

# PROGRESS



LifeNet EMS and SMC Nurse transporting patient from helipad to emergency department. Provided photo

## Samaritan gains provisional designation

**By JONATHON WHEELER**  
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WATERTOWN — Fewer patients presenting at Samaritan Medical Center’s Emergency Department with traumatic injuries will need to be transferred to facilities offering higher levels of trauma care after the hospital gained designation as the sole Level III trauma center in Jefferson or Lewis counties.

Samaritan recently announced that it received provisional Provisional Level III Adult Trauma Center designation from the state Department of Health in 2024. The hospital says this designation shows the hospital is prepared and capable of offering advanced care for patients in the Emergency Department that are presenting traumatic injuries. In 2024, Samaritan’s Emergency Department served over 30,000 patients,

with more than 600 receiving treatment for traumatic injuries, underscoring the need for the hospital to become a designated trauma center. Samaritan says Level III Trauma Centers play a vital role in communities that may not have timely access to higher-level facilities, such as Level I or II trauma centers. These centers provide definitive care for patients with mild to moderate injuries, ensuring that individuals can receive critical treatment closer to home. In addition to offering essential care, Samaritan says Level III centers are equipped with systems to promptly evaluate, manage, and transfer patients with more severe injuries to Level I and II facilities when necessary. Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse is the Central

See TRAUMA C2



On the left – LifeNet EMS; On the right – Dr. Daniel Bryden and Dr. Maja Lundborg-Gray (white coats). Provided photo



LifeNet helicopter on the Samaritan helipad. Provided photo



# Foy Agency celebrating its 75th year

The Foy Agency is a 3rd generation, family-owned independent insurance agency that has been providing insurance to businesses and families for 75 years.

The agency was founded by Francis and Rosemary Foy upon Francis's return home from being a POW in WWII. Francis and Rosemary ran the business out of their home on Roberts Road in Deer River for several years before purchasing a small schoolhouse building on Deer River Road in 1960. Francis's son and his wife, Thomas and Sue Foy, later took over the family business. The Agency is now owned and operated by Jeffrey Foy and Michael Hayes.

There continues to be three offices located in Lewis County.

The Croghan Office is run by long time employee, Brenda Nortz.

The Lowville Office is managed by Kristi Best-Spencer and they are excited to bring Ashley Hoch to their Lowville branch who will work as a Personal Lines Customer Service Rep.

The main office in Deer River has long-time employees to help manage the Commercial Lines department and is led by Maureen Steria as well as Paige Eves & Jeanna Everard.

The personal lines department is led by Shawna Brotherton and Erin Gebo, both who have over 20 years of insurance experience in the North Country and specialize in Personal Lines Sales and Service. Other team members include Brooke Smykla and Rachel Woodworth,

Personal Lines CSR's, Jake Fleury, Sales & Support & Elisa St. Louis who oversees administrative assistant duties.

Kyle Gehrke and Rox Hulbert continue to be the go-to Farm and Agriculture Specialists.

Kyle often wears several hats and helps with Commercial & Personal Sales as well.

As an Independent insurance firm, the Foy Agency represents over 25 Regional and National Insurance Companies to provide you with all your business and personal insurance needs. Foy Agency's clients include businesses from agricultural to manufacturing as well as restaurant, lodging and non-for-profit organizations. They welcome the opportunity to work on home and auto quotes, along with motorcycle and off-road vehicles.

The Foy Agency welcomes the chance to provide recommendations on any of your various insurance needs. You may reach us in Deer River at 315-493-2391, Croghan at 315-346-6378 and our Lowville office at 315-376-2731.

# Trauma

From C1

New York region's only Level I Trauma Center for adults and pediatrics.

While its designation is currently provisional, Samaritan said that after it completes a two-year verification process with the American College of Surgeons, it will then be recognized as an ACS verified Level III Adult Trauma Center.

"We are honored to receive the Provisional Level III Trauma Center designation from the New York State Department of Health," Thomas H. Carman, president and CEO at Samaritan Medical Center said in a statement. "This designation is an important step in highlighting our trauma care capabilities, and we are eager to complete the verification process with



From left, Michael Briggs, Trauma Coordinator; Dr. Daniel Bryden, Trauma Medical Director; and Chelsey Schmitt, Trauma Program Manager. Provided photo

the American College of Surgeons (ACS) to solidify our position as a comprehensive trauma care provider."

Level III trauma centers provide care for patients with mild to moderate injuries, According to Samaritan, hospitals designated as a Level III Trauma Center also are equipped with systems that will allow for them to evaluate, manage, and transfer patients to Level I

and Level II centers.

"The provisional designation is an essential first step in our long-term goal of becoming an ACS Verified Level III Trauma Center," Dr. Daniel Bryden, Trauma Medical Director for Samaritan, said in the hospital's statement. "In the meantime, the hospital will continue to build upon its trauma care services, ensuring that patients receive the best care in their time of need."



Ready to help you with all your flooring needs are, front row, from left, LouAnn and Dawn Roggie. Back row, Ben Roggie, Greg Widrick, Sherri Taube, Jeff Roggie and Will Roggie.

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# Hefferon Real Estate celebrated several milestones in 2024

2025 is starting off close to the same pattern as in recent years: Low to moderate inventory depending on the area and multiple offer situations in a few cases. In 2024, many listings did not last long and selling prices were still above average. Rising interest rates haven't deterred people from buying. Lenders and buyers have learned to get creative with financing. Buyers can buy points that give them a lower interest rate. This option hasn't been used in many years because of record low interest rates but it does work if you have a little extra money to work with. Over the life of a loan, one can save thousands with a very good interest rate.

The local real estate market in 2024 did show a slight drop in the number of closings at 8.2%. The average sales price continued to rise in 2024 with a 7.9 % increase. The number of new listings in 2024 increased slightly by 1.9% which meant a small uptick in inventory resulting in a little more of a selection for buyers. The average days on the market for houses to sell was 43 in 2023

and rose slightly to 48 in 2024. Good news for sellers is that they received 97.2% of their list price in 2024 which was exactly the same in 2023.

Because of the pandemic, Hefferon Real Estate learned to operate under extreme conditions including showing houses via virtual tours, Facetime and videos as well as completing most transactions online rather than in person. Operating remotely and handling more of the typical real estate transactions online, Hefferon Real Estate has the technical skills to meet the changing needs of the public. More people than ever before have jobs that allow them to work from home, which is allowing buyers to look for properties with room for a home office in more rural settings. People working remotely from outside Jefferson County have relocated to the area, since they can choose where to live while working from home. People continue to live here even when they retire from Fort Drum and some return to Jefferson County because of available jobs and the

quality of life. Hefferon Real Estate stands ready to assist buyers and sellers. Because there are more houses currently available in some areas, this is the perfect opportunity for buyers to be looking but property owners who are serious about selling should start getting their property ready now to put on the market for this upcoming selling season.

2024 brought some major milestones for Hefferon Real Estate. It was the 40th anniversary of the founding of Hefferon Real Estate and it continues to be one of the oldest independently owned real estate firms in Jefferson County. Another milestone in 2024 was that NYS Licensed Broker and Owner, Lisa L'Huillier Ruggiero celebrated 25 years of ownership on December 31st. In 2025, Ms. L'Huillier (who uses her maiden name for her business) will also celebrate 35 years in the local real estate industry. You can contact Lisa L'Huillier at 315-783-2188 or email her at [lisal@nnymls.com](mailto:lisal@nnymls.com)



Hodge's Legacy RV

## Hodge's Legacy RV: Where sales and service go hand in hand

Family members helping families has been the foundation of Hodge's Legacy RV since David Hodge took over the business in 2019. On any given day you will be greeted by family and treated like family. Formerly Wratten's RV, which

was founded in 1959, David continued with the notion of welcoming you to the RV family by doing business the old-fashioned way from start to finish; by encouraging a lifelong partnership with his customers. We believe in

being there with you throughout your camping journey, including renting. We are ready to help you fall in love with camping, buy your perfect unit, and then maintain that unit so that you will have years of memories. We also have a fully stocked parts store that will get you back on the road quickly, so you don't miss out on a moment of camping.

Hodge's Legacy RV has had many changes, including new faces in our service department. You now will be welcomed by either Josh or Scott, who combined, have almost 50 years of working in a service department. Their knowledge is extensive, and they are excited to get you back on the road and having the camping summer of a lifetime.

Another change is that we have added a unit to our rental fleet. We now will have four units that will be delivered to your local campground of choice and will take away all the worry and stress of setting up for your own vacation. We supply the camper, you supply the rest, including your family, so that you can all camp happy.

We currently carry several makes of campers to cover every angle of camping. Whether you are just starting out in our 17-foot Heartland Prowler or are a seasoned camping family looking to make our 43-foot Heritage Glen your home away from

### Hefferon REAL ESTATE

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# Following the latest trend may not be the best strategy for your tax preparation

It seems like every year a new trend in tax preparation services is promoted throughout the media. First, there were seasonal tax office locations in previously empty store fronts. Then, as soon as tax season ended, they seem to disappear. Next, there were pop-up locations in stores and malls. Now, it is all about on-line internet companies and apps, which promise fast and easy, with little effort at all. The professionals at M.R. Gaebel Tax and Accounting Services recognize the importance of filing your taxes in a correct manner which will help maximize your potential refund. Quite simply, when it comes to filing your taxes should you just follow the latest trend? Or use real tax professionals!

Tax codes and regulations change every year. Filing your taxes really does require the assistance of tax professionals, such as M.R. Gaebel, to navigate through these



MR Gaebel Income Tax Preparation and Accounting Services

complex waters. You can be assured that the year-round professionals at M.R. Gaebel are constantly staying up to date with the most rules enacted (or proposed) by the IRS and utilize that knowledge in the services provided to their clients.

“Today’s tax laws really can complicate a per-

son’s filing their tax returns. We can help sort all of that out and maximize your opportunity for a refund. We also take pride in the fact that our services are offered throughout the entire year, not just seasonally. Being local is also important to our clients. Too often outside agencies come in and

offer services at cut rates and then increase their prices later, as well as a decline in service. In today’s unstable financial atmosphere, it is very important that our clients have access to us, and not just during tax preparation season. We are able to offer a full array of tax and accounting services

at any time of the year.” Small Business Payroll and Record Keeping are also an important part of the services offered at M.R. Gaebel. “Small business owners spend countless hours each week doing payroll and recordkeeping, when they could utilize that time on their business generating more income. Our payroll services are an affordable, timely, local option to make doing

payroll and recordkeeping easier. In addition, with the host of government agencies reporting requirements that are constantly changing, a business owner must ask themselves...is it worth the risk? Errors can result in unnecessary penalties and interest owed. That is where our trained staff can help. We offer a variety of services, ranging

See GAEBEL C7

## Community Foundation partners with donors to strengthen quality of life across NNY

The Northern New York Community Foundation partners with families, individuals, businesses, and organizations across Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence County to support a variety of charitable interests.

Since 1929, the Community Foundation has worked to make the region a better place to live, work, and play — for all. Its commitment to donors helps them achieve their charitable objectives now and for generations to come by preserving and honoring legacies of community philanthropy. The Foundation is also a resource for local charitable organizations, donors, professional advisors, and nonprofits.

The Foundation’s mission — to inspire and celebrate giving, steward resources honorably, and foster vibrant North Country communities — has evolved to serve the Northern New York region. Its guiding values shape the work it does in partnership with donors to improve quality of life in communities across our region: Inspire Philanthropy. Develop Relationships. Act Respectfully. Honor Stewardship.

While much has changed through the Foundation’s 95-year history, one constant remains: the spirit of local philanthropy that so moved civic leaders to organize a community foundation is stronger than ever.

Throughout 2024, in partnership with those who love Northern New York, the Foundation continued to address the critical and essential needs of our neighbors, providing support to dozens of local food pantries and school-based backpack programs.

Community foundations work with charitably inclined individuals, families, organizations, and businesses to support quality-of-life programs, projects, and

services that improve the region. Anyone may decide to establish a charitable fund at the Community Foundation to support a cause, a geographic area, or organization about which they are passionate. These can be scholarships to specific schools to support education, a fund to support a nonprofit agency in perpetuity, or a customized fund to fulfill charitable interests. Another option is to make a gift to the Friends of the Foundation Community Betterment Annual Fund, which is designated to support various community programs, projects, and endeavors — including next-generation Youth Philanthropy and LEAD councils — in a flexible and responsive manner. The Foundation also makes many grants to projects that bring vital services and value to the community.

Establishing a fund at the Community Foundation isn’t a one-time event. It is

managed locally with an eye toward steady and stable growth. This means the fund can provide for its intended purpose in perpetuity with added stewardship and oversight. Charitable funds can be created to honor a loved one, family members, or those who have made a difference in the community. In the past year, donors established 53 new funds at the Community Foundation to support a wide range of charitable organizations, causes, and interests.


Educational support for post-secondary students continues to be a long-standing part of the Community Foundation’s legacy and heritage. Annual gifts to the Foundation help build scholarship funds and extend opportunities for students. Many awards also honor the legacies of caring individuals who believed in the value of making education more accessible.

Thanks to the generosity

of donors who have made gifts to support Foundation scholarships, opportunities for students have grown through the establishment of new awards. Scholarships were awarded to 583 students in Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties in 2024 with donors creating 27 new scholarships at the Community Foundation.

The Foundation is fortunate to partner with more than 150 nonprofits that serve tri-county residents, many of which have created funds within the Community Foundation for enduring support. Partnerships help support and strengthen organizations while working to preserve the North Country’s past, enhance its present, and secure its future. These critical relationships also provide stewarded options for donors.

During the past year, the Community Foundation awarded grants to help tri-county organizations thrive.



### Northern New York Community Foundation

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**Wealth Management**



# Beller's a one stop shop for all your auto repair needs

Beller's LLC, a family-owned business located at 4783 State Route 410 in Castorland, started in 1979, since then, it has been expanded from a small, one-stalled garage to a ONE STOP SHOP! With our new 2023 expansion, we are so excited to have seven bays for mechanical, with one of those bays dedicated to just precision alignments, one-bay Adas alignment, one-bay collision frame machine and a seven bay auto collision shop, plus a state-of-the-art brand new spray booth that was just put in with our 2023 expansion. Our techs are comfortable with using our ADAS Alignment machine. This machine uses precisely placed targets to align on board cameras and radars, on nearly all current and new model vehicles.

This also has a bay of its own. We have a Hunter Tire Changer and a John Bean wheel balancer, both top of the line. Your wheel will be in perfect balance with us! We are also in the business of selling quality used cars, trucks, and SUV's.

Myron and Mike Beller, proprietors of Bellers LLC have 30 plus years of experience in the automotive & body repair business, along with their father, Nevin Beller, having over 45 years in this business. The Beller brothers are constantly updating their knowledge in the technical world of mechanics and body, while also keeping the business updated in the latest technologies and equipment for the new vehicles.

Beller's has eight dependable employees working alongside Myron and Mike, so we can meet all your automotive and collision needs.



Ready to serve you at Beller's LLC your one-stop-shop are, from left, Zach Gingerich, Auto Body Technician; Mike Beller, Owner/Auto Body Technician and Manager; Daryl Halko, Mechanical Technician; Myron Beller, Owner/Mechanical Technician and Manager; Jacob Zehr, Mechanical Technician; Darin Halko, Auto Body Technician; Michaela Zehr, Office Secretary; Krystal Beller, Office Manager; Nevin Beller, Founder of Beller's LLC and Lorraine Beller, Co-Founder of Beller's LLC. Missing from photo is Patrick Sullivan - Auto Body Technician

We like to brag about our employees and are very proud of the work they perform. They are highly experienced mechanical and collision technicians with a

proven track record of successful maintenance and repair of automobiles. They are skilled in troubleshooting, problem-solving, and delivering cost-effective

solutions for our customers.

