



BNNY Business

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Above left: David Robinson, one of 10 employees at Parkview Cleaners, presses shirts in March.

By CRAIG FOX
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WATERTOWN — Debby Cean remembers when as many as 30 neckties would be dropped off for dry cleaning at Parkview Cleaners on any given day.

But times change, said Cean, who has worked at the State Street dry cleaning business for 36 years.

When she was hired, people dressed up for work, they put on their best outfits to go out to dinner and they went to more formal gatherings.

Most people now slip on more casual attire.

These days, the Parkview Cleaners gets about five neckties a month.

"It's a different business," Cean said.



Employee George Robinson explains how he puts the solvent into the dry cleaning machine at Parkview Cleaners.

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Clarkson professors selected for prestigious engineering award

POTSDAM — Weiming Wu, the James K. Edzwald Professor of Water Engineering at Clarkson University, has been chosen by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) to receive the 2026 Hunter Rouse Hydraulic Engineering Award.

The honor recognizes his “outstanding contributions to hydraulic engineering and computational modeling of sediment transport in rivers, estuaries, and coastal waters,” advancing understanding across critical water resources applications.

The Hunter Rouse Hydraulic Engineering Award, one of the most esteemed recognitions in the field, honors individuals whose work has significantly advanced hydraulic engineering and related waterways science. Established in 1979 in memory of hydraulician Hunter Rouse, the award highlights exemplary technical achievement and influence in practice, research, and education.

“Professor Wu is the epitome of a scholar whose research efforts and reputation has cemented Clarkson’s stature as an international leader in the areas of sedimentation and hydraulics,” said Chair of Civil and Environmental Engineering Steve Wojtkiewicz.

Wu’s research has provided new insights into sediment transport processes and their implications for river channel morphology, earthen dam failures, and interactions between fluid flow and vegetation in aquatic environments. His work combines fundamental theory with innovative computational modeling, informing both academic study and practical engineering solutions in riverine, estuarine, and coastal systems.

A highly respected international scholar, Wu earned his Ph.D. from Wuhan University of Hydraulic and Electric Engineering (now Wuhan University) in China. Before joining Clarkson University, he served on the faculty of the University of Mississippi and held a research fellowship at the University of Karlsruhe, Germa-



Weiming Wu

ny.

At Clarkson, Wu teaches courses in sediment transport, hydraulics, fluid mechanics, and computational river dynamics. His research interests include hydro- and morphodynamics, free surface flow modeling, dam and levee breach analysis, and water quality and aquatic ecosystem modeling. He has published more than 150 peer-reviewed articles and authored books “Computational River Dynamics” and “Sediment Transport Dynamics” that are widely used in the field. He is one of top 2% scientists worldwide listed by Stanford University since 2020, and No. 2 scholar in the field of Sediment Transport worldwide ranked by ScholarGPS since 2024.

In addition to his scholarly work, Wu has served in leadership roles within ASCE, including as chair of several technical committees and as associate editor for the Journal of Hydraulic Engineering. He is a Fellow of ASCE and a Fellow of International Association of Hydro-Environment Engineering and Research. He is also a Vice President of the World Association of Sedimentation and Erosion Research.

Wu will be honored at the upcoming ASCE awards ceremony during the 2026 World Environmental and Water Resources Congress, where he will deliver the Hunter Rouse Lecture and share insights from his distinguished career.

POTSDAM — Spencer Thew, Distinguished Service Professor in Clarkson University’s Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, has been selected by the American Society of Civil Engineers to receive the 2026 Roebling Award, one of the nation’s highest honors in construction engineering.

Established in memory of three pioneering constructors — John A. Roebling, designer of suspension bridges; his son, Washington Roebling, who led construction of the Brooklyn Bridge; and Emily Warren Roebling, who served as field superintendent during its completion — the award recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the advancement of construction engineering.

“This award recognizes Prof. Thew’s tireless efforts, where he has safely taught over 5000 and probably closer to 10,000 students, to successfully instill the department’s philosophy concerning construction engineering education, i.e. Clarkson aims to produce civil engineers with construction engineering expertise,” said Chair of Civil and Environmental Engineering Steve Wojtkiewicz.

Thew’s career spans more



Spencer Thew

than five decades as an engineer, educator and industry leader. A 1963 graduate of Clarkson University with a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering, he later earned a master’s degree from Clarkson while serving on the faculty. He began his professional career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before returning to the North Country to build a career that bridged industry and academia.

In 1967, Thew founded Atlantic Testing Laboratories, growing the firm from a small local operation into a respected, full-service engineering support company serving construction projects across the

region. He also founded Thew Associates Land Surveyors, further expanding professional services in civil engineering and land surveying.

Throughout his leadership in industry, Thew maintained a longstanding commitment to teaching. At Clarkson, he helped shape generations of civil engineers through construction-focused coursework and mentorship. He later served as the inaugural director of Clarkson’s Construction Engineering Management program and was named a Distinguished Service Professor.

Thew will be honored at a ceremony during ASCE’s Construction Institute and Construction Research Council Joint Conference, scheduled for March 18 to 21, 2026, in San Antonio, Texas.

Founded in 1852, ASCE represents more than 150,000 civil engineers worldwide and is dedicated to advancing the profession to enhance public welfare. The Roebling Award recognizes careers marked by innovation, leadership and lasting impact on construction engineering nationwide.

AG James calls for state to ban algorithmic pricing

By ALEX GAULT

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ALBANY — Retailers, both in-store and online, have been running massive data collection schemes that they’re now using to change prices based on what they think a particular customer is willing to pay. A coalition of state lawmakers, and New York Attorney General Letitia A. James, think that prac-

tice should be banned as a scam.

From outside the Capitol offices of the Attorney General on March 16, James and a coalition of Democratic lawmakers and advocacy groups called for the passage of their “One Fair Price Package,” two bills that combined would ban the use of so-called ‘surveillance pricing’ in New York and ban the

use of electronic shelf labels in stores across the state.

The package, they say, would address a growing problem that’s starting to change the way customers interact with the stores they frequent and pull more cash out of the wallets of unsuspecting New Yorkers.

