giglio said.

“We are hopeful for the renewed promise of transportation in our county,” she said.

While guests are supported during their stay at AMH, the reality is that once they leave, the stress of getting to work, childcare, and medical appointments may be a real concern.

“This is where a focus on local infrastructure could benefit not just our guests, but all residents within our county. We want our guests to move from surviving to thriving and that takes time and concerted effort,” said Giglio.

## Workforce and Talent

Giglio said the true workforce at Aunt Mary’s House is their volunteer base and committed donors.

“With only two to three paid employees, recruitment looks different for us than for a large corporation,” she said. “We don’t hire often, so the challenge isn’t volume of hiring, but impact of retention.”

Giglio mentioned their volunteer workforce is thriving. Contrary to national trends, she said they have found it surprisingly easy to recruit volunteers. Because Chenango County is a close-knit community, people want to help their neighbors.

She said the talent is here, they just need to be asked.

“We have teams of volunteers willing to support our many roles including: activity/group leader, childcare, family meals, AMH closet, mentoring, property care and maintenance, newsletter, volunteer coordinator, and overall outreach and raising awareness,” said Giglio.

“We are always looking to increase our volunteer pool, especially in the areas of transportation, social media management, and website maintenance,” she said.

“We are fortunate to have board members who are willing to take on the legal and fiscal responsibility of governing our organization,” she added. “This requires a different level of talent, long-term strategic thinking, rather than just physical labor.”

She said they also have volunteers dedicated to serving on their admissions, finance and fundraising teams and the varied life and expertise of their volunteers is an invaluable asset to AMH.

“Instead of asking for a huge commitment, we ask for small, specific tasks. It makes “joining the team” feel easy and rewarding,” said Giglio. “Once they see the house and meet the women, they often stay for the long haul.”

“For both donors and staff, we emphasize that in a small organization, you see the result of your work immediately,” she said.

At Aunt Mary’s House, Giglio said you will see the baby who is sleeping in the crib you assembled. You will see the guest you helped feed and clothe ready to assist at a local workplace.

“This emotional connection is our strongest recruitment tool,” said Giglio.

Improving quality of life in the county

Giglio said from the perspective of Aunt Mary’s House, improving the quality of life in Chenango County requires urgent attention to three specific areas: safe, affordable housing, transportation and access to childcare.

“We see these needs not as abstract statistics, but as the daily hurdles our guests envision when they leave our home,” she said.

“By far, the area needing the most attention is the lack of quality rental housing,” said Giglio.

She said while they can successfully help a mother secure a job, save money, and build life skills, when she is ready to graduate, they often hit a wall because there is nowhere for her to go.

Giglio said there is a severe shortage of apartments in Norwich and the surrounding county that are both affordable for a single income and safe for a newborn baby.

“We need more local landlords willing to partner with programs like ours and more investment in rehabilitating existing housing stock to increase the availability of safe, stable housing, in a rural county with limited public transit, a car is not a luxury, it is a lifeline,” she added.

She noted most of their guests do not have a vehicle and must rely on volunteers for transportation.

This works while they are with the program however upon exit, the reality is that there is a severe lack of public transportation in the area.

“Expanded public transit, ride-share programs, or community initiatives that help low-income workers repair or acquire vehicles are essential for long-term economic stability,” she said.

Continued on page 5 ►



# Aunt Mary’s House celebrates wins with a pathway to independent living -

Continued from page 4 ▶

Giglio explained finding childcare that matches the hours of entry-level jobs is a difficult task and said AMH mothers are driven and capable and want to work. But the 9 to 5 childcare model doesn't always fit the need. Expanding childcare options that support the actual working hours of the county's labor force is critical.

“If we could wave a magic wand to fix one thing in Chenango County, it would be the housing inventory,” she said.

AMH is a bridge to providing that safe, secure housing, until there are enough safe places for our graduates to live, the cycle of instability remains difficult to fully break.

### Key Community Partners

“At Aunt Mary’s House, we operate on a simple philosophy, We don’t try to be everything to everyone. Instead, we focus on what we do best providing a safe, loving home and we rely on our incredible network of community partners and volunteers to help us provide the rest,” said Giglio.

“These partnerships allow us to offer comprehensive services on a small non-profit budget,” she said. “By collaborating rather than duplicating, we accomplish far more together than we ever could alone.”

Giglio said they are proud to collaborate with the following: Greater Opportunities



It's all about finding your tribe and at Aunt Mary's House (AMH), they ensure you do. Women banding together to navigate through pregnancy and childbearing are part of the provisions given to guests that stay at AMH. (Submitted photo)

for Broome & Early Headstart, The Chenango Health Network, Madison County Rural Health Initiative, Public Health, The Norwich Family YMCA, The Community Cupboard, CDO Workforce, The Place, Cornell Cooperative Extension, DSS, WIC, PACT, SFCU, Norwich Copies Plus, Nina’s, The Chenango County Historical Society, Sew Sewcial, The Canasawacta Country Club, Optum, The Raymond Corporation, Pampered Chef Consultant Amber Kerr, The Bohemian Moon, Alpine Clippers, Wilson Funeral Home and Gilligan’s Island.

“These partners allow us to provide extras that our

operating budget might not cover. They turn the community into an extended family for our guests, ensuring they feel seen and celebrated. We are able to offer a world class program because of these connections,” said Giglio.

