

# Watertown Daily Times

# PROGRESS

## CONNECTING PAST AND FUTURE

### New TIAC building readies to open in summer



TIAC Executive Director Mia Ramseier, left, explains to Nancy Taylor-Schmitt and Fred Schmitt the multiple purposes of the third-floor studio in the new building. One of the light-filled studio's uses will be meeting and work space for the Wednesday Weavers. Erin Greene photo

By ERIN GREENE  
Special to the Times

CLAYTON — As the Thousand Islands Arts Center — Home of the Handweaving Museum — readies to open its new 13,000-square-foot building this summer, its mission will be further fulfilled by the structure, upcoming programs and an eye on the past.

This year, the arts center will celebrate 60 years since it began as the Thousand Islands Craft School in 1966. Its new ADA-compliant building was designed by Jonathan Taylor of Taylored Architecture, Clayton. The center's expanded campus is destined to increase community use and will further fulfill the organization's mission to advance art, craft and a unique handwoven textile collection through education and exhibitions.

"Our new building bridges 60 years of creative tradition with the opportunities of tomorrow," said Mia Ramseier, TIAC executive director. "It honors our rich past while strengthening our campus, expanding our programs, and deepening our impact across the north country. This expansion is the foundation for our next era of growth, one where the arts remain a cultural anchor for generations to come."

The arts center's board of trustees and staff envision the organization's new home as a way for the Clayton community and the larger Thousand Islands region to connect year-round with the joy of art: visiting to view artworks on display, creating art in the new building's light-filled classrooms or the research of handweaving history.

The center's new downtown campus, with the main building's front entrance on James Street, will feature dedicated

galleries, classrooms and office space, a multipurpose studio, a conference room, an elevator with access to all floors, a permanent exhibit and research space for the arts center's extensive textile collection. It will also include a library of significant textile publications, easy pottery studio access and an outdoor art park to encourage inspiration and meditation.

A grand opening celebration is scheduled for late June.

"We are creating a creative space that will dramatically expand our ability to offer hands-on classes, host more exhibitions and welcome more neighbors through our doors," Ramseier said. "Our organization looks forward to welcoming the public in June."

#### COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The expansion project received grants from the New York State Council for the Arts and the Northern New York Community Foundation, as well as numerous donations from community members.

The fundraising effort continues, overseen by Thousand Islands Arts Center's board member and capital campaign chairwoman Robin Lucas.

"We are grateful for the community's support for our Campus Expansion Campaign, which is backed by a diversified mix of public and private funding and grants," Lucas said. "We are now in the most critical phase: raising the final \$1 million. Hitting this target will ensure a fully fitted creative hub and allow the organization to move into 2027 debt-free, ensuring all our resources can be dedicated to bringing our community together and inspiring all through the power of art."

The center is promoting its



An artist's rendering of the Sonja Wahl Weaving Gallery at the new TIAC building.



See TIAC2

A schematic of the new home of the Thousand Islands Arts Center, scheduled to open this summer. Taylored Architecture



# Expanding Care, Strengthening Community: A Look at CHCNC’s Growth in 2025 and Beyond

In 2025, Community Health Center of the North Country (CHCNC) made meaningful investments in the health and well-being of the communities it serves. Through the addition of new providers, expanded pediatric care, and the introduction of new specialty services, CHCNC strengthened its ability to deliver high-quality, comprehensive healthcare close to home, while laying the groundwork for continued growth in 2026 and beyond.

**A MAJOR EXPANSION OF PEDIATRIC SERVICES**

One of the most significant advancements in 2025 was the expansion of pediatric services, particularly at CHCNC’s Gouverneur and Ogdensburg locations with the addition of Dr. Scott Spicer, MD and Dr. Sunny Patel, MD. As access to pediatric care becomes increasingly limited in many of our rural areas, CHCNC took proactive

steps to meet the needs of local families by welcoming new pediatric providers and increasing capacity.

This expansion allows children and adolescents to receive timely, consistent care, from wellchild visits and immunizations to management of acute and chronic conditions without families having to travel long distances. For parents and caregivers, it means greater peace of mind. For the community, it ensures young patients can establish long-term relationships with trusted providers right here in the North Country.

**GROWING OUR PROVIDER TEAM**

Beyond pediatrics, 2025 marked a year of broad growth across CHCNC’s clinical team.

Numerous new providers joined the organization, expanding access to primary and preventive care and allowing CHCNC to better meet the growing

demand for services across the region. This included Dr. Robert Rogers, MD at our Canton facility, and Dr. Sarika Shah-Sekhon, MD in Ogdensburg.

This growth reflects CHCNC’s continued focus on patient access, continuity of care, and longterm sustainability, ensuring individuals and families can receive the care they need when and where they need it.

**EXPANDING ACCESS TO SPECIALTY CARE**

Access to specialty care remains a challenge for many areas in the North Country, and in 2025, CHCNC took an important step forward by adding dermatology services with Chris LaPoint, PA.

This expansion filled a critical gap for patients who previously faced long wait times or extensive travel for specialty appointments.

By bringing dermatology services closer to home,

CHCNC improved patient convenience, reduced barriers to care, and enhanced overall health outcomes, while continuing to build a more comprehensive system of care within the community.

Behavioral health services were bolstered with the addition of Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Amanda Creel at our Canton Health Center, but available at all locations via telehealth.

**LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026**

Looking ahead, the momentum gained in 2025 continues in 2026, with several physicians already planning to join the CHCNC team. These include: Dr. Tiffany Hecht MD; Dr. Johnny Mendoza, MD; Dr. Marta M. Anghel, MD; and Dr. Drushti Mehta, DO. These additions, and others to be announced soon, will further strengthen primary and pediatric care for people of all ages and reinforce CHCNC’s commitment to

relationship-based, patient centered care.

One of the most anticipated additions in early 2026 is the expansion into women’s health services. In February, the organization will welcome Noelle Polniak, NP. This reflects the organization’s ongoing commitment to closing care gaps and ensuring essential services are available locally.

**ROOTED IN THE NORTH COUNTRY**

While growth and expansion define 2025 and 2026, CHCNC’s foundation remains unchanged.

The organization is locally controlled, locally managed, and led by people who live in, and are deeply connected to, the North Country. Decisions are made by people who understand the unique challenges and strengths of the region because it is their home too.

Many of CHCNC’s providers share that same

connection. A number grew up in the North Country and made the conscious decision to return; choosing to care for the people and communities that helped shape them. That commitment creates strong patient-provider relationships built on trust, familiarity, and shared values.

Today, Community Health Center of the North Country delivers award-winning care that is accessible to everyone. All patients are welcome, all insurances are accepted, and care is provided with dignity, respect, and excellence.

As CHCNC continues to grow, its mission remains clear: To provide comprehensive, equitable and accessible high quality healthcare and human services to people of all income levels and those with individualized needs in both St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties.

## Hodge’s Legacy RV: A Tradition of Service, Selection, and Family Values

At Hodge’s Legacy RV, sales and service truly go hand in hand. Since David Hodge took ownership in 2019, the dealership has continued the tradition of family members helping families— something that has been at the core of the dealership since its beginnings as Wratten’s RV in 1959. On any given day, customers are greeted by family and treated like family, reflecting a commitment to doing business the old-fashioned way: with honesty, care, and long-term relationships

That commitment extends well beyond the sale. Hodge’s Legacy RV believes in being there for customers throughout their entire camping journey—from helping them fall in love with camping, to finding the right unit, and then maintaining it for years to come.

The service department plays a key role in that promise, where recent changes have strengthened an already solid foundation. Customers are welcomed by Josh or Scott, who together bring nearly 50 years of service experience to the team. Their extensive knowledge and dedication ensure that campers are maintained properly and returned to the road quickly, so families can focus on making memories instead of managing repairs. A fully stocked parts department further supports this mission, helping minimize downtime during the camping season.

One of the cornerstones of Hodge’s Legacy RV is its focus on highly sought-after, trusted brands, with Rockwood standing out as a customer favorite. Rockwood campers are known for their quality construction, thoughtful design, and family-friendly layouts. They offer a wide range of models, from lightweight travel trailers to well-appointed fifth wheels, allowing campers to grow within the brand as their needs change. It’s common for customers who purchase a Rockwood to remain loyal to the brand for years— often choosing another Rockwood when it’s time to upgrade.

Complementing the Rockwood lineup is the Heritage Glen brand, a popular choice for experienced campers looking for spacious layouts, residential-style comforts, and a true home-away-from-home feel. From extended stays to full-season camping, Heritage Glen models are designed for families who want comfort without sacrificing quality or durability.

This year also brings excitement with the addition of the Coachmen Freedom Express lineup, further expanding the dealership’s offerings with a brand known for quality, innovation, and comfort. With multiple popular brands in stock, Hodge’s Legacy RV ensures customers have access to options that are both trusted and highly desired.

With more than 100 years of combined camping experience among its staff, many of whom are avid campers themselves, Hodge’s Legacy RV understands the importance of family time and lasting memories. When camping memories matter most, Hodge’s Legacy RV is ready to help make them last a lifetime.

## TIAC

**From A1**

“Step Up for the Arts” commemorative paver fundraiser. Donors can purchase pavers with personalized messages, and the pavers will be installed as walkways on its campus. Those seeking details on the paver fundraiser can contact Lucas at Campaign@TIArtsCenter.org.

**MISSION OF PRESERVATION**

Preservation of and access to the center’s permanent collection of American handweaving materials, including textiles, research materials, books, pamphlets, manuscripts and more, is one of the organization’s prime missions. In the new setting, the collection will be readily accessible to researchers. Preserved items include works from renowned 20th century weavers such as Berta Frey, Elmer Hickman, Mary Meigs Atwater, Mary Snyder, John Landes, Osma Gallinger Tod and Marguerite Porter Davison. Some treasures from the collection will be showcased for public viewing in the new space.

Sonja Wahl, Thousand Island Arts Center’s curator emerita, a founding member of the organization and someone who knows the textile collection by heart, is a living bridge between the original craft school and today’s arts center.

Wahl, who immigrated to the U.S. from Germany when she was 28 years old, arrived in the north country with a master of tailoring and dress design from the Handworkers Guild, a couture guild, in Saxony. Her tailoring skills and textile knowledge served her well after her marriage to Wilburt Wahl and her move to Clayton, where she created her own business, making quality dresses for a discerning clientele. Those skills led her to be asked to join the craft school’s steering committee in 1973, then the board of directors in 1975. She served as board chairperson from 1978 to 1987. Mrs. Wahl also taught classes in the foundations of weaving and garment construction. She eventually became the organization’s first curator, overseeing the textile collection and related resource materials, serving in that position until 2005.

The center’s Board of Trustees named the Sonja Wahl Collection Room in her honor in 2016. Today, still dedicated to TIAC well into her 90s, Wahl leads the Wednesday Weavers group that meets each week to hone their weaving skills, sharing the tradition and its treasure trove of stories.

In further recognition of Sonja Wahl’s decades of contributions to TIAC, the permanent



The late Mary Mascott and her husband, Ted, made a donation that will enable TIAC to create an inspirational outdoor art park on the nonprofit’s campus. Sarah Ellen Smith photo

weaving gallery in its new building will bear her name.

The arts center’s curator, Marina Loew, is Wahl’s granddaughter, carrying her grandmother’s knowledge with her into every aspect of her position. For those who wish to hear more about Sonja Wahl’s history with the center, a video interview with Wahl, produced by Elaine Tack and dated July 1, 2017, is available for viewing at ThousandIslandsLife.com.

**MASCOTT FAMILY LEGACY**

In August, the center lost one of its most ardent longtime advocates, Mary McDonald Mascott. In the early 2000s, she served many years as a TIAC trustee, filling leadership positions such as finance committee chair and development committee chair, guiding the organization through numerous projects.

Mary and her husband, Ted, continued to support the organization in a variety of ways after she completed her Board of Trustees tenure. Early in 2025, the Mascotts purchased the property at 313 James St., formerly the location of River Magic, and donated it to TIAC, with the long-range goal of enhancing the center’s campus expansion.

Over the summer of 2025, the building served as the temporary site of the arts center’s Finders Keepers resale shop. The building will eventually be razed to make room for the center’s outdoor art park, a space for public art that will be accessible to all, with the building and park part of the vision of the Mascotts: a “multi-generational opportunity to change the direction of the visual arts by establishing a major arts center and program that will benefit the river communities and their residents, as well as the entire north country.”

**SALISBURY SCULPTURES**

An untitled sculptural trio of

metal crows created by the late Will Salisbury, the largest measuring 8 feet by 14 feet, will act as another connection between the arts center’s history and its move into the future.

Will Salisbury, who died in 2022, readily shared his artwork with TIAC and regional audiences. He is best known for his large “Three Crows” metal sculptures in a field in Omar, just off Interstate 81 south. He also created the muskie sculpture at Frink Park and the “Tree of Knowledge” sculpture at Hawn Memorial Library, both in Clayton. His privately commissioned works on various islands consistently attract attention, especially the golden sun-wielding bear weather vane atop the Comfort Island cottages owned by Stephen Brown and James Hoff.

In 2019, Brown and Hoff commissioned Salisbury to create three crow sculptures for their home in Cambridge, Md. These crows were fashioned after the original “Three Crows,” but they are smaller in stature and have greater detail. When Brown and Hoff sold their Cambridge residence, they decided the crows would come to the north country, landing temporarily at the Hammond residence of Brown’s sister, Regan Brown.

The crows were intended to then be added to the Comfort Island sculpture menagerie, but Brown and Hoff decided instead to make the crows part of TIAC’s new campus.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

The Thousand Islands Middle/High School Showcase, an exhibition of local student artworks, will be the final exhibition to be held in the John Street arts center’s galleries. The showcase opens Feb. 25 and will be on display through April 24. A public reception to celebrate the students’ works is set for 6:30 p.m. April 22.

The annual “Along the

River’s Edge” exhibition will be the first exhibition in the new space, running June 24, through July 25. An opening reception is planned for June 24.

A new community exhibit, “Reel Art: A Community Catch,” will be on display from Aug. 4 to Sept. 5. Participants of any age will receive a flat, blank wooden fish as their canvas to decorate and alter in any way they wish. The exhibit’s opening reception is set for Aug. 4, 5-7 p.m..

The annual 1000 Islands Art & Craft Festival, bearing a slightly altered name and now a one-day event, will be held at Cerow Recreation Park Saturday, Aug. 8, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“Thrown Together: Creations from Our Pottery Studio” will open Sept. 10. The exhibition will be available for public viewing through Oct. 23.

The center will close the 2026 summer season with the “Summer Arts Send-off” on Sept. 12. The event is still in the planning stages.

The center’s 31st annual Weaving History Conference, now held virtually to engage a worldwide audience, will run from Oct. 19-21.

Quilts will take center stage in an exhibition planned from Oct. 29, through Dec. 2. The opening reception for “Comfort in Color: A Fall Quilt Exhibition” will be Oct. 29.

The popular “Elves Fair,” a juried holiday art/craft market, is set for Dec. 5.

Meanwhile, classes will continue. In 2025, TIAC hosted more than 75 adult and youth classes. Through the Thousand Islands Arts Center’s summer and after-school programs, 130 children from area schools participated in arts education opportunities, with some students receiving need-based scholarships to attend.

For information about the organization’s new building, upcoming classes or planned events, call 315-686-4123 or visit <https://tiartscenter.org>.



# Stronger with Time: What Watertown Family YMCA Teaches Us About Not Giving In to Age

At Watertown Family YMCA, our senior members remind us every day that strength isn't just measured in miles walked or weights lifted—it's found in consistency, humor, resilience, and the simple decision to keep showing up. The gym becomes more than a place to work out; it's a place to reconnect with purpose, routine, and community. Among the familiar faces who embody this spirit is Bill Barden, a man whose quiet determination, steady habits, and love for movement tell a story many of us recognize and admire.

Bill Barden is 90 years old and a familiar face at Watertown Family YMCA, where he has been a member for the past six years. A native of Watertown, New York, he is married and the proud father of four daughters and grandfather to nine. Bill retired on December 31, 2006, after a long and dedicated career as a printer.

One morning, after completing his usual workout, Bill was approached by the Y's Wellness Director and Marketing Director. They had noticed his consistency and dedication and asked if he would be willing to write about why he continues to exercise at his age.

And so, Bill tells the story in his own words:

I had just finished walking on the treadmill and worked my way through settings 1-8 on an exercise bike. I was about to move on to the exercise machines to complete my workout when the Wellness Director approached me with another YMCA staff member. After introductions, one of them said, "We've learned that you are 90 years old, have been a member of the Y for six years, and are a regular participant. We were wondering if you might write something about why you

come to exercise at your age." I agreed. And while still sitting on the bike, I asked myself, "Okay... why do you still want to do this, really?"

Certainly, I do it to benefit my health—to stay alive and well and to retain my ability to live independently at home with my wife. But honestly, do I come because it's good for me? I think we're more likely to do things because we enjoy them rather than because we're told we should.

Going to the Y in the morning gets me moving, gets me out of the house, and sets the tone for the day. When I'm finished, I feel like I've accomplished something—and I need that. I like how it makes me feel about myself: strong and

confident. And I like to think the strength and flexibility I gain might translate into better golf scores—and maybe even a little more money won from my friends.

I enjoy, almost as much as the exercise, visiting with people I know and others I meet—a man with Parkinson's Disease working hard to keep his strength, a man with educated sports opinions, a fellow church member. On other days, other people.

The whole gym experience is invigorating. Seeing others straining to better themselves gives me energy. I think I gain strength just by being there and being part of it.

If one is able, even at an advanced age, to exercise—try it. There's a lot to like.

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# Community Foundation partners with donors to strengthen quality of life across Northern New York

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 and is home to the Northern New York Philanthropy Center, sharing space with three other local organizations.

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



## Northern New York Community Foundation

Foundation’s 96-year history, one constant remains: the spirit of local philanthropy that inspired civic leaders to organize a community foundation is stronger than ever.

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 the next-generation Youth Philanthropy Council and the LEAD Giving Circle — 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 may 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 60 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.

In partnership with donors and 36 tri-county public and private schools, the Foundation awarded 1,157 scholarships totaling \$1.56 million in 2025 to help 743 students in Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties pursue their post-secondary educational goals.

Thanks to the generosity of hundreds of donors who continue to make gifts that support Community Foundation

scholarships, opportunities for students this year have grown through the establishment of new awards. In the past 18 months, donors have created nearly 50 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.

In 2025, the Community Foundation awarded \$2.8 million in grant funding to support the work and missions of hundreds of tri-county nonprofit organizations.

Ten seventh- and

eighth-grade students were selected as winners of the 2025-2026 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](mailto:info@nnycf.org). The team can work with you to plan the most effective and enduring legacy for today and tomorrow. Visit [nnycf.org](http://nnycf.org) to learn more and follow the Foundation on social media.



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## ‘No tax on car loan interest’ *How does new deduction work?*

By **ALEX GAULT**  
[agault@wdt.net](mailto:agault@wdt.net)

Some people who’ve bought a new car recently might be eligible for up to a \$10,000 deduction on their federal taxes.

As part of the ‘One Big Beautiful Bill’ passed by Congress early last year, a federal tax deduction was made available to people who’ve financed the purchase of a new car or motorcycle that was made in the United States. The IRS is still working through the rule-making process, but their draft regulations have been made available and public comment closes on Feb. 2.

The deduction is up to \$10,000 per tax year, and will match the value of whatever the taxpayer paid in interest on a loan for a vehicle for personal use in that year. The terms do not apply to vehicles purchased for work use.

The taxpayer has to have initiated the loan after Dec. 31, 2024 and the deduction will be available through 2028 under the current law. The rules are fairly specific; perhaps the biggest restriction is that the car has to have been made in the United States, at least for final assembly. To prove that, taxpayers will be asked to provide their Vehicle Identification Number on their tax returns.

The Monroney sticker, the large window sticker that lists all the details of a new car that is required by federal law, will list the vehicle’s final assembly point clearly under the ‘parts content information’ section, as well as the country of origin for its major mechanical components. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration maintains a VIN lookup tool that can also provide that information, which can be found at [wdt.me/VINLookup](http://wdt.me/VINLookup).