“These predatory algorithms analyze where you

See **PRICING T12**



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Parkview

From T1

Parkview Cleaners is the only remaining dry cleaner in Watertown.

Last month, Pine Cleaners closed for good. In the waning weeks, its final few dozen customers picked up their dry cleaning from the Franklin Street business for the last time. The owners did not disclose a reason for the closure.

A couple of years ago, Nelson's Dy Cleaners on Coffeen Street also shuttered.

At one time, Watertown was the home to a dozen dry cleaners — most were mom and pop businesses that closed when owners wanted to retire and their children weren't interested in keeping the businesses going, Cean said.

"We're now the only ones around," Cean said.

With Pine Cleaners now gone, Parkview Cleaners has experienced a dramatic increase in business. Its 10 employees are busier than ever.

Getting dry cleaning done starts with dropping garments off at the front counter and receiving a ticket to keep until the items are ready to be picked up. An employee fills out the inventory card that spells out what the customer wants done, if there are any special instructions or if the garment has a stain or tear, so the company



Garments ready to be picked up by Parkview Cleaners' customers on a recent Monday morning.

can prove that it didn't cause it.

Of course, sometimes customers forget or lose that ticket. When that happens, the customer gives their last name and a description of the garment. Occasionally, customers forget to pick up their dry cleaning. It remains on "the line" for six months. After a year, the garment is donated to a local organization.

There's a lot that goes on after the garment gets dropped off by a customer.

Open daily except for Sundays, the dry cleaning business remains quiet until just about 10 a.m. That's when it becomes a beehive of activity. Employees work in a spacious room at the back of the building that has lots of windows, where the sun beamed in on a recent pleasant winter day.

Employees are given specific jobs at individual stations. Two employees are assigned to press jackets during their entire shift, another two are pressing only shirts that day and two are getting the slacks and pants done.

George Robinson, who has worked at Parkview Cleaners for 12 years, has the responsibility of running the dry cleaning machine, which looks like a large washing machine.

The machine doesn't use water to clean garments. Instead of using water and detergent, organic solvents lift stains out of delicate wool and silk garments. It's a method that goes back to the early part of the 19th century.

It's quite obvious that Robinson knows what he's doing on the machine.

Heading to the back of the machine, Robinson adds the green-colored dry cleaning solvent — which is kept in a nearby 55-gallon drum — through a hose. He puts as much as 65 pounds of clothing into the dry cleaning machine, where

it takes 30 to 45 minutes to go through the cleaning process. The solvent goes through a holding tank, cleaning tank and a dirty tank, located in front of the machine near the bottom. He gets four loads done a day.

"It's pretty amazing," he said.

Robinson stressed that the green solvent is safe. The state has banned using chemicals that were a health hazard and a known carcinogen and could cause certain cancers, he said.

He enjoys working with the other employees at Parkview Cleaners. His son, David, mans the two shirt presses with colleague Josh Metzler.

"We are all here working as a team," Robinson said proudly. "We have a good time."

The crew uses presses and

irons that generate heat and pressurized steam to make sure each garment becomes wrinkle free. Looking like ironing boards, the press closes on the garment, injecting steam and moisture to ensure a crisp finish that rapidly dries.

Jason Altemose, a "presser" who has worked at Parkview since December, is still learning the finer points of handling jackets. He first places the jacket on a "Suzie," a mannequin-looking contraption that's used to steam, shape and remove wrinkles from jacket lapels and sleeves.

The garment is then pressed and he uses an industrial iron to finish the job before he inspects it for wrinkles and then places it on a hanger to be hung up. The jacket goes into a plastic bag and ends up on "the line" near the front counter, where the customer eventually picks it up.

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, a woman who has worked there for years comes in to do alterations. Parkview also washes and dries clothing in conventional washers and dryers.

On a recent day, Altemose was working on a contract for Fort Drum to dry clean military jackets. The Fort Drum contract keeps the place busy, Cean said.

Cean is typically up in her office, getting caught up on things, while the crew is busy with their work below. Cean, now 68, was the manager of the business, but has backed off from some of the duties, so she calls herself "lead person."

Her assistant, Amanda Lynn, has the title of "assembler," get-

See PARKVIEW T5



Employee Hesook Lago presses a pair of slacks at Parkview Cleaners. Craig Fox/Watertown Daily Times



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Parkview

From T4

ting the garments ready for the line. She inspects the garments to make sure that “they are perfect,” she said.

For decades, the late Theodore “Ted” Fibison owned Parkview Cleaners. Until he was 98 years old, he came in every day to make sure the operation was smooth.

The business got its name because it opened in an original location across from Thompson Park, Cean said. In 1950, Fibison moved the operation to State Street, where it’s been ever since.

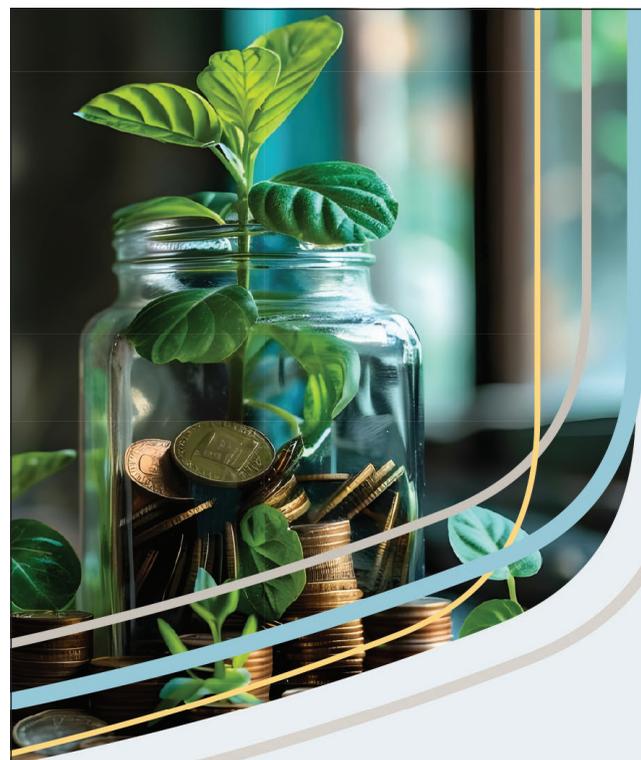
In 2017, Fibison sold the business to Pushkar V. Patel and Nina Amin, who own dry cleaning businesses across the country from their Arizona home. Fibison died in 2020.