We offer a complete service center with up to date diagnostics of your on-board computer system. To say a few, we offer

tune-ups, brake repair, suspension repair, precision camera four-wheel alignments, complete engine overhauls, Air conditioning service, and electrical

work. For each season, we can help you choose the best tires and mount and balance them at an affordable price. We still offer New York State Inspections along with checking over your vehicle so it's safe to drive. For your convenience, we stock nearly a full supply of batteries.

We have a complete collision automotive body repair shop with a state-of-the-art paint baking spray booth with a computerized paint mixing machine and a frame machine. Our frame pulling machine works along with a chief velocity laser measure system. For our customers' convenience, we offer insurance company assistance, and if you need to rent a car, your car rental can be picked up right here at Beller's when you drop your vehicle off for body repairs.

To go along with our collision repair shop, we have a flatbed and wrecker that allows us to also have a towing service. Give us a call when you have a fender bender or a major collision, we can tow you and then will direct you to our certified body shop manager. He will help you from start to finish in all your collision repair needs, starting with an estimate and insurance assistance. We will make this process as easy as we can for you, and will have your vehicle looking new again!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our community and customers for 45 years of business. We are grateful for your business and eagerly anticipate another year of serving you with your vehicle needs. We know you have high expectations, and as a used car dealer

See BELLER'S C7

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# THE ARC JEFFERSON – ST. LAWRENCE: EXPANDING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND IMPROVING FACILITIES

The Arc Jefferson - St. Lawrence (www.thearcjslc.org) continues to solidify their standing as the leading provider of service options for people with disabilities in the North Country. During the next year, the agency will expand services for children and advocate for funding to enhance programs for people supported and employees.

Between the counties, there are 52 residential homes, a Preschool, a large variety of community employment options, two integrated businesses, five site-based day programs, Federal contracts at the border stations and Fort Drum, two UPS stores, as well as educational programs for children, teens, and adults. Clinical Services such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Speech Therapy, are available. The agency also has Board Certified Behavior

Analysts on staff to guide service plans that are created to suit each person's needs.

The Arc Jefferson - St. Lawrence employs over 1,100 staff members and has an annual budget of \$85 million. The agency is overseen by Lynn Pietroski, Chief Executive Officer and Jackie Sauter serves as the Board of Directors' President.

In 2024, The Arc Jefferson – St. Lawrence successfully restructured to maximize service options for the people supported and to improve resources for employees. The agency implemented a new payroll system and provided trainings to ensure the workforce is highly skilled. The agency upgraded many facilities as part of a five-year renovation plan to modernize all locations.

In 2025, The Arc Jefferson – St. Lawrence will continue to move forward with

the expansion of children's services in St. Lawrence County in partnership with Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority (OBPA). Through this agreement with OPBA, the agency has the opportunity to serve 120 children and their families at a new state of art child care facility. Groundbreaking is planned for this spring.

Budget Advocacy continues and legislative officials will be asked to support a 7.8% Medicaid rate increase to stabilize non-profit provider agencies. Additional budget requests include the creation of a Wage Commission to examine the responsibilities of human service workers and establish fair, sustainable compensation standards and to establish a new capital program to make operations more energy-efficient, in alignment with the state's climate goals.

## Gaebel

From C5

from certified payrolls, year end and quarterly reports, payroll checks, payroll taxes, direct deposits, workers compensation audits and more. The business owner can pick which services best

fit their needs".

M.R. Gaebel sets the standard of tax and accounting services for businesses and residents of Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties. They specialize in offering their clients personalized, professional, quality service together with CPA expertise, knowledge and

experience... all at affordable rates.

Appointments are available in Watertown and Carthage.

To schedule an appointment for individual tax services, or for more information, please call 315-493-1862, or visit them at their website, www.mrgaebel.com.

## Beller's

From C6

and complete auto and body repair shop we enjoy the challenge of meeting and exceeding those expectations each and every time. If you haven't experienced our latest 2023 addition with additional bays for collision and mechanics, we invite you to visit our shop.

When you call us, you will likely be speaking to Michaela, or Krystal, who will be scheduling your appointment or directing your phone call. Michaela has been with us since May and goes above and beyond her duties here in the office. Patrick joined our team this past year in the collision shop and has been a valuable addition. All of our Technicians have rich automotive background, and are valued here whether it be in the mechanical or collision side of the repair.

We are here to help you determine your vehicle and financing needs that best fit your lifestyle. With used cars and trucks in stock our goal is to make your

buying experience completely satisfying. If you'd like to purchase a vehicle you're welcome to browse our used car lot, speak with our friendly sales rep, test drive and investigate financing options. If you don't see a particular vehicle on our lot, we allow you to email and submit a request for your vehicle.

We will do our best to match your request and will notify you when it is in our inventory. Our prices are competitive without add-ons after the deal is made. After the sale, you will continue to find extraordinary service at our Automotive and Collision facility in all departments. We are a ONE-STOP-SHOP! Allow us to demonstrate our commitment to excellence! The needs of each individual customer are of paramount concern to us! You can find us at www.bellersauto.com and like us on Facebook!

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## Hodge's

From C4

we always have many in stock to fulfill everyone's wants and needs. Our new website is

user-friendly and is kept up to date with our available units so browsing is a breeze.

At Hodge's Legacy RV we have over 100+ years of camping experience with many employees,

naming camping as one of their own personal pastimes. When family memories are a priority, call Hodge's Legacy RV to ensure that those memories are guaranteed to last a lifetime.

## Community

From C5

Awards included funding for the Compassionate Care Foundation; the Adams Revitalization Committee to help build a new community playground; Jefferson Community College Foundation to support Jefferson's dental hygiene program; North Country Family Health Center for dental equipment; the Salvation Army of Massena to help complete a new commercial kitchen; the Railway Historical Society of Northern New York to preserve historical documents; the Lowville Food Pantry to acquire a new walk-in freezer; the Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund to install an equipment lift at the Clayton Opera House; the East Hounsfield Library & Civic Association for a new furnace; Watertown American Little League for a lighting project at Rand Field; Snow Belt Housing Company to provide flood relief for vulnerable populations; the Thousand Islands Arts Center to support a capital campaign for a new facility; Watertown Area Boxing Club to build charitable support; Hay Memorial Library to help improve accessibility for patrons; and Ogdensburg Public Library for a handicapped lift project.

Grant awards also supported The Orchestra of Northern New York; the

Trinity Concert Series; the Jazz in the classroom Program; the Cape Vincent Arts Council; and the Historical Association of South Jefferson, among others.

Ten middle school students were selected as winners of the 2024-2025 Community Spirit Youth Giving Challenge, and each awarded a \$1,000 grant to a local nonprofit of their choice.

Several community funds at the Foundation highlight investments donors continue to make in geographic-specific giving including

the Six Town Community Fund, Clifton-Fine Community Fund, and the Canton Community Fund, among others.

*The Community Foundation is based in the Northern New York Philanthropy Center, 131 Washington St. Watertown. Contact the Foundation at 315-782-7110 or info@nnycf.org. The team can work with you to plan the most effective and enduring legacy for today and tomorrow. Visit nnycf.org to learn more and follow the Foundation on social media.*

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## Expanding on Patient Care: Samaritan’s Outpatient Physical Therapy Introduces New Animal-Assisted Therapy Programs

WATERTOWN, NY — Walking down the halls of Samaritan Medical Center, you may have encountered a new four-legged healthcare professional: Dr. Charlie Bear, also known as Charlie, a compassionate Golden Retriever dedicated to enhancing the patient experience in outpatient physical therapy. Charlie, who started her career at Samaritan at the end of 2024, provides an adjunct to traditional physical therapy services at the Medical Center as she works alongside her certified therapy dog handler, Lexie Shippee, a physical therapist.

“Charlie and I received extensive training to provide our patients the best comfort, support, and therapy possible,” said Shippee. “Physical therapy patients who meet certain requirements have the opportunity to request this support, and we are ready and willing to help as the need arises.”

The use of therapy dogs, in conjunction with traditional Physical Therapy, has been shown to:

- Decrease stress, blood pressure, and anxiety
  - Improve motivation
  - Reduce pain levels/ Increase pain threshold
  - Improve communication and engagement
- Improve attention to tasks
  - Improve Mood
  - And ultimately improve therapy outcomes



*Pictured here are Dr. Charlie Bear and Physical Therapist Lexie Shippee of Samaritan’s Outpatient Physical Therapy.*

While animal-assisted therapy may not be right for every patient, the team of exceptional physical therapists at Samaritan Medical Center offer a wide spectrum of services, including:

- Lymphedema
- Vestibular rehabilitation
- Temporal mandibular joint dysfunction care
- Pelvic rehabilitation
- Sports medicine/rehabilitation
- Mackenzie Method for spinal care
- Stroke rehabilitation as well as others

*A physician referral is required for outpatient therapy, and Samaritan accepts most insurance plans.*

In addition to physical therapy, Samaritan also offers outpatient occupational and speech therapy. While most services are available for adult patients, pediatric therapies are also available.

Samaritan Medical Center employs over 30 exceptional physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech language pathologists working in all areas of the hospital to meet your needs.

In addition to outpatient therapy services, Samaritan is proud to offer a full continuum of therapy care including:

- Intense inpatient therapy on our dedicated rehabilitation unit within the hospital
- Sub-acute rehabilitation in Samaritan Keep Home and Samaritan Summit Village
- In-home therapy services via Samaritan Home Health

To learn more about Samaritan’s continued commitment to the community through rehabilitation and therapeutic services, visit [samaritanhealth.com/service/rehabilitation-services/](https://samaritanhealth.com/service/rehabilitation-services/).



## Care as Exceptional as you: Samaritan Physical Therapy Patient Shares Her Experience

Deborah Jones, a 68-year-old Watertown resident, took a fall in early 2024 that led to progressively worsening pain in her lower back, knee and ankle. When the pain began affecting her ability to walk, her doctor referred her to Samaritan Physical Therapy, where she worked with Jeremy Tarwater, PT, DPT.

“I went there thinking this wasn’t going to help,” she said. “Then I met Jeremy. His professional and knowledgeable attitude immediately changed how I thought about therapy.”

After a few appointments, Ms. Jones began to feel her pain receding and her mobility being restored. Her skepticism was gone – in fact, she looked forward to her appointments and enjoyed the exercises she was learning.

“Jeremy treated me with respect...he was kind and fun to work with,” she said. “He taught me how to deal with any issues that may come up. I am amazed how I no longer have constant back pain.”

*Samaritan Medical Center Welcomes*

## Jane M. Simpson, DO

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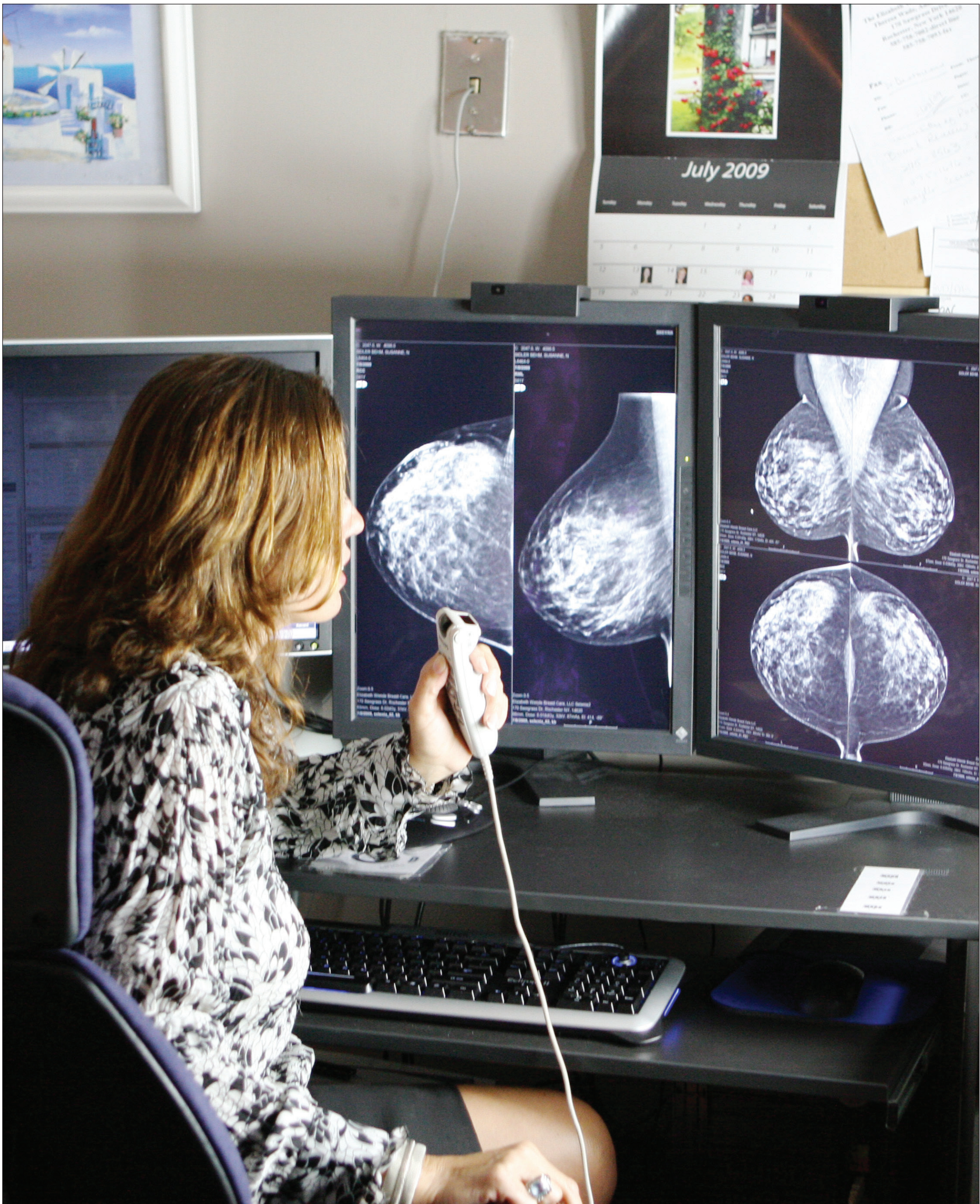
*Palliative care is a specialized type of medical care for people with serious or life-threatening illnesses, at any age. It focuses on improving quality of life by managing symptoms, providing relief from discomfort, helping make difficult medical decisions, and addressing physical, psychological, and educational needs.*

**Learn more about Dr. Simpson:**





# PROGRESS



Stamatia V. Destounis, MD, and managing partner of Elizabeth Wende Breast Care, or EWBC, reading a mammogram. Photo courtesy of EWBC

## Elizabeth Wende Breast Care moves into Watertown

**By JONATHON WHEELER**  
jwheeler@wdt.net

WATERTOWN — Elizabeth Wende Breast Care has officially made its move into Watertown, allowing for a more centralized location for patients to receive care.

Dr. Stamatia V. Destounis, managing partner of Elizabeth Wende Breast Care, or EWBC, said that they made the move from Carthage to Watertown to have a more centralized location and to have a larger office, making it possible to have more 3D mammography technology available.

Dr. Destounis said having the

larger space allows for the EWBC physician to practice there more often.

Staff has remained the same from the move from the Carthage office to the Watertown office.

“We offer the same high-quality care with our 3D mammography and ultrasound and whatever the patient may require,” she said.

Those born female and at least 40 years of age should have a routine 3D mammogram; any patient of any age who has new breast pain, or feels a lump, among other possible symptoms, can all get care at EWBC. The office can also

provide a second opinion.

EWBC will also help men who have a pain, have felt something, or their doctor has felt something. Dr. Destounis said that they will also take care of high-risk men, meaning they have a strong family history of breast cancer, and the male has had genetic testing and may have a genetic mutation.

“Anyone that has a concern, whether male or female, we’re able to see them if they have breast concern,” she said.

EWBC also offers bone density tests to screen patients for osteoporosis, along with counseling for

high-risk patients for breast cancer.

Dr. Destounis says patients can get their results the same day “within an hour or so,” meaning if the patient needs additional testing, EWBC may be able to provide it the same day.

“We will be able to do more of that because we have a bigger facility,” she said.