Other qualifications include a requirement that the loan must be secured by a lien on the vehicle it’s relevant to, and cannot be a refinanced loan. It has to be issued by a legitimate lender or dealership, and it must be an interest-bearing loan in the year the deduction is being sought; loans with terms of zero interest will only become eligible once the interest starts to accrue.

The IRS is in the process of drawing up the new forms required for this credit now. In the meantime, lenders are required to send their customers a statement with the total amount of interest paid on a qualified vehicle loan by Saturday. The taxpayer will include that information on their Schedule 1-A form when filling out their 2025 federal income tax return, which is due by April 15 of this year.

The deduction only works for new cars; previously owned vehicles are not eligible. Income restrictions are also in place; the deduction starts to phase out for single taxpayers who report more than \$100,000 in modified adjusted gross income per year, or joint filers who report more than \$200,000. The deduction is cut by \$200 for every \$1,000 earned above those levels.

Once put into place, taxpayers who claim the standard deduction and people who itemize their deductions will be able to apply for the credit. The standard deduction is \$15,750 for individual filers and \$31,500 for married joint filers this tax year.

Tax deductions lower the total taxable value of an individual’s income for the year, lowering the person’s overall tax burden. It’s different than a tax credit, which provides a specific dollar-for-dollar reduction of the individual’s tax burden.

According to automotive services and research group Cox Automotive, this deduction isn’t expected to really drive much new car purchasing. The group’s interim chief economist Jeremy Robb said that this isn’t a new concept, and has been done before.

“The idea of making auto loan interest tax deductible is not new; it was allowed before the Tax Reform Act of 1986. And the new rules can indeed benefit many buyers of new U.S.-assembled vehicles, as the administration notes,” he said.

Robb said about 50% of vehicles sold in the U.S. are finished in the country, and the fact that both standard deduction-takers and those who itemize will be able to receive it means it applies to a fairly broad category of people. But he said the actual financial benefits for each taxpayer are modest at best.

“A typical auto loan today — 72 months, 9.5% APR, on a \$48,000 vehicle (the average price of a new vehicle) with 12.5% down — results in about \$3,800 in interest in the first year; \$3,200 in the second year. Interest drops to \$2,600 in year three and declines from there,” he said. “If we assume the average federal tax rate ranges from about 15% to 20% for new-vehicle buyers, the first-year deduction — the largest during the life of a loan — would be less than \$750. In the second year, the deduction will result in about \$640 in savings on taxes. While all savings are a benefit to consumers, this tax credit alone is unlikely to be a big motivator for new car buyers. A \$40,000 vehicle over a similar 60-month loan: First year deduction would be less than \$600.”

It’s expected to cost the federal government over \$57 billion in lost revenue in exchange, according to analysis from the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation.

Robb said there may be other benefits driven by this deduction though; because it reduces adjusted gross income, it could help taxpayers near the income limits for other deductions or tax credits to qualify for them. That could include the federal student loan interest deduction or health savings account contribution deductions.

“In the end, the new tax policy may reduce the number of cash buyers (as there is some offset for taking out a loan now), but even then, that result will benefit lenders and banks (more loans) more than it will benefit consumers,” he said. “Overall, any incentive for new-vehicle buyers is welcome, but this tax credit is limited, won’t be a market mover, nor is it a tool to substantially address the affordability challenges and high interest rates our market faces.”





10th Mountain Life features soldier shoutouts, photos of Fort Drum events, memories from post and more.

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U.S. Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole addresses a Fort Drum news conference as part of the 1985 reactivation of the 10th Mountain Division, with which he served in World War II. With him were, from left, U.S. Sens. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Alfonse M. D’Amato, U.S. Reps. David O’B. Martin and Sherwood Boehlert, Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh Jr., U.S. Rep. Samuel S. Stratton, and Army Chief of Staff Gen. John A. Wickham Jr. From the Watertown Daily Times Archive

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# 10TH MOUNTAIN LIFE

## How does winter weather impact Fort Drum operations?

Fort Drum Public Affairs

Winters in the north country can be harsh and unpredictable. To address this, Fort Drum officials follow an established weather call policy designed to balance mission requirements with the safety of Soldiers, Army civilians, and their families. The installation’s weather call process is based on multiple factors, including forecasts from the National Weather Service and 18th Combat Weather Squadron, road conditions on and around the installation, and input from multiple organizations, including the directorates of Public Works, Emergency Services, and Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security.

Under this policy, installation leaders may implement a Delayed Report, Early Release, or Do Not Report order. Rich Hughes, the installation emergency manager, said Fort Drum personnel are notified of the initial weather call before 4 a.m.

“Many of our Soldiers and civilian employees live across the North Country and report to work early each day, so we want to get the information to people for their awareness before they begin their morning commute,” he said. The early decision also allows Fort Drum DPW snow removal crews to clear roadways and lots, unimpeded by normal traffic. Additionally, the installation informs local school districts about on-post conditions to inform their separate decisions on delays or closures. If weather conditions worsen, the data collection process is repeated for a potential status change before 7 a.m.

“If the severe weather is projected to continue, or roads and parking lots can’t be cleared even by the delayed reporting time, we may recommend a ‘Do Not Report’ for non-essential personnel,” Hughes said. For severe weather developing during the duty day, an early release decision is made before 11:30 a.m. “If we’re already here and see that severe weather is going to impact the afternoon

hours and/or the drive home, we may recommend an early release to prevent personnel from having to drive in hazardous conditions,” he added.

Hughes said the weather call policy is reviewed annually as part of a broader effort to maintain readiness while reducing unnecessary risk during severe weather events.

“There is so much more that goes into a decision than what the weather looks like at any given moment,” he said. “It’s not an exact science, but it is as informed a decision as we can make it based on multiple factors.”

These include:

- The ability to clear snow in time for personnel to report for duty.
- Current weather and road conditions across a 40-mile commute radius, which involves canvassing local law enforcement agencies, monitoring travel advisories and bans in the tri-county area, and tracking 511NY.
- Forecasted weather conditions across the commute radius for the entire duty day. The unpredictability of lake effect snow bands in some areas can make this difficult to project. Any minor variations to wind speeds and directions can greatly affect the amount of snow.
- Mission-essential activities such as deployments, redeployments, special events, and critical training. The command team may designate certain activities as mission-essential to ensure personnel are available.

**STAYING INFORMED**

Information on post status, road conditions and how weather impacts Fort Drum is available at <http://wdt.me/FortDrumAlerts> and accessible through MAPA (My Army Post App). Status updates are also posted on the U.S. Army Fort Drum & 10th Mountain Division Facebook page. Community members can also call the Fort Drum Information Hotline at 315-772-3786 for road conditions, and delay and closure information.

Above: Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division and across the U.S. Army ski in the annual D-Series event at Fort Drum on Jan. 29. This event tested the strength and agility of different squads in the U.S. Army to build cohesion while honoring the legacy of the 10th Mountain Division ancestors. Check back this month for more D-Series photos in 10th Mountain Life. Courtesy of the 10th Mountain Division

## NEWS FROM POST

■ The parents of a 10th Mountain Division soldier who embodied the values of courage and selflessness were notified this week that their son, Staff Sgt. Michael H. Ollis, who died in the summer of 2013 during combat in Afghanistan while protecting a comrade in arms from Poland, will posthumously receive the nation’s highest military decoration. On Tuesday, Bob and Linda Ollis received a call at their Staten Island home from President Donald Trump informing them that Michael deserved the Medal of Honor for his actions.

In August 2006, Ollis enlisted in the Army at age 17 after excelling in the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program at the Michael J. Petrides School on Staten Island.

He completed basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia, and was assigned to the 1st Armored Division in Baumholder, Germany. In April 2008, he deployed to Iraq and was promoted to sergeant before the combat tour ended. Ollis moved to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where he served as a fire team leader with 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. He completed Air Assault School before deploying to Afghanistan with his unit. Ollis returned to Fort Campbell in May 2011, but he was soon reassigned to the 10th Mountain Division. He arrived at Fort Drum in November to join the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team. While stationed at Fort Drum, he lived in Sackets Harbor at Madison Barracks. He told his father he hoped to retire there after his Army career.

In 2013, Ollis was serving with the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division. Following two tense combat deployments in the mountains of Afghanistan, he earned the U.S. Army’s Ranger tab. On Aug. 28, 2013, Ollis and his entire coalition military base, Forward Operating Base Ghazni, were caught in the middle of a major Taliban assault.

■ The 10th Mountain Division’s 2nd Mobile Brigade Combat Team is set to deploy to the Middle East. The Army announced Monday that the 2nd Mobile Brigade Combat Team will be replacing the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, Iowa National Guard, as part of its regular rotation of forces. The 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team was deployed from Iowa in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.



Michael H. Ollis during his first deployment to Afghanistan. St. Martin’s Press





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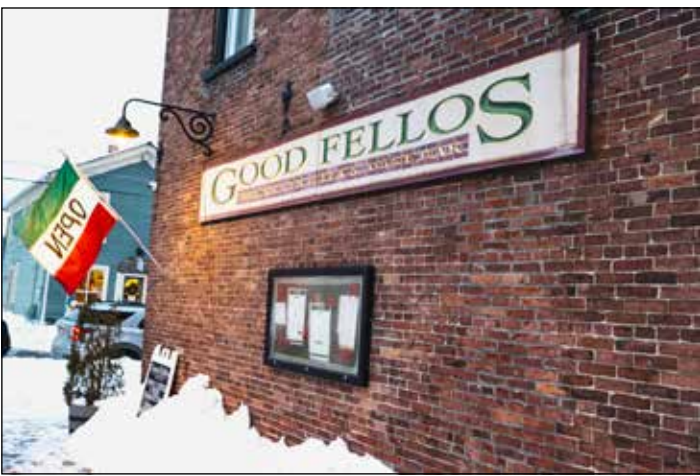
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See GOOD FELLOWS A9

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# Champlain Valley Equipment

## A Legacy Built on Integrity, Community, and Forward-Thinking Growth

For more than five decades, Champlain Valley Equipment (CVE) has been a trusted partner to farmers, contractors, and property owners across Vermont and New York. What began as a single-store tractor dealership rooted in the Champlain Valley has grown into one of the Northeast’s most respected, multi-location equipment organizations—while remaining firmly committed to the values that shaped its founding.

Champlain Valley Equipment’s story began in 1970, when father and son Russell F. Carpenter and Russell C. Carpenter purchased Knapp Farm Supply in Middlebury, Vermont. On November 7 of that year, the Carpenters officially established Champlain Valley Equipment as a Ford Tractor dealership. From the start, the business reflected the family’s agricultural roots and their belief that success comes from hard work, honesty, and taking care of people.

In 1981, Russell F. Carpenter retired, and the company entered a period of transition and opportunity. When Ford divested its tractor business in the mid-1980s, CVE became a New Holland dealership in 1986—marking the beginning of a long and successful partnership with one of the most recognized names in agricultural equipment.

That same decade, the next generation of leadership was taking shape. Russell C.’s son, Brian Carpenter, graduated cum laude from St. Lawrence University in 1984 with a bachelor’s degree in economics. Upon graduation, he received a Regular Army commission through the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and served nine years on active duty with the United States Army. His service included assignments in Germany and Panama, as well as several stateside bases—experiences that helped shape his disciplined leadership style and long-term strategic mindset.

In 1993, Brian joined the Vermont Army National Guard, allowing him to return home and prepare to assume a leadership role within Champlain Valley Equipment. His transition back to Vermont marked a pivotal moment in the company’s evolution, as CVE began positioning itself for thoughtful expansion beyond its original footprint.

By 2001, CVE expanded operations in Middlebury through the acquisition of Green Mountain Tractor. This growth brought additional manufacturers into the dealership’s lineup, including Case IH, Kubota, and New Holland Hay & Forage—broadening the company’s ability to serve a more diverse customer base while strengthening its full-service model.

With a clear objective to provide dependable equipment sales and support across multiple regions, Champlain Valley Equipment acquired Fine Line Equipment in St. Albans, Vermont, in 2005. The acquisition transformed CVE into a two-store dealership and welcomed Jason Bessette as a partner. Just one year later, CVE was named “Dealership of the Year” by Farm Equipment magazine—an early indicator of the company’s operational excellence, leadership strength, and customer-focused culture. The organization would go on to earn multiple industry recognitions in the years that followed.

In 2008, after years of steady growth and strong leadership, Brian Carpenter was named President and Chief Executive Officer of Champlain Valley Equipment. That same year, CVE expanded again with the acquisition of Derby Equipment in Derby, Vermont, and Josh Provost joined the company as a third partner. The pace of growth continued in 2012 with the



**Russell C. Carpenter (center) pictured with his mother, Priscilla Carpenter (left), and his father and co-founder, Russell F. Carpenter (right), during the early years of Champlain Valley Equipment.**



**An aerial photograph of Champlain Valley Equipment’s original Middlebury, Vermont location, circa 1970.**



**Russell C. Carpenter (left) and Brian Carpenter (right) pictured together during the company’s early leadership transition.**



**Members of the Champlain Valley Equipment Middlebury team after receiving the 2014 Business of the Year award from the Addison County Chamber of Commerce.**



**Brigadier General Brian Carpenter upon his retirement in 2014 after 30 years of military service.**

acquisition of Riverside Equipment in Berlin, Vermont, making CVE a four-store dealership and further solidifying its presence across the state.

In 2014, Champlain Valley Equipment acquired L.W. Greenwood & Sons in East Randolph, Vermont. Though the East Randolph location was later merged into the Berlin dealership in 2018, the acquisition added Bobcat to CVE’s equipment lineup across all locations. That same year, CVE received the Business of the Year Award from the Addison County Chamber of Commerce—recognizing not only business success, but also the company’s involvement and leadership within the community.

Russell C. Carpenter retired in 2015 and passed away in 2020, leaving behind a lasting legacy. His influence remains deeply embedded in the company culture—carried forward by a team that includes family members, long-tenured employees, and loyal customers who have grown alongside the business he helped build.

At the heart of Champlain Valley Equipment’s success is a philosophy grounded in integrity. Brian Carpenter has often spoken about the values instilled in him by his father—values

shaped by farming, community involvement, and accountability. Leading with integrity, he explains, means standing behind your word, learning from mistakes, and doing right by the customer even when it is difficult. That mindset has become a defining characteristic of CVE’s approach to business and a cornerstone of the trust it has built with customers over generations.

This customer-first philosophy extends beyond transactions. Many CVE customers describe their relationship with the dealership as personal and enduring—one rooted in reliability, respect, and familiarity. As Brian has noted, when people need help, they often turn to those they trust most. CVE has worked intentionally to be that trusted partner for the communities it serves.

Community involvement has always been central to the Carpenter family’s leadership. Champlain Valley Equipment actively supports civic engagement and encourages employees to give back through volunteer fire departments, emergency medical services, and other local organizations. The company supports this involvement by allowing flexibility for employees to serve their

communities—reinforcing a culture where public service and professional excellence go hand in hand.

Brian Carpenter himself has long been a visible leader both locally and nationally. He has served on the Middlebury Select Board since 2014 and has chaired the board since 2016. Within the equipment industry, he has served as Chairman of the North American Equipment Dealers Association board, chaired both the New Holland and Kubota Dealer Councils, and contributed to numerous other industry boards. His leadership reflects not only operational expertise, but a deep understanding of the evolving needs of modern equipment customers.

In addition to his civilian leadership, Brian retired in 2014 as a Brigadier General after serving as Assistant Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard—bringing decades of service, strategic planning, and team development experience into his role at CVE.

Environmental stewardship is another pillar of Champlain Valley Equipment’s operations. Recognizing the responsibility that comes with growth, CVE has invested in sustainable initiatives across its locations. Solar panels have been installed on

many buildings in Middlebury, St. Albans, and Colchester, electric operations have been adopted where feasible, and stormwater systems have been reengineered to capture rainwater runoff for use in wash bays. These initiatives reflect CVE’s broader goal of minimizing environmental impact while supporting regenerative practices that benefit future generations.

Today, Champlain Valley Equipment operates as an 11-store organization serving Vermont and New York. Growth in recent years includes the acquisition of Essex Equipment in Colchester, Vermont, in 2022, followed by the transformative acquisition of Empire Tractor in November 2024. The Empire Tractor acquisition added six locations—Atlanta, Batavia, Canton, Cortland, Watertown, and Waterloo—significantly expanding CVE’s footprint across Upstate New York while preserving the local identities and legacies of each dealership.

With more than 200 employees across its locations, CVE continues to operate under its long-standing motto: “Big enough to keep you running, small enough to know your name.” The company remains committed to honoring the heritage of each family-owned business it brings

into the CVE organization, ensuring continuity for customers and employees alike.

From sales and rentals to parts, service, and after-sale support, Champlain Valley Equipment offers a full-service model designed to keep customers productive. Its knowledgeable team stays current through ongoing training and industry education, ensuring customers receive expert guidance and dependable support.

CVE’s extensive equipment lineup includes leading brands such as Kubota, New Holland, Case IH, Bobcat, Krone, Oxbo, Polaris, Woods, Land Pride, Great Plains, Kuhn Knight, H&S, Ventrac, Jamesway, Stihl, Kinze, Manitou, Gehl, Farni Forest, and more—serving agricultural, construction, and residential customers alike.

As Champlain Valley Equipment continues to grow, it does so with the same principles that defined its beginnings: integrity in leadership, commitment to community, and a forward-thinking approach to service and sustainability. More than 50 years after opening its doors, CVE remains focused on what matters most—keeping its customers running and its communities strong.



**Champlain Valley Equipment’s Watertown, New York dealership.**



# Robert J. Ashley NNY Lumber Person of the Year

Robert Joseph Ashley was born in Ogdensburg, N.Y. on July 7, 1962 entered the lumber and building materials industry through the family business started by his father, John Ashley Sr. His entire professional career has been with Triple “A” Building Center, where he serves as President and CEO. Under his leadership, the company has grown and maintained branch locations in Canton, Potsdam, and Massena, N.Y. He is a graduate of Ogdensburg Free Academy High School (1980) and attended Niagara University. His continued professional development includes recognition through the Doctorate of Andersen (1988, 1994) and the Bachelor of Andersen (1990).

Throughout his career, Robert has held significant leadership roles in both professional and community organizations. He currently serves as First Vice President of the Northern New York Lumber Dealers Association (NNYLDA) and has been active in the Ogdensburg Lions Club since 1992, where he has held every board officer position. His past board memberships include the Do it Best Board of Directors (Treasurer), St. Lawrence Health Alliance (Treasurer/President), Frederic Remington Art Museum, Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center (Performance Improvement Chairman), American Heart Association (Co-Chair of the American Heart Classic), Ogdensburg Pavilion Fund (Co-Chair/Head of Fundraising), Home Builders Association of St. Lawrence, Jefferson, and Lewis Counties (Membership Chairman), and the Seaway Council of Boy Scouts (Director).



The Northern New York Lumber Dealers Association 2025 Lumber Person of the Year is Robert Ashley, president and CEO of Triple A Building Center - Do It Best Hardware. Present for the award were (front) Joe Goliber, Potsdam store manager and Mark Miller, logistics manager; (back row) Nathaniel Ashley, vice president, Robert Ashley, Marty Mossow, product manager, and Michael Thayer, CFO. Photo submitted.

His honors and awards are numerous and include the Lions Melvin Jones Fellowship Award (1993, 2009), a nomination for Young Retailer of the Year (1996), Ogdensburg Lions Club “Lion of the Year” (1994), recognition from Hardware Wholesalers, Inc. as Sheriff & Teller (October 1994), and Campaign Sight First Chair for the Ogdensburg Lions Club (1994–1996). He has also contributed to the Hardware Wholesalers, Inc. (Do-it Best Corporation) Advertising

Committee (1996–1997, 2004–2005). Robert’s commitment to community service is equally strong. He coached Ogdensburg Minor Hockey from 1992 to 2004 and is also a longtime member of the Ogdensburg Elks Lodge.

Outside of his professional and civic commitments, Robert enjoys working on his and Mollee’s property, following sports, and appreciating wine. Robert has been married to Mollee Monnet-Ashley, a Speech and Language Teacher

with the Enlarged Ogdensburg School District. Together, they are the proud parents of Nathaniel Robert Ashley, a graduate of Franklin Pierce University, and Alana Marie Ashley, a graduate of St. Lawrence University.

