



Progress CHENANGO 24

VOL. 5

AN EVENING SUN PUBLICATION

FEBRUARY 7, 2024

Norwich's YMCA invests in infrastructure and rebuilds membership



Runners participating in the Norwich Family YMCA Turkey Trot 5K held on Saturday, November 25, 2023. (Photo from the Norwich Family YMCA)

ZACHARY MESECK
EVENING SUN

NORWICH - The YMCA has existed in the Norwich area for more than 100 years, first with the purchase of the S.A. Jones House and lot in 1903, then this century's 'New Y' following its construction and open house in

2002.

The Norwich YMCA remains open, and despite the pandemic, the organization is starting to see growth return to membership with the support of the community.

According to Norwich YMCA Executive Director Jamey Mullen, the YMCA continues to grow in Norwich, thanks to

its core values and strong community support. Mullen said over the past 32 years he has had the opportunity to serve the Norwich YMCA, and has been part of some major changes in the Y's history.

Mullen started working at the Norwich YMCA in 1992 and led programming and activities through February 1997 before

being promoted to executive director. Between Mullen and his predecessor, Dave Sherman, they were able to personally witness some of the greatest investments the Y has made in the Norwich community.

"The Y is, and always has been, a very special place," said

Continued on page 26 ►

SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus continues to invest in the future of Chenango County



The SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus held an open house and Instant Decision Day in the fall of 2023, where prospective students could visit the campus, learn about program offerings, meet with financial aid staff, and even apply to the school and be accepted on the spot. (Photo by Sarah Genter)

SARAH GENTER
EVENING SUN

NORWICH - Investing in the future is nothing new for the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus, located at 20 Conkey Avenue in Norwich.

The institution has spent the past year continuing to provide quality education with several associate degree programs, flexible learning options for traditional and non-traditional students, and implementing new programs and opportunities.

The SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus has approximately 12 full-time staff, three part-time and six full-time faculty, and eight full-time Liberty Partnerships employees and seven advocates, who all strive to meet students where they are and give them an opportunity for higher education.

Investing in student success

Investing in students and their success is at the forefront of SUNY Morrisville's focus. The college has several programs, services, and tools in

Continued on page 28 ►



Business SPOTLIGHT

The New York State Veterans Home

SOPHIA ROOT
EVENING SUN

OXFORD - The New York State Veterans Home at Oxford, the first and oldest Veterans Home in the State.

The New York State Veterans Home at Oxford (NYSVHO) is a skilled nursing facility with licensed capacity to care for 242 residents, comprised of veterans, their spouses, and Gold Star parents. A Gold Star parent is a parent of a fallen service member who died while serving in a time of conflict.

Jennifer Scheuer, Health Facilities Management Assistant/Director of Recreation Therapy, Community Relations, and Volunteer Services has worked with the NYSVHO for 20 years. As a child and sister of dedicated service members, she enjoys giving back to the Veteran community.

She said working at the facility is "more than just a job" and she appreciates the unique feel that a small town like Oxford provides the facility and residents. She is always moved by how many community organizations give back to the residents and how special the community support feels when it is tight knit.

"These are the people who fought for our freedom, tucking them away is not warranted. We really try to make it so they can see the community and that the community can see them," Scheuer said.

Last year was the facility's first time participating in the Parade of Lights in Norwich, and Scheuer said that the residents loved being immersed in the community and they had a great time.

There are plenty of opportunities for the community to engage with the NYSVHO, such as internships and observation experiences for people studying healthcare fields. They also offer the Nurse Aid Training Program where interested parties can come to the facility to get trained without tuition costs. Once they pass their certifications, they are welcomed back to the NYSVHO to work full time. Scheuer stated that she is working with schools to get more school aged children into the facility for tours.

She said, "Many people pass by us and wonder what that beautiful building is, we are trying to teach them about what we do and who we are."

NYSVHO is owned and operated by the New York State Department of Health under the direction of a subsidiary department called Health Facilities Management (HFM). HFM manages four New York State Veterans' Homes located in St. Albans, Batavia, Montrose, and Oxford.

NYSVHO provides long term/short term rehab, and specialized memory enhanced skilled nursing care.

The organization's focus is honoring personal preferences in a family-oriented, home-like setting with over 98% private rooms and the remaining semi-private rooms set up to accommodate couples.