EWBC is located at 1571 Washington St., Suite B, in the same building as North Country Orthopedic Group.

“We think that that will allow us to have more visibility,” she said,

while adding the opportunity to see more patients exists.

Dr. Destounis said that before EWBC had an office in the north country, patients would drive to Rochester to get care. Now, that care is available locally in Watertown.

“Hopefully that will make everything a little bit easier for patients to get to us,” she said.

EWBC opened in Watertown on Jan. 13.

Dr. Destounis said that if someone has a concern, not to wait and to either call EWBC or stop into the office.



# North Country Children’s Museum is a hands-on experience



The North Country Children’s Museum.

The North Country Children’s Museum is hosting hands-on science, art, and cultural programs this upcoming year including Preschool and Afterschool Class Series, Saturday Family Science Programs, and Sunday Family Art Programs. The Children’s Museum also hosts special monthly weekend events. Programs will be held in the Children’s Museum’s renovated program rooms. The museum is located at 10 Raymond Street in Potsdam. Regular hours are Wednesday through Sunday from 10am to 5pm.

Upcoming special events include: Lena the Lizard Lady live animal program on Saturday, Feb 22nd from 11am-12pm, Learn to Yo-Yo and Do Tricks on Saturday, March 8th

from 2pm-3pm, Kids on the Block Puppet Performance on Saturday, March 22nd from 11am-12pm, Mommy & Me Paint It Pottery on Saturday, May 3rd from 11am-1pm, Herpetology Live Animal Program on Saturday, June 7th from 1pm-3pm, and Build A Bunny Workshop on Saturday, June 14th from 11am-12:30pm.

Afterschool Class Series begin in March and include: Clay ‘n Play Art and Bugs, Bugs, Bugs Science on Wednesdays, the Art of Monsters and Kitchen Chemistry on Thursdays, Engineering Design Challenges and Musical Games on Fridays. Preschool Class Series includes: Toddler Music on Wednesdays, Make a Mess Art on Thursdays, and Science Play on Fridays. Visit the

museum’s website for class descriptions and to register for the series. Space is limited in the class series. <https://northcountrychildrensmuseum.org/camps-and-classes/>

The Children’s Museum is open from Wednesday to Sunday weekly from 10am to 5pm. The new Family Resource Room on the second floor is now open to the public. The Children’s Museum has hands-on exhibits and changing activity stations so there is always something new to explore. Birthday Parties and School Field Trips are also offered.

Visit the website [www.northcountrychildrensmuseum.org](http://www.northcountrychildrensmuseum.org) or Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/ncchildrensmuseum> for more information.

## Northern Computers:

### LOCAL EXPERTS OFFERING HANDS-ON TECH SUPPORT IN A DIGITAL-FIRST WORLD

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, the demand for reliable, local, tech support continues to grow. From businesses managing critical IT infrastructure to individuals relying on their devices for work and communication, having access to trusted technology professionals is more important than ever. Northern Computers has established itself as a key resource for both residents and businesses in Northern and Central New York, providing essential IT and telephone services with a personal touch.

At a time when many companies direct customers to automated troubleshooting systems and remote support lines, Northern Computers takes a different approach. By offering face-to-face assistance and hands-on service, they ensure that customers receive real, effective solutions tailored to their specific needs.

A Growing Need for Local Tech Support

As businesses become more dependent on digital infrastructure and individuals rely on technology for daily tasks, even minor technical issues can lead to major disruptions. Cybersecurity threats, outdated software, and hardware failures can create serious challenges, leaving many unsure of where to turn for help.

Northern Computers provides a local, in-person solution to these modern technology problems. Located at 130 Park Place in Watertown, they offer a wide range of IT and telephone services, including computer

sales and repairs, managed IT solutions for businesses, telephone system setup and support, network setup and security, and on-site technical assistance. Whether it’s a failing laptop, a slow business network, a telephone system that needs upgrading, or a complex IT issue that requires expert attention, Northern Computers is equipped to handle the problem efficiently.

Unlike large retailers or remote-only tech services, Northern Computers prioritizes personal service and quick turnaround times. Customers can walk into their store and speak directly with an experienced IT professional who understands the challenges they are facing. This hands-on approach not only helps resolve issues faster but also builds trust between the company and the community it serves.

Bridging the Gap Between Digital Problems and Real Solutions

For many people, getting help with technology issues has become a frustrating experience. Long wait times on automated phone systems, outsourced customer service, and complex troubleshooting guides often lead to more confusion than solutions. Finding reliable, in-person IT and telephone support is becoming increasingly difficult, yet the need for it continues to grow.

Northern Computers bridges this gap by offering direct, in-person assistance for both individuals and businesses. Instead of shipping a device away for repairs or relying on

impersonal troubleshooting, customers can bring their technology or telephone system concerns directly to the experts and receive immediate support. This eliminates downtime, reduces frustration, and ensures that issues are resolved as efficiently as possible.

The Future of Local IT & Telephone Support

As technology continues to evolve, the demand for accessible, knowledgeable IT and telephone support will only increase. Cybersecurity risks are rising, businesses are shifting to cloud-based operations, and reliable communication systems are more essential than ever. Having a trusted local IT and telephone service provider who can navigate these changes and provide expert guidance is crucial.

Northern Computers is committed to being that trusted partner for the community. By combining expert technical knowledge, fast service, and a customer-first approach, they ensure that individuals and businesses in Northern and Central New York stay connected and secure in an increasingly digital world.

For those in need of IT and telephone support, Northern Computers is located at 130 Park Place in Watertown, NY, and can be reached at (315) 782-8340 or via their website at [nnycomputers.com](http://nnycomputers.com). Whether it’s troubleshooting a personal device, upgrading a business’s telephone system, or managing IT infrastructure, Northern Computers provides the hands-on support that today’s technology users need.



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We are excited to serve you as we are going into our 23rd year of business and we are honored to be a part of the amazing community, we call home!

It takes a lot to win at business, but it takes even more to continue to win, year after year. I fully believe that the future is bright for the green industry and I’m excited to see the PROGRESS in 2025 here at Zehrs!



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**A Special Thanks To Our Local Community For Helping Our Progress In 2024 Be A Successful One!**



# Widrick Auto Sales has been locally owned and operated in Watertown since 1980.

Co-owners James Widrick and Steven Widrick both are Jefferson County natives.



Widrick Auto Sales has been locally owned and operated in Watertown since 1980. Co-owners James Widrick and Steven Widrick both are Jefferson County natives. Widrick Auto Sales is always expanding, looking to better serve the needs of our customers. We are carrying the largest inventory in its history, providing quality pre-owned vehicles at competitive prices. Facility expansion is ongoing and we recently opened a new detailing shop to maximize our ability to process vehicles for sale, as well as, provide quality detail services for our customers. Widrick Auto Sales specializes in finding finance options for all credit situations including first time buyers, bankruptcy and repossession.

To service what we sell, our facility offers a full service department, as well as a state of the art collision and body shop with over 50 years of combined experience. Look to us first for your next preowned vehicle. Your experience here will be transparent and accommodating and you won't want to buy anywhere else. We make it easy, that's what we do!



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# St. Lawrence County IDA strengthens county business climate

The mission of the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency is to promote, encourage, attract, and develop job opportunities and economically sound commerce and industry in St. Lawrence County. Outreach efforts involve direct calls, site visits, advertisements, tradeshow participation, job fair coordination and participation, and a variety of business-to-business sponsored activities and other cosponsored events with the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce.

In 2024, activities designed to support both business and workforce development included a Business Resource Mixer highlighting the local resource providers in the county, Business Connection Events which spotlight specific resources such as the SUNY Canton Canino School of Engineering and the three BOCES Tech Centers. The IDA also worked with BOCES to schedule 360 local high school students to visit 13 manufacturers in St. Lawrence County as part of Manufacturing Day, introducing the students to careers with local employers.

The “Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership” networking and business development program, a collaboration with the University of Buffalo and SUNY Canton, hosted by the IDA and the New York Power Authority, saw seven small business leaders from throughout the county complete the 20-week session in June 2024.

In 2022, the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators allocated American Rescue Plan

Act (“ARPA”) funds in the amount of \$3,387,000 to be administered by the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency to assist businesses, organizations, and individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic through several program categories.

Training programs for CDL-A licensure, Heavy Equipment



The St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency office, 19 Commerce Lane, Canton. Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times

Operator, the Family Child Care Training Program were undertaken with participation from a variety of partners, including SUNY Canton, BOCES, the Cornell Cooperative Extension, the St. Lawrence

County Child Care Council, and the St. Lawrence County One Stop Career Center. At the end of 2024, the IDA completed the process of awarding ARPA funds in St. Lawrence County. In 2025, the IDA will complete the expenditure of awarded funds, which in addition to the training programs, include small business and non-profit assistance programs, tourism promotion and development support, and facility and infrastructure development funding.

Project activity for the IDA, and its affiliated development entities, including the Local Development Corporation and the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency, continued in 2024 with projects at GoCo Massena, LLC, Cives Steel in Gouverneur, L&T Crafts n Things in Massena, Bent Beam Brewing (dba St. Lawrence Suds) in Canton, Miskarie, USA LLC (dba Summit Shred Lab) in Potsdam, Lakeside Haven Cottages in Black Lake, and Thompson’s Diesel Works in Waddington.

Air Products, Inc. completed clearing work at the project site for its green hydrogen facility

on the Pontoon Bridge Road in Massena. Construction work is anticipated to continue through 2025. The project represents an investment of over \$400 million, a major milestone in further establishing St. Lawrence County and New York State as leaders in the clean energy sector. The company proposes to create 90 full-time jobs within its first three years of operation.

The IDA is partnering with the Development Authority of the North Country for the demolition and redevelopment of the former Massena School of Business site in downtown Massena. Requests for Proposals were issued, and contractors were selected for the architecture and design services and demolition work. Grant funding is provided as part of the successful Downtown Revitalization Initiative award in Massena to transfer the property into a community space, while maintaining the historic Main Street façade of the building. Other DRI and Restore NY Projects the IDA is assisting include Massena Arts and Theatre, Bent Beam Brewing in Canton, and the former Hackett’s facility in Ogdensburg.

The IDA approved a lease with the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES Adult Education & Workforce Development Program for space in the IDA’s Ernest J. LaBaff Industrial Building



The St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency has granted more than \$150,000 in tax breaks to GoCo Massena, which is looking to renovate the old JJ Newberry building in downtown Massena. The project will be partially funded by the village’s 2021 Downtown Revitalization Initiative award. Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times



Land was cleared on the Pontoon Bridge Road to make way for the Air Products Green Hydrogen facility that’s projected to be operational in 2027. Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times

in Canton. This will create a more significant connection with BOCES adult services programs as collaborative efforts for economic and workforce development issues continue. The space will be used for offices, classrooms, and training programs.

The St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency approved \$100,000 in awards for the 2024 River Valley

Community Development and Environmental Improvement Program. The program has provided over \$4.4 million over the past 14 years for a variety of projects in St. Lawrence County.

Tropical Storm Debby resulted in extensive flood damage around the county, affecting operations for a handful of businesses. The IDA quickly outreached local businesses and municipalities to assess the

damage to determine assistance needed. The Small Business Administration set up an operations center in the IDA offices for two weeks at the end of the year to answer questions and help residents and businesses complete funding applications.

For more information contact the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency at 315-379-9806 or visit [www.slcida.com](http://www.slcida.com).

## PLAN YOUR BUSINESS START-UP OR EXPANSION ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY



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- Site Selection Assistance
- Networking and Business Contacts
- Industrial Building Construction

Whether you are an entrepreneur or an established business, The **St. Lawrence County IDA** is your **central point of contact!**



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For more information, please call (315) 379-9806 or visit **[www.SLCIDA.com](http://www.SLCIDA.com)**





# From opening day to today: New Y's first-year highlights



The Watertown Family YMCA Mary Cleo Smith Downtown Community Center opened its doors on December 11, 2023, introducing countless opportunities for individuals and families to connect, grow, and thrive together.

Since opening, the new facility has offered a variety of new YMCA programming.

Art has been added to its already successful STEAM program. Classes are available for children as young as 2 years old, school-age children, and senior adults.

The Aquatic Center developed a new program category called Aqua Fitness which offers classes like Aqua Yoga, Aqua Jump, and Aqua Cycle. Also added to the aquatic program list are adult swim lessons and lifeguard certification classes.

In addition to state-of-the-art fitness equipment, the Downtown Community Center features 3 types of Group Exercise studios including yoga, spin, and cardio. Classes are offered from open to close and include a variety of live and virtually taught classes.

The indoor racquet sports courts have been bustling with activity, hosting enthusiastic pickleball and tennis games, socials, and tournaments.

The Y Community Kitchen, which opened in December 2024, has already hosted engaging classes such as the DASH diet, focaccia and sourdough bread making, and apple pie baking. Plans are underway to introduce an even wider variety of exciting new classes in the future.

Demonstrating its commitment to providing the best possible resources and experiences for its members, Watertown Family YMCA has also made updates to equipment and facilities in its Carthage and Fairgrounds branches. By investing in fitness center upgrades, the YMCA ensures that individuals have access to tools that facilitate their fitness journeys and help them achieve their goals effectively.

CEO Shawna Cutuli stated “As we reflect on the past months since the opening of our new YMCA branch, I am truly humbled and inspired by the overwhelming support and enthusiasm from our members

reaffirming our belief in the power of the Y to positively impact lives and strengthen the fabric of our community. As we look ahead, I am filled with excitement for the countless opportunities that lie ahead as we continue our journey of empowering individuals, families, and neighbors to thrive together.”

On March 15th, the Watertown Family YMCA will host the 36th annual Shamrock Run. This annual family-friendly tradition fosters a sense of unity and camaraderie bringing people together in a healthy activity, promoting well-being, and strengthening social connections within the community.

From promoting health and wellness to fostering youth development and social cohesion, the YMCA has stood as a beacon of support and enrichment for all members of our community.

Whether you're looking to break a sweat, make new friends, or simply find a welcoming space to belong, the YMCA warmly invites you to embark on this journey of growth, connection, and well-being with them. Welcome to your new home away from home!

# Good Fellos in Sackets Harbor open 7 days a week, all year



Good Fellos Brick Oven Pizza and Wine Bar is pleased to provide their guests with an exceptional, relaxed setting located in the heart of the scenic Village of Sackets Harbor. They proudly serve authentic Italian cuisine, scratch-made brick oven pizza, and a full-service wine bar, in an intimate atmosphere of a tastefully renovated historic building. Good Fellos is known for exceptional customer service, delectable meals made with fresh ingredients, an excellent selection of wines, and a unique atmosphere that is unmatched in the area.

Good Fellos is one of the only dining establishments in the area that is open seven days a week, all year long. “Not only are we open all year, 7 days a week, we are one of the few places you can still be served after 9 pm,” commented Owner Richard Cunha.

Good Fellos is famous for their brick oven pizza. The dough is made fresh and from scratch for extra flavor and authenticity. Savor every bite of their signature appetizers while you enjoy one of their 16 local craft beers on tap or choose an exquisite wine from their extensive 50 bottle list. They also offer many other local and regional breweries bottled and ice cold for those who might be looking for something unique and refreshing. Wednesday nights play host to their ever popular “Wine Nights” - a cure for the mid-week blues – starting at 4pm.

Of course, their wide variety of Italian entrees are the highlight of the dining experience at Good Fellos. Their extensive selection of menu items are prepared fresh daily by their talented chefs and cook staff. Be sure to check their famous chalkboard and ask the friendly waitstaff for information on new daily menu items, as well as pairing suggestions with your favorite wines. Top off your experience with their delicious desserts - all made from scratch in-house. Owner Richard Cunha states: “Our ingredients are locally sourced whenever possible, fresh, and



hand-selected to provide our guests with the finest quality and the best experience possible.” Lunch is served on Saturday and Sunday starting at 11:30 am.

One of the most popular things about Good Fellos is their four seasons dining room. The space is warm and cozy during the cold winter months, and open and airy during the summer months. It is also the perfect place for private parties and functions of different sizes.