Guided by his philosophy, “There are seven days in a week; someday is not one of them. Working harder can create your luck or improve your chance luck will follow,” Robert is known for his dedication, work ethic, and focus on both

professional and personal excellence. His words of encouragement to others are simple but powerful: “Breathe easy, smile more, put in 100% effort, work harder, stay focused, take chances, be creative, stay away from drama, enjoy the little victories, listen–assess–improve–take action.”

The Northern New York Lumber Dealers Association is proud to honor Robert Ashley as its 2025 Lumber Person of the Year.

# Good Fellos

From A6

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.good-fellos.com](http://www.good-fellos.com), or their Facebook or Instagram page. Reservations are welcome for certain size groups...or walk in to discover the difference at Good Fellos.

# Jersey Mike’s makes Watertown debut



Watertown’s first Jersey Mike’s is now open off Arsenal Street next to Red Robin in the Hannaford plaza.

Craig Fox/Watertown Daily Times

By CRAIG FOX  
cfox@wdt.net

WATERTOWN — Many sandwich lovers have been waiting for this day to come — Jersey Mike’s opened in January in a storefront next to Red Robin in the Hannaford plaza.

Owner Adam Palisa, a franchise owner in Syracuse for almost three years, said his entrance to the north country begins at 10 a.m. this morning.

“We’re really excited,” he said. “We’re really excited about getting involved in the community.”

To begin with, the Watertown store is employing between 30 and 35 people. His team got some last-minute training on Tuesday before today’s local debut.

Like Jersey Mike’s corporate-required hours, the

Watertown store will be open daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Fort Drum soldiers visiting the Syracuse Jersey Mike’s store urged him to expand into Watertown, he said. It will be the first Jersey Mike’s store in the north country, with more planned in the future.

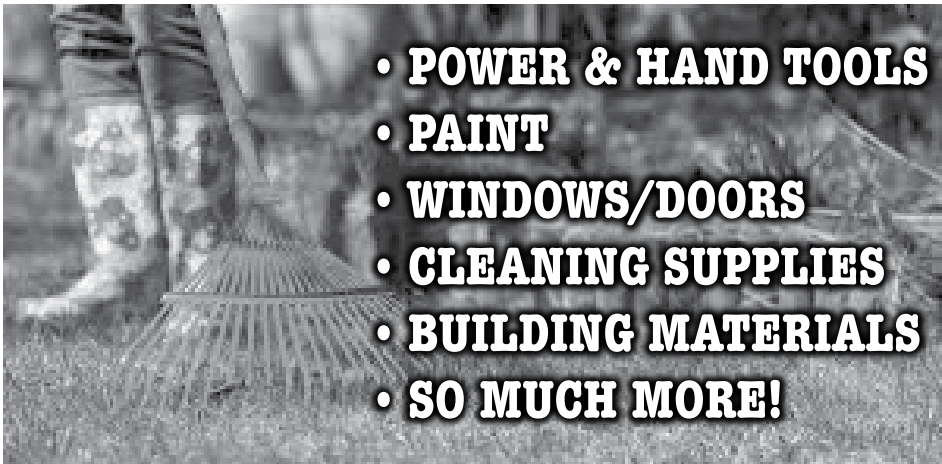
“They kept saying to come up to Watertown,” Palisa said

It took him about 18 months to find the right location, he said.

He and his girlfriend, Meghan, got to know Watertown while vacationing in the north country, he said.

The New Jersey chain has more than 2,700 stores nationwide. Nearly 300 more are planned.

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## Better Breathing Starts with a Stronger Team



Difficulty breathing changes everything. At Samaritan, comprehensive pulmonary care is delivered by a team of board-certified pulmonologists and respiratory specialists offering prevention, early detection, treatment, and rehabilitation services unmatched in the region. As the largest and most experienced pulmonary critical care service in the area, complex conditions—such as asthma, sleep apnea, and lung cancer—can be treated locally.

In 2025, Samaritan upgraded its Johnson & Johnson MedTech’s Monarch™ Platform with new Quest technology, a breakthrough technology designed to support earlier and more accurate lung cancer diagnosis. Using advanced robotics, software, and endoscopic imaging, the platform allows physicians to reach small, hard-to-access lung nodules for biopsy. Samaritan is the first hospital in Central New York and the North Country—and one of only two in New York State—to offer this innovative technology.



Robotic-Assisted Bronchoscopy Technology at Samaritan Medical Center.



*“Using Quest technology with the MONARCH™ platform allows for more precise diagnoses, giving patients a more comfortable experience and better clinical outcomes.”*

**Dr. Rory Sears | Pulmonologist**  
Samaritan Pulmonology

## Small Incisions. Big Stories.

Samaritan’s commitment to innovation also extends to surgical care. Our local general surgery team is available 24/7—the only one of its kind in the region—ensuring timely, accessible care from surgeons who live and work in the community.

With significant upgrades to surgical suite technology in 2025 and the addition of a second da Vinci® Surgical System in 2026, Samaritan continues to expand access to minimally invasive robotic surgery. These procedures use smaller incisions, often resulting in less pain, shorter hospital stays, and faster recovery times. Samaritan is proud to have the only team of robotically trained surgeons in Jefferson County, offering advanced urologic, gynecologic, and general surgery options.

“**Immediately after surgery, I felt better.**

*Dr. Daniels has a lot of confidence in herself and what she does. She was very responsive to my questions.*”

-Peggy B.  
Samaritan General Surgery Patient





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# Watertown Daily Times

# PROGRESS

## St. Lawrence County makes mining history



Employees from the Titan Mining Corporation pose for a photo with state Sen. Mark Walczyk, Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush, and Congresswoman Elise Stefanik during a tour of the facilities. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

**TIMES STAFF REPORT**

Natural flake graphite is coming out of the ground near Gouverneur, and what has started as an experiment after discovering the mineral while drilling for zinc may help the United States end its reliance on the global supply.

Titan Mining launched its Kilbourne graphite project at Empire State Mine in September. It was the first of its type to be commissioned in the United States in nearly 70 years, and ends a 50-year stretch when no graphite was actively mined in the country.

On Jan. 26, the company announced that it its first tests have been successful.

"Titan has successfully produced natural flake graphite concentrate, now transitioning to the production of material for customer and government qualification programs, marking the first step in re-establishing a domestic natural graphite supply chain in the United States for the first time in more than seven decades," the company stated.

The United States depends entirely on imported natural graphite with 42% of the supply coming from China. The federal Department of Energy and the Department of Defense have designated graphite as a critical mineral for batteries, semiconductors, and defense systems.

"The graphite demonstration facility, located within Titan's existing Empire State Mine infrastructure, is designed to produce

approximately 1,200 tonnes per year of graphite concentrate, providing a critical bridge to commercial scale," the company stated. "This milestone materially advances the Kilbourne Graphite Project toward its targeted 40,000-tonne-per-year production profile, which could supply a substantial portion of current U.S. natural graphite demand."

Connor Messler, exploration manager with the Titan Mining Corporation, was the one, along with his team who found the graphite in the St. Lawrence County mine.

Messler said back in 2022, while drilling for zinc, he and his team "intercepted some graphite mineralization."

Joel Rheault, vice president of operations for Empire State Mine, told the Times after the discovery that geologists have confirmed an ore deposit weighing 22 million tons containing 2.91% graphite at Fowler.

"We've basically defined a deposit that's about 8,000 feet long, on a full extent we believe is over 25,000 feet," Rheault said in April.

He said geologists discovered the deposit while doing a routine core drilling examination.

"It was kind of discovered a little bit by accident or by chance, as it is with many discoveries," Rheault said.

The graphitemining is being done with traditional open pit methods. On-site processing will be similar to current processes used to extract zinc from zinc ore.

"It will be accomplished

by crushing, flotation, filtering and drying to produce a graphite concentrate," Rheault said. "All our zinc concentrate is exported to Canada for smelting into zinc ingots."

According to a U.S. Geological Survey fact sheet on graphite, around 95 companies, mainly in the Great Lakes and Northeast regions, consumed 76,000 tons in 2023, valued at approximately \$180 million.

The primary applications for natural graphite included batteries, brake linings, lubricants, powdered metals, refractory uses, and steelmaking.

"In the same year, U.S. imports of natural graphite were estimated at 84,000 tons, consisting of about 89.3% flake and high-purity graphite, 10.4% amorphous graphite, and 0.3% lump and chip graphite," according to the USGS.

"Graphite consumption is expected to keep rising, mainly due to the expansion of the lithium-ion battery market," USGS wrote. "According to Benchmark Mineral Intelligence, global graphite consumption by the battery industry has grown by 200% since 2019. The number of lithium-ion battery manufacturing plants in the United States increased to 10 in 2023, up from just 3 in 2019, with an additional 28 facilities still under development."

Christian M. Schrader, a geology professor at SUNY Potsdam, said

# Lewis County Humane Society

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**Shelter Manager: Barb Turck**

**Location:** 6390 Pine Grove Road, Glenfield, NY

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

**Email:** [LewisCountyHumaneSociety@gmail.com](mailto:LewisCountyHumaneSociety@gmail.com)

**FB:** Lewis County Humane Society NY 501c3

**Web:** [LewisCountyHumaneSociety.org](http://LewisCountyHumaneSociety.org)

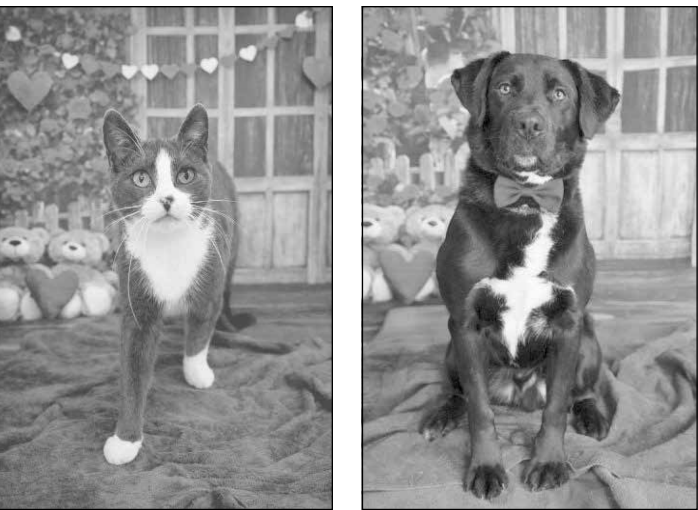
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**Left:** After arriving in poor health from a hoarding situation, Blush received extensive medical care and a second chance. She is still waiting for a patient, loving home. **Right:** Ike is a bright, high-energy Lab/Border Collie mix who loves to learn and stay busy. Shelter staff say he'll shine in an active home with structure and room to move.

# Lewis County Humane Society Nears Completion of Major Capital Improvement Project

The Lewis County Humane Society in Glenfield is entering an exciting new chapter as it nears completion of a major capital construction project. After more than three years of planning, building, and community support — and an investment exceeding \$900,000 — the organization is preparing for the final phase of improvements and a long-anticipated grand opening.

The project was designed to modernize and strengthen the shelter's ability to serve homeless and vulnerable animals across Lewis County and surrounding areas. Upgrades have focused on improving animal housing, safety, workflow efficiency, and overall comfort for both the animals and the people who care for them. With construction largely complete, only a final punch list of finishing items remains before the facility is fully ready for use.

The improvements support both animal welfare and regulatory compliance. The shelter is governed by New York State Agriculture and Markets Law and follows The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters. New state standards took effect on December 15, 2025, and the organization has been working diligently to ensure full compliance. Capital upgrades have helped bring the facility up to required standards in key areas such as quarantine space, ventilation, and sealed flooring. Additional requirements — including daily exercise and socialization, expanded record keeping, and animal identification protocols

— are being met through enhanced staff procedures and training.

Operationally, the shelter strengthened its municipal partnerships over the past year. Contracts have been established or renewed with 15 Townships in Lewis County, as well as with the Town of Wilna in Jefferson County. The Humane Society also continues to maintain its contract with the Fort Drum installation for stray dogs and cats.

As construction wraps up, the organization will begin installing a donor recognition wall to celebrate the many individuals and organizations who made the capital project possible. The wall will include plaques honoring all supporters who contributed \$500 or more toward the campaign. Shelter leadership emphasizes that the project was made possible through widespread community generosity.

The Humane Society also extends special thanks to several major donors and grantors who provided substantial support this year, including Mary Delton, The Mika Foundation, E & W G Foundation, Northern New York Community Foundation, G. David Phelps Hamar, Kathy Hudson, Lewis County, The Hanley Foundation, Susan LaChausse, Kovach Land Surveying PC, and many others whose generosity continues to sustain and advance the shelter's mission.

Additional improvements are already planned. A full exterior siding project is scheduled for the spring, and fundraising efforts are

See HUMANE B3

# An Era of Destination Stewardship and Resident-First Tourism



**Kathryn Puleo, Destination Manager, left, Tiffani Amo, Director of Tourism, right, tabling at Canton Canoe Weekend for Visit STLC / St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce.**

As the designated tourism promotion agency for St. Lawrence County, the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce tourism team is entering a new era of destination development grounded in resident-first values. Led by Director of Tourism Tiffani Amo and Destination Manager Kathryn Puleo, the team's 2026 initiatives reflect a deliberate shift beyond short-term marketing toward long-term planning, collaboration, and sustainable growth. This work represents the next phase of a strategically planned evolution that began in 2025, one that received strong engagement from residents, stakeholders, and tourism partners throughout the county.

**2025: A YEAR IN REVIEW**

In 2025, tourism initiatives were guided by a commitment to authenticity, sustainability, and quality of life. The tourism team engaged a resident-first approach, rooted in the belief that communities where people want to live are also places visitors want to experience. This philosophy informed programming throughout the year and laid the foundation for the destination stewardship efforts now moving forward.

Leveraging Grant Funds for Lasting Impact

A major focus in 2025 was leveraging grant funding to expand and strengthen tourism programming. The tourism team successfully completed several multi-year grant-funded projects supported through New York State Economic Development Agency sub-awards and American Rescue Plan Act funding in partnership with the Industrial Development Agency. Between 2023 and 2025,

these efforts represented more than \$400,000 in leveraged investment dedicated to strengthening the county's tourism infrastructure and long-term competitiveness.

**BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH SPORT TOURISM**

One of the most impactful initiatives completed in 2025 was the sport tourism project, which focused on strategic planning to maximize sport-related opportunities tied to the county's natural beauty, recreational assets, and strong community spirit. While the initial grant funding has concluded, the initiative continues as intended through the recent formation of a Sport Tourism Founders Group and a Sport Tourism Coalition. These groups will help advance the county's position as a premier destination for sporting events and related economic activity.

**CANADIAN MARKETING SUCCESS**

Another highlight of 2025 was the Canadian marketing initiative, which targeted year-round visitation through coordinated print and digital campaigns. This effort was recognized by the New York State Tourism Industry Association with a 2025 Excellence in Tourism Marketing Campaigns, Projects & Programs award, honoring a successful two-year digital campaign designed to attract Canadian visitors for weekend getaways. The tourism team also received a special Assembly Citation from New York State Assemblyman Scott Gray in recognition of this work.

**INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY**

Industry engagement and partnership-building remained

a priority throughout the year. More than 70 tourism partners gathered for the annual Tourism Dinner themed "Tourism At Home," reinforcing the importance of resident-centered tourism development. The team also expanded regional, statewide, and international connectivity by participating in tourism conferences, cross-border summits, and trade shows, strengthening visibility and collaboration across New York State, Canada, and the greater seaway region.

2026: A Strategic Investment in Destination Development

Building on the momentum of 2025, tourism efforts are now focused on implementing a targeted destination stewardship plan in 2026. This initiative represents a strategic investment in the county's long-term tourism success and broader economic vitality, prioritizing thoughtful growth that benefits communities as much as visitors.

**A COUNTYWIDE, COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH**

At the heart of the 2026 plan is a countywide strategy delivered through a community-based approach. While a shared vision provides coordination and efficiency, the initiative recognizes that each community has its own identity, assets, and priorities. Engagement with local businesses, residents, municipalities, and stakeholders will ensure that strategies are informed by local insight and tailored to individual communities rather than relying on one-size-fits-all solutions.

Professional Destination Consulting and Local Input

A key component of this work is the engagement of New York-based destination consultant

Josiah Brown. His expertise in destination stewardship will support long-term planning and implementation, offering a proven framework for managing growth and strengthening community alignment. This professional guidance will be grounded in local participation, ensuring expert insight enhances, rather than replaces, community voices.

**SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Support for local businesses is another cornerstone for the year ahead. Through digital maturity assessments and mentorships, businesses will receive guidance to improve online presence, better use digital tools, and increase visibility to visitors. At the same time, investments in county-level digital infrastructure, including an expanded events calendar and improved online booking tools, will make trip planning easier while delivering tangible benefits to event organizers and businesses.

**A FORWARD-THINKING VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Collectively, the destination development initiative represents a resident-focused, forward-thinking approach aligned with the county's broader economic development goals. By strengthening partnerships, investing in communities, and planning for long-term impact, the tourism team is positioning St. Lawrence County for sustainable success. This work ensures that tourism growth enhances quality of life, supports local businesses, and creates meaningful experiences for visitors, well beyond 2026 and for generations to come.

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# Twin Rivers FCU named one of America's Best Regional Banks & Credit Unions for 2026

Twin Rivers Federal Credit Union has been recognized as one of America's Best Regional Banks & Credit Unions for 2026. Twin Rivers FCU was among the top 500 highest-scoring credit unions nationwide.

The ranking highlights financial institutions that combine strong financial performance with a commitment to empowering local economies by supporting small businesses, community projects, and helping families reach their financial goals.

Newsweek in partnership with Plant-A Insights Group began with an initial pool of more than 8,800 banks and credit unions, evaluated across key financial indicators including profitability,

credit quality, and net loans/leases. From there, over 2,400 banks and 2,400 credit unions advanced to an in-depth customer evaluation.

"We are excited to be named one of the top credit unions by Newsweek. It is truly an honor. I am proud of the hard work and dedication that is put forth by our employees and volunteers every day," said Christine Grant, Chief Executive Officer of Twin Rivers Federal Credit Union.

Credit Unions are structured as member-owned cooperatives, and operate with service as their guiding mission. That commitment often results in lower fees, competitive loan options and an emphasis on member satisfaction.



# Humane

From B2

currently underway to support that upgrade. The siding replacement will protect the building long-term and give the facility a refreshed exterior that reflects the quality of care provided inside. Following the siding project, a custom catio — a secure outdoor patio space for cats — will be constructed, fully sponsored by a generous donor. The catio will allow cats to safely enjoy fresh air and enrichment, which helps reduce stress and improve adoptability.

Despite reduced intake capacity during construction, the shelter continued to make a meaningful impact throughout the year. Annual statistics include:

Animals taken in: 481 cats, 193 dogs  
 Adopted: 444 cats, 124 dogs  
 Returned to owner: 11 cats, 60 dogs  
 Placed in foster care: 217 cats, 80 dogs  
 Spayed/Neutered: 395 cats, 105 dogs  
 These numbers reflect

continued lifesaving work by staff and volunteers, even during a period of limited space and active construction.

Long-Term Resident Spotlights

Blush has been with the shelter since February 7, 2025 — nearly a full year. This 1½-year-old female cat came from a hoarding situation after her owner passed away. She was one of many cats humanely trapped from the property and arrived in urgent need of care. Blush required a full dental extraction, treatment for lice, and extensive cleaning and medical support after her health had declined. Today she is healthy, though she occasionally experiences respiratory flare-ups. She is timid but friendly and would thrive in a quiet home with a patient adopter willing to give her time to feel safe and secure.

Ike has been at the shelter since November 8, 2024. This 1 year, 11 month old Lab/Border Collie mix arrived as a stray and was never claimed. Ike is high-energy, highly intelligent, and full of enthusiasm. Like many active dogs in a shelter environment, his

energy level has increased without the benefit of a consistent home routine. Staff are confident that with structure, enrichment, and regular exercise, Ike will settle into an exceptional companion. He completed a one-month board-and-train program and excelled, showing strong learning ability and focus. Ike would do best in an active home — possibly with land or a farm setting — and with a confident owner who appreciates a spirited, loyal dog who enjoys having a job to do.