“We are a donor based, privately funded organization and we would be remiss if we did not thank our countless donors,” she said. “These range from individual donors, business partners, and grants.”

She said their partners include: Chobani, The Community Foundation of South Central NY, The Norwich Rotary Club, The Roger Follet Foundation, The

Greater Norwich Foundation, The Everett & Pearl Gilmour Foundation and other local foundations.

“You have helped us open doors, offer hope and change lives,” Giglio added.

Many local churches provide both financial support and volunteer time and include: CVFREE, City Church, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, The First Baptist Church of South Otselic, Georgetown United Methodist Church, Broad Street Methodist Church, Calvary Baptist, St. Bartholomew’s Rosary Society, The United Church of Christ, The Methodist Church of South Otselic and

St. Ann’s Episcopal Church.

She said they rely on their community, service partners and county agencies to ensure that the women who need them most can find them.

“Our streamlined referral process helps to keep our beds full and ensure we are serving the population we were built to help,” Giglio said. “In short, we build the house, but our partners help build the life and spirit inside it.

### Community Events

“The “Hopeful Hearts” Brunch is our signature fundraising event held in spring that gathers community leaders and donors to celebrate milestones and raise capital for operations,” Giglio said.

“This year’s event is scheduled for Sunday, May 3rd from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at The Canasawacta Country Club. Brunch will be served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and our silent auction winners will be announced from 2 to 3 p.m.

AMH will continue to see everyone at Saturdays in the Park in the fall, Toys for Tots, FFNYCC volunteering events, and, due to the success of our Holiday “Angel Tree” Drive, they will be making this an annual event.

Giglio said they also host periodic open house events to allow neighbors, donors, and local officials to tour the facility, meet the board, and see the impact of their donations firsthand.

They encourage local groups to host drives for household essentials such as

diapers, cleaning supplies, non-perishable food, to keep our operational costs down.

She said they have ‘Baby Bottles for Change’ available to anyone in the community who would like to collect their spare change and donate it to them and added, anyone an reach out to them if interested.

“We are looking forward to a new partnership with The Place, to support and grow a Moms & Babies group and internally, we plan on hosting an annual Thanksgiving dinner, cookie exchange, family dinners, craft nights, and volunteer appreciation nights,” said Giglio.

“We don’t just host events; we participate in the broader Chenango County landscape,” she added.

“You will often see Aunt Mary’s House leadership present at the Interagency Council Meetings, the Non-Profit Fair held at the Norwich campus of SUNY Morrisville, the local diaper giveaways and many other tabling events throughout our community,” Giglio said.

To apply for the next volunteer orientation, visit Aunt Mary’s House on their Facebook page or their website at auntmaryshouse.net to apply as a guest or volunteer.

To donate, visit auntmaryshouse.net and click the “donate” tab to learn more about opportunities to support AMH financially or by purchasing items from their Amazon Wish list located on the site.

## Leatherstocking Veterinary Group gives back with Angel Fund Donations

“As a small privately owned business, LVG is extremely grateful for the support of our local community. We are pleased to donate a portion of the profits from our online pharmacy sales to our Angel Fund, supporting individual animals in need and animal related groups.”

### LVG Leadership Team



Curry DeCarlo



Kids and Calves

Leatherstocking Veterinary Services, New Berlin, Heritage and Marcy Vet clinics each chose a recipient based on their hard work, dedication and care for animals in our community. All four are doing outstanding work that LVG is proud to support!



LEATHERSTOCKING VETERINARY GROUP



Super Heroes Humane Society



Strays R' Us

\* Not pictured: The Chenango County Hippology

## New Berlin Vet Clinic Opening



New Berlin Vet has opened its doors in April 2025 to a brand new state of the art facility. The new clinic offers state of the art amenities for appointments, surgeries and comprehensive care for your furry pets! Our team consists of 4 DVM's, licensed Techs and support staff that are excited to serve the community in a new clinic.

The original NB clinic has transformed into the new home for the Leatherstocking Business Office, a vital hub that supports all our clinics within the LVG family.



5094 State Highway 8, New Berlin, NY 13411  
newberlinvetclinic.com | 607.847.6118

## Our Goal is to Provide You with a Large Selection of Quality Foods and Friendly Service

Thank you to all of you, our previous customers and friends who have patronized us at our farm market. We look forward to continue serving you. We also look forward to meeting any new customers that haven't been in the store. Come visit us soon!  
- The Daniel Weaver Family & Staff



Family Gatherings or Company Banquets?  
Order Your Fruit, Vegetable and Meat & Cheese Platters.



“Local” To Weaver’s Farm Market Means Otsego and Adjoining Counties. We Buy From 60 Local Farmers, Bakers and Crafters.



Watch for our weekly ad in the Pennysaver!  
1272 East Side Rd.,  
Morris NY 13808  
607-263-2030

Hours: Tues., Wed. & Sat.  
9 am - 5 pm  
Thurs. & Fri. 9 am - 6 pm;  
Closed Sun. & Mon.

Payment  
Cash Or Check -  
No Credit Cards



# Community

Chenango County is more than a place on a map – it’s our home.

At Preferred Mutual, we are dedicated to giving back to the organizations and people that make this community a better place to live and work.



Supporting local causes is more than what we do – it’s who we are.

Together, we’re growing a stronger, thriving Chenango County.



HOME | AUTO | BUSINESS