Good Fellos is less than a 15-minute drive from Watertown, and a very short drive from Fort Drum. Please call the restaurant at 315-646-3463 for more information on booking an individual reservation or private party. To view their menu, visit their website: [www.goodfellos.com](http://www.goodfellos.com), or their Facebook or Instagram page. Reservations are welcome for certain size groups...or walk in to discover the difference at Good Fellos.

# Employee recognition at the AdironDUCK Race



While wearing a duck costume, Emily Lighthall cheers on the first, second and third place ducks in the 26th annual Adiron-DUCK Race on Sunday at Oswegatchie Educational Center on Long Pond Road, Croghan. Watertown Daily Times

Join us on Sunday, April 27, 2025, for the 31st Annual AdironDUCK Race at the Oswegatchie Educational Center. The day includes delicious pancake breakfast, free entertainment, and watching as many as 10,000 rubber ducks' races down the West Branch of the Oswegatchie River! This is a family-friendly event that is open to the public.

Employee recognition programs are methods of recognizing the accomplishments of a company's deserving workforce and teams. These activities aim to boost workers' morale, retain talent, and create a bond between workers and the organization. Acknowledging your employees' efforts is a straightforward way to build your professional community. The Oswegatchie Educational Center has two options for recognizing employees.

Option #1: As an employer, you could purchase a “yellow duck” for each employee at \$10 each. This is a straightforward strategy that allows employees to receive something, with the possibility of winning something greater. Winners do not have to be present to claim their prize.

Option #2: For the cost of \$20 per employee, every employee in your business will receive a yellow duck, a pancake breakfast coupon, and an entry into our AdironDUCK 5K Trail Run. This total package is worth \$40; however, your cost remains just \$20 per employee. Winners do not have to be present and participation in the 5k is not mandatory.

To learn more about Oswegatchie's employee recognition program, go to [www.adironduckrace.com/employee-recognition.html](http://www.adironduckrace.com/employee-recognition.html) Oswegatchie can be found

online at [www.oswegatchie.org](http://www.oswegatchie.org) or by phone at (315) 346-1222. Oswegatchie is owned and operated by the New York FFA Foundation. ([www.nyffafoundation.org](http://www.nyffafoundation.org))



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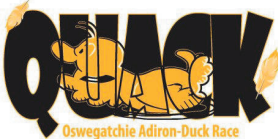
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Oswegatchie's 31st Annual Sunday April 27th, 2025

## AdironDUCK Race

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Wilderness adventure camps and other specialty camps for youth are also offered at Beaver Camp.

The camp's mission is to provide facilities and programs, infused with God's love, in which people of every age are invited to establish and grow in their relationships with Jesus Christ, through teaching and positive role models. Countless people leave camp each year feeling refreshed, and energized by a fresh, life-changing faith decision.

Beaver Camp is a place to grow, where positive friendships, and lasting faith decisions are made.

Beaver Camp is the DBA of Adirondack Mennonite Camping Association, which is a group of approximately 198 members, governed by a Board of Directors.

Upcoming events

The annual Beaver Camp Auction at the Lewis County Fairgrounds is June 6-7.

Beaver Camp summer camps begin this year on July 6 and run for seven weeks. Prices vary based on camp and the length of the camp.

Women's scrapbook and craft retreats, a women's retreat, a parenting weekend, a grandparent and grandchild camp, winter and fall family retreats, and a young adult weekend are also offered throughout the year.

We want to hear from you! If you have any questions about Beaver Camp, please contact Mike Judd, Director at 315-376-2640 or by emailing office@beaver.camp . You can also visit their website at www.beavercamp.org.



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# From the Desk of Andrew Boulais, P.E.

Regional Manager and Senior Vice President,  
New York Power Authority St. Lawrence FDR Power Project

As we welcome a new year, I am excited about the many accomplishments and opportunities that lie ahead for the New York Power Authority in 2025. As I prepare to complete my first full-year in the role of Regional Manager for NYPA’s Northern New York operations, I wanted to share the many contributions and accomplishments that are associated with the operation of the St. Lawrence-Franklin D. Roosevelt Power Project in Massena.

As a long-time North Country resident, I am deeply grateful for the unparalleled support my family and I have received from this incredible community. Moving forward into 2025, the community will play a vital role in our efforts to implement programs that align with NYPA’s strategic vision, advance the state’s clean energy goals, and enhance the quality of life for North Country residents.

Strong communication and relationship-building have been, and will continue to be, central to our success. In collaboration with our IBEW Local workforce, we’ve taken significant steps to secure the long-term future of the St. Lawrence-Franklin D. Roosevelt Power Project as a clean energy producer that fosters economic growth. This project is a cornerstone of the North Country’s economy, anchoring jobs at key facilities like Alcoa and Arconic.

The low-cost power generated at the St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project directly supports nearly 10,000 jobs in the North Country and has leveraged over \$1 billion in capital investments. Recent allocations include 90 MW of Preservation Power to Air Products and Chemicals, Inc.,



**New York Power Authority Project Engineer James Bright, with the help of Stewaerts Shops mascot Flavor, demonstrates how to use the EVolve NY fast-charging station on September 12, 2023 on Maple Street in Potsdam.** Christopher Lenney/ Watertown Daily Times

enabling the development of a green hydrogen production facility in Massena.

Since its launch in December 2014, the Northern New York Power Proceeds program has awarded over \$4 million to 14 organizations, creating 199 job commitments and leveraging more than \$39.6 million in capital expenditures. Recent beneficiaries include Natural Insulation Products of America, Inc., which will establish a down-fabric production facility in Massena, and the Massena Arts and Theater Association, Inc., which is renovating the historic Schine Theater into a multi-use community cultural and event center in support of Massena’s downtown revitalization efforts.

NYPA continues to partner with our host communities with dedicated funding to recreation, emergency services

and general funds. The Power Authority provides a total of \$2 million annually to St. Lawrence County, the towns of Massena, Louisville and Waddington, the villages of Massena and Waddington, Massena Central and Madrid-Waddington school districts that are located within the project boundary. NYPA provided over \$767,000 in funding to the host communities for the operation and maintenance of local parks, beaches and boat launches in support of local recreation.

NYPA’s commitment to a clean energy future includes investments in public facilities and education. Our Environmental Justice team has been deeply engaged with the community, offering energy literacy and weatherization workshops, and collaborating with the Massena Housing Authority to

upgrade facilities — a partnership that began in 2018.

Our employees are proud to give back to the community where many of them live, work, and raise their families. On August 6, more than 20 NYPA volunteers painted the community room at the Housing Authority’s Grasmere Terrace complex, using supplies donated by NYPA. Later that month, the Environmental Justice team sponsored the annual Community Education Day, providing food, educational games, and exhibits for about 100 guests. NYPA purchased LED lighting for the Housing Authority, with staff installing the new equipment to improve energy efficiency in residential units.

NYPA also completed major recreational projects in host communities. The ongoing drainage improvement project



**The New York Power Authority is giving interns a taste of real-world scenarios as part of its Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) initiative.** Photo courtesy of NYPA

on St. Lawrence Avenue in Waddington is slated for completion in spring 2025. Construction was finished on new tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts at Whittaker Park. Additionally, emerald ash borer tree removal at Louisville Landing and tree replanting at Massena Intake, Whalen Park, and Louisville Landing are enhancing these public spaces.

In addition to these efforts, we achieved significant operational milestones in 2024. We completed the final two motor operated disconnect replacements at the Massena substation and power distribution upgrades at the Long Sault Dam. Two generating unit rotor modifications were successfully finished, with work on a third now underway. Our team also brought four new breakers into service within the main switchyard, enhancing reliability and system performance. Furthermore, we completed two critical FERC audits — covering water impounding facilities and security — with no major findings, reflecting our ongoing commitment to safety, regulatory

compliance, and operational excellence.

Our Smart Path Connect transmission project is making significant progress. Line work, managed in partnership with contractor Michels, is expected to be completed by June 2025, with substation work scheduled for completion by June 2026.

More than three dozen schools and 36,000 visitors attended events at the Nicandri Nature Center and the Frank S. McCullough Jr. Hawkins Point Visitor Center in 2024 to learn about the region’s rich history and energy production.

These accomplishments represent just a portion of NYPA’s contributions to the community in 2024. Looking ahead to 2025, we are eager to tackle many exciting projects. We will continue to pursue opportunities to develop new renewable energy projects and support job growth and retention across various sectors of the economy. Thank you for your continued partnership and trust. Together, we’ll create a sustainable and prosperous future for the North Country.



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The North Country economy is built on low-cost renewable hydropower from the New York Power Authority’s St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project in Massena. By rebuilding its regional transmission grid and introducing renewables like energy storage and solar, the New York Power Authority is proud to continue the legacy of its partnership with the North Country for a clean, reliable and economical energy future.

Become a Partner, Contact [karen.white@nypa.gov](mailto:karen.white@nypa.gov)

Learn more about Low-cost Power & North Country Success Stories with the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency  
<https://slcida.com/rvrda/>







# PROGRESS

Webster defines progress as the movement towards a goal or to a further or higher stage.

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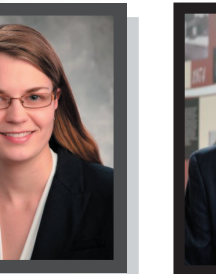
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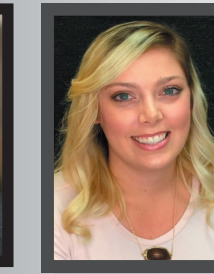
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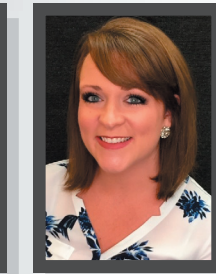
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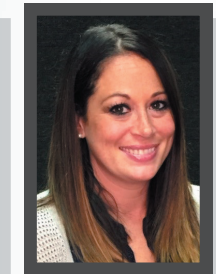
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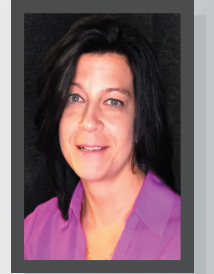
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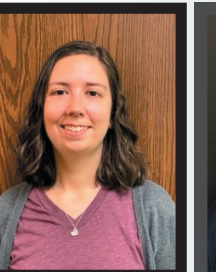
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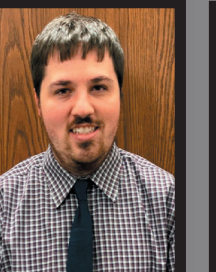
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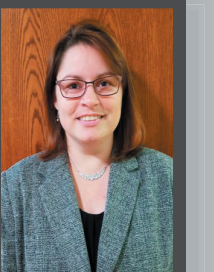
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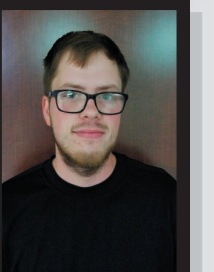
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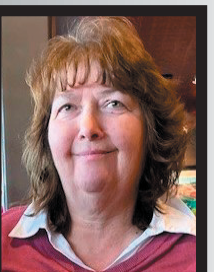
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# PROGRESS

## Micron plant could impact north country housing market



Home sales were up last year in Jefferson and Lewis counties, but down in St. Lawrence County. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

By JONATHON WHEELER  
jwheeler@wdt.net

WATERTOWN — Micron, a computer chip manufacturer planning to build a \$100 billion plant in Clay in Onondaga County, could have an impact on the north country's housing market.

Construction of Micron's campus near Syracuse, which will be largest semiconductor fabrication facility in the United States, is expected to create 5,000 construction jobs and will employ about 3,000 people initially. Over about the next 20 years, the megafab plant will create nearly 50,000 jobs, with 9,000 Micron employees and an estimated 40,000 "community" jobs, including suppliers, contractors and other positions supporting the operations.

Karen A. Peebles, president of Jeff-Lewis Board of Realtors and a Realtor herself, believes that, as things progress with Micron, a "trickle up" could be happening.

She said in places closer to Syracuse, such as Pulaski and Mexico, "houses are flying off the market," but said she doesn't believe it has had any effect on the north country housing market yet.

"I do see it trickling up. I do," she said. "I don't think a 45 minute to an hour drive to Syracuse is going to be a lot for some people."

Peebles said there are already people who live in the southern end of Jefferson County who travel to Syracuse for work, mostly traveling nurses.

She said she is unsure how far north the housing market could be affected,

but expects to see some movement in the market as a whole in the coming years.

Peebles also predicted that the real estate numbers in 2025 will be better than they were in 2024.

In Jefferson and Lewis counties this past December, 103 homes were sold for a median price of \$185,000, up from 98 in December 2023, according to data from the Jefferson-Lewis Board of Realtors.

The St. Lawrence County Board of Realtors reported 60 homes sold for a median price of \$136,500, which is down from 67 the year prior.

Nationally, Lance M. Evans, executive officer of the Jefferson-Lewis Board of Realtors and the St. Lawrence County Board of Realtors said that for the last three months, sales were up year-over-year.

Houses were on the market for an average of about seven weeks, and have been going down for the last few years. For example, prior to the pandemic, in 2019, in Jefferson and Lewis counties, homes were on the market for about 102 days. In St. Lawrence County during that same period, houses were on the market for 177 days.

"That's a huge drop in six years," Evans said.

The drop is occurring partially due to fewer homes on the market resulting in potential buyers purchasing the property quicker, Evans said.

Evans said the national forecast believes the mortgage rates will stabilize at about 6% for 2025, helping sales.



# The tradition continues for Freeman’s Taffy



Hannah Freeman, Scott Freeman, Lori Freeman, Carli Freeman, Chris Freeman, Heather Reed, Kyla Reed, John Reed, Cole Reed, Ryan Reed, Teresa Freeman and Shawn Freeman.

The Freeman Family is ready to begin its 130th year of making their delicious taffy products. The taffy stand at the top of the hill at the Lewis County Fairgrounds was originally owned and operated by Charlie and Minnie Ryan. They also operated the Green Gate Fine Candy Store on State Street. The Ryan’s built the taffy stand at its present location in 1895, and that original structure is still utilized today. Family stories recall that they started out only making only four flavors of taffy a far cry from their 21-flavor selection today. Mr. and Mrs. Ryan died in the 1950s, as did Clarence Ryan. Clarence’s brother-in-law, Lester Freeman and his wife Nora then took over the operation of the taffy business. They were later joined by Betty, Beryl and his wife Cornelia (Tip). In 1976, their son, Jim and his wife Christine took control of the stand. Their children and grandchildren grew up learning the trade and help to this day. Although the operation has changed hands through the generations, the actual process of taffy making has changed very little. The candy is still made on the same coal stove, although it has been converted to gas. The candy still gets cooled on white hard marbles and then hand-cut as it was done in 1895. While the taffy used to be hand pulled, it is now machine pulled. The old hook hangs on site as a reminder of days gone by. The recipe has also remained intact, using only sugar, water, flavors and coloring. You can buy a stick or kisses at the original stand on top of

the hill, still made the old way... As Beryl once stated, “with a lot of love and sweetness and a drop of water from heaven.” One special flavor of kiss is a regionally favorite as it contains pure Lewis County Maple Syrup. The layout of the fair has changed over the years, and, to spare some fairgoers the walk up the hill, the Freemans have added a second location next to the Information Booth. You will still want to head up the hill to see where the taffy was made and maybe grab a fresh sample, but our trailer also offers; sno-cones, nachos, popcorn and lemonade. Even though the taffy tradition centers around the week of the Lewis County Fair, their Pure Maple Taffy Kisses are also available at various north country businesses. These kisses can be found at Lowville Producer’s Cheese Store, Miller’s Meat Market, Thousands Islands River Rat Cheese Store, Burville Cider Mill, Massey Ranch, Colwell’s Farm Market, Brantingham Station, Steiner’s Sugar Shack and Widrick Maple. In

See TAFFY E4

## From Humble Beginnings to Award-Winning: The Story of Tim Fralick Custom Calls



Tim Fralick plays a turkey call. Contributed.