Community members who wish to support ongoing improvements and shelter operations may donate by mail to LCHS, PO Box 682, Lowville, NY 13367, or electronically via Venmo or PayPal at @LewisCoHumaneSociety.

With major upgrades nearly complete and future projects already underway, the Lewis County Humane Society continues its mission to provide safe shelter, medical care, and second chances for animals in need — now supported by a facility built for the future.

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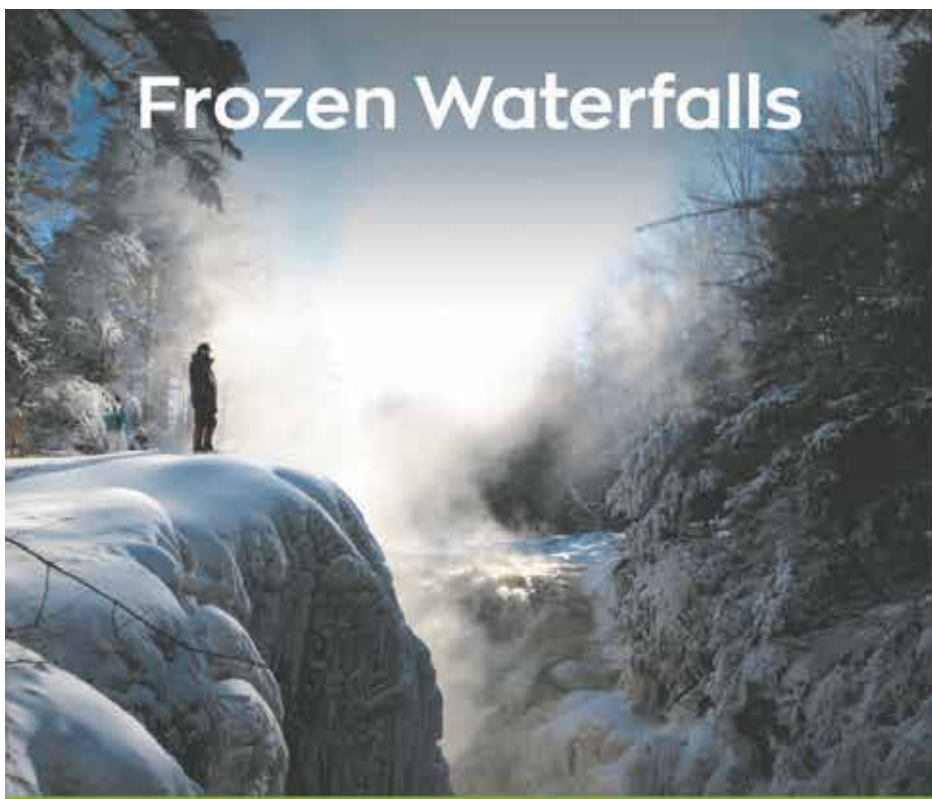
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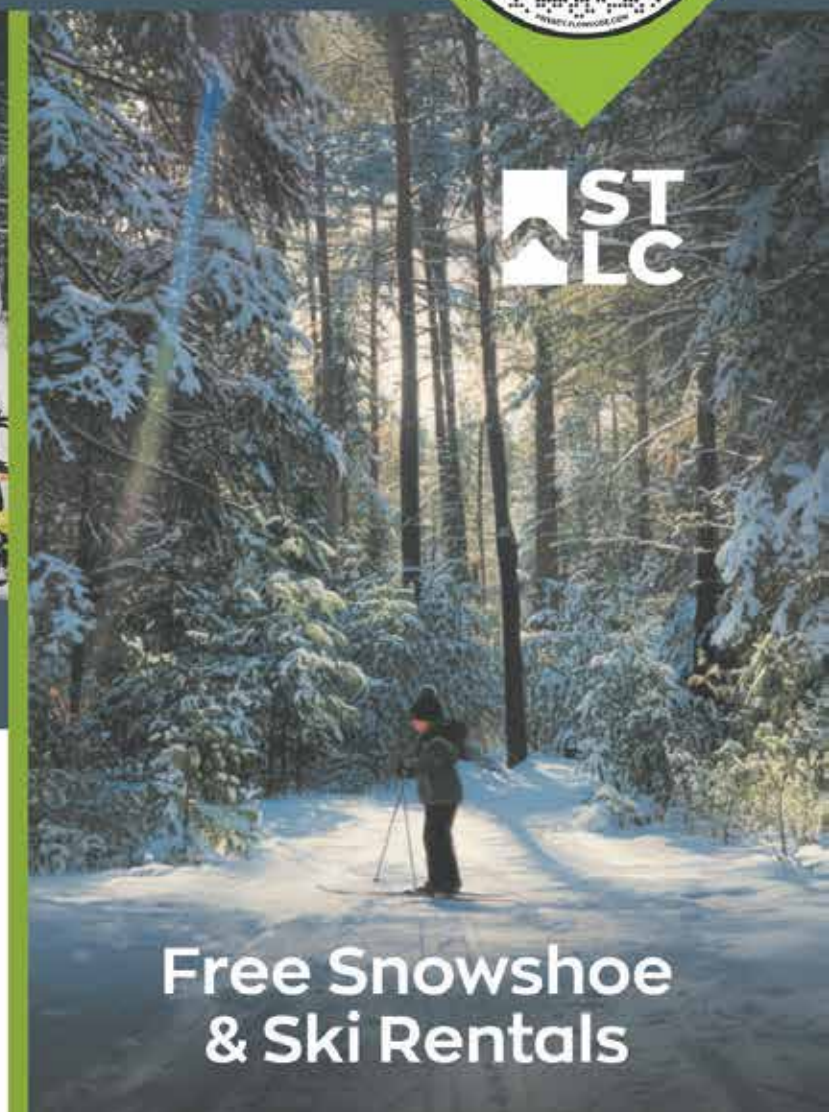
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# Retreat from life’s worries at Beaver Camp



For generations, Beaver Camp has been providing youth with some of the finest experiences of summer, and adults many opportunities to retreat from life’s worries on Beaver Lake in the Adirondacks.

Beaver Camp delivers enriching, fun-filled, spiritually-focused summer camps for kids, with swimming, boating, nature instruction and the ropes course that will get you climbing! Beaver Camp offers year-round programming and facilities for youth and adults, including winter camps, and the perfect place to book your group’s retreat or event.

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.

# Family Ice Cream celebrating 23 years of serving up soft custard ice cream

Rich and Kim Martin want to thank everyone who helped Family Ice Cream have a wonderful season in 2025. We couldn’t have done it without you. Now we are looking forward to 2026 with some new and exciting additions to our menu.

We also have weekly Fruit Slush flavor specials.

We are located at 7388 Turin Road, Lowville, the last place on the left going up Martinsburg Hill, the colorful building which represents some of the more than 40 flavors we serve in soft custard ice cream.

For those of you that haven’t visited Family Ice Cream our menu consist of waffle, sugar and gluten free cones always with free sprinkles, sundaes, banana splits with many different toppings and always includes nuts, whipped cream and of course a cherry. Our avalanches are out of this world:

Butterfinger, Oreo, M&M, Reese’s Pieces, cookie dough, Heath and Andes candies and of course your own combination.

We also have shaved ice with many different flavors to choose from. Don’t forget to try our signature sundae the Piggy Sweet, you guessed it, a waffle bowl, two toppings, nuts, whipped cream, cherry and the piggy (bacon bits). You’ll love it.

As Rich and I look back to our early years of Family Ice Cream, we can only thank our faithful customers for supporting our business.

If it wasn’t for them we wouldn’t have had the wonderful years that has brought us to where we are today. We always miss the interaction with our customers during the off season and look forward to opening day, which will be Friday, April 24. Again thank you everyone.





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# Oswegatchie FFA Camp Gears Up for Another Summer of Leadership and Adventure

CROGHAN, NY — The Oswegatchie FFA Camp, set on 1,200 acres of Adirondack forest in Croghan, is preparing for its 2026 summer season, continuing a storied tradition of outdoor adventure and leadership development for teens. Founded in 1946 by the New York FFA Association, the camp was created to give youth a place to discover themselves, meet new people, and grow through hands-on experiences far from home.

Open to youth ages 11–18 or those entering grades 7–12 in the fall, Oswegatchie offers a wide range of activities designed to build confidence and foster teamwork. Campers can test their limits on a 350-foot zip line, paddle kayaks and canoes across four pristine ponds, ride horses through forest trails, and mountain bike rugged Adirondack terrain.

Registration for the six week summer program

opens in March, with special rates for FFA members. Week-by-week sessions begin in late June and run through early August.

In addition to adventure activities, Oswegatchie hires about fifty seasonal staff members each summer, providing training in wilderness first aid and leadership before guiding campers throughout the season.

As the camp looks forward to another season, organizers emphasize that the experience offers not just thrills, but lasting friendships and personal growth.

Join us on April 26th, 2026 for the 32nd Annual Adironduck Race & Pancake Breakfast. The day starts as early as 8 AM for breakfast, includes free entertainment in the morning, and a 5k at 10 AM. Ducks are raced at 1 PM. A special thank you to our Title Sponsor, Farm Credit East.

# IDA helping St. Lawrence County growth

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, trade-show 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 2025, the IDA supported a variety of business and workforce development activities.

Business Connection Events highlighted regional assets such as the SUNY Canton Canino School of Engineering and the three BOCES Tech Centers. The IDA also partnered with BOCES to coordinate Manufacturing Day, arranging visits for more than 300 students from 11 local school districts to 16 manufacturers across St. Lawrence County. Additionally, the IDA assisted the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce with organizing and promoting a Business Resource Mixer highlighting local business support services and providers to local employers.

Throughout the year, the IDA hosted several targeted engagement events. Real Estate Roundtables connected local real estate professionals with economic development representatives to discuss shared workforce and business priorities. The IDA also facilitated Next Move NY introductions with the Development Authority of the North Country, linking local employers with Fort Drum soldiers transitioning to civilian life, as part of a regional effort to keep soldiers and families in the area. An Export to Canada Roundtable rounded out the year's activities, featuring Empire State Development trade representatives from Montreal and bringing together regional economic developers and local businesses to support cross-border trade.

Project activity for the IDA and its affiliated development corporations and the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency remained strong throughout 2025. Active projects included work with Cives Steel in Gouverneur; Vecino Group NY, LLC on the Canton Midtown Plaza and Potsdam Congdon Hall projects; Kinney Drugs in Gouverneur; a multi-county tax exempt bond issue for Rochester Regional Hospital/St. Lawrence Health Systems; the Massena Arts and Theatre rehabilitation projects; Villnave Construction Services in Winthrop; and Legacy Crane, an affiliate of ENI Mechanical, Inc., in Gouverneur.

Empire State Mines

received approval for a \$2 million joint financing package from the IDA Local Development Corporation, the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency, and the Development Authority of the North Country to establish a graphite processing demonstration facility in Fowler. The project is the first step toward enabling the company, historically a zinc mining operation, to expand into a second mineral product line and position itself as the first end-to-end graphite producer in the United States in over 70 years.

The IDA also authorized the lease of the former Kraft facility at 30 Buck Street in Canton from the St. Lawrence County Property Development Corporation, enabling the agency to oversee the property's rehabilitation and redevelopment. In 2025, the IDA completed maintenance and basic building repairs at the site. An RFP for initial HVAC, lighting, and electrical upgrades will be issued in early 2026.

In partnership with the Development Authority of the North Country, the IDA continued demolition and redevelopment of the former Massena School of Business site in downtown Massena. A key part of the Massena Downtown Revitalization Initiative, the project will transform the property into a community space linking the downtown corridor with riverwalk areas while preserving the structure's historic Main Street façade.

The St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency also approved \$100,000 in awards through the 2025 River Valley Community Development and Environmental Improvement Program, which has provided more than \$4.5 million in funding over the past fifteen years for projects across St. Lawrence County.

In 2022, the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators allocated \$3,387,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency to support businesses, organizations, and individuals affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2024, the IDA had completed the award process and continued issuing final expenditures in 2025. Most awards were fully disbursed and closed out by year-end, with only a small number scheduled for 2026. Funding supported multiple program areas, including workforce training, small business and nonprofit assistance, tourism promotion and development, and facility and infrastructure improvements.

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



Congresswoman Elise Stefanik looks at rocks on display at Empire State Mines, which is owned by Titan Mining Corporation. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

# Mining

From B1

graphite hasn't been mined in the U.S. because it's been cheaper to import it from China.

"China has huge graphite resources, began exporting so much in the 1990s that the price went down and so U.S. companies had little reason to produce their own. Demand for graphite is increasing, especially due to the increase in production of lithium ion batteries, of which graphite is a component," he said.

Messler said he and his team are "pretty excited" to mine graphite in the north country.

"In mineral exploration, finding anything that ends up being mined is pretty rare, but finding something that carries this type of criticality and the importance to the U.S., it's exciting."

Rita Adiani, president and chief executive officer of Titan Mining, described the graphite production as the first end-to-end natural flake graphite production in the United States in about 70 years.

"Graphite is a critical mineral," she said in September.

The largest component of lithium-ion batteries is graphite, Adiani said. Those batteries are used in electric vehicles, energy storage systems, semiconductor optics, and more.

"It goes into some of the very critical industries where the United States is trying to onshore," she said. "What I think this administration has realized very quickly, and all our federal partners have realized very quickly, it's great to be able to onshore industries, but you need to onshore inputs



Titan Mining President/CEO Rita Adiani, left, talks with Rep. Elise Stefanik at Titan's graphite mine in Gouverneur on Friday. Submitted photo.

as well, and that's where we play a significant role."

Adiani was at the head of a September tour, along with Congresswoman Elise M. Stefanik. Adiani called Stefanik "instrumental" with some of the early federal interactions.

"What we're very proud of... is we're sort of leading in really a space which has never been done before," she said.

A mining project typically takes around a decade to become operational. However, after the 2022 discovery, the St. Lawrence County mine is already beginning first production this year.

"I think we're doing this at light speed, and we're doing this thanks to the infrastructure and the workforce that we have," Adiani said.

Adiani said an issue she conveyed to Stefanik was that since products like graphite haven't traditionally been mined in the United States, there isn't a Western price point for it. She said there is pricing, but it's based off of China, where there are lower labor and

energy costs.

"What China can sell it for, we can't," she said.

"This production coincides with the issuance of a new Executive Order by the White House directing the application of Section 232 authorities to processed critical minerals and their derivative products, including natural graphite, in response to persistent U.S. import dependence and downstream supply-chain vulnerabilities," the Jan. 26 news release stated. "The Executive Order explicitly recognizes that domestic mining alone does not ensure supply security where processing capacity remains concentrated offshore."

"With Kilbourne now producing, Titan is aligned with the federal government's clear policy direction: rebuilding secure, end-to-end U.S. supply chains for critical minerals," said Adiani.

"The combination of first domestic production and decisive trade and industrial policy action materially de-risks the path to commercial scale."

The discovery will help re-tail 135 jobs at the plant, and five new jobs will be created.

"We have watched the growth from a zinc mine into this discovery of graphite," Stefanik said. "This is a very big district, we have a lot of interesting opportunities at all times, but I'm very very excited about the opportunity in years to come."

State Sen. Mark Walczyk was on the September tour where said this provides "awesome opportunities for jobs in St. Lawrence County."

"The bigger mission of harvesting more of the material that we need to keep the United States of America's economy pumping, very exciting for anybody and we should have a tremendous amount of pride in the north country that this is here, the graphite mine of the United States of America is not just in New York, but is in St. Lawrence County and right here in the north country," he said.

"The entire process here is really cool," Walczyk said.



# St. Lawrence Federal Credit Union strengthening community



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**Pictured from left to right: St. Lawrence Health President Donna McGregor; St. Lawrence FCU Board Director John (Dick) Durkin; St. Lawrence FCU President & CEO Amber Taylor; St. Lawrence FCU VP of Operations Michelle Carkner; St. Lawrence FCU VP of Lending Ashlee Crosby; and St. Lawrence FCU Vice Chairman of the Board Dale Coats.”**

St. Lawrence Federal Credit Union proudly presented a \$10,000 donation to the St. Lawrence Health Foundation as part of our \$50,000, five-year pledge, including sponsorship of the Visitor Lounge to support the care and comfort of patients, families, and our greater community.

remains deeply committed to strengthening the communities we serve, recognizing that access to compassionate, high-quality healthcare is essential to the well-being of our members and neighbors.



**Oswegatchie's 32nd Annual Sunday April 26th, 2026**

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Throughout the year, the IDA hosted several targeted engagement events. Real Estate Roundtables connected local real estate professionals with economic development representatives to discuss shared workforce and business priorities. The IDA also facilitated Next Move NY introductions with the Development Authority of the North Country, linking local employers with Fort Drum soldiers transitioning to civilian life, as part of a regional effort to keep soldiers and families in the area. An Export to Canada Roundtable rounded out the year's activities, featuring Empire State Development trade representatives from Montreal and bringing together regional economic developers and local businesses to support crossborder trade.

Project activity for the IDA and its affiliated development corporations and the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency remained strong throughout 2025. Active projects included work with Cives Steel in Gouverneur; Vecino Group NY, LLC on the Canton Midtown Plaza and Potsdam Congdon Hall projects; Kinney Drugs in Gouverneur; a multi-county tax exempt bond issue for Rochester Regional Hospital/St. Lawrence Health Systems; the Massena Arts and Theatre rehabilitation projects; Villnave Construction Services in Winthrop; and Legacy



Crane, an affiliate of ENI Mechanical, Inc., in Gouverneur. Empire State Mines received approval for a \$2 million joint financing package from the IDA Local Development Corporation, the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency, and the Development Authority of the North Country to establish a graphite processing demonstration facility in Fowler. The project is the first step toward enabling the company, historically a zinc mining operation, to expand into a second mineral product line and position itself as the first end-to-end graphite producer in the United States in over 70 years.

The IDA also authorized the lease of the former Kraft facility at 30 Buck Street in Canton from the St. Lawrence County Property Development Corporation, enabling the agency to oversee the property's rehabilitation and redevelopment. In 2025, the IDA completed maintenance and basic building repairs at the site. An RFP for initial HVAC, lighting, and electrical upgrades will be issued in early 2026.

In partnership with the Development Authority of the North Country, the IDA continued demolition and redevelopment of the former Massena School of Business site in downtown Massena. A key part of the Massena Downtown Revitalization Initiative, the project will transform the property into a community space linking the

downtown corridor with riverwalk areas while preserving the structure's historic Main Street façade. The St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency also approved \$100,000 in awards through the 2025 River Valley Community Development and Environmental Improvement Program, which has provided more than \$4.5 million in funding over the past fifteen years for projects across St. Lawrence County.

In 2022, the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators allocated \$3,387,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency to support businesses, organizations, and individuals affected by the COVID19 pandemic. By the end of 2024, the IDA had completed the award process and continued issuing final expenditures in 2025. Most awards were fully disbursed and closed out by yearend, with only a small number scheduled for 2026. Funding supported multiple program areas, including workforce training, small business and nonprofit assistance, tourism promotion and development, and facility and infrastructure improvements.

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



# Lewis County Health System ~ A Healthcare Leader in the North Country

Lewis County Health System (LCHS) provides local access to vital healthcare services for Lewis County, Fort Drum, and the surrounding communities. LCHS offers acute care and diagnostic services, a 24-hour physician-staffed emergency department, long-term care, home health and hospice, and a variety of primary and specialty care services, including orthopedics, surgery, OB/GYN care, and podiatry.

Collectively, over 650 dedicated employees make LCHS a healthcare leader in the North Country. Examples of how our team has cared for those in our community over the past year include the delivery of the following services: 2,023 surgeries, 12,066 emergency department visits, 66,376 clinic visits, 7,186 home health visits, 1,345 hospice visits, and 1,966 inpatient admissions.