According to Administrator Kurt Apthorpe, "We provide hands-on care as well as using innovative and proven technologies and equipment to deliver our services. NYSVHO's mission is to provide the highest quality skilled nursing home care and services to New York State veterans and their families in a family-oriented environment through proven and innovative programs, services, and activities."

Apthorpe stated, "Newsweek has named Oxford as one of their "Best Nursing Homes" for 2024 and ranked the Home at

Continued on page 27 ►

Norwich's YMCA invests in infrastructure and rebuilds membership -



In February of 2023, volunteers, community partners, and outgoing board members were recognized for their dedication to the Norwich Family YMCA at their annual dinner. Youth volunteer Sebastian Maricle, volunteer Noreen Wessels, volunteer Kathy Coates, volunteer Rhet Genung, and representatives from community partner Norwich City School District. Not pictured but also recognized during the dinner were outgoing board members John Klockowski and Kecia Funaro Burton, who both gave nine years of service to the YMCA. (Photo from the Norwich Family YMCA)

Continued from page 25 ▶

Mullen. "This is a facility where we all check our differences at the door, and know that anyone can come for personal or community needs."

Mullen said the Y acts as a place anyone can visit regardless of their socioeconomic or health status, which reflects the Y's mission to promote youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.

"We have the philosophy that our facility is kind of a tool that keeps the community together," he added. "Every demographic in our county is welcome and accepted here at the YMCA."

Growing Despite The Pandemic

Mullen said part of the social responsibility aspect of the Y's mission was tested as the organization faced COVID-19 in 2020. He said that the organization didn't feel that it was right to charge people during the height of the pandemic, and the pandemic as a whole has had an impact on how the YMCA operates to this day.

"In 2023 we were still, as an organization, in recovery mode from the COVID years," said Mullen. "Imagine as a not-for-profit, shutting down the majority of your organization for six months."

"Fortunately during that time, we were able to continue to offer some of the essential work that we do such as the child care programs, and helping to build our relationship with our friends at Helping Hands, but those were the only two things we could really expand on during those six months."

Mullen said before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Norwich YMCA had approx-

imately 4,000 members, and currently they have around 2,700 members. He added that while there were members who likely would have continued paying even though they had to close their doors, the organization didn't feel that it was right.

"After COVID we had to reimagine ourselves, and we've been doing that," said Mullen. "At the end of 2023 we wrapped up a new strategic plan with new goals and objectives."

"We also created a whole new personnel policy to help guide us as we move forward."

According to Mullen, New York State mandates and minimum wage increases have added another layer of challenge to leading Norwich's YMCA. He said between mandatory training requirements and more than a decade's worth of wage increases there are only a few ways the Y is able to move forward including reducing staff and membership rate increases.

"We're trying to be creative when it comes to revenue sources, and what we can do to keep the Y moving forward while keeping membership affordable for everyone," he said. "That being said, we do recognize how important it is to continue to make improvements to our facility, and there is a fine balancing act between the two."

The New Y Is Getting Older

"It's kind of hard to believe that the 'New Y' isn't necessarily that new anymore, it's 22 years old," said Mullen. "Now we're looking at a variety of upgrades across the entire facility."

Mullen said the YMCA completed around a half a million

Continued on page 27 ▶



Norwich Family YMCA Halloween Parade and costume contest, supported by the Norwich Business Improvement District (B.I.D.), is an annual community tradition. (Photo from the Norwich Family YMCA)



Each year The Norwich Family YMCA collectively raises over \$100,000 to support Y membership, community youth participation, and program scholarships. (Photo from the Norwich Family YMCA)

The Total Service Team At NORWICH OUTDOOR POWER EQUIPMENT

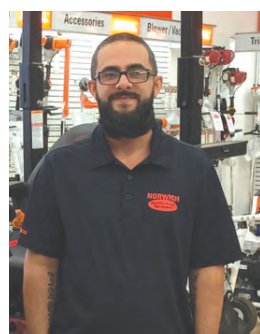


Sales / Office



Dawn
Office Manager **Jon**
Owner **Andrew**
Sales

Customer Service



Rich
Service Manager

Service Techs



Rich **Charlie**

Experienced Sales Team • Same Great Service Techs
Same Great Product Line • Same Convenient Location

NORWICH OUTDOOR POWER EQUIPMENT

5876 County Rd. 32- East River Road, Norwich
607-334-4378 • www.norwichope.com



Hours:
8:00-5:00 Monday-Friday
and
8:00-12:00 on Saturday

Norwich's YMCA invests in infrastructure and rebuilds membership -

Continued from page 26 ▶

dollars in projects throughout 2023, and has another approximately half a million dollars in projects scheduled for 2024.