After 36 years at the place, Cean isn’t quite ready to retire.

“I’m proud of the place, you know,” she said.



Debbie Cean has a view of the operations from her office at Parkview Cleaners. Craig Fox/Watertown Daily Times



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St. Lawrence County Chamber elects new leadership, honors top volunteers

OGDENSBURG — The St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce elected a new slate of executive officers and honored two community leaders during its annual breakfast meeting Wednesday at the Gran View Restaurant.

Benny Fairchild, of United Helpers, was elected president of the chamber's board of directors. Joining Fairchild on the executive board are:

— First Vice President: Erica Kelso, SLCArts

— Second Vice President: John Duraj, St. Lawrence University

— Secretary: Amanda Hitterman, North Country This Week

— Treasurer: Craig Chevalier, NBT Bank

Lenore VanderZee, the outgoing president, will continue to serve on the board as past president. Executive Director Ben Dixon will remain an ex officio member.

During the program, Dixon presented the Chamber of Commerce Day Award to Adam Soulia of Liberty Utilities. The award recognizes board members who show exceptional commitment to the chamber's mission of promoting St. Lawrence County as a destination to live and work.

Dixon praised Soulia as a "brilliant idea factory" who helped secure Liberty Utilities as a platinum Leadership Circle partner and currently chairs the membership committee.

The Chamber of Commerce Appreciation Award was presented to VanderZee for her work behind the scenes during a period of significant transition. Fairchild, in one of his first acts as incoming president, noted that VanderZee's guidance was vital during a recent organizational merger and staffing changes.

In her acceptance remarks, VanderZee described the chamber's partners as a "phenomenal group of people to work with."

Following the leadership transitions, Dixon and Tourism Director Tiffani Amo outlined the 2026 strategic vision, which includes:

Dixon spotlighted growth in outreach tools, including expanded electronic newsletters, six active social media channels and a new dual-calendar system separating tourism-focused events from community happenings. He also detailed a busy slate of trade shows, craft food and wine events, networking sessions, and business resource mixers designed to connect members with development opportunities.

The chamber reported deeper engagement in key communities. In Ogdensburg, Assistant Director Laura Pearson has been involved with the land bank, growth fund, museum board and other civic bodies, as well as events like business-after-hours gatherings.

In Canton, work has centered on economic development planning, municipal coordination and university partnerships.

In Massena, the chamber is opening a new downtown office on Main Street and supporting an energetic ambassador group that is driving new events, including a planned "spring fever" festival.

Dixon also pointed to broader economic and workforce initiatives such as the St. Lawrence Leadership Institute, a new leadership microcredential through Clarkson University, and a forthcoming Kiva crowd-lending platform intended to channel local investment into small business projects. The chamber continues to serve as liaison for the North Country Center for Business and is pursuing more formal partnerships that tie member activities to chamber-led programs.

Amo described tourism as part of a "tide that lifts all ships," outlining efforts to marry destination marketing with local business opportunity.

Plans for 2026 include restaurant promotions tied to Eat Local NY, lodging promotions through an online booking platform, and the Open Doors to History program aligned with America's 250th anniversary.

The chamber has also



From left, St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Ben Dixon, Chamber of Commerce Day Award recipient Adam Soulia, Chamber Appreciation Award winner and past President Lenore VanderZee, and board President Benny Fairchild pose during the chamber's annual breakfast meeting at the Gran View in Ogdensburg. Chamber photo



The St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce elected a new slate of executive officers and honored two community leaders during its annual breakfast meeting Wednesday at the Gran View Restaurant. Chamber photo

launched a sport tourism coalition, continued cross-border marketing in Canada, and introduced a digital maturity accelerator to help tourism businesses improve their online presence.

Leaders said these efforts are aimed at drawing more visitors while making St. Lawrence County a more attractive place to live and work.

"Our goal is to build a vibrant

business climate," Dixon said. "We are connecting members with development opportunities while making St. Lawrence County a more attractive place to live and raise a family."

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St. Lawrence County Chamber cuts ribbon on Massena office



St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Benjamin R. Dixon highlights some of the activities that have taken place in Massena during the chamber's ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open the Massena satellite office. Bob Beckstead/Watertown Daily Times



Center, from left, Bruce Beckstead, St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Benjamin R. Dixon and Massena Town Supervisor Raymond Lancto cut the ribbon to officially open the chamber's Massena office. Bob Beckstead/Advance News

By Bob Beckstead
bbeckstead@wdt.net

MASSENA — The St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce now officially has a home in Massena. Officials held a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 12 at 54 Main St., a former barber shop, to open the new satellite office in downtown Massena.

The barber shop was owned by Robert W. Smith for more than 65 years. That space has been vacant since Smith died on May 30, but has been undergoing renovations by Bruce Beckstead.

“Someone pointed out to me the poetry of today, that we are using a gigantic pair of scissors to cut the ribbon here in this facility that was a barber shop for so many years. I was like, ‘You’re right, that is poetic.’ I love it,” chamber Executive Director Benjamin R. Dixon said.

He said it was a “wonderful milestone” for the chamber. St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce members overwhelmingly approved the mergers between the county, Canton, Massena and Ogdensburg chambers in August 2023.

“This is a wonderful milestone for us on our journey as we continue to pursue the vision of an integrated chamber of commerce here in Massena,” Dixon said. “Mergers take time, and we’re trying to be patient with it, and we do appreciate the patience of the community and the support as we continue to pursue those goals.”

He said they made “some great progress and gotten some really good traction” in Massena over the past year.

“It’s been great highlighting the tourism assets of Massena here to the broader world as the tourism promotion agency for the county,” Dixon said. “We do a regular business newsletter on a monthly basis. We do a tourism newsletter. Now, we’re also doing a Seaway one, which is focused on the communities here along the Seaway. It’s a great way to share information about what’s going on here.”