A new specialty service, Lewis County Podiatry, opened on the main campus in Lowville. The podiatry clinic is staffed by Surgical Podiatrist Gifford Ko, DPM, MSc, AACFAS, and offers foot care for all ages. Dr. Ko received his Doctor of Podiatric Medicine at



In photo left to right: The Lewis County Podiatry team; Janice Whitehead, LPN; Surgical Podiatrist Gifford Ko, DPM, MSc, AACFAS; and Cindy Brasie, POA.

the Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine in Independence, Ohio, followed

by residency at Emory University School of Medicine. His expertise and care will help

North Country residents keep

See LCHS B9

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Next Move NY connects military service members, spouses, and veterans who are leaving the military to meaningful employment opportunities, education and training to help make the North Country and New York State their home. Next Move NY is administered by the Development Authority of the North Country.

#### JOB PORTAL

Our Job Portal uses state-of-the-art military friendly technology to align talent and skills to careers and real-time jobs in the North Country.

#### CAREER PLANNING

Assist candidates with resume building, cover letter creation and mock interviews that cover all their bases for their next career move in New York.

#### PROGRAMS

Next Move NY offers Mentorship Programs, Employer Incentive Programs, Internship, and Apprenticeship opportunities.

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10th Mountain Life features soldier shoutouts, photos of Fort Drum events, memories from post and more.

To recognize your favorite soldier or share photos, email [news@wdt.net](mailto:news@wdt.net) with subject “10th Mountain Life”

The Madison Barracks 9th Division of the 25th Field Artillery, on maneuver at the Pine Camp artillery range, prepare to fire a 75-millimeter gun. In 1906, the area of Pine Camp near the communities of Black River and Deferiet was selected by the commanders of Madison Barracks for training. Courtesy of the 10th Mountain Division & Fort Drum Museum



HISTORIC  
DRUM



ON THIS DAY

A team comprised of Central New York and Fort Drum-based sled hockey players watches a game against a team from Buffalo during the fifth 1000 Islands River Classic pond hockey tournament in Clayton on Jan. 30, 2016. From the Watertown Daily Times Archive

# 10TH MOUNTAIN LIFE

## 10th Light Support Battalion honored by Assemblyman Gray

By JONATHON WHEELER  
[jwheeler@wdt.net](mailto:jwheeler@wdt.net)

FORT DRUM — The 10th Light Support Battalion was recently recognized by Assemblyman Scott A. Gray for extraordinary efforts during high-priority missions.

The battalion had completed more than 20 high priority missions without a single error.

“It really came down to extraordinary work by the unit,” Gray said. “We thought it was worthy to point it out and actually thank them for it and welcome them home.”

Gray said that when units complete the high-level missions without error, it is worth officially recognizing at the state level.

“They’re under extreme pressure,” Gray said. “It’s like having a perfect season in sports... It’s worthy of recognition when somebody can execute at that level.”

Gray called the Fort Drum connection to the north country “huge” while complimenting the work of Capt. Kenard Hird, who is the Company C commander.

“There are certain units and there are certain leaders and Kenny Hird is one of those leaders, one of those



Assemblyman Scott Gray presents the citation to Capt. Kenard Hird, right, and 1st Sgt. Darlson Osias. Provided photo

exceptional leaders,” he said.

He said Hird leads the unit at a high level.

“We’re talking about not only war-fighting, when they’re operating flawlessly, but we’re talking about when they come home, they train hard... they incorporate moral type of building activities in there and they’re very community oriented,” Gray said. “When you talk about well rounded leadership and you’re talking about a well-rounded unit, you’re looking at Kenny leading that unit.”

## JOB WELL DONE



Sgt. Pedro Crespo Jesus, a human resources NCO, gets awarded by soldiers and leaders with HHC, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade during his ETS ceremony at Fort Drum on Dec. 9. Pedro reaffirmed his dedication to service in the United States Army by reenlisting for 3 years the prior month. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Mason Nichols

## OUT AND ABOUT

- Seven soldiers, including one from the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Polk, started off 2026 by earning their newest Military Occupational Specialty — 91J — by completing five weeks of training in the 91J10 Quartermaster and Chemical Equipment Repairer Course at Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance at Fort McCoy. Spc. Chandler Petrimoulx with 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was among them.
- Although he never wore a military uniform, Charles Minot Dole’s service to the U.S. Army proved invaluable as his advocacy and recruitment efforts led to the establishment of the 10th Mountain Division in 1943. Fort Drum community members and invited guests gathered inside the post museum to celebrate his legacy Jan. 23 during the dedication ceremony of the Charles Minot “Minnie” Dole Heritage Complex. “Today we are not simply renaming a building,” said Maj. Gen. Scott Naumann, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum commanding general. “We are recognizing the individual whose vision, persistence, and love of the mountains helped create this division and, probably more importantly, helped define who we are.”
- Dole, the founder of the National Ski Patrol, recognized a critical gap in the U.S. military and relentlessly petitioned the War Department for a specialized mountain unit.



# Augustinian Academy Continues a Legacy of Academic Excellence, Faith-Formation, and Community Service in the North Country

For over 140 years, Augustinian Academy has been a trusted educational cornerstone for families across the North Country, serving students from Carthage, Fort Drum, Copenhagen, Lowville, Beaver Falls, and neighboring communities. Founded in 1885 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Augustinian Academy has remained steadfast in its mission to provide a high-quality, faith-centered education for students in preschool through eighth grade.

Augustinian Academy has small class sizes, a committed faculty, and a close-knit, family-focused atmosphere. These qualities allow for individualized instruction while fostering a nurturing environment that supports students' academic, emotional, physical, and spiritual development. While rooted in Catholic tradition, the school welcomes students of all faith backgrounds, offering values-based education that emphasizes service and character development. Located near Fort Drum, the school proudly supports military-connected students and understands the unique challenges associated with military life.

Beyond the classroom, the Academy provides a variety of extracurricular activities and opportunities for community involvement, encouraging students to grow into well-rounded individuals. This holistic approach to education reflects the school's long-standing commitment to shaping not only strong students, but compassionate and engaged citizens.

Community connection has always been central to Augustinian Academy's identity, and that spirit is especially evident through its long-running community events. The school's Annual Gala, now in its 24th year, has become a highlight of the local social calendar.

What began as a simple gathering envisioned by the late principal Sister John Mary has grown into a signature fundraising event that supports the school's mission. This year's celebration, themed "Movie Premiere Gala - A Night on the Red Carpet," featured fine dining, dancing, live Jazz music from The Lowville Community Orchestra, raffles, a silent auction, and more.

The Gala is made possible through the generous support of Major Event Sponsors, including Carthage Area Hospital, Rob Sligar of Cross Country Mortgage, the Sisters of St. Joseph, Iseneker Funeral Home, Knights of Columbus Father John Cosmic Council 291, and Indigo Inkwell. Numerous local businesses and individual

donors also contribute gift certificates, raffle prizes, and auction items. These collective efforts help ensure that Augustinian Academy continues its longstanding policy of never turning away a student due to financial hardship.

Another cherished community tradition is the St. James Fair, the school's largest annual fundraiser and a beloved summer event. Now celebrating its 52nd year, the fair draws thousands each summer with its food vendors, live entertainment, carnival rides, games, and family-friendly attractions. The fair stands as a testament to the Academy's deep roots and lasting impact within the community.

Academically, Augustinian Academy offers a challenging curriculum aligned with New York State Standards and accredited through Cognia. This accreditation underscores the school's dedication to continuous improvement while remaining grounded in its Catholic identity. Students in eighth grade have the opportunity to accelerate in core subjects such as mathematics, earning high school credit through NYS Regents courses. The Academy also works closely with local public school districts to support students with Individualized Education Plans and 504 Plans.

The academic curriculum at Augustinian Academy is enriched by classes in physical education, music, art, and technology, along with access to a modern library and computer lab. Students may also participate in a variety of extracurricular opportunities, including after-school programs, intramural sports, and at the middle school level modified sports offered through local public school districts. In addition, the After-Care Program supports families by providing a supervised, structured environment featuring activities such as baton twirling, drama club, arts and crafts, and homework assistance.

Through its emphasis on academic excellence, faith formation, service, and affordability, Augustinian Academy continues to serve as a vital resource for families throughout the region. Scholarships, low tuition rates, and transportation provided by local school districts help ensure that a Catholic education remains accessible to all.

As the Academy looks ahead to the 2026-2027 school year, applications are now being accepted. Families interested in learning more or scheduling a visit are encouraged to visit [www.c-augustinian.org](http://www.c-augustinian.org) or contact the school directly at 315-493-1301.

# LCHS

From B7

their feet healthy for comfort, mobility, and overall health.

The Lewis County Health System invests in our workforce to advance our team! For example, after identifying a significant need for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in the workforce, LCHS was proud to partner with Jefferson/Lewis BOCES and the Caring Gene/Iroquois Health Association Healthcare Career Pathways Initiative to bring back the Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) program to Lewis County. The collaborative efforts involved many and included support for rebuilding the clinical lab at the Howard G. Sackett Technical Center in Glenfield, as well as teaming up to recruit

students, many of whom were employees motivated to advance their careers. The 10-month practical nursing program requires students to complete intensive classroom study and to observe and rotate through clinical areas to gain hands-on experience.

The Women's Health and Maternity teams are proud to provide local access to vital health care services for women and expectant families in Lewis County and across the North Country. Last year, the obstetricians and nursing team delivered 156 babies; this year, the team expects to welcome 160 babies by the end of June!

In addition to providing quality care, the health system creates economic opportunities for area businesses, generates millions in tax dollars to stimulate the local economy, and creates jobs at all skill

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# DANC connecting soldiers with the north country through Next Move NY

Next Move NY is a bold new initiative to connect soldiers leaving the military, their spouses, and veterans with job opportunities in the seven-county North Country region, and New York State. The program creates a workforce pipeline to real-time jobs, ultimately retaining military families to the region and state, while driving economic vitality and growth.

Next Move NY does not duplicate existing workforce development initiatives,

but instead focuses staff resources to provide direct support to transitioning soldiers, spouses and veterans as they seek employment in the region. Staff meets one-on-one with job seekers to help them identify jobs in our region and state that meet their skills, capabilities, and experiences.

The Next Move NY job portal, powered by Oplign, is currently open to transitioning soldiers, spouses and veterans to register for real-time

job matches in our region. To register go to <https://nextmoveny.com/programs/>. The same link provides access to employers to register their business, and job openings, while communicating directly with potential applicants.

The Next Move NY program is currently matching transitioning soldiers with business leader mentors through a Veterans Ambassador Program. Additionally, staff is working with the Fort

Drum Transition Assistance Program to match transitioning soldiers with internship and apprenticeship programs with area businesses through its Career Connect Program.

The Next Move NY initiative is funded by New York State and the workforce portion is administered by the Development Authority of the North Country. For more information, contact Ben Cruz, at 315-661-3356, or at [bcruz@danc.org](mailto:bcruz@danc.org).

# North Country Children's Museum an immersive, hands-on experience

The North Country Children's Museum features hands-on exhibits and rotating activity stations, so there is always something new to explore. Designed for children ages 12 and under and their families. Come create family memories at the museum!

There is now even more to enjoy with the opening of the brand-new second floor. New exhibits include an indoor Maple Forest Climber that rises through the roof of the museum, offering an amazing view of downtown Potsdam. The climber gives children opportunities to crawl, climb,

and explore a forest-inspired structure filled with tunnels, pulleys, and lookout points that encourage big movement and imaginative play.

The Music and Sound Lab is a hands-on exhibit focused on seeing sound and making music, including a playable, see-through piano. Addie's Opera House brings the excitement of the stage to life with a control booth, ticket booth, and backstage costumes. The Amish House offers a hands-on look at

daily life in a traditional Amish home, where children can pump water, tend to chores, and role-play family life in a thoughtfully designed setting built by local Amish builders. Along the Physics Trail, kids explore motion, air, light, and energy through large-scale interactive elements that turn science concepts into playful experiments. The Peek-A-Boo Corner provides a cozy, comfortable space just for babies and toddlers, giving families a place to slow down while still

feeling part of the action.

The North Country Children's Museum is located at 10 Raymond Street in Potsdam and is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The new second floor is included with regular museum admission and is now open to the public. For more information, visit [www.northcountrychildrensmuseum.org](http://www.northcountrychildrensmuseum.org) or follow the North Country Children's Museum on Facebook.



Carson Kuhl

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# 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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# Watertown Daily Times

## PROGRESS

### Ribbon cut at new Watertown airport terminal



Elected officials and airport officials officially cut the ribbon on the newly renovated Watertown International Airport in November. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

The Watertown International Airport's new terminal has been cleared for takeoff.

Jefferson County and airport officials officially cut the ribbon on the new \$32.3 million terminal in November in front of a packed crowd. The project modernized the terminal and added additional space.

"It's a very exciting day," Airport Manager Grant W. Sussey said. "We've worked hard to get to this point."

The old terminal will be repurposed as a restaurant and meeting space for both travelers and non-travelers. Local restaurant and bar chain Bad Apple was chosen to operate the restaurant space.

Some of the new changes include an automatic conveyor belt for baggage, a jet bridge, new seating with USB charging ports, a larger holding area, and improved baggage claim space.

The first flight out of the new terminal took place on Oct. 24 at 6 a.m.

Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul said in a news release that investing in airports puts the

community on the path towards economic prosperity and can provide a better quality of life.

"This new terminal at the Watertown International Airport gives the North Country the first-class travel hub it deserves and will create a welcoming environment for passengers traveling through its spacious confines, including the many soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Drum who frequently use this airport," she said in the news release.

The project was funded by a \$28 million state grant to north country airports. Jefferson County paid \$1.3 million and the Federal Aviation Administration contributed \$3 million.

The Watertown International Airport was one of nine upstate airports that were awarded a total of \$230 million in the Upstate Airport Economic Development and Revitalization Competition, which were given to promote, revitalize, and accelerate investments in commercial passenger service airports in upstate New York.

Jefferson County assumed responsibility of the airport in 2006 from the city of Watertown. County Administrator Ryan Piche said in 2006 there were around 4,000 passengers a year. They expect there will be over 50,000 travelers going through the airport next year.

"This is truly an impressive space," Piche said.

Piche said that the project would not have been possible without the support from the state and the governor's office.

"The state believes in Jefferson County, has shared our vision for the airport, and has supported this critical project with almost \$30 million in funding from the New York State Department of Transportation," he said.

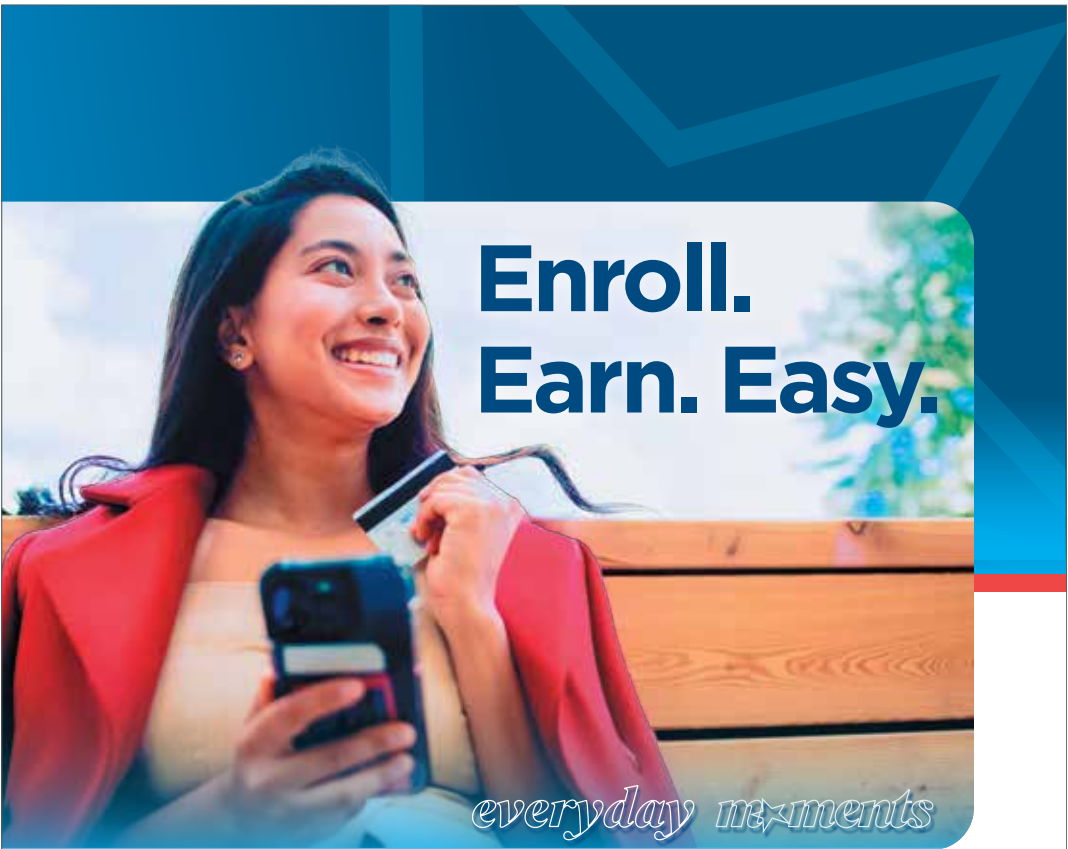
Department of Transportation Chief Engineer Stephanie Winkelhake said that the airport was built with military members in mind.

"In many ways, this space is an honor of what you mean to your community, to our country," she said. "This new

See AIRPORT C2



A seating area for passengers to eat quick snacks is also now inside the Watertown International Airport's new terminal. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



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# Aubertine and Currier – A Look Back at 2025’s Highlights and Opportunities

Aubertine and Currier Architects, Engineers & Land Surveyors, PLLC is a NYS Certified Women Business Enterprise (WBE) 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 relationships with clients and colleagues. Through decades of hard work and expertise, we have remained a major player in the developments happening in our local communities.

In 2025, Aubertine and Currier was proud to have attended several conferences, career fairs and community events to directly engage with members of our local communities. This year, we look forward to attending the upcoming annual SUNY Canton Engineering Career Fair, Jefferson Community College’s Spring Open House, the Clarkson University Career Fair, and the annual Jefferson County Career Jam to connect with another generation North Country students. We also had the opportunity to connect with industry leaders on a national level at the SAME Federal Small Business Conference in Phoenix, Arizona! The SAME Conference unites businesses across the Unites States, government agencies and AEC professionals to promote innovation, drive industry discussion, and foster long lasting professional relationships. We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to attend such an impactful, nationwide event!

Last fall, we collaborated with Jefferson Community College to host another successful Collegiate Science & Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) Leadership event. JCC’s CSTEP students spent the day touring local facilities, connecting with community representatives, and were introduced to the various opportunities the North Country has to offer, including architecture and engineering. Throughout the day, students toured the Thrive Wellness and Recovery Outpatient Clinic, got a glimpse into the construction process of the Neighbors of Watertown Housing Facility for the Homeless, enjoyed lunch at the STRAND Theater with a guest speaker from Samaritan Hospital, received a guided architecture and engineering tour of the Clayton Riverwalk, and ended their day at Boldt Castle for some St. Lawrence River sight-seeing. We are grateful for the partnerships that allow these events to happen and look forward to collaborating in the upcoming year!

Our team experienced significant growth in 2025 as we had the pleasure of welcoming six new team members. Allow us to welcome: Wyatt Holmes, Survey Technician, Kaela Mel-lowship, Proposal Coordinator, Dani Wright, Administrative Assistant, Duanne Rayburn, Construction Inspector, Storm Turck, Survey Proposal Co-ordinator, and Justin Queary, IT Specialist. We also had the pleasure of hosting a Thousand Islands High School student looking to get some hands-on engineering experience!

Project Updates:  
Plattsburgh Water Recovery Resource Facility Façade Project – The Plattsburgh WRRF is officially under construction! The Façade Integration Project, completed in partnership with CDM Smith, will transform the existing WRRF into an attractive and informational destination that harmonizes with the surrounding scenery and the Lake Champlain waterfront. Once completed, the facility will be more than just a water treatment plant, rather an interactive facility that blends education, recreation, and revitalization.