"In 2023, we approved a \$500,000 dehumidification project for our swimming pool area," he said. "We have also approved an opportunity to retille showers in the men's locker room, on the pool deck, and a few other areas in the building that need retiling."

"That is scheduled to start here relatively soon, and we will also be replacing the original wood doors and metal frames that are about 22 years old now."

Mullen said the Y is planning on replacing their older wooden doors with fiberglass doors which will have significantly longer lifespans. He added that in addition to new doors, the entire administrative wing will receive temperature control upgrades.

"The administration wing which has the child watch, preschool, and nursery school, along with the group exercise room where they have fitness classes will be getting new air conditioning units along with heat exchangers."

Mullen said these upgrades will help keep the building energy efficient, and will hopefully result in savings in the future. He added that the upgrades to the administrative wing and group exercise room will cost approximately \$500,000.

"We're blessed that our trustees have allocated some of the funds we have received and invested them properly to allow for some opportunities for capital improvements," said Mullen. "This investment will allow us to protect this wonderful asset that serves as more than just a building in our community."

Staffing The Y

"I referenced the struggles of returning to pre-COVID numbers, but pre-COVID in 2019 we were at probably 120 employees, and that would include full-time and part-time," said Mullen. "We had everything from a fitness instructor that worked one or two hours a week, to a full-time 40 hour a week employee, and everything in between."

"Today, we're at about 80 employees - we're trying to do more with less, because that may have been one of the areas

that was adjusted as we worked through our budget."

He said even with a smaller cap for staffing, there is still always a need for new applicants, especially with part-time positions. He added that life-guards, child care staff, team members for the fitness area, or the front desk tend to have the highest turnover.

"We are blessed to have a core group of staff that has been here and provided continuity and consistency," Mullen said. "In addition to core staff members, we also have a dedicated group of volunteers who help make events possible."

According to Mullen, there are hundreds of volunteers who assist at YMCA events throughout the year including the annual Turkey Trot, Gus Macker, Y Camp, youth sports, and the Halloween Parade.

Mullen said in addition to events, volunteers also assist with maintaining the grounds, spreading mulch, and sometimes community partners like Burrell's Excavating, Norwich Pharmaceuticals, GE, and City Church help as well.

"Businesses and organizations lend their expertise, time, and manpower to help us out because they know we can't do everything - especially with decreased staff," he said. "We're incredibly thankful that our community has gotten creative in the ways they're willing to help out."

He added that another challenge for staffing are the new training requirements for staff, and over a decade straight of minimum wage increases.

Fundraising And Community Activism Efforts

"Each year we're collectively able to raise over \$100,000 in funds, which supports the Y through membership and program scholarships, and also helps keep our overall membership cost lower," said Mullen. "Donors help us significantly, and we leave the campaign open throughout the year. The need is there 365 days a year, and we're honored to accept any donation to help our work in this community."

Mullen said the Y is fortunate to have the support from several key foundations that believe in the YMCA and its programs. "In addition to great foundations, we also have some wonderful partnerships with other organizations throughout the community that help us have a positive impact that goes beyond our facility," he added.

One example of a community partnership is with Helping Hands.

Helping Hands has been working with the Norwich YMCA for approximately four years, and Mullen said this partnership is one of his favorite ways to give back.

He said in addition to being the site of Helping Hands, the Norwich YMCA also appreciates member's flexibility and understanding on the day of giving.

"There are still activities going on whether it's karate, swim lessons, or basketball practices - accessing the YMCA is not easy on that night because we have 180 people on average that show up for help."

"At the end of the evening you just take a deep breath and think to yourself, 'wow, we did that in a few hours,' each time it's meaningful and impactful."

"Each month you see a different group of volunteers from some of the largest companies and organizations in our community as well including people from NBT Bank, Kerry Bioscience, Chobani, or Amber Perkins' School of the Arts."