By MARION GRANT In 1985, a friend in the Adirondacks introduced Tim Fralick to the world of turkey hunting. Eager to begin, Tim quickly realized the cost of the gear and decided to craft his own calls. His inaugural creation? A piece of hand-cut slate nestled in a discarded Skoal can. This makeshift call sparked a deep dive into the art of game calling. Already a talented woodworker, Tim began experimenting with different wood species, discovering the nuances of each for box calls and pot calls. He meticulously honed his craft, learning to coax a symphony of sounds from his creations, from soft purrs to loud yelps that would make any turkey take notice. Tim then pioneered hybrid pot calls, pairing acrylic with various woods, a combination that garnered him 4th, 5th, and 6th place finishes at the National Wild Turkey Federation’s National Call Maker’s Competition. He expanded his repertoire to include the Burrville Bomber Long Box Call and effective locator calls. As his skills increased, he applied his expertise to crafting a diverse range of calls for deer, waterfowl, and predators. Each call is a testament to his dedication, meticulously hand-crafted in his workshop using a wood lathe. Only the reeds are sourced externally; every other component is born from his skilled hands and meticulously tuned and tested to ensure it delivers the perfect sound. While awards like 1st, 2nd, and Best of Class at the Virginia State NWTF Call Maker’s Competition are certainly a feather in his cap, Tim finds the greatest reward in the success of his customers. Their photos and stories truly fuel his passion.

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# Development Authority Celebrates 40 Years of Serving North Country

Forty years ago, the reactivation of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) at Fort Drum was met with great enthusiasm by the North Country, promising more jobs, an influx of people and a revitalized economy.

However, with the excitement, practical concerns arose: housing for the new residents, waste management, water supply, and sewage systems. The North Country needed an organization to address these infrastructure challenges, which would affect Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. No existing entity had the ability to cross regional lines and provide the necessary resources to address these issues – and do it quickly.

In response, the New York State Legislature created the Development Authority of the North Country on July 30, 1985. The organization held its first Board of Directors meeting on October 31, 1985, back when a new car cost \$9,011, a stamp was 22 cents and Ronald Reagan was president. One of the original board appointments and founding members was John B. Johnson, Jr., chairman of the Johnson Newspaper Corp. He was appointed by then-Governor Mario Cuomo and retired from board service in 2021, as the longest-serving member.

The Authority's first few years were spent preparing for the influx of Fort Drum troops, addressing immediate needs of water, sewer, housing and waste disposal, similar to challenges being faced by many local municipalities at the time.

■ 1986: A Solid Waste Management Agreement was signed with Jefferson and Lewis counties and the City of Watertown, leading to the creation of a state-of-the-art landfill to replace local facilities that could not meet strict new environmental

regulations. St. Lawrence County joined as a solid waste management partner in 1993.

■ 1987: A 12-mile, \$15.5 million-Fort Drum-to-Watertown sewer line began operation. The sewer line serves Fort Drum as well as sewer districts in LeRay, Champion and Pamela.

■ 1988: The Authority received \$12 million from the state to create its first housing program. This allowed the Authority to work with developers to build rental housing units in the Fort Drum impact area. The Authority implemented two more housing programs through the years and to date, has lent over \$58.9 million toward projects totaling \$433 million, assisting 4,165 units.

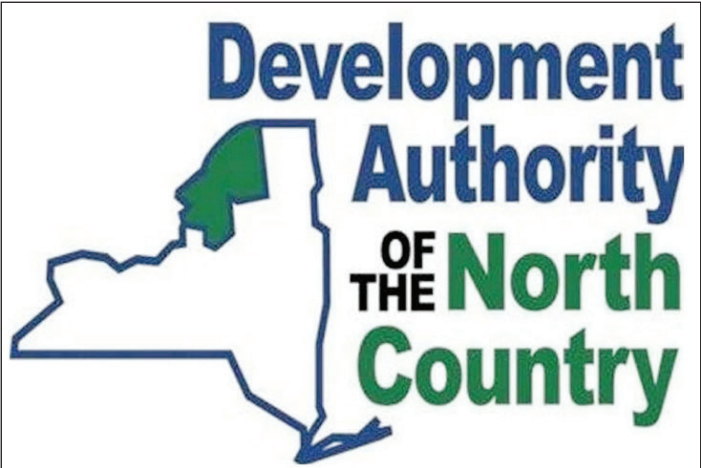
■ 1991: An 11-mile, \$8.5 million-water line between Watertown and Fort Drum began operating, serving not only Fort Drum but also water districts in Champion, LeRay and Pamela.

■ 1992: Opening of the regional Solid Waste Management Facility in Rodman.

These efforts addressed the immediate infrastructure needs due to Fort Drum's expansion, however new challenges emerged, including the need for operational and maintenance support for local water and sewer systems, business development, additional housing and broadband technology.

The Authority is self-supporting, without state funds or taxing power to support operations, generating revenue through services provided to customers. It offers services to municipalities on a contractual basis, using a shared services model to keep costs low. For example, one wastewater operator can oversee multiple municipal facilities, saving taxpayer dollars.

■ 1994: The Authority began offering contract operations of water and wastewater facilities,



at the request of the Town of LeRay. The Authority now has water and wastewater operations and maintenance contracts with 27 different municipalities across the region.

■ Late 1990s: A regional waterline was developed to benefit communities on the western side of Jefferson County, and a regional sewer line was developed along Route 3 to help several communities with their wastewater needs.

Authority staff work with communities that don't have the technical expertise on staff to help them understand complex technical challenges and develop cost-effective solutions such as when undertaking a significant wastewater facility upgrade. Technical services also include capital project management and management of community redevelopment projects like the Lyons Falls Mill in Lewis County and the J & L site clean-up in St. Lawrence County.

In 2000, the Authority recognized a critical gap in telecommunication services in the North Country that needed to be filled. The Authority began work to develop a fiber optic system to serve schools, businesses and other institutions in the region. In 2004, the Authority's Open Access Telecommunications Network (OATN) commenced operations,

providing broadband access to both the Jefferson-Lewis and St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES. Today, the OATN spans over 2,000 miles across the northern portion of the state, with connectivity to Syracuse, Utica and New York City. The network has gone far beyond schools and businesses and now provides the backbone for residential connections to the internet as well. The Authority does not provide internet service; its OATN is what enables internet service providers to offer service to customers.

The Authority continues to expand and enhance its broadband network to meet the ever-increasing demands of a technology-driven population. Authority staff work with county staff to identify gaps in service areas and develop plans and funding sources to fill those gaps. Over the last 20 years, the Authority has transitioned from a couple employees trying to figure out how to bridge the digital divide in the North Country to a Telecommunications staff of 14 who are recognized experts in their fields.

The creation of the broadband network was a key step in advancing economic development in the North Country, providing critical infrastructure needed to attract business to the region and to retain existing



A DANC employee works on a liner on the first day the regional landfill opened in November 1992.

employers. Another critical step is funding to attract business development.

Throughout its existence, the Authority has been the recipient of many state-awarded funds to attract business development and assist projects across the finish line. The Authority administers these regional funds on behalf of the state. They include funds for economic development, tourism and value-added agriculture, often providing gap funding that allows projects to move forward. Of the seven loan funds that the Authority administers, \$38 million has been lent to leverage \$172 million and create or retain almost 2,000 jobs in the North Country.

Originally staffed with two employees, the Development Authority has grown and evolved through the years to meet the needs of not only Fort Drum, but also its community partners throughout the region. The 97 employees of the Authority look forward to continuing to serve the needs of North Country communities for another 40 years.

# DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE NORTH COUNTRY

## 1985-2025

CELEBRATING

40

YEARS

of working with municipal partners and Fort Drum to address complex challenges: water & sewer infrastructure, housing, broadband, business development, waste disposal & more!

Development Authority OF THE North Country

[www.danc.org](http://www.danc.org)

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# Lewis County humane society saves wayward pets



Zena



Jumbo



Lightning

The Lewis County Humane Society shelter is located on the Pine Grove Road in Glenfield, just 7 miles outside of Lowville, NY. We are a no-kill shelter that takes in lost or stray dogs brought in by Dog Control for 17 townships in Lewis County, 1 township in Jefferson County, and the Fort Drum installation. The shelter works very hard to reunite them with their families. If the owner is not found, they are vetted, and made available for adoption.

The shelter also takes in surrendered animals from private individuals. These animals are also vetted and then put up for adoption.

We pride ourselves in helping our local animals, and took in just 5 non-local puppies this year. This was because we received a call from Lewis County in the State of Washington! After discovering the error, we decided to still dig in and help! We also took in a couple local medical transfers, and transferred out two dogs and four cats to the JC SPCA due to our construction project.

SUPPORT

We have strived to keep our adoption fees low, which we believe helps us to keep our animal stays short, and adopt animals out more quickly. Our work, and animal shelter operations, rely mostly on the generosity of our supporters because shelter expenses far exceed our revenue.

We want to continue to be the place people can turn to when they need help with sick or injured animals, but we can only do that with your continued support!

If you're wondering how you can help, here are a few ways: Adopt, become a member, donate supplies, volunteer, donate items for our raffles, or drop off your returnable bottles & cans. We are always grateful for monetary donations, which can be sent several ways to include our Facebook Donate button, PayPal to lewiscountyhumesociety@gmail.com, Venmo to @lewiscountyhumesociety, or you can mail checks to PO Box 682, Lowville, NY 13367. Of course, you can always drop off donations at our shelter. We are a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

BOARD & STAFF

We had two board members resign in 2024, Bre & Kaela Storey, leaving the secretary position vacant. Robin Waite filled the position in November.

We had many staff changes with several employees departing, to include the shelter manager. At the end of May, Barb Turck was promoted into the Shelter Manager position. We ended the year with new employees Josh Robinson and Sage Stoltzfus. Thank You to the old and Welcome to the new!

ADOPTABLE PETS

You can find all of our adoptable pets on our website at lewiscountyhumesociety.org. All adoptions include spay/neuter of pet, testing, vaccinations, flea/tick/worm meds, and microchip for dogs. Our website also has a fee list, our hours, what to do if you've lost/found an animal, and lots of other helpful info.

Here we'd like to highlight some of our fostered animals looking for their forever homes:

Zena is a female 6 year old pit. She was adopted out of the shelter back in 2020, and found her way back to us in April 2024 after being found abandoned at a home. Zena was ill, and at that point, it was thought she had Lymphoma. Her prognosis wasn't great, so she was sent to a hospice foster in June. After months of follow up vet visits, and her nodes not growing like expected with her diagnosis, the vet did a biopsy only to discover Zena does not have cancer after all! She was taken off all her medications and got a clean bill of health. The bad news is, the foster's own dog has started to not get along with Zena. Zena needs to be in a home where she is either the only dog or with a dog that is laid back and submissive. Zena does fine with dog-savvy cats. She would do best in a home with older children as she can play rough.

See HUMANE E5

# WATERTOWN FAMILY YMCA

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Mail: P.O. Box 682, Lowville, NY 13367

**Email:** [LewisCountyHumandSociety@gmail.com](mailto:LewisCountyHumandSociety@gmail.com)  
**Facebook:** Lewis County Humane Society 501c3  
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**SHELTER HOURS:**  
**Mon/Tue/Thu/Fri 2pm-6pm**  
**Sat 11am-4pm, Closed Sun & Wed**

## Taffy

From E2

addition to the Cream Cheese Festival, The Freeman's Taffy and Treats concession trailer has expanded to include Lewis County Food Truck Friday events. We would like to thank these businesses for carrying our products and allowing us to continue the tradition.

Sadly, Jim passed away on October 8, 2020. Although he, along with his expertise is missed; his wife Chris along with their children Heather and John Reed, Scott and Lori Freeman, Shawn and Teresa Freeman and five grandchildren Ryan, Cole and Kyla Reed, Hannah and Carli Freeman are carrying on this long-standing tradition.

130 years of a family tradition is something the Freeman Family is extremely proud of and wishes to thank the community who has played a large part in supporting this tradition.



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Oakley

# Humane

From E4

Oakley is a 5-6 year old female German Shepherd. She came to us 8 months ago when she was found wandering along Rt 812 between Croghan and Harrisville. Oakley has spent the last few months with a trainer to give her the best chance at finding an adoptive home. She will need someone to go slow with her and be patient. It takes her a moment to trust, and we understand that. Oakley is very smart, independent, loyal to her person, crate trained (loves her crate), and loves squeaky toys and tennis balls. She will need to be an only animal, and prefers a quiet home with no kids.

Lightning is a blind Australian Shepherd/Lab mix, 10 month old male puppy. He has more of the Australian Shepherd genes than lab, and is super smart. Even though he is blind, he is very outgoing and curious. With some consistent training, Lightning will make an amazing companion. If he goes to a home where there is another dog, he needs a canine sibling that understands Lightning has no boundaries. Because he is blind, he is a bit of a bull in a China shop, and likes to get right up in another dog’s face to get to know

them, often running into them. Lightning rides great in the car, is potty trained, loves to play, is a great snuggler, and has a very gentle demeanor.

Jumbo is a 4 year old male pit. Once upon a time, Jumbo had a loving home. Somehow he fell into the unsafe hands of a person who abandoned him in the woods, and then he ended up at the shelter. Imagine how confused Jumbo was about where his life had led him. Shelter life was not good for him, as it stressed him out. Thankfully, he landed an awesome board and train with Canine Sports Unlimited, where he receives the guidance and structure he needs. If you asked Jumbo what he prefers, he’d tell you that he wants to be your one and only pet, like a king of a castle. He absolutely loves humans! He wiggles his cute butt anytime he meets a new human friend. Jumbo is kid friendly, but is a big guy with lots of muscle, so he can be a lot of dog for young children. One of his favorite things to do is train; learning new things really stimulates his mind! He also likes hiking and taking adventures, which helps him socialize.

## VOLUNTEER/FOSTER

We are so blessed to have some of the amazing volunteers and fosters that we have. We’re always looking for more individuals or groups who want to lend a helping hand, or those who can foster animals. We are fostering more and more animals due to our construction, but also just because it’s a much better climate for the animals while they await their forever homes.

## GRANTS/MATCHES RECEIVED 2024:

In 2024 we received some wonderful grants to help with our capital construction project, to include: The Pratt-Northam Foundation, \$20,000; the Mika Foundation, \$16,000; Dorothy Arthur Fund \$6,200; The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, \$10,000 (Double our December match from Dec 2023); Lewis County \$5,000; Veterinary Care Foundation \$5,000; and as of December 31st, we have received \$9,500 of the \$11,500 in pledges for our Double our December 2024!

## PROJECTS/UPGRADES

It’s been a busy year with our capital improvement project construction. Our shelter started in a garage, and was slowly added on over many years, with a miniscule budget. To say we are excited at the prospect of having a fully remodeled and more comfortable facility for both our animals and our staff is truly an understatement!

We started construction in Dec 2023 with a replacement of a portion of our steel roof. In 2024 much work was done in our attic to house all the new HVAC equipment. Old insulation was removed, and new spray foam insulation was installed. New duct work is being installed. A new boiler has also been installed, and heat lines have been relocated into the attic space. Phase 1 which includes the reception area and first set of cat rooms was demolished and new cats rooms and temp housing/office were constructed. New wall panels, ceilings, doors & windows have been installed. A new isolation vestibule/storage and new dog food rooms have also been started. New electrical circuits, switches, outlets and lighting are being installed. And lastly new water lines were installed from the well to a new water pressure tank.

We are about to move into Phase 2, and still have a long way to go to project completion, but all good things take time.

We will be taking donations for our capital project through the end of construction. We are tracking all sponsors over \$500 to be displayed on plaques at project completion. You may specify whether you wish to be on the cat rooms or dog kennels plaque.

If you’d like to read more about our capital project, please see our web page at lewiscountyhumesociety.org.

## CHALLENGES

All animal shelters and rescues are experiencing unprecedented need right now. Our phones ring off the hook daily with requests to surrender animals with reasons ranging from the owner no longer being able to afford their pet, to landlords not allowing them. Often there are behavioral issues from lack of socialization, exercise, training, etc.