Massena School of Business Revitalization – The historic Massena School of Business

located in the heart of Down-town Massena will soon receive a fresh new look! Ground broke last summer to convert the structurally insecure and unsafe building into a community resource. The project converts the facility into a public “Pocket Park” for recreational use, while maintaining its historic brick façade on Main Street.

New Projects:  
Cape Vincent Improvement Projects – Downtown Cape Vincent will soon undergo some impressive changes. Aubertine and Currier is engaged in providing Civil Engineering services for two major projects that will come to revitalize the Cape Vincent community. Partnering with Edgewater Civil, the Club Street Waterfront Project strengthens infrastructure for recreational boating, will stabilize the existing seawall and provide new dock space for incoming guests. This project, as part of a larger effort to improve Downtown Cape Vincent, is anticipated to undergo construction this spring. Simultaneously, our civil engineering team is partnering with Delta Engineers for the Streetscape Improvements & Pedestrian Zone project that will create safer downtown infrastructure and streetscape improvements for the village. This project will aim to create safer sidewalks and pedestrian routes, improve street lighting and significantly enhance site amenities in an effort to create an inviting downtown environment. Once completed, these projects will provide Cape Vincent with safe, accessible infrastructure that will allow the downtown area to accommodate tourists and long-term economic development!

Thousand Islands Inn Revitalization - Built in 1897, the historic Thousand Islands Inn was once a booming tourist destination but has now sat vacant for over 10 years. Aubertine and Currier is providing a full suite of design services to ensure the building receives the revitalization it deserves. With construction aimed to start early this summer, the TI Inn will be transformed into a multi-use facility accommodating the growing needs of the Thousand Island region. The renovation will focus on improving the structural integrity of the building, adding a modern element to the Inn, and bringing it up to current NYS Building and Energy Codes. The renovated building will take on new life as it will provide publicly available apartment units for those looking to live on the majestic St. Lawrence River. Four apartment units will comprise the second floor, while the third floor is made up of one large apartment designed for luxurious river living. This apartment will feature 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms and a loft-style mezzanine to take full advantage of the space. Moving down, the first floor will be home to a new restaurant, with a tenant lobby and entrance on the opposite side of the building. On the exterior, the first floor will be fitted with a wrap-around porch, with balconies on the remaining two levels. Our teams have been working diligently to provide our client with a design that meets their needs, as well as those of the greater Clayton area. Stay tuned for this impressive renovation coming later this year!

To learn more about the progress of these projects, be sure to follow us on Facebook, visit our website at [aubertinecurrier.com](http://aubertinecurrier.com), or subscribe to our newsletter! 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, please visit our website for more information. We cannot wait to see what 2026 will bring!



Watertown International Airport. Watertown Daily Times

## Airport

From C1

modern facility is a blessing (for) many reasons...This transformation sends a clear message: The Watertown and the Thousand Islands region are open for business, opportunity, and tourism.”

Sen. Mark Walczyk said the airport is the first impression travelers will have when they come to the area.

“I love this airport,” he said. Kelly Curry painted the murals that appear on the walls inside the new terminal. She stated that as soon as she heard that they were looking for artwork for the terminal, she was interested.

Curry, who also has a book coming out titled “Murals: The Seen and Unseen Along the St. Lawrence River” said she wanted to make murals for the county as a whole, not just a specific portion.

She said she has been working since August on the murals and used exterior house paint from Benjamin Moore.

“To be here and be able to add my art to our home area, our roots so to say, is a really big deal,” Curry said.

Curry’s grandfather is a previous sheriff of Jefferson County and used to be a legislator.

Chairman of the Board of Legislators William W. Johnson stated that the project was made possible by legislators past and present.

“True vision and true leadership is the ability to see beyond what’s in front of us today and push towards an uncertain future,” he said. “This is the value of consistent investment and the



Balloons with the Watertown International Airport logo appear outside the baggage area at the new terminal for the Watertown International Airport. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

shared belief that this community is deserving of access to high quality air travel.”

Legislator James A. Nabywaneic was an original member of the county’s airport committee and currently serves as chairman of the General Services Committee. He said that they had a chance to see the terminal a few weeks back.

“For us, it was a little like Christmas morning,” he said.

He also stated that the relationship with Fort Drum brought a legacy carrier like American Airlines to the airport.

“I think they saw the potential of Fort Drum and ridership,” he said. “We’re so fortunate to have a legacy carrier like American Airlines to partner with. It’s been a great

15-year relationship.”

Nabywaneic said the county is “very fortunate” to have Sussey as the director of aviation for the airport.

In attendance were Walczyk, Assemblyman Scott A. Gray, Sen. Ken Blankenbush, Chairman of the Board of Legislators William Johnson, Vice Chairman of the Board of Legislators Patrick Jareo and Legislators Phil Reed, Robert Cantwell, Tina M. Bartlett-Bearup, Michael Montigelli, Daniel R. McBride, Nabywaneic, Karen J. Freeman, Christopher S. Boulio, Robert D. Ferris, Steel E. Potter and Corey Y. Grant.

Reed said that Friday was “a long time coming.”

“We would not be anywhere without the people flying in and out of here or the

community support,” he said. “We’re not going to be the next major airport, but we’re going to provide the community with an asset that’s not saddled with debt, responsible growth, and provide a good service for the area.”

Also in attendance were Watertown City Council members Lisa A. Ruggiero and Robert O. Kimball, in addition to Deputy County Administrator Dylan Soper, retired County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Jefferson County Treasurer Brian Peck, town of Hounsfield Supervisor Beth Arthur, Garrison Commander for Fort Drum Jason Adler, and Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Burns and a representative from Congresswoman Elise Stefanik’s office.



The new ticketing area for the Watertown International Airport. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



# STLC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE: Investing in the Future of St. Lawrence County

CANTON — For businesses and organizations looking to grow their footprint while simultaneously fueling the economic engine of the North Country, the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Circle has emerged as a premier vehicle for community investment. Designed for companies that serve as major investors in the Chamber, the Leadership Circle program provides a structured way for businesses to support regional growth, job creation, and quality-of-life initiatives. “Members of the Leadership Circle are critical partners in supporting our

work to make St. Lawrence County a great place to live, invest, work, play, study, and raise a family,” said Ben Dixon, Executive Director of the Chamber. Dixon noted that participation in the Leadership Circle demonstrates an inherent commitment to giving back to the community: “We are thrilled to see leading companies and organizations who are dedicated to the vitality of our region join this group,” Dixon added. “These members provide important and exceptional services to other businesses in the region, and we collaborate with them on everything from business

connections to workforce development.” The Chamber made tremendous progress in these areas in 2025. Activities included:

- Facilitating networking and connections through Business After Hours, the Spring Business Resources Mixer, and referrals to business development programs;
- Contributing to workforce and business resources such as the University-Business Mixer, Lunch & Learn Webinars, tours of the BOCES and SUNY Canton Canino School of Engineering, and the SLC Center for Entrepreneurial

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Welcome to 10th Mountain Life, where you'll find soldier shoutouts, photos of Fort Drum events, memories from post and more.

To recognize your favorite soldier or share photos, email [news@wdt.net](mailto:news@wdt.net) with subject "10th Mountain Life"

From right: Third graders John Carr, Scott Hyde and Joseph Trombley watch the complicated gauges and controls of an Army UH-1 "Huey" helicopter from Fort Drum that landed on the fields of General Brown Central School for a brief visit one morning in September 1984. From the Watertown Daily Times Archive



HISTORIC DRUM



Above and below: Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team conduct rail load operations on Jan. 24, 2019, at the Fort Drum rail yard to prepare for deployment to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Photos by Sgt. Keegan Costello/U.S. Army

ON THIS DAY



## OUT AND ABOUT

- The 10th Mountain Division helped the Buffalo Bills and their fans say goodbye to Highmark Stadium on Jan. 4. The flyover involved crews for two Blackhawk helicopters, one Chinook and one Apache helicopter. The Buffalo Bills extended the flyover opportunity to the 10th Mountain Division as part of its celebration of the final game to occur at Highmark Stadium. The Bills won their final game at the stadium — 35 to 8 over the New York Jets. The Bills played the first game at the Orchard Park site on Aug. 17, 1973, in what was then called Rich Stadium. This year marked the final season at what is now called Highmark Stadium.
- The New York State Assembly recently honored the 10th Light Support Battalion, Challenger Company, at Fort Drum with a citation recognizing the unit's courage, sacrifice, and performance during deployment and their lasting impact at home. The citation was presented by Assemblyman Scott A. Gray. **Read more about the honor next week.**

## SOLDIER OF THE MONTH

Sgt. Rocio Ceja is our 10th Mountain Division's soldier of the month. She was chosen for her efforts on ARSTRUC and her exceptional performance at the Basic Leader Course (BLC). Her subject matter expertise and personal drive led to hundreds of processed HR actions critical to DIVARTY's ARSTRUC transition. In addition, she graduated BLC on the Commandant's List and received the class Superior Writing Award.

### HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR JOB?

As a 42A, my job is characterized by change. I do my best to keep my Battalion informed on the best course of action for the types of requests/processing they are most likely to submit for so we "get it right" the first time. We have demanding training cycles, and I understand the time other Soldiers take out of their day to visit the S1. My role in support is to prevent as many hiccups as possible.

NAME: Rocio Ceja  
AGE: 26  
RANK: Sergeant  
HOMETOWN: Coachella, California  
YEARS IN SERVICE: 2

### WHAT MAKES FORT DRUM HOME?

Fort Drum is home because of the people and the community. I have been fortunate enough to have met motivated Soldiers that inspire me to be the best I can. The local community is also very supportive of Fort Drum. Growing up in the desert, I am out of my element here in Drum. But when I get invitations to go snowboarding or watch hockey games it's not so cold when I'm with friends.

Soldier of the Month is a collaboration with the Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs Office.



Sgt. Rocio Ceja  
Photo courtesy of the 10th Mountain Division



# Morgia Wealth here to help build legacies

At Morgia Wealth Management, building a legacy for future generations is paramount—and not just when it comes to financial planning and investment management. Founder Cataldo (Tony) Morgia began helping local families and businesses in Watertown, New York, in 1968. Tony saw a need in his community and spent the next 58 years serving it. Always future-thinking, Tony built his reputation by offering clients steady, disciplined, and careful guidance, nurturing client relationships just as much as investment portfolios.

When he needed the support of others to keep up with his growing client base, he knew exactly where he could turn to for help: his family. In 1988, his son, Michael Morgia, joined him in business. As they continued to see growth in clients and assets, Tony's son-in-law, PJ Banazek, left his career as a CPA in Syracuse to help build the practice in Watertown. Together, the two generations worked to bring "The Morgia Difference" to the community, taking a holistic view of every client's life and being a steady presence in moments of major financial decisions. Part of "The Morgia Difference" is trust. When Tony decided to transition his leadership over to Mike and PJ in 2001, he knew it would be a smooth one because of the strong relationships built over decades. "PJ and Mike had the respect of the employees and a vision to grow the practice," said Tony. "It was easy for me to transition." While Tony's role evolved, his presence and dedication to

the business never changed. "My father made it easy for us," said Mike. "He kept coming into the office and still does—even today at 87!" Mike acknowledges that the continuity of Tony's presence helped clients feel secure during the transition—especially since Morgia Wealth Management works with many of the children and, now, grandchildren, of Tony's original clients. Under the leadership of Mike and PJ, the practice has continued to grow and expand. Morgia Wealth Management has become a trusted advisor for banks, hospitals, unions, foundations, boards, retirement plans, non-profits, professional practices, and private businesses of all sizes. Now at 14 employees, the practice is entering another new chapter of leadership. Having watched Tony navigate the transition with care and discipline, Mike and PJ are taking the same thoughtful and graceful approach in this most recent evolution that has been years in the making. The first steps began back in 2022, when Morgia Wealth Management expanded its active partners to include Heather Clement and John Johnson. "Tony taught Mike and me a very important lesson," said PJ. "Be willing to trust the people that you brought on board to build this business for the next 25 years." PJ says from day one, they've asked each person brought on to think like an owner. "Now, it's time to let them be the key decision makers on the day-to-day management of the business," he said. Today, the practice is managed by John, Heather, and

Frank Murphy, the director of Trading & Research. The third generation of the Morgia family, Nico Morgia, has also joined the management team. "Similar to when Tony handed over the reins, Mike and PJ continue to be actively involved in the business, working with their long-time clients and making key investment decisions," said Heather. "Their guidance and insights are critical because the team is still growing in the North Country." Heather says 2025 was one of the best years the practice has seen for new client growth. At Morgia Wealth Management, keeping up with growth has been a dynamic process, involving increasing the complexity of operations and reorganizing business functions. Underlying each change has been a focus on deepening the level of service provided to clients. The team is also growing beyond the North Country: This past fall, William McCanney opened a satellite office in Reading, Pennsylvania, to serve the Greater Reading and Lancaster region. William is currently taking new clients in the area. Today, Mike and PJ remain involved in the business, fostering long-term client relationships and participating in all portfolio investment decisions. While, like Tony, they now work a few fewer days each month, their active presence is felt. Values become a legacy when we pass them on. Tony, Mike, and PJ take pride in watching a new cohort of leaders steward the Morgia legacy for the generations to come.



Dozens of regional business leaders and resource providers made connections at the Spring Business Resource Mixer hosted by the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce at the Best Western University. The Chamber's Leadership Circle supports the organization's foundational work in business, economic, and workforce development. SLC Chamber photo

## Chamber

From C3

Leadership; Chamber Integration presence and coalition building in Massena, Ogdensburg, and Canton, including the establishment of Chamber Ambassador groups; Providing leadership to strategic programs such as the St. Lawrence Leadership Institute and the Center for Businesses in Transition; and Being at the table in countless local through regional partnerships, from economic and community development committees to the St. Lawrence County Workforce Development Board and the North Country Alliance. Momentum is building into 2026 with several key initiatives in development, including a new satellite office in Massena, a crowdlending platform, a civic engagement matchmaker platform, and establishment of BizConnect expo and career fairs. "This activity is just an exemplifying glance at the extensive work the Chamber is doing to enhance community vitality," said Dixon. "We therefore view our Leadership Circle members not just as donors but as strategic partners in regional development."

Leadership Circle members are recognized for their collaborative support: The program is divided into three tiers—Platinum, Gold, and Silver—each offering varying levels of visibility and engagement. While the financial investment varies, all members receive "Enhanced Membership" status and recognition in Chamber communications and events. Leadership Circle members receive priority sponsorship opportunities and are featured as partners in signature regional events, from the Craft, Food & Wine markets to the Business After Hours series. For the highest tier, Platinum members receive high-impact marketing tools, including 12-month banner ads on the VisitSTLC website and banner recognition on business e-newsletters. "The Leadership Circle benefit package provides members with visibility year-round – to recognize their support that keeps the Chamber strong and working on issues at the local, state, and federal level that affect a business owner's bottom line," shared Dixon. The Chamber's Platinum Level Leadership members include: ALCOA, AmeriCU Credit Union, the ARC Jefferson-St. Lawrence, Chimera Integrations, Liberty Utilities, NBT Bank, Rochester

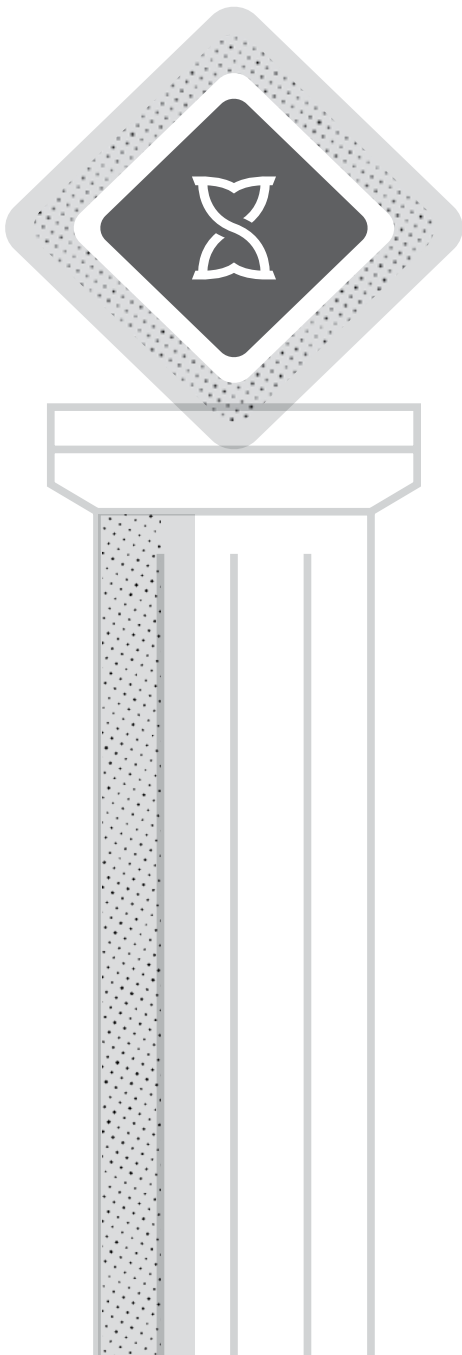
Regional Health, St. Lawrence University, and United Helpers. Gold Level Leadership members include: Clarkson University, Northern Credit Union, SUNY Canton, and SUNY Potsdam. Silver Level Leadership members include: Best Western University Inn, Kinney Drugs, North Country Colocation Services, North Country Savings Bank, and Northern Insuring Agency. For more information about the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Circle, and to join the Circle, fueling the Chamber's critical work in business, economic, workforce, and community development, please contact STLC Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Ben Dixon, at Ben@SLCChamber.org or 315-386-4000x2. Information on the Leadership Circle can also be found at <https://www.visitstlc.com/leadership-circle/>. "The collective support of ALL Chamber of Commerce members is also critical to our work to support the regional business community," closed Dixon, who urged residents to patronize Chamber members, who can be found on the Chamber's searchable business directory at [www.SLCChamber.org](http://www.SLCChamber.org).

# Building for What Comes Next

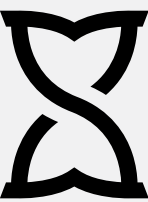
For more than 50 years, Morgia Wealth Management has grown through careful planning and deliberate leadership transitions.

Founded by Tony Morgia and expanded under the long-term leadership of Michael Morgia and PJ Banazek, the practice is now following a multi-year succession plan for a new generation of partners, supported by the continued involvement of its founders.

This continuity of leadership and process keeps Morgia steady, disciplined, and prepared.



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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.

Greetings from the New York Power Authority’s St. Lawrence -FDR Power Project. As we embark on 2026, I am filled with pride in the remarkable achievements NYPA made in 2025. The new year will bring new projects that underscore our commitment to clean energy, economic growth, and community support in the North Country.

Alcoa Power Contract with NYPA

The renewal of the power contract with Alcoa stands as one of last year’s key accomplishments. As NYPA’s inaugural customer, Alcoa continues to play a crucial role in the North Country economy. The new agreement secures the provision of low-cost, reliable power to one of the region’s largest employers, thereby supporting thousands of direct and indirect jobs throughout the North Country. Extending through 2036, this contract underscores NYPA’s commitment to fostering economic stability and growth in the region.

Smart Path Connect Transmission Line

The Smart Path Connect transmission project in the North Country is scheduled to be completed later this year. The project, which is 90 percent complete, marks a significant upgrade to New York’s transmission infrastructure, enhancing the reliability and capacity of our power delivery system. The Smart Path Connect project, which began construction in late 2022, is on track to help unbottle existing renewable resources in the region, yielding significant production cost savings and emissions reductions.

Massena Power Canal Project

In 2025 NYPA began work to stabilize the former Alcoa dam located at the intersection of the Massena Canal and the Grasse River in Massena. The work, which will continue into 2026, will involve the removal of steel structures and the partial demolition of the concrete structure. Any remaining structures will be stabilized and

covered with topsoil and grass to form a more visually appealing earthen dam. The project aims to restore natural river flow and improve ecological conditions. This work is part of broader environmental restoration efforts in the region, aiming to rehabilitate and preserve the natural environment for future generations.