He said they recently hosted a business after-hours at Massena’s Grist Mill Brewery, have been a guest speaker at a Massena Rotary Club meeting, held a business roundtable at the Alcoa Clubhouse, lined up Massena town-wide garage sales, and have resurrected the volunteer Massena Ambassadors group.

“It is a very enthused group. If you are interested in joining it, we are wide open. We welcome anyone to do so because it’s all about building community here,” Dixon said.

Looking ahead, he said the Massena Ambassadors are planning a Spring Fever Festival, a nine-day celebration from May 1 to 9.

“Anybody in the community, any business, organization, individual can be part of that by planning your own events to host. We’ll bring it all together under one week-long celebration umbrella. Business promo-

tions, business deals, we’ll do a raffle and button sales and all that kind of stuff. It’s going to be really exciting,” he said. “We’re also planning on hosting a new event called Biz Connect, which is kind of a small business expo and career fair. So, that will be a great thing to feature our Massena members.”

Dixon said they have just over 50 chamber members in Mas-

senna, but are making a push to have more join the organization.

“We would love to at least double that this year. So, we encourage you to encourage additional businesses and organizations to join the membership. We have some great, great things happening here in Massena. I’m feeling a really positive vibe this year in Massena. I think we have great times ahead,” he said.

Chamber Assistant Director Laura Pearson will be staffing the office from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, offering resources for small business owners, including information on membership benefits, available business resources and local tourism. Appointments are available by phone, 315-386-4000, ext. 6, or email, Laura@slc-chamber.org.

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Gray talks climate law, energy as issues dominate debate in Albany

By **ALEX GAULT**

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ALBANY — Electricity is at the top of mind in the state Capitol this year.

How to make it more affordable, how to plan for the expected doubling of demand for it, how to generate it without causing environmental disaster. And now, Assemblyman Scott A. Gray is in the middle of those debates as the new ranking member on the Assembly Energy Committee.

It's a position Gray, R-Water-town, said he finds himself comfortable with.

He has been focused on energy policy since he came to Albany. The 116th Assembly District, which Gray represents, includes Massena and the Moses-Saunders Power Dam, a significant presence from the New York Power Authority, and a recent history of renewable energy developments.

This year, Gray has been working to promote the region to host the 1-gigawatt nuclear power facility that Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul has directed NYPA to construct in partnership with a private company.

In the past, Gray has also pushed for energy safety after the 2023 battery energy storage system fire in Chaumont, Jefferson County, within his district.

He said there's a lot to take in within the energy sector lately. New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, or simply Climate Act, which set aggressive emissions reduction timelines when passed in 2019, is at the centerpiece of debate in the state legislature this year.

At the same time, efforts are underway to build up the state's energy production capabilities and debate continues on the viability of nuclear power.

"I think everyone knows I've been working on the generation side, the supply side of this issue for quite a while," he said in an interview in Albany on Thursday. "But we also have the CLCPA, which is out there, which is the centerpiece of what's going on in the budget negotiations."

Hochul made sure that the Climate Act would be top of mind this week when she spoke at an event in Albany hosted by the news organization Politico. When asked about the skyrocket-

ing utility costs that New Yorkers are seeing, Hochul said she sees it as a given that the Climate Act will have to be amended. She told Politico's Albany Bureau Chief Nick Reisman that the world that legislation was written for simply does not exist today.

"It was a world that had not seen a global pandemic, that disrupted supply chains for all the component parts, for the nacelles and the wind turbines and everything you need to be able to build offshore wind the path that we are on," Hochul said. "Could not have foreseen that. Followed by some of the highest inflation we had seen in years jacking up the cost once again. And then let's throw on a hostile, very hostile administration in Washington that basically eliminates the tax incentives that businesses count on when they're going to make investments in renewable energy — solar and wind being the top of the list."

The governor said she wants to push for changes to the Climate Act that would prevent further legal challenges that could force the state to implement expensive policies that she says New York

isn't ready for yet.

The key focus of most challenges so far has been on the "cap and invest" program that would implement a cap on how much carbon pollution companies can emit, and taxing those emissions. The revenue from those taxes would go into decarbonizing the energy grid.

The governor's office has widely circulated a memo, from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, NYSEDA, that suggests if the "cap and invest" program were to be implemented, it could raise gas prices by more than \$2.32 per gallon and push \$4,000 in extra annual costs on upstate fuel-powered homes.

That memo was dated Feb. 26 of this year, but at the Politico event on Wednesday Hochul said she had been circulating it for "years."

"Nobody was paying attention to it," she said. "That'll go into effect under the judge's rule if something is not done during this budget time. That's the reality I'm facing. I have an April deadline to meet what a judge has told us we have to do."

She said the budget, a massive package of legislation that often includes non-financial legislation, appears to be her best vehicle for making those adjustments by the court's deadline. The state budget is due before April 1, but frequently negotiations run late.

Gray said he is meeting with the wide range of people who have a stake in the state's energy economy — that includes the utilities, the independent power generators, the people who build power plants and transmission lines and customers.

What he's hearing, broadly, is that the key to cutting costs and ensuring New York has a viable electrical capacity into the future is building more power production facilities. Gray is bullish on nuclear; he wants to see it come to his district, and he wants to see it built out across the state. He supports the development of the next generation, modular nuclear reactors that can, in theory, be put wherever the power is needed and can be relied upon for stable, high-volume generation.

"We have to have dispatchable, reliable power," he said.

Gray, who was first elected to

state office in 2022, is supportive of the environmental goals of the Climate Act. He and most of the Republicans in Albany accept the scientific consensus that man-made carbon emissions are causing global climate change. The current Assembly Republican minority leader, Ed P. Ra, R-Garden City, and a few others in leadership voted for the Climate Act in 2019.

But Gray said in the current world, New York's climate laws are too aggressive and unrealistic, and are only going to drive up prices exorbitantly unless amended.

"The goal is still emissions reduction," Gray said. "We can have the climate impacts that we're seeing now somewhat mitigated, but having said that, New York is only less than half of one percent of global emissions."

Gray stressed that the state needs to stop forcing the closure of active fossil-fuel power plants, and should be focused on doing whatever possible to build up more generation capacity. He's been highly critical of state efforts that closed the Indian Point nuclear generation facility in Westchester County, which was replaced with a number of natural gas power plants dotted around downstate New York.