Many of us are going through “mandatory” construction so we will meet new standards that take effect in December of this year, or face being closed or fined. This equates to not being able to help as many animals, compounding the situation. Animals in shelters that are under construction are experiencing more stress due to extra noise and strangers in their spaces.

Another challenge we face is our town contracts, and trying to keep a balance between animals coming in on dog control, and private animal surrenders. With 19 contracts, we are often full with dog control which allows us very few selective intakes through surrender.

You can help with responsible pet ownership. The number one thing is to spay or neuter your pet. Think ahead before getting a pet, where will your family be in 10-15 years, because you will have a pet for this long! Pets are a financial responsibility, not much different than a child. If you cannot provide for lifetime care, please reconsider getting a pet. With cats, please keep them inside, especially if they are not fixed. With dogs, unless you are a dedicated, knowledgeable breeder actively working to improve a specific breed, there should be no reason to have a litter of puppies. We beg of you, please do not contribute to the suffering of homeless animals!

## THANKYOU

It’s hard to find a new way to say Thank You each year. Days can be long and hard, heart breaking, even downright depressing in the shelter business. But at the end of each day, it’s our customers, adopters and supporters who make us feel it’s all worthwhile. When you come in and adopt an animal, and we get to see the smile on both of your faces; when we receive updates of how amazing your new pet fits into your home and how much you love them; even when you just say a few kind words on a post; we feel we’re making a difference. We are thankful to be a place of comfort when people need help. It’s because of your support that we get to see a parvo puppy or a hit & run kitten go from knocking on death’s door to thriving in a loving home. We thank you for considering us worthy of handling your pet needs, and worthy of your unending support.

Please keep sharing our adoptions posts, speaking out against cruelty and animal abusers, advocating for people to spay/neuter, and holding fundraisers for us. It really does help more than you’ll ever know! We could never do this without our community’s support and we thank you!

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# WSB Enjoys Continued Growth In The North Country

When Watertown Savings Bank first opened its doors in 1893, few probably imagined their sustained growth and longevity.

WSB offers a wide range of mobile, online, and digital banking services and continues to retain the largest deposit market share, the top mortgage lending share and recognition as the top commercial lender in Jefferson County. They are also the largest charitable donor among all financial institutions in the area, which is made possible by their strong and loyal customer base.

Last year, the Bank opened a new 14,000 square foot state-of-the-art Lending Center situated next to their main office on Clinton Street. The Lending Center provides a dedicated facility to service their borrowers, while supporting their position as the number one lender in the community.

Since opening their doors 132 years ago, Watertown Savings Bank understands the local economy and the diverse banking needs of the community as they continue to help ensure the growth and development of the North Country.

# A Rising Multi-Discipline Design Firm Welcomes New Employees to the Team

Aubertine and Currier Architects, Engineers & Land Surveyors, PLLC is a NYS Certified Women Business Enterprise located in the City of Watertown. For over 25 years, we have been servicing clients throughout the North Country by leading projects with innovative, efficient design while growing long-lasting, professional relationships with clients and colleagues. Through decades of hard work and expertise, we have become a major player in the developments happening in our local communities.

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new hires this past year.

We are happy to welcome Julian Meares III to our Land Surveying Department as a Survey Technician. Julian hails from Bel Air, Maryland, and has lived in North Carolina, Florida, and Virginia before settling in Watertown, NY. He holds a degree in Geography from the United States Military Academy at West Point. He has previously worked as an electrician in both North Carolina and Florida and served as a Gym Manager in Virginia. Julian and his wife share their home with two German Shepherd mix dogs. Julian also played defensive line for the Army Football Team while attending West Point. In his free time, he enjoys visiting national parks and working out.

We are thrilled to announce the addition of Dave Cushing to our Structural Engineering Department. Dave resides in Lowville, NY, and will be graduating this Spring from SUNY Polytechnic Institute



with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, specializing in Structural Concentration. Dave worked as a carpenter with Cedarcrest Construction, focusing on residential construction projects where he developed an interest in structural systems. His new interest has inspired Dave to return to pursue his engineering career. Dave and his wife, Lizzie, have a son named Sebastian and an Australian Shepherd. Dave enjoys playing guitar, woodworking, and spending time outdoors. His hobbies include hiking, skiing, and ice fishing.

Lastly, we are pleased to announce the addition of Shyanne Jones to our Engineering Department as a Civil/Site Engineering

Technician. Shyanne grew up in Vinemont, Alabama, and currently resides in Watertown, NY. She holds an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Engineering Technology, which she pursued through the Fast Track program at her local community college while still in high school. Demonstrating remarkable commitment, Shyanne began her college education at just 16 years old. In 2020, Shyanne married her high school sweetheart, who serves in the U.S. Army. The couple returned stateside after spending the last 2 years in Germany. Shyanne is eager to dive into her career in engineering with Aubertine and Currier and we look forward to seeing her develop in her

new role.

For A&C, 2024 was yet another successful year. Our firm took part in several significant projects. A few highlighted projects include:

**Countryside Veterinary Clinic, Carthage, NY** - A&C provided architectural and engineering services for the expansion of Countryside Veterinary Clinic executing a two-phase project to enhance operational efficiency and patient care. Phase 1 introduced a 3,650-square-foot addition, incorporating a new reception and waiting area, four exam rooms, two comfort rooms, administrative and provider offices, a locker room, and an individualized treatment room. Essential support spaces, including

restrooms, janitorial areas, and storage, were integrated to optimize workflow. The addition was strategically connected to the existing facility on the east side, with a widened passageway designed to improve circulation and prevent bottlenecks between treatment spaces. Phase 2 focused on interior renovations, modernizing the treatment area with new equipment and expanding the staff break-room. Structural upgrades included modifications to the existing roof to accommodate the addition, along with the installation of a new EPDM roofing system over rigid insulation, applied atop the retained metal roofing. The expansion enhances the clinic's capacity, functionality, and overall efficiency, supporting its commitment to high-quality veterinary care.

**Cambray Court Multifamily Housing, Gouverneur, NY** - A&C provided full professional design services for a 12,000-square-foot multifamily housing project for United Helpers, focusing on accessibility, energy efficiency, and community-centered living. The project began with a comprehensive Physical Needs Assessment, laying the foundation for a design that prioritizes both functionality and sustainability. The building design incorporates accessible walkways, ramps, and patios leading into individual apartments, along with an accessible entry to the community building. The exterior envelope features durable and low-maintenance

See FIRM E7



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# SeaComm is dedicated to its membership, the community

MASSENA, NY— Since 1963, SeaComm has maintained unwavering dedication to the financial health and well-being of its membership. As such, 2024 was another year of continued success for the credit union.

In 2024, SeaComm continued to focus on enhancing its current offerings to improve the overall member experience. Through its “Enhanced Loyalty Rewards” program, SeaComm provided members a boost on certificates of deposit, IRA certificates, and reductions on loan rates. The credit union also announced the upcoming launch of its new online and mobile platform, Access Digital, which will roll out early in the New Year. This upgrade will include new features for the credit union’s members, including person to person payments, and the ability to open new share accounts from the mobile app or website. SeaComm continued to provide access to additional services as

well, including the Loan Engine pre-approval program, Homebuyer Dream Program®, and Benefits Plus® checking, which provides members with retail and travel savings, as well as identity theft protection.

SeaComm’s year-long celebration of the organization’s 60th anniversary was completed on June 6th with a special celebration for the credit union’s last remaining charter member, Earl Jackson, in recognition of his years of service and dedication.

The credit union’s “Pay-it-Forward” program continued to spread joy throughout the communities it serves by delivering random acts of kindness that impacted over 4,000 people. Throughout 2024, SeaComm provided hundreds of free meals to individuals at local restaurants, encouraged financial literacy through engaging trivia nights, sponsored evenings of free tickets and popcorn at movie theatres, donated school supplies to local

districts with students in need, covered the cost of admittance to a holiday brass orchestra, and much more. To further support its local communities, SeaComm has also encouraged staff members to participate in the organization’s “Do Some Good” Program, which grants them the opportunity to volunteer for a charity or cause of their choice during work hours. Through this program in 2024, SeaComm staff volunteered at various local charities including St. Peter’s of Massena, 4-H, St. Lawrence Power & Equipment Museum, Salvation Army, The Morning Side Cemetery in Malone, Emmanuel Congregation Summer Vacation Bible School, Ready-4-School Event in Massena, Light Up a Life and Helping Hands of Potsdam. In addition to these initiatives, SeaComm contributed more than \$323,450.00 in donations and sponsorships to local organizations including the Massena Memorial Hospital, Canton College Foundation, North

Country Children’s Museum, Canton-Potsdam Hospital, and many more.

Demonstrating a commitment to fostering creativity and innovation, SeaComm awarded four young entrepreneurs \$500 to aid the growth of their new businesses through the organization’s Summer Grant Program. SeaComm also awarded the Shirley J. Eagles scholarship of \$1,000 to ten college-bound high school seniors in support of their continued education.

SeaComm was proud to accept two prestigious Diamond Awards from the CUNA Marketing and Business Development Council. The credit union won the first in overall “Social Media” for credit unions with assets of \$500 million to \$1 billion, and second as Category’s Best “Diamond in the Rough,” for the organization’s “Plunky’s aMAZEing Race” sweepstakes. SeaComm was also awarded the 2024 Silver MAC Award from the Marketing Association

of Credit Unions in recognition of its Social Media.

In 2024, SeaComm was Certified™ by Great Place to Work® as elected by its employees for the fourth consecutive year. This distinguished award is based entirely on what current employees say about their experience working at SeaComm. Great Place To Work® is a global leader in workplace culture, helping organizations create a consistently and overwhelmingly positive employee experience. In 2024, 90% of SeaComm employees said it’s a great place to work, compared to 57% of employees at a typical US-based company.

Bauer Financial, an independent financial rating company, awarded SeaComm their Superior Five-Stars. The star ratings classify each credit union based upon a complex formula which factors in relevant data including, but not limited to: capital, historical trends, loan delinquencies, differences in the book and market values of

the investment portfolio, profitability, repossessed assets, reserves, charge-offs, regulatory compliance, and asset quality. It has deemed SeaComm as safe, financially sound, and that the organization is operating well above regulatory capital requirements.

With strong financial performance and a solid plan for the future, SeaComm is well positioned for another successful year ahead. SeaComm is a member owned financial cooperative, headquartered in Massena with over 55,370 members and assets exceeding \$776 million. The credit union has nine branches located in Massena, Potsdam, Malone, Canton, Ogdensburg, Plattsburgh, South Burlington, Essex, and Watertown. Membership is open to anyone who lives, works, worships or attends school in St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, Essex, Jefferson, and Lewis Counties, New York and Grand Isle, Chittenden and Franklin Counties, Vermont.

## Firm

From E6

materials, including vinyl shake and clapboard siding, architectural shingle roofing, PVC fascia and soffits, fiberglass windows, and storefront entrances. Energy efficiency was a key consideration, with enhanced insulation in ceilings and exterior wall cavities, as well as closed-cell spray foam insulation in crawl space rim joists. New HVAC and domestic hot water systems were installed to improve performance and sustainability. Interior upgrades include new doors, lighting, flooring, and fully renovated kitchens and bathrooms equipped with modern fixtures and appliances. Additionally, four living units were designed to meet ADA compliance standards for mobility and vision accessibility. The project also features two common laundry spaces and a central community gathering area for residents. The design aligns with New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) energy efficiency standards. Site improvements enhance accessibility and safety, including new concrete walkway routes connecting buildings to on-site parking, accessible parking spaces, improved drainage, and dedicated trash, recycling, and bus stop shelters. Additional site enhancements include new lighting and walkways to improve visibility and security.

In the coming year, A&C is honored to once again host the 4th Annual Jefferson Community College CSTEP Leadership Conference, which has been on hold since 2020. CSTEP, the Collegiate Science & Technology Entry Program, is dedicated to fostering academic success and preparing students for careers in engineering, healthcare, mathematics, science, and technology. This event aims to broaden students’ perspectives on regional businesses and career opportunities while showcasing the exceptional quality of life Jefferson County offers. The ultimate goal is to inspire them to return to our region post-graduation and establish fulfilling careers within the community.

Aubertine and Currier always welcomes resumes from qualified applicants in the fields of Architecture, Structural or Civil Engineering, Land Surveying and Construction Inspection. If you are looking for a rewarding career at a design firm, we might be the right fit for you! For further information on our firm, please visit us on Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn, and check out our website [www.aubertinecurrier.com](http://www.aubertinecurrier.com). We cannot wait to see what 2025 will bring!

## Fuller Insurance Agency: Local Service, Local Knowledge



Fuller Insurance Agency, Inc. is an independent insurance agency offering all types of insurance from auto, property and life to all types of clients including individuals, businesses, not-for-profits and public entities.

The second generation agency has been serving clients throughout Northern New York for over 44 years. Wilfred T. “Bill” Fuller founded the agency on State Street in Carthage in September, 1980. While many things have changed since 1980, the agency remains committed to providing local service with local knowledge.

Adam Fuller commented on the current state of insurance. “Insurance, particularly auto insurance, is in a tough spot right now. We call it a hard market. Insurance companies are taking

rate increases, non-renewing policies and some are even ceasing to write new business.” He added, “more than ever, having a local independent insurance agent is important, especially one who provides local service with local knowledge, to help you navigate during turbulent times.”

In July, 2021, Fuller Insurance Agency became appointed to represent Erie Insurance in New York. Erie Insurance (Erie, PA and Rochester, NY) offers a full line of property/casualty insurance products including auto and homeowners insurance as well as commercial insurance. Adam Fuller, agency principal, said “we’re extremely proud and honored to represent Erie Insurance. We both share similar values and a commitment to

service for our clients.”

In addition to Erie Insurance, Fuller Insurance Agency represents numerous other national and regional carriers plus access to specialty insurance programs. For a full list of insurance carriers and programs, please visit <https://www.fullerinsuranceagency.com/partners.html>.

Aaron Fuller, agency principal, added “being an independent agent means we have choices for our clients. Today, that means offering service in-person, phone, email, text or on our agency’s consumer portal app.”

Fuller Insurance Agency, Inc. is located at 110 S. School

Street, Carthage and at 10 Court Street, Canton. The agency has eight staff members who share over 100 years of combined insurance experience. They can be contacted in Carthage at 315.493.2110 or in Canton at 315.386.3403 or visit them on the web: [www.fullerinsuranceagency.com](http://www.fullerinsuranceagency.com).





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Johnson Lumber Company, LLC, also known as Johnson Pine, celebrates its 48th year of business in 2025! Since our last update, we have much to share as far as progress and plans. In 2017, neighboring property was purchased to expand operations including the addition of our new building as well as two warehouses. Our new building currently houses our second planer mill, allowing us to plane an additional 40,000 BF per day! Also within this building are our upgraded state-of-the-art pre-finishing machines for our tongue and groove pine and trim. Our office and sales team moved into the new building, and trucks are now able to be loaded inside out of the elements. Around the yard other improvements have also been made including a reorganized log yard that includes lighting for evening deliveries, sprinkler system to water our log supply as needed, installation of a five head stenner in our sawmill to utilize more from each log, and the reintegration of a third dry kiln. A partnership with National Grid allowed for upgraded drives throughout the mill to reduce energy demand load. As we continued to grow, our original pre-finishing line was put back into service and now runs as needed to fulfill special orders and miscellaneous items, simultaneously to the new machines. For deliveries, we invested in two tractor trailers, as well as three fifth wheel trucks to pull 34 foot tarped sided trailers for smaller deliveries. New multi-directional Combilift forklifts were purchased to organize inventory and load trucks with ease. To best utilize by-products, Johnson Lumber now bales a sawdust/shavings/fiber blend into 4 foot round bales. These round bales are used by farms for bedding all over NYS. We now have a tarping system for all incoming trucks, to allow easy, safe tarping over the lumber units for protection. Beginning in Spring 2025, we are excited to offer pine mulch in various colors to wholesale accounts in bulk. All improvements and changes have been made strategically to optimize efficiency and safety!