NYPA Initiatives on Renewables, Nuclear Energy, and Sustainability

NYPA has a long history in Massena beginning with the construction of the St. Lawrence-FDR hydroelectric facility that brought economic revitalization and job opportunities to the region. This landmark project not only supplied clean, renewable energy but also demonstrated NYPA’s commitment to sustainable development. Building on this legacy, NYPA is now poised to embark on new energy infrastructure initiatives, focusing on renewable energy projects and nuclear power development. These initiatives aim to further enhance the region’s energy portfolio, reduce carbon emissions, and ensure a resilient, sustainable energy future for Massena and beyond. By leveraging its experience, NYPA continues to lead the charge in advancing the clean energy frontier.

Nuclear Energy

On June 23, 2025, Governor Kathy Hochul directed NYPA to develop at least one new nuclear energy facility with a combined capacity of no less than one gigawatt of electricity, either alone or in partnership with private entities in upstate New York. This initiative will provide clean, reliable, around-the-clock power to support the state’s economic growth and clean energy goals while shielding New Yorkers from long-term energy volatility and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. This project will complement the state’s effort to build renewables and retire aging fossil plants, and is a critical step toward energy

security, affordability and sustainability built by and for New Yorkers.

Community Engagement and Support

Our partnership with the North Country communities remains strong. Our Environmental Justice team remains deeply engaged with the community, partnering with local organizations to improve public facilities. NYPA has a talented workforce that is working to implement initiatives that will have a lasting impact on New York’s energy future. The Power Authority has a strong commitment to Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and Workforce Development, recognizing the integral role these principles play in fostering a sustainable and equitable energy future. NYPA actively engages with underserved communities to ensure that the benefits of clean energy initiatives are equitably distributed. Through various programs and partnerships, NYPA prioritizes environmental justice through educational resources and support, ensuring that every New Yorker has a stake in the state’s transition to a greener energy landscape. NYPA remains committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the communities it serves. By providing comprehensive training and development programs, NYPA equips the next generation of utility workers with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the evolving energy sector. These initiatives include apprenticeships, internships, and professional development opportunities aimed at attracting and retaining talent from diverse backgrounds. NYPA’s commitment to workforce development ensures that the energy field benefits from a wide range of perspectives and expertise, driving innovation and excellence while promoting equitable access to career advancement opportunities. Through these efforts, NYPA not only supports the current energy infrastructure but also lays the groundwork for a dynamic and inclusive future in the utility industry.



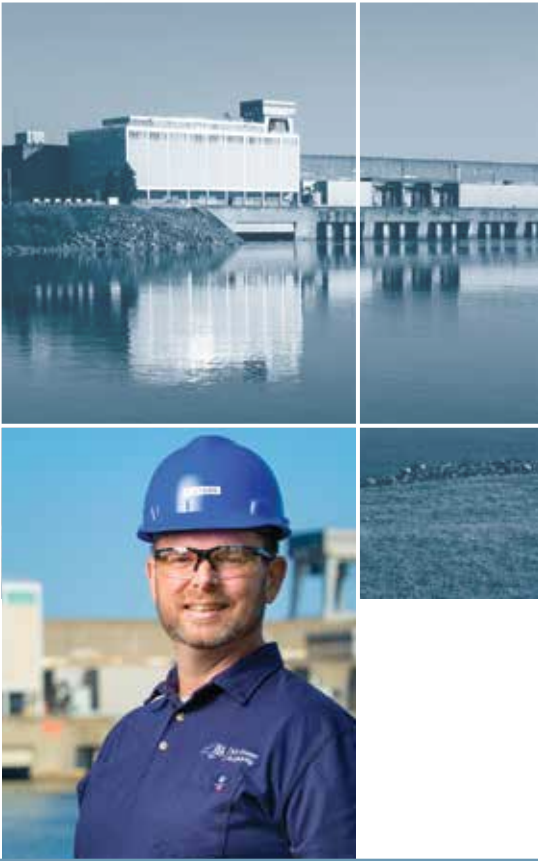
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The North Country economy is built on low-cost renewable hydropower from the New York Power Authority’s St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project in Massena. By modernizing its regional sections of the statewide transmission grid and supporting innovative local solutions, NYPA is proud to collaborate with the North Country to advance a reliable, affordable, and clean energy future.

To connect, 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/>





# Stony Creek Country Store carries a variety of products

Stony Creek Country Store is located in Deer River on State Route 26, about 21 1/2 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 pickup.

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. We've started to stock several



different kinds of frozen potpies and are planning to have other frozen meal options by summertime. 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

See STONY C8

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**Founded in November 2023 by Broker/Owner Amanda Mattimore, Northern Beginnings Realty LLC has quickly established itself as a growing presence in the North Country real estate market.**

Our team is dedicated to helping buyers and sellers navigate the real estate process with professionalism, integrity, and a strong commitment to the communities they serve. From first-time homebuyers to longtime property owners, Northern Beginnings Realty prides itself on providing personalized service rooted in local knowledge and community values.

Looking ahead to 2026, Northern Beginnings Realty LLC remains focused on continued growth while staying true to its mission of serving the region it proudly calls home. The brokerage extends its sincere gratitude to its clients, friends, family, and the broader community for their continued trust and support, which has made this progress possible.

As Northern Beginnings Realty moves forward, its commitment to the North Country remains at the heart of everything it does—helping neighbors, strengthening communities, and building lasting relationships one property at a time.

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# Flemings: quality furniture at affordable prices Stony

Family owned and operated since June 15, 1987, Flemings Fine Furniture has gone from being the smallest furniture store in Malone to the largest furniture and mattress store in the North Country! They’ve done so by offering a large selection of quality furniture and mattresses at affordable prices.

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Flemings offers a number of payment options including all major credit cards and no interest financing from Synchrony Financial. As always, delivery and setup throughout much of the North Country is FREE!

Flemings is located at 424 East Main Street, Malone. Their store hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 to 5:00, Saturday from 10:00 to 3:00, and anytime by appointment. There is plenty of parking behind the store and a convenient side entrance on Mill Street.

From C7

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 store-wide 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!

# Hochul outlines NYPA’s role in nuclear power in State of the State address

By BOB BECKSTEAD  
bbeckstead@wdt.net

WHITE PLAINS — The New York Power Authority’s role in advancing nuclear power in the state was one of the areas Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul outlined in her State of the State address.

NYPA President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll addressed those areas with trustees during this week’s meeting.

“She announced a nuclear reliability backbone and directed largely the Public Service Commission, but all state energy agencies to work on creating a pathway to 4 gigawatts of new nuclear added to the existing fleet of about 4 gigawatts,” Driscoll said.

He said that was in addition to NYPA’s work on a 1 gigawatt project, “which we very much are viewing as being a first mover and a catalyst for further build-out of the nuclear backbone in our state.”

“These are obviously long-term investments that the state’s making to move us toward 24/7 backbone complemented with renewables and our hydro and other forms of renewable energy. So, that was the big one, if you will, from our perspective in the State of the State,” Driscoll said. “The Department of Public Service will be working on creating a proceeding to take input on what that looks like. It will certainly be a big participant in that regulatory proceeding.”

He said NYPA’s role in the nuclear workforce was also addressed.

“The governor announced what she called the Next Gen Nuclear New York. That’s a



The New York Power Authority’s role in advancing nuclear power in the state was one of the areas Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul outlined in her State of the State address. Watertown Daily Times

workforce development issue, very similar really to the work we’re doing on the clean energy workforce of the future and renewables,” Driscoll said.

He said Hochul announced \$100 million for the nuclear workforce of the future.

“That includes the \$40 million over the next four years that you approved recently,

so for a total of \$100 million toward the nuclear workforce. So, we’ll be a big player in that. We’ve offered and I’m sure that the template we’ve created around our renewables workforce will be an input into how the state goes about establishing this nuclear workforce training program,” he said.

Driscoll said the governor also directed NYPA and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to update their regulations “to facilitate and speed up the deployment of projects”

“This is in the very early stages. Our legal team is looking at our existing procedures

and working closely with NY-SERDA to develop a joint proposal around how the project regulatory environment, if you will, can be streamlined and simplified so that projects can move along faster,” he said

The Canal Corporation was also addressed in the governor’s speech.

“As I think we all know,

another appropriation is in the governor’s proposed budget for \$50 million for the canal infrastructure, which we’re delighted to be receiving,” Driscoll said. “We’re putting it to good use. So, another good level of support from the state that enables additional work to be done.”

# New York Air Brake to add line in Watertown

## 13 manufacturing jobs slated for plant

By CRAIG FOX  
cfox@wdt.net

WATERTOWN — New York Air Brake is bringing in a manufacturing line to its Starbuck Avenue plant from a facility in Maryland.

It’s the first time that its parent company, the manufacturing giant Knorr-Bremse Group, is adding manufacturing jobs in Watertown since it reduced the workforce by 99 jobs three years ago.

The move from Westminster, Maryland, will create 13 jobs in Watertown — five salaried and eight hourly positions.

The news came during a Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency meeting on Thursday.

CEO Marshall Weir told the JCIDA board that he learned about the addition of the manufacturing line from a local company official when he took a tour of the plant a few weeks ago.

“It’s good news,” Weir said, adding that the company official thanked the JCIDA for its support over the years.

The products coming to the local plant are electronic components and relay connectors for transit vehicles, the



New York Air Brake, 784 Starbuck Ave., Watertown. Watertown Daily Times

company said in a statement.

The transfer of the commercial line optimizes efficiency for the company, according to

NYAB.

The move to Watertown presents two significant opportunities: greater

production floor space, along with state-of-the-art manufacturing and testing cells, both of which would enhance

production across all product lines, and provide room for potential future expansion at the plant, the company said.

“We will also capitalize on improved industrialization with the latest tooling technology. The move is another step aimed at enhancing our future competitive position and improving our ability to better serve our customers,” the company said.

Nine positions at the Westminster facility will be affected by the move to Watertown, but the company will reassign the workers to other positions at the Maryland facility.

In 2023, NYAB went through a restructuring plan that shifted a portion of its manufacturing, assembly and test operations from Watertown to other locations across North America.

At the time, the company announced 125 layoffs and said that it would move manufacturing to a new facility in Mexico. The number of jobs lost ended up being 99, with 25 positions retained.

The company — which got its start in Watertown more than 130 years ago — remains committed to Watertown, NYAB officials said.

Watertown remains the corporate headquarters and the company’s engineering center.



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# Watertown Daily Times

# PROGRESS

## Micron breaks ground on plant

Site preparation in Clay to start with clearing 445 acres of forest

By GLENN COIN  
Syracuse.com

CLAY — At the edge of a 1,400-acre tract of swamp, forest and former farmland just north of Syracuse, Micron Technology and public officials across the political spectrum broke ground last month on what’s being called the largest private development in New York state history.

For Micron, riding a wave of record profits and bolstered by \$25 billion in taxpayer subsidies, it marked the first ceremonial step to building its largest memory chip plant.

The groundbreaking came more than three years after Micron announced it had chosen Central New York for its biggest expansion ever in the United States. Nearly all of the company’s chips are made in Asia.

Central New York’s legendary winters didn’t disappoint: Wind chills dipped to about 10 degrees and the ground was covered with at least half a foot of fresh lake effect snow blown in from Lake Ontario, where Micron will draw its water.

“That is a perfect day,” Micron CEO Sanjay Mehrotra said of the fresh snow and sun that broke through before the ceremony began. He thanked the Democratic and Republican officials in the audience who both recruited Micron to Upstate New York and helped pass the federal legislation that paved the way for onshoring more computer chipmaking in the nation.

“It shows that when it comes to restoring American manufacturing,” he said, “we are clearly one team.”

Micron says it plans to build four chipmaking factories in Clay by 2041 to churn out billions of tiny computer chips used in cars, cell phones, appliances and, increasingly, data centers and artificial intelligence.

“The site will soon hum with activity,” Mehrotra said. “It will become a thriving technology hub, generating tens of thousands of jobs here, transforming the region.”

Shortly before noon, Mehrotra joined with Gov. Kathy Hochul, Sens. Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and County Executive Ryan McMahon for the ceremonial dirt-tossing with silver shovels.

They did it four times for the cameras, then an excavator behind them dumped a load of dirt into a dump truck with a Micron icon on its side. It was 12 degrees. Schumer wore a Buffalo Bills hat and an orange Syracuse tie.

Before the outdoor festivities, Lutnick, whose department will oversee the disbursement of about \$20 billion in taxpayer subsidies to Micron over the next decade or so, took the stage and injected politics into a heated tent set up on the former farmland in northern Onondaga County.

“It is great to be in Central New York,” Lutnick said, “which, of course, you all know, is the heart of Trump country.”

“It’s a historic day today,” Lutnick continued. “Because this fab, mega fab, is going to be the largest investment in the history, the largest single investment in the history of the great state of New York. So imagine that being right here, rebuilding and growing in the heart of Syracuse. That’s fantastic.”



Micron Technology breaks ground on a \$100 billion computer chipmaking complex in Clay last month. Pictured from left are: Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Sen. Charles Schumer, Gov. Kathy Hochul, Micron CEO Sanjay Mehrotra and U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. N. Scott Trimble/syracuse.com

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# SeaComm Grows and Adds Insurance Agency

2025 proved to be a strong year for SeaComm Federal Credit Union, marked by both membership and loan growth, while maintaining a strong financial position.

The credit union launched SeaComm Insurance Agency and acquired Maple City Insurance in Ogdensburg, to provide a more comprehensive financial experience for members. Insurance services will now complement SeaComm’s core financial services of checking, savings, and lending products, along with Personal Financial Advisor Services, by offering auto, home, and business insurance products.

SeaComm also upgraded several of its services including a new SeaComm Mobile App and online banking platform, ensuring that members have access to a more robust and improved mobile and online experience. Members are enjoying greater simplicity making debit and credit



**Pictured: SeaComm Board of Directors Secretary Patricia Dodge, Insurance Support Specialist Erin Fennessy, VP of Accounting Michelle Patenaude, Board of Directors Chairman Myron Burns, President and Chief Executive Officer Scott A. Wilson, Licensed Insurance Agent Jake Bellinger, Manager and Lead Licensed Agent Tom Bellinger.**

card purchases with all new cards having tap and pay, or contactless, functionality.

2025 was a milestone year for Personal Financial Advisor Services at SeaComm, as the credit union celebrated 10 years since launching in 2015, providing members with a dedicated Advisor to help them pursue their financial goals. Understanding that some people are more comfortable investing on their own, SeaComm introduced Guided Wealth Portfolio, a digital investment platform that users can access to manage their own funds from home.

SeaComm remains dedicated to giving back and contributed more than \$350,000 to non-profits and charitable causes in 2025. This included a major gift of \$100,000 to the Canton-Potsdam Hospital in support of the hospital’s capital campaign for the renovation of the pavilion

See SEACOMM D3

# Rochester Regional serving the St. Lawrence Region

Rochester Regional Health’s St. Lawrence Region (RRH-SLR) continues to strengthen healthcare access and services for residents across Northern NY. The care network includes three hospitals—Canton-Potsdam Hospital (CPH), a Certified Primary Stroke and Level III Trauma Center; Gouverneur Hospital (GH); and Massena Hospital (MH), along with more than 40 outpatient specialty and primary care practices serving communities from Edwards to Brasher.

With 2,225 dedicated team members, including 209 full-time medical providers, the RRH-SLR network is committed to delivering exceptional care close to home. In 2025, we welcomed 24 new providers in key specialties such as cardiology, emergency medicine, hematology, hospitalist medicine, surgical services, women’s health, urgent care, wound care, ophthalmology, and psychiatry—further expanding access to advanced care for local patients.

Through the continued integration into RRH, the local community now has access to advanced Intensive Care services, including Tele-ICU which offers local specialists a direct and immediate connection to collaborate with expert colleagues in the Rochester Region. Additionally, specialty vascular care was introduced to the SLR; where patients can now readily access vascular evaluations, consultations, treatment, and follow up care with Chair of Surgery, Eastern Region Dustin J. Fanciullo, MD.

Since January 2025, SLR Pulmonologist Rishi Kumar, MD, performed 78 diagnostic procedures utilizing the Ion robotic-assisted bronchoscopy system to detect and diagnose lung nodules, improving early detection rates. We are proud to lead healthcare delivery across Northern NY with technology

unmatched in precision and accuracy. Most recently, the SLR was recognized for leadership in one of the most influential COVID-19 clinical trials of the pandemic. A peer-reviewed study led by Eyal Kedar, MD, highlights the region as the only truly rural flagship system—and one of the most productive sites—participating in the international ACTIV-1 trial - demonstrating the critical role rural research networks have in advancing national science and improving patient care.

RRH’s Isabella Graham Hart School of Practical Nursing (IGH) in Potsdam proudly celebrated the graduation of 13 students in 2025, with an additional six currently enrolled and on track to graduate in 2026. Since its inception in August of 2022, the School has trained 25 individuals through the program with 15 signing on to provide care locally.

Registered nurses and nurse leaders from across the SLR were recognized at the 2025 American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet & Pathway to Excellence® Conference; commemorating their 2024 Pathway designation.

With community partnership such a critical component in addressing healthcare needs, RRH-SLR is proud to partner with community entities including Community Health Center of the North Country, Public Health, and Northern Lights Home Healthcare to further strengthen local resources. Most recently, in partnership with the North Country Children’s Museum, RRH-SLR’s maternity and obstetrics teams provided free birthing classes and breastfeeding education workshops to 120 prenatal patients, breastfeeding mothers, and support persons.

Canton-Potsdam Hospital commemorated 100 years of healthcare excellence



**Photo left to right: Rochester Regional Health, St. Lawrence Region President Donna McGregor; Cardiothoracic Surgeon Shuyin Liang, MD; Rochester Regional Health President of Health Care Operations and Chief Operating Officer Jennifer Eslinger; Pulmonologist Rishi Kumar, MD; St. Lawrence Region Chief Medical Officer Andrew Williams, MD; Rochester Regional Health Chief Medical Officer Robert Mayo, MD; and Surgeon Apostolos Kandilis, MD.**

in Potsdam on March 13, marking a century of continued growth and evolution in meeting the community’s healthcare access needs. This milestone is underscored by recent advancements, including the opening of the Regional Care Pavilion, which features private patient rooms and a newly expanded emergency department.

Additional notable achievements include the hospital’s re-verification as a Level III Trauma Center by the American College of Surgeons’ Verification Review Committee. As the only Level III Trauma Center north of the New York State Thruway in the Central New York region, this designation reflects the Trauma Center’s ongoing commitment to providing critical care for patients across the North Country.

CPH also earned recertification as a Primary Stroke

Center by Det Norske Veritas (DNV), the internationally accredited registrar and classification society, reaffirming the hospital’s ability to deliver timely, high-quality stroke care to the community.

Gouverneur Hospital was proudly named a 2025 Leapfrog Top Rural Hospital, a national distinction recognizing excellence in patient safety and quality. One of only five rural hospitals nationwide—and the only hospital in New York State—to receive this honor, Gouverneur Hospital continues to set a high standard of care.

Over the past year, the Hospital also expanded its Behavioral Health services, including an extension at Gouverneur Central School, helping to address the growing need for essential mental health care.

In addition, through the generosity of the Gouverneur Hospital Auxiliary, the

Hospital acquired critical new equipment to enhance patient care, including a GE iPanda Infant Resuscitation Cart to strengthen emergency care for newborns and a Generator RFG3 ClosureFast System to support advanced treatment of vein-related conditions.

Massena Hospital celebrated the completion of a newly transformed emergency department in May with a ribbon-cutting ceremony honoring the generous donors and community partners who made the project possible. Serving more than 14,000 patients annually, the redesigned space significantly enhances patient comfort and privacy while improving efficiency and workflow for clinical teams. This milestone reflects MH’s continued growth and forward momentum, building on recent quality recognitions and strategic service

expansions that strengthen emergency care for the entire community.

“This year has been defined by steady progress, strong partnerships, and an unwavering commitment to our community,” said Rochester Regional Health, St. Lawrence Region President Donna McGregor. “Because of the dedication of our team members, we have strengthened access to care, enhanced local services, and continued to invest in the people and programs our patients rely on every day. While we are proud of what we have already achieved together, our focus remains on the future—listening to our community and responding with the care, innovation, and collaboration they deserve.”