There's a limited role for the legislature in the governor's ongoing efforts to build up nuclear generation capacity. Hochul has NYPA building a 1-gigawatt facility and has called for 4 more gigawatts of generation capacity to be built across upstate New York.

Most of those efforts need no support from the state legislature, as Hochul is using the powers of the executive branch to support them.

"We have supply chain issues we have to resolve, we have workforce development that is within our BOCES system, so there is a lot that we can be doing in order to enhance what the governor's initiative is," Gray said.

Gray said he is overall confident that New York can navigate these challenges successfully, provided that lawmakers stay committed to the core goals of building capacity and lowering bills.

"I'm focused on the 'glass half full,'" he said.

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JCC Roundtable Spurs Early Childhood Apprenticeships at Little Lukes Preschool

Carrie Pruett, Center Director at Little Lukes Preschool, Pulaski, a New York State Department of Labor-approved employer authorized to offer paid, registered apprenticeships. Meeting regional employer needs remains central to the mission of Jefferson Community College (JCC) Workforce Solutions.

In June 2024, JCC Workforce Solutions hosted an education industry apprenticeship roundtable, bringing together regional employers to discuss workforce challenges and skills gaps in early childhood education. Participants also learned about funding opportunities available through the State University of New York (SUNY) Apprenticeship Program to support the launch of registered apprenticeships.

Through collaboration with Jefferson Workforce Solutions, the SUNY Apprenticeship Program, and the New York State Department of Labor (NYS-DOL), employers may receive up to \$6,000 to launch and sustain a registered apprenticeship program. Registered apprenticeships enable employees to earn wages while completing structured, on-the-job training aligned with industry-recognized competencies.

Representatives from Little Lukes Preschool, which operates six centers across Central New York, attended the roundtable. Employer feedback informed the structure and content of Jefferson's Pre-Apprenticeship Community-Based Training Teacher Assistant program. When the program launched in



Carrie Pruett, Center Director at Little Lukes Preschool, Pulaski, a New York State Department of Labor-approved employer authorized to offer paid, registered apprenticeships.

January 2025, two Little Lukes employees enrolled.

In February 2025, Little Lukes launched a registered apprenticeship model with support from the SUNY Apprenticeship Program. By August 2025, the organization became a NYS-DOL-approved employer sponsor, authorized to offer formal registered apprenticeships to its employees.

Carrie Pruett, Center Director at Little Lukes' Pulaski location, said, "The registered apprenticeship program supports professional growth for our employees while strengthening our workforce. As an organization, it enhances staff retention, program quality, and long-term stability for our preschool community."

"Apprenticeship is a powerful workforce development tool,"

said Joanna Brislan, Director of Military Enrollment and Workforce Solutions at Jefferson. "It creates a direct pathway for individuals to gain high-demand skills while earning a paycheck."

Jefferson Workforce Solutions worked with Little Lukes to align curriculum offerings with the competencies required for the childcare assistant trade and coordinated informational sessions led by its apprenticeship business developer to educate employees about program benefits.

"Jefferson Workforce Solutions provided clear guidance and hands-on support, helping educate our staff and managers at every step of the registered apprenticeship process," said Pruett. "Their assistance made it easy for us to participate in a program that supports attracting and retaining high-quality staff for our inclusive preschool program and other local daycare providers."

Through this partnership, Jefferson and Little Lukes are preparing to welcome a new cohort of Childcare Assistant apprentices in spring 2026, further strengthening the early childhood education workforce across Central New York.

Businesses interested in launching a registered apprenticeship or customized training program may contact JCC Workforce Solutions at (315) 786-2233 or ced@sunyjefferson.edu for more information.

Nature's Storehouse breaking ground for expansion



Owners Clark and Yen Maine are expanding Nature's Storehouse (right) into the adjacent property (left) to launch Nature's Café. The project is a key component of the store's "Vision 2028" plan to establish a health and wellness hub in downtown Canton. A public groundbreaking ceremony with the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce will take place at the site on Friday, April 3 at 2 p.m. Provided photo

CANTON — Nature's Storehouse will host a groundbreaking ceremony at 2 p.m. on Friday, April 3 to celebrate the expansion of its downtown footprint with the development of Nature's Café.

The new café will occupy the space adjacent to the current shop, a property formerly owned by the North Country Housing Council. Owners Clark and Yen Maine were awarded a New York Forward grant in 2025 to facilitate the project, which will complement the store's long-standing natural food and supplement business.

While Nature's Storehouse has offered vegetarian take-out for years, the new café will provide a dedicated space for made-to-order meals, specialty drinks, and indoor seating.

"Nature's Storehouse is

driven by a purpose to nurture a healthier, more sustainable North Country. The development of Nature's Café is a pivotal step toward our 'Vision 2028' of becoming the region's premier health and wellness hub." Clark and Yen Maine said in a statement. "This expansion isn't just about more square footage; it's about creating a welcoming space for community and connection, where our neighbors can celebrate our regional heritage and support local prosperity with every meal."

The ceremony is co-hosted by the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce and will be held in the new café space. Attendees are invited to enjoy complimentary coffee, smoothies, avocado toast, and protein bites.



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Enid Moore - Owner 226 James St., Clayton, NY

JCC trains five CDL drivers



(l-r) Tyler Forger of Clayton, Rivver Tourville of Turin, Lane Lyndaker of Adams, John Case of Watertown, Nate Roof of Adams Center, and Chris Letham, Instructor, The CDL Schools.

Five students successfully completed Jefferson Community College's Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Class A training program on February 20, 2026, gaining hands-on experience behind the wheel, including driving in winter weather conditions. Jefferson's CDL Class A training, offered in partnership with The CDL Schools, took place at the Lewis County JCC Education Center in Lowville.

Program completers include John Case of Watertown, Tyler Forger of Clayton, Lane Lyndaker of Adams, Nate Roof of Adams Center, and Rivver Tourville of Turin.