In the lumber industry, Johnson Lumber is well known for high quality products. Our lumber ships across the country, truckloads to Minnesota, Tennessee, Michigan, Virginia, Florida and more! Our membership in Lumber Merchandising Corporation, and partnership with a wholesaler in New England, has opened new avenues of growth for our products. The future is bright and Johnson Lumber is proud to be part of the Carthage and Lewis County community!

Current plans for the future include improvements to our sawmill, product growth into additional states, and continued efficiency, safety and quality control measures. Transitioning to three of the second generation is also in the works!

Our progress and success are in major thanks to our wonderful crew. Our dedicated employees are the key and we are honored to have such wonderful individuals on our team. In addition to our team, our retailers are the best partners we could ask for. We are grateful to have so many wonderful lumber retailers, promoting and stocking our products, and distributing them to their fine contractors and homeowners.



# PROGRESS

## Plans moving along for Air Products green hydrogen facility in Massena



What was once a vacant plot of land on Pontoon Bridge Road now has buildings added as work continues to prepare the site for the Air Products green hydrogen facility. Bob Beckstead/Watertown Daily Times

By BOB BECKSTEAD  
bbeckstead@wdt.net

MASSENA — Winter snow and cold haven’t stopped Air Products and Chemicals from continuing to move forward with plans for a green hydrogen production facility on the Pontoon Bridge Road in the town of Massena.

Air Products and Chemicals is developing approximately 84.4 acres of land to harvest up to 35 metric tons of green hydrogen daily using renewable power that will be supplied by the New York Power Authority.

The facility will produce liquid-hydrogen through electrolysis using the hydroelectric power. The company is investing about \$500 million in the facility.

The process at the site will use approximately 1 to 1.2 million gallons of water a day, and the company plans to spend about \$300,000 a year to purchase water from the village for the operation.

The company announced its plans to construct the facility in July 2022. New York Power Authority trustees had awarded Air Products 94 megawatts of low-cost St. Lawrence hydropower — 84 megawatts of preservation power for 10 years and 10 megawatts of preservation power for three years. The 10-megawatt allocation could be extended or replaced with another hydropower resource that becomes available.

Initial site work began in October 2023, with construction anticipated to take about three years. Buildings were put on site last year so they could work indoors during the 2024 winter season. The plan is to start wrapping up construction this year, with start-up scheduled for March through August 2026. They hope to have everything wrapped up by third quarter of 2026 with the project scheduled to be online by the first quarter of 2027.

Company officials have said the project will bring 90 jobs to the area — about 64 at the facility and another 26 jobs in either an office location somewhere in this area or at the site. That’s in addition to the jobs that created during construction work.

The company plans to spend about \$300,000 a year to purchase water from the village of Massena for the operation. The site will use approximately 1 to 1.2 million gallons of water a day. Of that, about 300,000 gallons will then be returned to the St. Lawrence



Land was cleared on the Pontoon Bridge Road to make way for the Air Products green hydrogen facility that’s projected to be operational in 2027.

Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times

River cleaner than when it came out.

Village trustees signed off on the water agreement during a March 2024 meeting and approved an escrow agreement with Air Products in November 2024.

Since announcing plans for the facility, Air Products and Chemicals has made several community contributions. Among them, the company partnered with the Massena Volunteer Fire Department in September 2023, donating \$5,000 to the fire department to enhance both training and equipment that will be available in the case of an emergency.

In September 2024, Air Products announced that it would be installing charging stations around Massena as part of their permitting and licensing to operate a green hydrogen facility. The company needed and received approval from both the village and town boards to move forward with the installation.

The company also announced last year that they had partnered with the Northern New York Community Foundation to establish the \$50,000 Air Products Greater Massena Community Fund. The Northern New York Community Foundation is overseeing administration of the

### Massena Green Hydrogen Project



An artist’s rendering shows what the new Air Products green hydrogen facility will look like when it opens on the Pontoon Bridge Road in the town of Massena. Air Products photo

fund and managing its awards.

The funding from the Air Products Foundation offers grants of up to \$7,500 per applicant. The grants are available to qualified and approved 501(c)(3) organizations and local governing bodies for programs, projects and initiatives that will improve the quality of life for residents in the Greater Massena community and St. Regis Mohawk Reservation.

The first grant recipients

were announced in October 2024. They included \$5,000 for the Massena Arts and Theater Association to support the theater’s restoration, including marquee restoration and façade stabilization.

Other funding in the first round, totaling \$32,500, included \$7,500 for the Holistic Life Foundation to support the Massena Central School District’s Mindful Moment Program, and \$7,500 for the Police

Activities League of Massena to enhance the safety and security of their facility with the installation of security windows and a door opener that’s compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Funding also included \$7,500 for the Massena Salvation Army to complete the construction of a commercial-grade kitchen, which will allow them to provide three hot meals a week for St. Lawrence

County residents facing food insecurity, and \$5,000 for Massena Hospital to support the renovation of the emergency department. That includes upgrading the behavioral health room, refreshing staff areas with new furniture, refreshing patient exam treatment rooms, creating a private family consultation area, and improving security measures.

Most recently, the Massena Public Library announced that it had received \$6,736 to establish a Memory Cafe. A memory cafe is a social gathering for people with memory loss and their caregivers. Memory cafes are held in a safe and welcoming environment where people can connect with others who understand what they’re going through.

As part of the Air Products Greater Massena Community Fund, the company and the Northern New York Community Foundation announced a \$25,000 Air Products Greater Massena Scholarship Fund. The scholarship opportunity was available to students in St. Lawrence and Franklin counties. They were eligible for up to \$5,000 per applicant if they were applying for admission in any year of study to a college or university, or vocational, technical or trade school.



**See NORTH STAR F&E**



# 2024 Tourism Promotion Progress with the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce

## EMBRACING A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO TOURISM

As the designated tourism promotion agency for the County, the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce comprises both a membership services team and a dedicated tourism promotion team. In 2024, the Chamber's tourism efforts were led by Tiffani Amo, Director of Tourism, and Kathryn Puleo, Tourism & Events Manager. Throughout the year, tourism promotion efforts were guided by a commitment to authenticity and sustainability with a mission to support initiatives that would contribute to making St. Lawrence County a place where people want to live which in turn makes it a place where people want to visit.

## LEVERAGING GRANT FUNDING TO SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMMING

In 2024, the tourism team kicked off two major grant-funded projects secured through a New York State Economic Development Agency (EDA) sub-award grant, including a sport tourism initiative and a Canadian Marketing initiative. Ongoing projects funded through the American Rescue Plan Act in partnership with the Industrial Development Agency also moved forward, including the use of an online booking platform and the production and distribution of rack cards and brochures throughout New York State and Canada. Funds leveraged through these successful grant applications totals more than \$400,000 over the duration of the projects.

## SPORT TOURISM INITIATIVE

The EDA-funded sport tourism initiative is aimed at fostering economic growth and community development through strategic planning that will maximize sport-related opportunities that utilize the area's natural beauty, recreational assets, and vibrant community spirit to attract visitors and stimulate the local economy. Visit [www.visitstlc.com/sport-tourism/](http://www.visitstlc.com/sport-tourism/) to learn more.

## CANADIAN MARKETING INITIATIVE

The EDA-funded Canadian marketing initiative focuses on attracting Canadian visitors to the area year-round through print and digital marketing efforts including the creation of 'Weekend Getaway' itineraries designed to make it easy for visitors to plan a trip and explore all the many and widespread hidden gems throughout the county.

## TOURISM EVENT SUPPORT & PROMOTIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**2024 Tourism Dinner**  
More than 50 industry partners came together from all corners of the county for the Chamber's annual tourism dinner. The event, themed "S.E.E. the Big Picture," showcased the pivotal role of tourism in the county with consideration to Sustainability, Education, and Engagement. Keynote speaker and sport tourism industry expert Grant MacDonald of Cimarron Global Solutions shared initial discoveries, opportunities, and strategies from the Chamber's ongoing sport tourism project. Two tourism excel-



A passenger walks past a St. Lawrence County tourism mural in the baggage claim area at Ogdensburg International Airport in September 2022. Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times

lence awards were also presented, including the 2024 'Best to the Guest' Tourism Excellence Award to Otto's Abode, of Wanakena, for outstanding customer service, and the 2024 Best Destination Marketing Initiative Award to SLC Arts for executing an exceptional marketing campaign for the annual North Country Arts Festival.

## REGIONAL, STATEWIDE, AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

2024 was a year of investing in local partnerships and growing a wider and stronger tourism network domestically and internationally. Through a combined effort of tourism and chamber staff, team members attended the New York State Tourism Industry Association conferences in partnership with I Love New York and other key tourism part-

ners throughout New York State, as well as the Akwesasne Tourism Summit and the 1000 Islands Binational Tourism Summit to bolster connections with our tourism counterparts across the border and throughout the seaway region. To support promotional efforts for history & culture groups in preparation of America's 250th Commemoration, STLC was also represented at the New York State 250th Commemoration Summit.

## 2024 BASSMASTER ELITE SERIES

The Bassmaster Elite Series made another stop in Waddington, hosting more than 3,400 attendees and receiving a "Peak Performance" award from Bassmaster. Promotional efforts included a digital marketing campaign throughout New York State and Canada along with radio interviews, TV

coverage, and more.

## 2024 TOTAL ECLIPSE PROMOTIONS

Tourism promotions for the total eclipse included printed brochures and a custom landing page on the VisitSTLC.com website showcasing information on where and how to view the eclipse, along with sales and distribution of viewing glasses, and collaboration with town and city officials, universities, businesses, and volunteer organizations to organize and promote safe viewing opportunities throughout the county.

## OUT-OF-COUNTY TOURISM TRADE SHOWS

The Chamber provided support for partners at trade shows throughout New York State and surrounding states, including organizations like the Black Lake Chamber of Commerce, the

Town of Massena, the St. Lawrence Valley Paddlers, the St. Lawrence Mountain Biking Association, and Potsdam Pride. The Chamber/Tourism team also attended the Ottawa Travel &

Vacation show with partners from the Seaway Visitor at Eisenhower Lock, the Frederic Remington Art Museum, and Fort de la Presentation.

## RESIDENT-FIRST TOURISM IN 2025

In 2025, sustainable tourism initiatives will delve even deeper into a sentiment of 'Resident-First Tourism' which will prioritize the needs and preferences of local communities when it comes to supporting existing tourism assets as well as when and how to pursue new tourism opportunities.

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# Northern Beginnings Realty blossoms



Northern Beginnings Realty

Northern Beginnings Realty was founded in November of 2023, by Broker/Owner Amanda Mattimore, a lifetime resident of the North Country. Before starting Northern Beginnings Realty LLC, Amanda had over 9 years of Real Estate experience. With over 250 transactions and years of continued education she decided it was time to start her own dream. 2024 was Northern Beginnings Realty LLC first full year in business, helping over 25 families buy or sell their properties. We have hired two brand new agents

and hired an experienced agent from another brokerage. Amanda and her family built an office in Croghan, which they are very proud of. Our goals for 2025 are to make Northern Beginnings Realty LLC a household name in Jefferson and Lewis County. We are looking forward to business growth so that all four of our agents can become full-time and be blessed to help our community. Northern Beginnings Realty LLC are very Thankful for the opportunity to serve you!

# Augustinian Academy: A Pillar of Education, Faith, and Community in the North Country

Proudly serving the communities of Carthage, Fort Drum, Copenhagen, Lowville, Beaver Falls, and surrounding areas, Augustinian Academy has built a well-earned reputation as a top-tier educational institution for Pre-K through 8th-grade students. Since its founding in 1885 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Academy has remained deeply committed to providing a faith-based education grounded in academic excellence, service, and faith formation. The school is known for its small class sizes, dedicated staff, and strong family-oriented environment, which all contribute to a personalized educational experience. Augustinian Academy offers an education that spans beyond academics to nurture physical, emotional, and spiritual growth. This commitment extends to a wide range of extracurricular programs and opportunities for character development and community service. While Augustinian Academy is a Catholic school, the foundations of this faith offer spiritual formation for students of all denominations.

In addition to its commitment to academic and community service, Augustinian Academy has a long history of organizing events that bring the community together. The school's annual Gala, now in its 21st year, has become a cornerstone of the community's social calendar. Originally envisioned by the late principal Sister John Mary as a fun night for staff, parishioners, and community members, the Gala has evolved into a major fundraising event. This year, attendees will enjoy a 1980s theme with "Retro Rewind-



An 80s Night to Remember," featuring dinner, dancing, silent auction, live music, raffles, prizes and more. The event is made possible through the generosity of local Major Event Sponsors- Carthage Area Hospital, Rob Sligar with Cross Country Mortgage, the Sister of St. Joseph, Iseneker Funeral Home, The Knights of Columbus- Father John Cosmis Council 291, and Indigo Inkwell. Several other area businesses and individual sponsors contribute through sponsorships and dona-



tions, offering gift certificates, raffle items, and gift baskets for the silent auction. These contributions play a vital role in ensuring the continued success of the school's mission. The Academy takes pride in never turning away a student due to an inability to pay tuition, keeping costs as affordable as possible to ensure access to quality education for all families. The Academy's largest annual fundraiser, the St. James Fair, is another beloved community event. With its wide variety of food, live music, amusement

rides, games, and carnival attractions, the fair draws record crowds every summer. This year marks the fair's 51st year. The St. James Fair is a testament to the school's deep roots in the community and its role in bringing people together. In terms of academics, Augustinian Academy offers a rigorous curriculum that not only meets New York State Standards but is also accredited through Cognia. This accreditation assures that we are rooted in our Catholic identity while constantly improving and expanding NYS Standard achievement. Eighth-grade students have the opportunity to accelerate in subjects like Math, earning high school credits through NYS Regents courses. The Academy also provides additional support for students with Individualized Educational Plans and 504 Plans in partnership with local public schools. The school's comprehensive approach includes regular classes in physical education, music, art, and technology, along with a modern library and computer lab. Students also have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities such as Science Olympiad, Battle of the Books, and intramural sports. Recently competing at the Adirondack Regional Science Olympiad, students in grades 5th-8th earned an overall 2nd place, earning the opportunity to compete at the State level this spring. The school offers an After-care



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See ACADEMY F6



# 2024 Year in Review

## GYMO Architecture, Engineering and Land Surveying, DPC

GYMO Architecture, Engineering, & Land Surveying, DPC had an eventful 2024, filled with community engagement, professional accomplishments, and exciting projects that continue to enhance the North Country region.

GYMO remained actively involved in local events and initiatives throughout the year. Staff attended the Tug Hill Commission's Local Government Conference, Naturally Lewis' Economic Development Conference, SUNY Potsdam Local Government Conference, Spring Conference for Public Housing Authorities, and the Clayton Climate Smart Community Public Information Session. We were also proud to be sponsors for the Tyler R Christman Foundation's 3rd Annual ATV/UTV "Ride for Ty" and the 203rd Lewis County Fair, among other local events and initiatives. The team enjoyed time together at the Great Watertown North Country Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament, as well as our own annual GYMO Open and BBQ at Thompson Park Golf Course. We wrapped up the year with the annual North Country Festival of Trees, where we were excited to win the "Most Elegant" award. Our team members are not just making a living—they're making a difference, and we are proud of their individual causes of choice.

This year brought significant professional growth within our team. The firm was able to grow with quality individuals who are

committed to improving the North Country. We are proud to announce that the following people joined GYMO in 2024.

**Construction Management:**

- Neal Moser - Senior Construction Manager, bringing years of experience in overseeing largescale projects and ensuring quality execution.
- Mark Cote - Senior Construction Manager, utilizing his expertise in project coordination and site management to support our clients.

**Engineering:**

- Matthew Mehaffy, PE - Senior Project Engineer specializing in Structural Engineering, providing critical analysis and design solutions for various projects.
- Ryan Aubertine and Connor Chawgo - Design Engineers, contributing to project development with innovative engineering solutions.