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

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Williamson Trash Removal is a family-owned business located in Natural Bridge. The business was established in 1987 by Gary and Therese Williamson, they operated

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ownership of Stephen & Shannon Clarke who had been working for Williamsons since 1994. Over the past 39 years Williamson Services has

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Counties. Williamson Services provides a range of services for residential trash and recycling pick-up, commercial dumpsters, roll-offs containers and septic pumping

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# SeaComm

From D2

and the construction of the SeaComm Café, which is now open and provides patients, visitors, and employees with a warm and welcoming spot.

Demonstrating a continued commitment to education, SeaComm gave out a total of \$10,000 to 10 local, college-bound high school seniors in scholarship dollars and a \$500 grant to a young entrepreneur through its Summer Grant Program.

In addition to donations and sponsorships, SeaComm gave back to the community throughout 2025 by way of their Beyond the Branch program. The credit union provided

hundreds of free meals at local restaurants, and paid for fun family activities including mini golf, tubing, museum passes, event tickets, in addition to countless other events and giveaways.

For the fifth consecutive year, SeaComm was Certified™ as a Great Place to Work®, which was determined by its employees through an anonymous survey process. 88% of the credit union's employees rated SeaComm as a great place to work, compared to 57% of employees at a typical US based company. Not only do SeaComm employees think it's a great place to work, but they are also engaged in the community through the "Do Some Good" Program, which grants them the opportunity to volunteer for a charity

of their choice during work hours.

BauerFinancial, and independent financial rating company, rated SeaComm their superior five-stars, deeming that it is a safe financial institution, financially sound, and operating well above regulatory capital requirements.

SeaComm serves the financial, lending, and insurance needs of more than 56,000 members with nine branches located throughout the North Country and Vermont, from Watertown, NY to South Burlington, VT. Founded in 1963 with headquarters in Massena, SeaComm has a current asset size exceeding \$780 million, and remains dedicated to providing its members with the highest level of service along with giving back to the community.

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- ▶ Look for coverage that helps pay for major services. Some plans may limit the number of procedures – or pay for preventive care only.
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- ▶ Shop for coverage with no annual maximum on cash benefits. Some plans have annual maximums of \$1,000.

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### Previous dental work can wear out.

Even if you’ve had quality dental work in the past, you shouldn’t take your dental health for granted. In fact, your odds of having a dental problem only go up as you age.<sup>2</sup>

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Consider these national average costs of treatment ... \$274 for a checkup ... \$299 for a filling ... \$1,471 for a crown.<sup>3</sup> Unexpected bills like this can be a real burden, especially if you’re on a fixed income.

<sup>1</sup>“Medicare & You,” Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2025. <sup>2</sup> “Aging changes in teeth and gums”, medlineplus.gov, 4/17/2022. <sup>3</sup> FairHealth, Inc. National average dental fees. Data current as of July 2025; subject to change.

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6371



# A Strong Foundation for What’s Ahead: GYMO’s Review of 2025

GYMO Architecture, Engineering, & Land Surveying, DPC experienced another productive and meaningful year in 2025, marked by community engagement, professional accomplishments, and continued investment in projects that strengthen communities across the North Country.

Our People & Professional Growth

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’s Construction Management department in 2025:

- Kris Carr, Project Manager
- Jennifer Wise, Project Manager
- Nick Westcott, Senior Construction Manager
- Greg Millard, Senior Construction Manager
- Rod Tyrell, Senior Construction Manager

Investing in the next generation of professionals also remained a priority. During the summer, GYMO welcomed four interns who supported active projects across disciplines and gained hands-on experience working alongside our staff:

- Priya Retajczyk, Engineering
- Rob Hellings, Engineering
- Hunter Garnsey, Construction Management
- Lucas Edgar, Construction Management

Several team members celebrated notable professional milestones in 2025:

- Jesse Irwin was promoted to Architectural Project Manager, recognizing his leadership and expanding role in guiding projects from design through construction.
- Mark Tompkins, Senior Project Engineer, achieved professional engineering licensure, further strengthening GYMO’s engineering expertise.
- McKenzee Fisk-Kamide, Architectural Department Manager, successfully passed all three NCIDQ exams, earning Certified Interior Designer status and professional licensure through the New York State Education Department.
- David Nisley, Marketing Coordinator, graduated from the Lewis County Leadership Academy, reinforcing GYMO’s engagement in regional leadership development.

Community Engagement & Firm Activities

GYMO remained actively involved in local and

regional events throughout 2025, continuing a long-standing commitment to community engagement. Staff participated in the Tug Hill Commission’s Local Government Conference, Naturally Lewis Economic Development Conference, SUNY Potsdam Local Government Conference, the Spring Conference for Public Housing Authorities, and the Clayton Climate Smart Community Public Information Session.

The firm was also proud to support the region through sponsorships and community involvement, including the 4th Annual Tyler R. Christman Foundation ATV/UTV “Ride for Ty” and the Lewis County Fair. Team members also enjoyed joining various golf tournament fundraisers, ringing bells for the Salvation Army, and having a family day at our annual Open & BBQ at Thompson Park Golf Course. The firm wrapped up the year with winning “Best Use of Festival Theme” at the 2025 North Country Festival of Trees, continuing a tradition that reflects our creative spirit and community pride.

Our team isn’t just making a living. They’re making a difference, and we are proud of the causes and communities they support.

Completed & Ongoing Projects

GYMO continued work on a diverse portfolio of completed and ongoing projects. While each project is unique, together they reflect the breadth of the firm’s services and the partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit clients. These clients include:

- Municipal & Infrastructure Projects
- Town of Potsdam – Parkhurst Brook Bridge
- Town of Philadelphia – Park Improvements
- City of Watertown – City Courthouse Renovation, Huntington Street Topographic Survey, Northeast Water Topographic Survey, Burlington Street,
- Village of Hammond – I/I Study and Preliminary Engineering Report
- Village of Lowville – Groundwater Development Continuation and Drainage Study
- Village of Malone – Recreation Park, Future Growth Plan, Civic Center Expansion
- Private Development & Community Facilities
- The Globe – Renovations for BOCES and

See GYMO D6



Micron leaders, local and state officials and community leaders gather at Syracuse University to celebrate the groundbreaking Friday in Clay. Gov. Kathy Hochul, Sen. Charles Schumer and Onondaga County Executive J. Ryan McMahon II listen during SU Chancellor Kent Syverud’s remarks. N. Scott Trimble/syracuse.com

## Micron

From D1

rebuilding and growing in the heart of Syracuse. That’s fantastic.”

Schumer, a Democrat and the Senate’s former majority leader, thanked McMahon, a Republican, for his partnership in working to get Micron to move to the Syracuse area.

“I want to give him some thanks, because he really helped prepare this site,” said Schumer, who ushered through the CHIPS and Science Act in 2022 that gave Micron the impetus to build factories in the United States.

“We will look back generations,” Schumer added. “This was a turning point for Central New York, for Upstate New York, and for the United States of America ... because what’s happening here is going to give the United States the lead in semiconductor manufacturing for generations.”

Hochul, who went to Syracuse University in the 1970s, noted how at that time manufacturing was fleeing cities in Upstate New York. As she took the microphone, she quipped that this was really Hochul country. The applause was louder than for the secretary’s job.

Micron’s arrival and its promise of a resurgence of manufacturing in Central New York, Hochul continued, is a dream come true.

“I could not be prouder,” Hochul said. “This is the day we rise up New York.”

The \$52 billion, bipartisan CHIPS Act was designed to bring back to the U.S. the manufacture of computer chips essential to modern life and national security. Micron was one of the big winners, securing a grant of more than \$6 billion to build factories in New York and at its headquarters in Idaho.

Construction of the first of two fabs in Boise is well underway, with production expected to start next year. Micron announced this year in a new deal with the Trump administration that it would build a second factory in Boise that would open before any of the New York factories.

Late last year, Micron announced that the Clay fabrication plants, or fabs, would be delayed by two to three years. The first is now set to start production in 2030; the second, in 2033.

The moment is about more than today, McMahon said. It’s about helping Micron continue to grow as a memory chip leader, he said. And it’s about making sure Central New Yorkers share in the expected largess.

“This is truly about the American worker and opportunity,” McMahon said. “But the reality is, this is about the national security of this country first and foremost. And by this investment here today, America will lead the world in AI dominance, and that means the world will literally be a safer and better place.”

Micron says it will spend more than \$51 billion to build two fabrication plants, or fabs, by 2033. Taxpayer subsidies from federal, state and local governments would cover about half of those costs.

The company says it could spend another \$50 billion to build a third and fourth fab by 2041, although there is no public money allotted for those.

Micron’s project here underwent a two-year, 20,000-page environmental review that was wrapped up in November. Since then,

Micron has obtained the wide variety of necessary construction approvals from the federal, state and local governments.

If Micron keeps its promises, the impact on Central New York would be enormous. Micron says it would employ 9,000 people — nearly as many as Upstate Medical University, now the region’s biggest employer.

Up to 40,000 spinoff jobs could be created, from those in semiconductor supply chains to hotels to schools. Construction would require more than 4,000 workers during peak construction periods.

The groundbreaking comes as Micron, founded in the basement of a dentist’s office in Boise in 1978, is soaring on the demand for artificial intelligence chips. Micron has recently posted record sales and profits, and even bailed out of the consumer market to preserve its production for bigger profits in AI. Investors have noticed: Micron’s stock price has tripled in the past year.

Site preparation in Clay is expected to start within days. The first task for Micron’s initial contractor, Gilbane Co., is to start clearing 445 acres of forest. Gilbane will have to hurry: All tree-cutting must halt between March 31 and Nov. 1 because two species of endangered bats use the site to raise their young during the warmer months.

This year, Micron will need to haul in about 2 million yards of gravel-like fill to level and stabilize the site, which contains about 200 acres of wetlands. That will be done mostly by truck, with more than 500 trucks going in and out of the site every day on two-lane roads.

# WSB Continues Support of Local Economy

After 133 years of serving Jefferson County, Watertown Savings Bank continues to help strengthen the local area. With nine locations and an unparalleled commitment to their customers and the community, Watertown Savings Bank has much to show for its progress.

Watertown Savings Bank 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.

The bank also continues its commitment to foster economic growth. Since 2018, WSB has provided nearly \$3,000,000.00 in donations to local businesses and nonprofit organizations.

In 2023, WSB expanded its offices with the addition of a new Lending Center situated next to their main office on Clinton Street. Bank President & C.E.O., Mark Lavarway said “Our commercial

and residential lending efforts are the core of our business model, and our Lending Center not only provides a dedicated facility to serve our growing customer base, but also supports our continued position as the number one lender in the community”.

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.

# Sherman Electric: quality products and service for more than 100 years

Sherman Electric, located at 417 S. Clinton St. in Carthage, is a familiar name to generations of families in the area.

Established in 1912 by LeRoy E. Sherman, the store was always the first place people thought of for electrical supplies and household appliances. In 1970, son LeRoy Z. Sherman took over and continued the tradition of trust and service.

Today, Sherman Electric is owned by Ray Pickel, who has worked at the store since 1970. They mostly serve the tri-county area, but go outside of the area as needed.

They provide wholesale electrical supplies and lighting fixtures for industries, residences, municipalities, contractors and schools. They stock Berko electric heat, Nutone ventilators, Sylvania lamps, Progress lighting, Murray distribution equipment and Klein tools and provide sales and service on GE appliances. They also carry all sizes of conduit and wire, GE appliances, TVs, DVD players and electronics supplies.

Ray invites you to stop in and see their wide range of products firsthand.

The shop is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Saturday or give them a call at 315-493-3050. They’ll be happy to assist your needs.

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GYMO

From D5

- Apartments
- Agape Shoppe – Building Renovations
  - Half Pints International Brewhaus – Design Services
  - Net Par Indoor Golf – Design Services
  - Zoo New York – Concept Design for Concession Area & Entrance
  - Masonic Care Community – Sidewalk & Drainage Improvements
  - Watertown International Airport (with Bette Cring) – Airport Escalator Shoring
  - Missile Defense Agency – Fort Drum FSOMM Project
  - Housing Authority Projects

- Wilna Housing Authority – Westside Terrace Renovation
- Malone Housing Authority – Riverside Haven Electrical Upgrades
- Ogdensburg Housing Authority – Mechanical & Electrical Upgrades
- Watertown Housing Authority – Hilltop Towers Generator & Sprinkler Replacement
- Educational Facilities (Construction Management)
- Altmar-Parish-Williamstown CSD – Phases 2 & 3 Capital Projects
- Thousand Islands CSD – Phase 1 Capital Project
- Morristown CSD – Phase 1 Capital Project
- Phoenix CSD – Phase 1 Capital Project
- Stockbridge Valley CSD – Phases 1 & 2 Capital Projects
- General Brown CSD – Phases 1 & 2 Capital Projects
- Town of Webb UFSD – Phase 1 Capital Project
- Healthcare & Nonprofit Projects
- Lewis County General Hospital – Surgical and Podiatry Offices
- North Country Family Health – Office Renovation
- Jefferson County SPCA – SPCA Expansion
- Tupper Arts – Theater Structural Shoring
- Salvation Army – Bathroom and Shower Renovations
- North Jefferson Improvement Association – The Mill House Mixed-Use Building in LaFargeville
- Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust – Conservation Easement Surveys

Carrying the Foundation Forward

As GYMO looks toward 2026, the firm is well positioned for continued growth, supported by strong leadership, an expanding team, and a healthy pipeline of work. This readiness is reflected in both GYMO’s project outlook and its leadership - a key part of the firm’s foundation. At the beginning of 2026, Matthew Cervini assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer. He brings strong technical expertise and a deep understanding of GYMO’s mission and culture.

Patrick Scordo remains an important part of GYMO, continuing to contribute his experience and institutional knowledge while transitioning to a part-time role as he begins to enjoy retirement. This transition ensures continuity for clients and staff alike, while supporting the next generation of leadership.

Looking ahead, GYMO is also focused on strengthening its team for the future. The firm is currently hiring for several leadership and senior technical positions, including:

- Managing Engineer
- Senior Municipal Engineer
- Senior Project Engineer

Additional information about career opportunities is available at [www.gymodpc.com](http://www.gymodpc.com).

The year ahead builds on what matters most: people, partnerships, and successful projects.



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# ‘Animal Chiropractic’ Now Being Offered at Countryside Veterinary Clinic

Countryside Veterinary Clinic (CVC) is proud to be the largest provider of veterinary services for pet owners, dairy/livestock farmers and horse owners throughout the North Country. With hospitals located in Lowville, Carthage, Boonville and Otter Lake, the CVC doctors and staff bring their family atmosphere every day to serve their clients and four-legged family members. To strengthen this commitment Countryside is always adding new and improved services, plus technology for even better service to their clients.

The most recent service addition to Countryside is the introduction of Veterinary Spinal Manipulative Therapy (VSMT). You may also hear VSMT referred to as “animal chiropractic”. It is a manual therapy focused on restoring normal, healthy range of motion to your pet’s joints. By improving joint mobility, VSMT helps reduce pain, enhance nervous system function, and support your pet’s overall health and performance. When joints become restricted or don’t move properly (called hypomobilities), the body compensates—often leading to pain, stiffness, muscle tension, or injury over time. VSMT works to gently correct these restrictions, allowing the body to heal and function optimally. VSMT is both an excellent preventative and therapeutic option for pets of all ages, including horses. The service is offered by appointment with Dr. Julia Brigandi. Driven by a passion for rehabilitation and holistic care, Dr. Brigandi pursued advanced training in Veterinary

Spinal Manipulative Therapy, and In November 2025, she completed her certification in VSMT (CVSMT) and became a Fellow of the College of Animal Chiropractors (FCoAC). A more detailed description and conditions that can be treated with VSMT is available on Countryside’s website. Spinal Manipulative Therapy appointments (for any of the four clinics) can be made by calling 315-376-6563.

Our ability to offer advanced diagnostic specialty services continues to grow. We are now equipped to perform complete cardiology work-ups including

echocardiogram with the On-cura telehealth ultrasound system. This system allows us to collaborate with board certified cardiologists outside our practice area for assessment and diagnosis of a variety of cardiac conditions from the comfort and convenience of our Lowville hospital.

Other recent changes in the Countryside system include a major expansion and renovation of the Carthage Clinic, which now has two separate entrances for improved patient flow. In addition to more exam rooms for their patients, the new space has a larger laboratory and pharmacy

area. Facility improvements include a private, comfort room to accommodate families navigating the end-of-life journey with their beloved pet.

Otto, a new online patient communication platform was introduced, which helps pet owners conveniently connect with Countryside clinics to get the best care for their pets. The Otto app can be used to request appointments, prescription refills, or follow up after appointments as well as chat with the clinic staff to ask pet health questions. In addition, pet owners can view upcoming appointments and

reminders, as well as information about previous visits. Orthopedic services

continue to be an important

See CLINIC D8



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*Beller's Auto: A Trusted One-Stop Shop Serving Our Community Since 1979*

CASTORLAND, NY — For more than four decades, we at Beller's Auto have been proud to serve the North Country as a trusted, family-owned auto repair and collision shop. Located at 4783 State Route 410 in Castorland, our business has been built on a simple foundation since 1979: hard work, integrity, and treating our customers like family.

Our story began with our founder, Nevin Beller, whose passion for automotive repair and dedication to quality service helped establish Beller's Auto as a dependable name in the community. With more than 45 years of hands-on experience, Nevin still helps out today, offering guidance and expertise as we continue to grow. Today, the business is owned and operated by brothers Myron and Mike Beller, each bringing more than 30 years of experience and a shared commitment to carrying on the values our family business was built upon.

We proudly live by our slogan, "Your One Stop Shop." Our facility includes seven mechanical bays, with one bay dedicated exclusively to precision alignments, one ADAS alignment bay, and one bay equipped with a collision frame machine. In addition, we operate seven dedicated collision repair bays, allowing us to handle everything from small cosmetic repairs to major collision work efficiently and effectively.

To provide the highest quality results, we continually invest in state-of-the-art equipment. Our shop features a modern paint booth with a computerized paint mixing system, a one-bay

frame straightening machine with the latest Chief laser measuring system, a top-of-the-line Hunter tire changer, and a John Bean wheel balancer. These tools help us deliver precise, reliable, and efficient service on every vehicle that comes through our doors.

We offer a full range of mechanical services, including brake and suspension repair, tire mounting and balancing, four-wheel precision camera alignments, complete engine overhauls,

more options when it comes to meeting their automotive needs. We welcome you to come check out our line of vehicles and take them for a test drive.

Behind everything we do is an experienced and dedicated team. Our office manager Krystal, and clerical assistant Michaela, are the friendly voices answering the phone. From scheduling to ordering parts, they are the glue that holds our shop together. We have seven technicians employed with us who together bring more than 200 years of combined experience to Beller's Auto. We are lifelong learners, always expanding our knowledge and refining our skills to stay current with today's evolving vehicle technology.

As we reflect on more than 45 years in business, we want to sincerely thank our community and loyal customers for placing their trust in us. Serving you and your vehicles has truly been our greatest pleasure.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce plans to break ground in the winter of 2026 on an office remodel. Our goal is to create a more

inviting and comfortable space for our customers while they wait for their vehicle service to be completed. We look forward to welcoming everyone to tour our new office during our customer appreciation event this spring.

For updates and event details, follow us on Facebook or Instagram. To view our current inventory of pre-owned vehicles or learn more about our services, please visit [www.bellersauto.com](http://www.bellersauto.com).



Ready to serve you at Beller's Auto, your one-stop-shop, are, from left, Daryl Halko, mechanical technician; Zach Gingerich, auto body technician; Michaela Zehr, office secretary; Jacob Zehr, mechanical technician; Mike Beller, owner/autobody technician and manager; Patrick Sullivan, auto body technician; Myron Beller, Owner/mechanical technician and manager, Darin Halko, auto body technician; Krystal Beller, office manager; and Nevin Beller, founder of Beller's Auto.

air conditioning service, electrical diagnostics, and New York State inspections. We handle all collision repairs—big or small—and work with all major insurance companies. Our collision repair manager assists customers through the entire insurance process and helps arrange rental cars when needed. We also offer dependable towing services with both a wrecker and a flatbed.

In addition to repairs, we sell quality pre-owned cars, trucks, and SUVs, giving our customers even