"The success of this cohort reflects the dedication of our students and the strength of our regional partnerships," said Joanna Brislan, Director of Military Enrollment and Workforce Solutions at Jefferson. "Jefferson's Class A CDL program continues to meet critical workforce needs by preparing students with the skills, confidence, and real-world winter driving experience employers expect. Funding opportunities from The Work-Place help ensure that cost is never a barrier, allowing more individuals to step into essential roles in our local transportation industry."

Lyndaker is one of four stu-

dents in the cohort who received a scholarship from The Work-Place. "I was really surprised to learn that funding was available," he said. "It helped cover costs and will allow me to invest in equipment." After earning his Class A license, Lyndaker plans to drive a lowboy truck for Blue-line Heavy Equipment Repair and Diesel Performance, his family-owned business.

Lyndaker adds, "I was surprised by how in-depth the [CDL] program is. I didn't know what to expect and was pretty nervous at first, but the instructors made me feel comfortable, which boosted my confidence. They cover everything—from mechanics to driving—and getting winter driving experience was a huge plus. I'd rather be driving truck in the winter, than turning wrenches in the snow."

The Class A CDL program, offered in collaboration with The CDL Schools, began in January 2026. It prepared individuals to qualify for the Class A CDL Skills Test and meet all Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) requirements. The 192-hour curriculum combines classroom instruction with extensive behind-the-wheel training to prepare students for both the theoretical and practical components of

commercial driving.

The program is divided into three parts. The first consists of 80 hours of classroom, lab, and Learning Management System (LMS) instruction. Upon completion, participants earn their ELDT Theory certification and are eligible to obtain a Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP). The second portion includes 110 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction focused on meeting FMCSA range and public road proficiency requirements for the Class A CDL skills test. The final portion includes two hours dedicated to completing the state skills test.

Training and preparation for the CDL skills test on a manual transmission vehicle are included in the program.

The Class A CDL program supports regional workforce development by preparing students for in-demand careers in transportation and logistics, while providing real-world driving experience in a variety of conditions.

The next JCC CDL Class A training will be held May 18 to June 15, 2026 in Watertown. Registration deadline is May 8. To learn more and inquire about funding, contact JCC Workforce Solutions at (315) 786-2233 or email ced@sunyjefferson.edu.

Pricing

From T3

live, your spending habits and even whether you're in a hurry, and when you get paid," James said. "All to determine if they can charge more. Two neighbors can buy the same item and at the same time, and pay two different prices. Some are calling this new tactic algorithm pricing, others refer to it as surveillance pricing. I call it predatory pricing."

Surveillance pricing isn't entirely new; online platforms have been using it in some ways for years, including online air and train ticket sales sites, online stores and web-based grocery shopping platforms. A number of media outlets including Hearst's Albany Times Union newspaper and the Washington Post have recently implemented algorithm-based pricing models for their web and print subscriptions.

In 2024 Consumer Reports and Groundwork Collaborative found that Instacart, the online grocery delivery service, had been using surveillance pricing in New York.

It's legal to use surveillance pricing in New York, but a law passed last year requires that companies disclose whenever they're using algorithms to adjust prices. James's office demanded answers from Instacart on their program, and the company dialed it back.

But recent tech developments have made it possible to use surveillance pricing in physical stores as well, with the use of electronic shelf labels and in-store tracking technologies. By tracking a customer based on face recognition or the unique wireless identifiers their personal cell phones and smart watches put out, a store could theoretically adjust the price that customer sees on their electronic shelf labels and what they pay at the register.

Some grocery stores are embracing the electronic labels — Kroger, a nation-

al brand with no presence in New York, has been rolling them out over the last year. Amazon-owned Whole Foods is also using them in all their stores now. And Walmart executives have said they plan to roll the digital tags out across the nation as well this year.

Under the package backed by James, companies would not be allowed to use a customer's personal data to charge different prices for the same products, in both online and physical stores. The bills would permit loyalty and reward programs to continue as they have, as well as coupons, promotional discounts and membership programs.

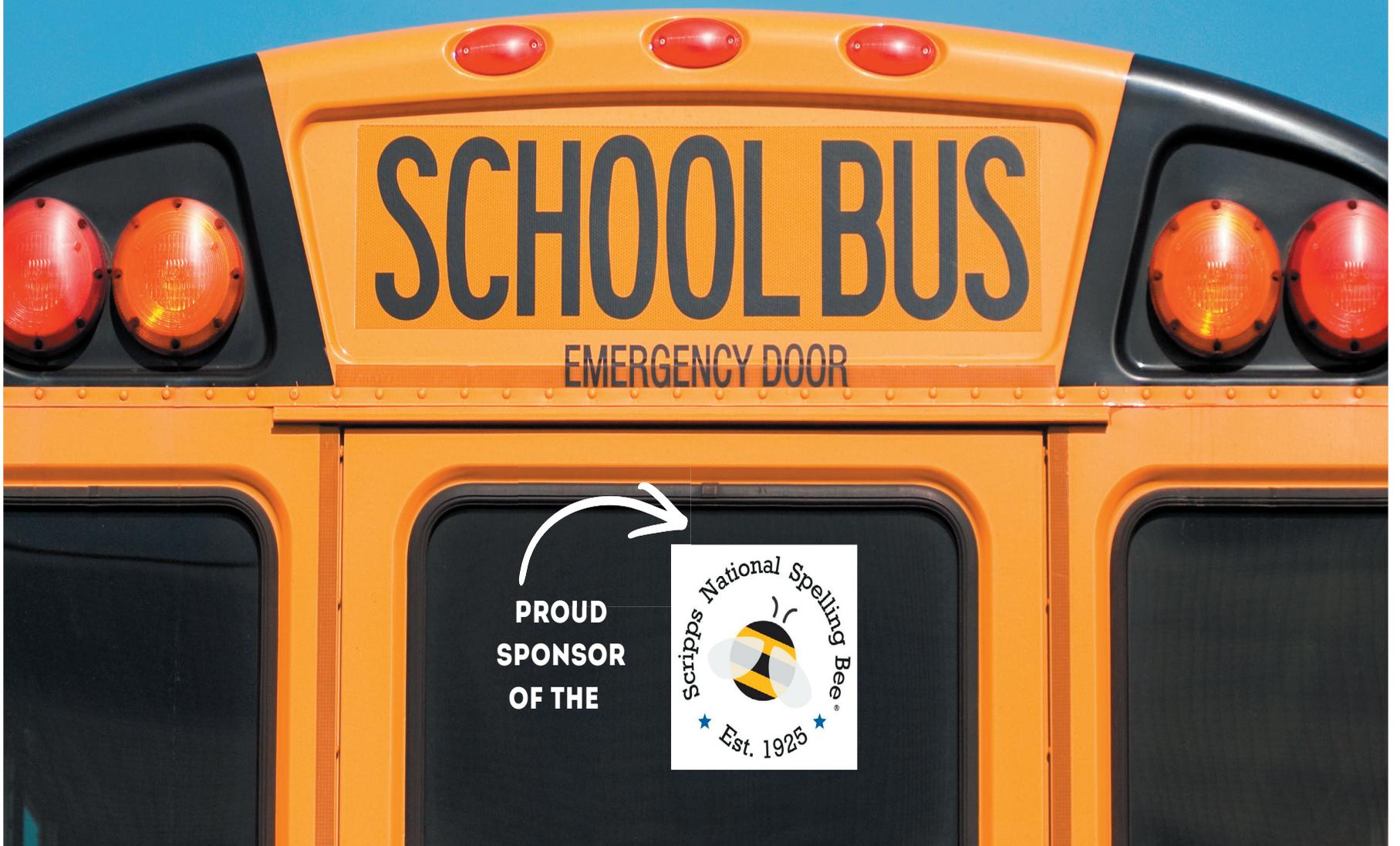
The lawmakers backing the surveillance pricing ban say those electronic labels pose a secondary issue as well, by taking work away from grocery store staff members. Robert Newell Jr., president of the UFCW Local 1500 union that represents grocery store and retail workers across New York, said his organization is categorically opposed to surveillance pricing and the digital shelf labels.