**Architecture:**

- Konrad Krysztofski - Architecture Intern from Endicott College, gaining valuable hands-on experience in the field.

**Administration:**

- Emily Rogers - Administrative Assistant for Construction Management, helping to streamline operations and support project teams.
- David Nisley - Marketing Coordinator, enhancing GYMO's outreach, branding, and communication strategies.

Several of our team members also achieved notable accomplishments this year. McKenzie Fisk-Kamide further

demonstrated her leadership skills by graduating from the Jefferson Leadership Institute, a prestigious program aimed at developing the next generation of community leaders. Zach Scordo received his Professional Land Surveying License. Peter Clough, Director of Construction Management, was honored as the newest president of the Northern New York Builders Exchange at their annual dinner, a well-deserved recognition of his contributions to the industry.

As we look ahead, GYMO is excited to continue growing our team and is actively hiring for several positions, including Design Engineer, Project Engineer, Senior Project Engineer, and Senior Construction Manager.

GYMO also continued to expand our reach and impact through a range of projects, working with a variety of healthcare facilities, municipalities, private residences, and non-profit organizations.

**Existing Projects:**

- The Historical Globe Building - This iconic mixed-use building will soon feature BOCES in the vibrant commercial space on the first floor and stylish market-rate apartments on the second floor.
- Downybrook Nature Reserve (OBI) - Land surveying and map designs
- Ducks Unlimited – ALTA surveys
- Watertown Savings Bank's Lending Center – The new lending center was completed, with a courtyard and elevated bridge connecting over 40 offices with

existing headquarters.

- City of Watertown's Thompson Park – Phase 1 of the Trail Expansion Project was completed, enhancing accessibility and connectivity throughout the western area of the historic park.
- Oswego County's Camp Zerbe – A new ADA accessible bathroom and new sewer system were designed and constructed.
- Thousand Islands Central School District – Phase 1 of elementary school renovations is complete! The \$23 million capital project included the removal of over 35,000 square feet of asbestos plaster ceilings, upgrading heating systems, installing new energy-efficient LED lighting, reconstructing parking lots, and installing new fire alarm systems and public address systems for enhanced safety.
- Altmar-Parish-Williamstown Central School District – Phase 2 of construction was completed.

The project included a new auditorium with increased seating capacity, state-of-the-art sound and lighting system, an expanded stage, and a green room to support district theatrical performances.

- Town of Potsdam's Parks - The Town of Potsdam hired GYMO for Grant Writing and Engineering Services. Conceptual designs have been developed for Unionville Park located in Potsdam and Postwood Park located in Pierrepont. These designs will be used to apply for

The New York State Office of Parks and Historic Preservation grants.

- Town of Tupper Lake – An Engineering Report and Environmental Review were completed for the modification of Water and Sewer District #1.
- Town of Henderson - GYMO assisted the Town of Henderson in securing over \$29 million in grants and completed Engineering Plans and Specifications that have been approved by the NYS DEC and EFC for a new sewer collection and treatment system for over 400 residences and businesses in Henderson Harbor and the Town of Henderson.
- Town of Watertown – Since 2005, GYMO has completed numerous technical studies, Engineering Reports, and Engineering Designs for the Northeast Water District #7. Recently, the Town was awarded \$5 million in grant funds and a \$3 million 0% interest loan for the project. GYMO is completing final design plans for a 2025 start of construction.
- City of Watertown – City Hall first floor renovations
- Multi-family housing units for housing authorities and other organizations in Malone, Massena, Ogdensburg, Wilna, Watertown, Tupper Lake, West Carthage, and the North Jefferson Improvement Association.

**New Projects:**

- Village of Hammond – Sewer Study
- Village of Mannsville – Lilac Park Drive Drainage project
- Village of Lowville

- Groundwater Well Development project
- Town of Potsdam – Bridge Replacement
- 136 Court Street – mixed-use renovations
- Thousand Islands Central School District's High School Renovations - Phase 2 construction
- Jefferson County SPCA – Phase 2 Expansion Project
- Town of Webb Union Free School District Capital Project
- General Brown Central School District Capital Project
- Morristown Central School District Capital Project
- Stockbridge Central School District Capital Project
- Madison Central School District Capital Project
- H. Douglas Barclay Courthouse – Exterior Renovation Project
- Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust – Concept Plans and Conservation Easements
- Jefferson County Dog Control – Renovations
- Claxton Hepburn – Renovation Plans for Grant Funding
- Lewis County Health System – New Surgical and Procedure Offices

We extend our sincere gratitude to our valued clients and partners for their continued trust and collaboration. GYMO remains dedicated to delivering quality architecture, engineering, land surveying, and construction management, and we eagerly anticipate another year of progress and innovation in 2025.

# Stony Creek Country Store carries a variety of products

Stony Creek Country Store is located in Deer River on State Route 26, about 21/2 miles south of Carthage. Our bulk foods part includes baking supplies, spices, soup mixes, pasta, candy and snacks, cereal, canning supplies and gift items. We bake our own bread, pies and cookies. At the deli, you can order subs and sandwiches, have party platters made or get cold cuts for making your

own sandwiches. We take phone orders for quick pick-up.

Spring opens our soft ice cream window and brings in flower and vegetable plants from local greenhouses. We carry garden seeds and mulch hay, too. In the summer, there are vegetables and fruit from local sources. Potato and macaroni salads and coleslaw are available then, too. Fall brings mums, apples

from nearby orchards and apple cider.

Brown eggs and a lot of the pork products come from our own farm. We have some cuts of goat meat and goat feta and mozzarella cheeses from our own goats. We sell maple syrup from our own sugarbush. The applesauce and soups in the freezer are homemade here at the store.

Potpies and frozen meal options such as lasagna,

sweet & sour chicken, and chicken broccoli stuffed shells make meal preparations much easier. Looking

for gifts or handcrafts? Come in and check out our selection of knitted items, embroidered and crocheted things,

and candles. We also carry a variety of essential oils and DoTerra products."

See STONY F6



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# Stony

From F5

Pure honey is available from local sources. We do custom baking by order and can make some gluten- or sugar-free things. There are a variety of party platters to choose from such

as snack trays, veggie trays, cheese and crackers, and regular meat and cheese trays. We can make rolls to go with the tray or make a sub or sandwich tray that's ready to serve. We support a lot of local businesses here. There is meat from Red Barn Meats, milk from Black River Valley Natural, coffee from Tug Hill Artisans, dry brine

from Miller's Meat Market, and Croghan bologna from Croghan Meat Market. We also carry maple sugar products from Sollyjon's Maple and Lyndaker's Maple Orchard. Flavored maple syrups and maple hard candy comes from Sterling Maple. We accept debit and credit cards and food stamps. Our store hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m.

to 5 p.m. on Saturday. We are closed Sunday. Mark your calendar for our Open House the first weekend in June. There is a free lunch and a storewide discount on your purchases that Friday and Saturday. You can contact us at 315-493-0750 if you have questions or orders. Thank you, friends and customers, for stopping in to shop at the store!



Ready to serve you at Stony Creek Country Store are in front, Ernest Yoder, and standing, from left, Lily Lapp, Savilla Steria, Carla Newswanger, Gabriella Steria, Larissa Lyndaker and Gretchen Yoder.

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Wolff's Body Shop has been serving Lewis County and the surrounding area for 64 years! Beginning in 1961, founder Jim Wolff opened the shop behind his home at 9850 Main St, Croghan. Tom and Ron Wolff purchased the growing business from their father in 1988 and relocated the shop to its present location at 9411 State Route 812, Croghan. Since that point, there have been two expansion projects designed to accommodate their growing clientele. In 2013 Scott Moshier, a then 12-year employee, purchased the business from the Wolff brothers with a vision of providing the highest quality auto body repairs. Also serving their customers are Manager- Greg Dermady, and Technicians- Carl Schermerhorn, Zach Pelo, Jeff Covey, and Jaden Kline. These men are specialists in collision repair and take great pride in their workmanship. Wolff's Body Shop is a PPG certified collision repair facility and uses only the highest quality PPG water-based finishes. They also offer 24-hour towing and have the most up to date equipment and training to keep up with the demand of repairing ever changing vehicle technology. Their business hours are 7:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Monday- Friday, and by appointment on Saturday. They would like to express their appreciation for the community's continued support and confidence in their auto body services. Please check out their website at- wolffsbodyshop.com and their Facebook page.



Scott Moshier - Owner



wolffsbodyshop  
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www.wolffsbodyshop.com



## North Star

From D2

the quality of life for our community through comprehensive, patient-centered healthcare. We want to express our profound gratitude to our dedicated team—including our employees, medical staff, foundation members, auxiliary teams, hospital foundation,

and board of directors. Your unwavering commitment, along with the strong support from our community, is the driving force behind our ability to provide exceptional patient-centered healthcare services right here in your hometown. Together, we look forward to a year of growth, innovation, and continued excellence, reinforcing our role as your trusted neighborhood healthcare system.

## Academy

From F4

program where students can take part in activities such as baton twirling, drama club and arts and crafts while also leaving time to work on homework and get the help they need. These efforts reflect Augustinian Academy's dedication to fostering well-rounded individuals who are prepared for both academic success and lifelong learning. Augustinian Academy's commitment to academic excellence, faith and service has made it a cornerstone of the community, offering a safe, nurturing environment

where students thrive both in and out of the classroom. With a focus on affordability through scholarships, low tuition, and busing services provided by local school districts, the Academy ensures that a Catholic education is accessible to all families. Looking ahead, Augustinian Academy remains dedicated to providing a well-rounded educational experience that fosters academic success, spiritual growth, and active community engagement. As the school prepares for the 2025-2026 school year, it continues to accept applications and invites prospective families to explore the many opportunities it has to offer. For more information or to schedule a visit, families can visit [www.c-augustinian.org](http://www.c-augustinian.org)



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# Rochester Regional Health’s St. Lawrence Region 2024 Progress Report

Rochester Regional Health’s (RRH) St. Lawrence Region, is comprised of three hospitals, Canton-Potsdam (CPH) – a Certified Primary Stroke and Level III Trauma Center, Gouverneur (GH), and Massena (MH). It offers more than 40 outpatient specialty and primary care practices within Brasher, Canton, Colton, DeKalb, Edwards, Gouverneur, Louisville, Massena, Norfolk, and Potsdam.

The St. Lawrence Region employs 2,131 team members, including 215 full-time medical providers. Throughout 2024, 20 new providers were recruited among the specialty fields of cardiology, emergency medicine, endocrinology, hematology/oncology, hospitalist medicine, neurology, pain management, pediatrics, primary care, otolaryngology, surgical services, women’s health, and urgent care.

The Region achieved the distinguished Pathway to Excellence® designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center; the only system of hospitals in New York State to achieve this success.

RRH’s Isabella Graham Hart School of Practical Nursing (IGH) in Potsdam celebrated three graduates from the program in 2024; another 16 students are currently enrolled and on track to graduate in 2025.

RRH’s St. Lawrence Region began offering Virtual Urgent Care for non-emergency injuries and common illnesses. Available seven days/week, providers meet with patients remotely, call in prescriptions, and/or order labs or swabs for further diagnosis.

Additionally, Virtual Intensive Care is now available locally where bed-side clinicians and specialists collaborate remotely with experts from across the RRH network of care. Experts access real-time monitoring and offer guidance on evidence-based medicine



More than 200 individuals attended the ribbon cutting ceremony and guided tours of Rochester Regional Health’s new Regional Care Pavilion at Canton-Potsdam Hospital.

to support optimal patient outcomes.

In collaboration with the local orthopedics team, specialists from Rochester and the Finger Lakes began offering monthly spine clinics in Canton. Consultations focus exclusively on the comprehensive evaluation, management, and treatment of spine-related conditions.

Canton-Potsdam Hospital, through the support of many generous donors, grant funding, and RRH, opened its Regional Care Pavilion; doubling the size of the campus. The facility houses a new gift shop, an expanded emergency room, 60 single-occupancy large private inpatient rooms with family accommodations, family consultation rooms, and bedside vital signs monitoring, among other enhancements. Exclusive within New York State, Potsdam is among only three locations offering this state-of-the-art bed technology across the Nation. The new Emergency Department offers 11 additional treatment rooms, triage rooms with sub waiting area, four flex exam rooms, and four resuscitation/trauma rooms.

Additionally, CPH began offering lung nodule biopsies using the Ion Robotic Bronchoscopy System. Robotic support allows for access to smaller nodules resulting in earlier cancer diagnosis and

treatment.

Through collaboration with cardiothoracic surgeons from Rochester General Hospital, CPH’s surgical team began performing thoracic surgeries using its da Vinci Xi robot. A full range of robotic-assisted thoracic services are now offered in Potsdam.

Gouverneur Hospital opened a speech language pathology room to enhance outcomes for patients requiring speech therapy. Through a NYS Rural Access Grant, the Hospital acquired a new state-of-the-art Fuji FDR Go Portable x-ray unit, which offers improved image quality while reducing radiation exposure. GH also received a Pediatric Crash Cart and eight Care-e-Vac Portable Aspirator machines through the generosity of its Auxiliary.

Massena Hospital received Critical Access Hospital (CAH) status with swing bed services, further ensuring its long-term sustainability, and opened its \$1.2M Wound Care center offering hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Behavioral Health services expanded into a newly refreshed, modern suite with much needed additional square footage to accommodate increased patient volumes. Additionally, the Hospital initiated an Emergency Department refresh project to upgrade its nurses’ station, registration, and private

counseling areas. With generous donations from community and team members, local businesses, the MH Foundation and Auxiliary, the project is on target for a spring 2025 completion.

Additionally, all three hospitals have put forth a concerted effort to implement hourly and/or leader rounding, which has led to increased patient experience scores. Patient feedback continues to be a critical component of improvement initiatives.

The St. Lawrence Health Foundation realized over 2,600 contributions totaling more than \$1.1M toward its \$15M Great Care, Right Here campaign. Success was due, in large part, to the generosity and commitment of private foundations, businesses, and individual donors. Additionally, its Grand Masquerade Gala alone raised over \$200,000.

Significant additional grant funding was awarded throughout 2024 to support the health-care priorities of Women’s Health, Emergency Medical Services and Access to Care, Clinical and Rural Health Research, and our Hospitalist Quality of Care Service Model.

“I am immensely proud of the tremendous progress our amazing teams have made over the last year; expanding upon the care we deliver locally and accessing quality care for our patients and

the communities we serve,” noted President Donna McGregor. “Although we’ve accomplished so much, we’re really just getting started. Our work is never done, and never done alone. There are many more exciting initiatives on the horizon for our Region. From

standing up specialty practices to welcoming additional advanced care providers from the Rochester and Finger Lakes regions, we’re here for whatever our community needs most.”

To learn more about the St. Lawrence Region, visit <https://www.rochesterregional.org/>.



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# The North Star Health Alliance Charts the Future of Local Care

**Richard Duvall, President & CEO  
North Star Health Alliance**



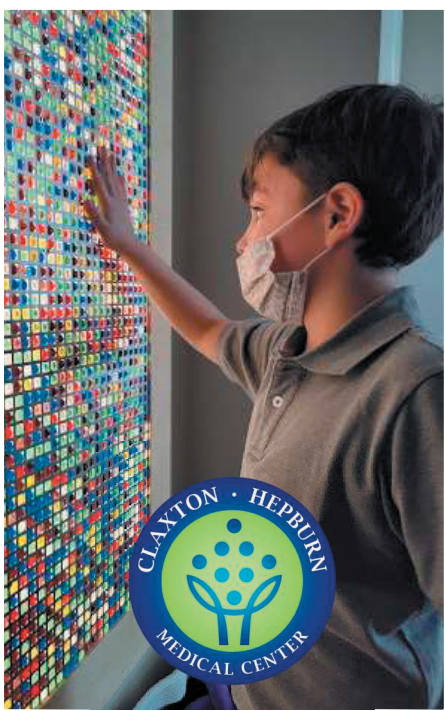
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