"If we allow corporations to do this to grocery stores, all they're going to do is increase efficiency," Newell said. "Efficiency. That's code for laying off workers. That's code for removing good union jobs from the economy."

The package has the support of a number of Democrats in the state Assembly and Senate; while it's currently budget season with lawmakers debating the state's spending plan, this package hasn't been inserted into those negotiations and appears to be proceeding through the typical legislative process. Both bills have been referred to the consumer protection committees in both the state Senate and Assembly. With James picking these bills as the focus of her office's legislative agenda for the year, lawmakers are likely to move on them this year.



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SUNY Canton announces 2026 summer day camp schedule

CANTON — SUNY Canton has expanded its educational summer day camp schedule for a range of grade levels and areas of interest. Each camp runs for a one-week period (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m.

to 4 p.m.). All campers must bring a water bottle, nut-free lunch and snack each day; however, the college is offering a fee-based daily bagged lunch, drink and snack that can be purchased during the registration process.

Cost is \$250 per week with discounts available for multiple camps and/or multiple campers. The STEM, RC Car & Aero STEM and Drone camps are at a reduced rate of \$50 per student and the STEAM camp is at a reduced rate of \$150 through a partnership with Adirondack North Country Association and a NYSERDA grant. Multiple discounts are not available for those camps.

Registration is now open and parents can sign up at <https://www.canton.edu/wcip/summer/>.

The summer day camp scheduled for 1st to 5th graders is:

Explorer Camp, July 6-10

Campers dive into the wonders of nature, science and art while sparking curiosity and unleashing the spirit of adventure.

Comic Book Camp, July 13-17

Through hands-on lessons in comic book paneling, students will learn how to bring their story to life visually. By the end of the week, each young artist will have created their very own short comic book.

Music Theater Camp, July 20-24

Young performers step into the spotlight for a week filled with singing, dancing, acting and imagination. The week wraps up with a joyful showcase where campers perform "GOAL!" for friends and family.

STEM Camp, July 27-31

A hands-on adventure where science, technology, engineering and math come to life through exciting projects, playful challenges and real-world exploration.

Art Camp, Aug. 3-7

Campers will engage in hands-on activities to get creative. Projects will incorporate drawing, painting, collaging and more.

STEAM, Aug. 10-14

A blend of science, technology, engineering, arts and math. Campers explore, create and collaborate through exciting projects that spark curiosity and celebrate creativity.

The summer day camp scheduled for 6th to 9th graders is:

Down to a Science, July 6-10

This hands-on summer camp allows participants to dive deep into the wonders of biology, chemistry, physics and environmental science through real experiments, creative challenges and collaborative discovery.

Mixed Media Art, July 13-17

Campers dive into printmaking, collage, sketchbook making and the combination of art mediums that blend traditional techniques

with modern flair, turning everyday materials into extraordinary works of art.

Code Crafters, July 20-24

A tech adventure where students learn to build, design and problem-solve through the power or code. This camp is designed for all levels of experience.

Performing Arts, July 27-31

Campers explore the magic of theater, music, movement and storytelling. All levels of experience are welcome to join this supportive space to grow and collaborate. The week wraps up with a performance including hits from "Hair-spray," "The Music Man," "The King and I," "Wicked," "Rent" and "Grease," and a medley of favorites from George M. Cohan.

RC Car & Aero STEM, Aug. 3-7

This camp is a fast-paced, hands-on experience where campers dive into the world of remote-controlled vehicles while exploring the science, tech and engineering that powers them.

First Responder Camp, Aug. 10-14

Campers step into the boots of real-life heroes and explore the world of emergency response—from firefighting and EMS to search-and-rescue and public safety. Participants learn skills and gain an appreciation for those who protect and serve our communities.

The summer day camp scheduled for 7th to 10th graders is:

Blender: Modeling Characters & Environments, Aug. 3-7

Students will dive into the world of 3D design using Blender, the same powerful tool used by game developers and digital artists worldwide. Campers will learn how to model characters, objects and entire environments from scratch.

Blender: Animation, Aug. 10-14

Ever wonder how your favorite movie and video game characters move, talk, and express emotion? In this camp, students will learn the art of character animation using Blender, the same software used by professionals in the entertainment industry. Campers will explore body mechanics, facial animation and lip syncing to create expressive, believable performances.

Drones & Drone Soccer, Aug. 10-14

Ignite curiosity, teamwork, and hands-on STEM skills in this fast-paced, tech-powered summer experience. Campers will learn about the exciting world of unmanned aerial systems and the emerging sport of drone soccer—a safe, engaging way for learners to build flight skills and engineering confidence.

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Fundraising efforts continue for restoration of Schine Theater

By Bob Beckstead
bbeckstead@wdt.net

MASSENA — A once-in-a-lifetime dining experiences is among the fundraising efforts to help restore the historic Schine Theater in downtown Massena.

The “Certified Japanese A5 Wagyu Dining Experience,” which has sold out, is scheduled for March 22 at Chase’s Riverside Dining.

Several chefs are preparing a five-course Michelin dinner, including imported certified Japanese A5 Wagyu Beef, prepared on a 550-degree Himalayan salt block at the table.

Dr. William Orlando, who helped organize the event, was selected as the Volunteer of the Month for his efforts in raising funds to restore the theater.

“We would like to recognize Dr. Bill Orlando as our Volunteer of the Month for going above and beyond in helping organize the upcoming Wagyu Dining Experience later this month. His energy, enthusiasm, and willingness to jump in and help create memorable fundraising events truly make a difference,” said officials with the Massena Arts and Theater Association (MATA), the theater’s owners. “Bill, thank you for your time, leadership, and commitment to bringing this project to life.”

Orlando said he was thankful for the recognition.

“So glad to help this community that my family calls home. It has provided for me for over 30 years and I do my best to provide for it. It’s truly my pleasure to do these events. Thank you Massena Schine Theater Association for the recognition,” he said.

Bringing the project to life means more fundraising. The nonprofit had received \$2.74 million in grants toward the total project cost of \$3.2 million. They were awarded funding through an Empire State Development Restore New York grant, village of Massena Core of the Community grant, and a Power Proceeds grant from the New York Power Authority.

The grant funding is contingent on the group raising the addition-



Phones are at the ready to take a picture as the historic Schine Theater marquee is lit once again during an October block party. Fundraising efforts continue to reopen the theater in downtown Massena. Bob Beckstead/Advance News

al funding to cover the total project cost.

In their monthly fundraising update, MATA officials said they had raised \$29,988 in February.

“We’re excited to share that \$29,988.30 was raised in February in support of the Schine Theater Restoration Project. Every dollar brings us closer to unlocking this historic space and bringing the arts back to downtown Massena,” they said.

They said the project continues moving forward “because of the incredible generosity, creativity, and volunteer spirit of our community.”

“Thank you to everyone who donated, attended events, shared our posts, and continues to believe in the vision for the Schine,” officials said. “The momentum is building, and we’re so grateful to have a community that continues to show up for the Schine.”

They said fundraising will continue as they get closer to opening the theater’s doors to the public.

“Stay tuned for more exciting events and updates as we continue working to restore this historic theater for future generations,” they said.

Massena Arts and Theater Inc. became the official owner of the former Schine Theater in 2015. The group purchased the theater from MPG Development LLC for \$95,000 in a property sale that was recorded June 2, 2015 in the St. Lawrence County clerk’s office.

The group had worked for more than two years to secure funding to purchase and renovate the historic downtown landmark at 65 Main St. The building had been vacant until it was purchased by the Massena Arts and Theater Association.

Ogdensburg bridge traffic remains low

By ANDY GARDNER
agardner@wdt.net

OGDENSBURG — The Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority is starting 2026 with Ogdensburg-Prescott International Bridge traffic revenue \$44,500 below its ideal figure. However, the OBPA is waiting to see February’s numbers later this month before drawing any conclusions.

OBPA Executive Director Steven J. Lawrence discussed the bridge during the February OBPA Board of Directors meeting.

The OBPA lost more than \$1 million in bridge traffic revenue in 2025. Numbers sagged shortly after President Donald J. Trump’s inauguration.

“January is one of our slowest months, but it seems percentage-wise, it’s falling in line with what we’ve seen in 2025,” Lawrence said. “The trend is slightly better.”

The OBPA uses 2019’s bridge traffic levels as the benchmark, which it considers the last year

of normal revenue before the COVID-19 pandemic hit and caused a decrease that never recovered. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 had a similar effect on Ogdensburg bridge traffic.

“We were coming back fairly strong versus pandemic times,” Lawrence said.

According to Lawrence’s bridge traffic report, a total of 30,498 vehicles crossed the Ogdensburg-Prescott bridge in January, down 27.2% from 41,901 in January 2019.

Auto crossings, which include work commuters and discretionary travel, totaled 26,160. That’s down 26.7% from 35,667 in January 2019. The column labeled “all other crossings,” which is largely commercial truck traffic, says there were 4,338 crossings in January, down 30.4% from January 2019.

Bridge revenue for the first month of 2026 was \$59,676, down from \$104,184 in January 2019.

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Greedy Goblin Popcorn open in Potsdam



The Potsdam Chamber of Commerce recently celebrated the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Celebration for Greedy Goblin Popcorn, located at 49 Market Street in downtown Potsdam. Greedy Goblin Popcorn is a specialty shop offering freshly made gourmet popcorn, sweet treats, and unique gift items. Community members, local businesses and Chamber board members gathered to welcome the new business to the Potsdam community. Potsdam Chamber of Commerce photo

Serenity Counseling celebrates first year



Serenity Counseling of Potsdam recently celebrated its one-year business anniversary with a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the Potsdam Chamber of Commerce. Potsdam Chamber of Commerce photo

Serenity Counseling of Potsdam recently celebrated its one-year business anniversary with a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the Potsdam Chamber of Commerce. Community members, family, and local businesses gathered to mark the milestone.

Located at 22 Depot Street, Suite 19 in Market Square Mall, Serenity Counseling of Potsdam is owned and operated by Jessica Royal, LCSW, and provides

professional counseling and wellness services to support individuals on their journey toward improved mental health and overall well-being.

“All of this is possible due to the support of my family, friends, the Village of Potsdam, and the network of Potsdam Chamber members,” said Royal.

Learn more about her services at serenitywellnesspotsdam.com.

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