Mullen said each of the groups understand that there is a need for this assistance in our community, and the Norwich YMCA is honored to bring everyone together.

Thanking The Community

"We're a community based organization, and we're starting our 162nd year in Norwich," said Mullen. "You don't do that by being lucky, you do that by supporting and working with the community,"

"The Y isn't one person, I've been here for a while, but [I'm] not the Y."

Mullen said often times when he speaks to people they credit him with some of the long term success of the Y, but the real secret in the Y's success is the whole team behind it.

"We've got 80 employees, 500 volunteers, several thousand members, and a community that accesses our programs in the thousands that may not be members," he said. "The Y is a reflection of our community, and there are no ifs, ands, or buts about that."

"We're only going to be as strong as we can be if we work together, and that has shown to be very strong over our existence. There aren't too many other independent Y's in a town with around 7,000 people."

Mullen said the Norwich YMCA is going to do everything it can to continue to be an asset to Norwich and the Chenango County community.

"We're honored to work for our community, we're honored to work for our members, and we're blessed to have your support - thank you," said Mullen.

Those who are interested in learning more about the Norwich YMCA may visit its website at norwichymca.com for additional information.

Business SPOTLIGHT

The New York State Veterans Home

Continued from page 25 ▶

#22 in New York State. The facility was ranked #37 in 2023 and #45 in 2022.

U.S. News and World Report has also recognized the Home as one of their "Best Nursing Homes" for short-term rehabilitation for 2024, which is given to the top 19% of homes that meet their criteria."

Apthorpe also shared some data on the achievements of the facility. NYSVHO has consistently maintained a CMS 5-star overall quality rating as well as a 5-star rating in each of the measurement categories. More information can be obtained about CMS quality ratings at CMS.gov/nursing-home-compare.

The facility had an unannounced NYS DOH Survey inspection in October that resulted in an excellent inspection and is currently ranked #11 out of 601 nursing homes in New York State based on the Survey inspections.

Also, the veterans' home has been receiving "Best in Class" customer satisfaction scores since it began participating over eight years ago with Pinnacle, the company who surveys over 1200 senior living facilities nationwide. Only the top 15% of homes receive the "Best in Class" distinction.

Scheuer highlighted some of the internal operations and events that makes the NYSVHO a great experience for the residents, such as their world tour food series where the chef rotates a menu of international foods, trips to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown for residents to embark on, bingo nights with prizes, and holiday decorating contests. "We always make sure people have fun here, the residents and everyone else based on the resident's preferences."

The facility has approximately 335 staff, including employees and contractors that work full-time, part-time or per diem. NYSVHO's major facility is a building constructed on 60 acres, has a square footage of 217,643, and is comprised of 6 neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are separate resident units within the facility.

According to Apthorpe, NYSVHO has a fully integrated fire detection, suppression, and alarm system, kitchen equipment to prepare and furnish all meals, a fleet of wheelchair-compatible lift vans and cars for resident transport. NYSVHO uses state of the art equipment and technology, including several rehabilitation treatment modalities (ultrasound, short wave diathermy, electrical stimulation, and ultrasound), Omnicycles, networked computer system, access to Wi-Fi, and an electronic health record system, called ADL System.

The veterans' home is always currently looking to recruit more staff in all areas (especially Nursing, Housekeeping, Food Service, Recreation, Billing Office) to help with their growth. To learn more about NYSVHO, visit their Facebook page at New York State Veterans' Home, Oxford.

2023 Recipient of the Small Business of the Year



Home of Steaks, Seafood and Pasta Since 1942

Lewis' Restaurant



Serving Tuesday - Saturday from 4:00 pm on Sherburne, New York

For Reservations Call 674-9055

www.lewisrestaurantny.com

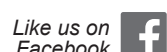


38 S. BROAD STREET, NORWICH, NY • 607-334-2431
HOURS: Mon.-Fri. 9-6; Sat. 9-3; Sun. 9-1

6 N. MAIN ST., SHERBURNE, NY • 607-674-9691
HOURS: Mon.-Fri. 9-6; Sat. 9-3; Sun. 9-1

12 MAIN ST., NEW BERLIN, NY • 607-847-8100
HOURS: Mon.-Fri. 9-6; Sat. 9-3; Sun. 9-1

Be A Smart Shopper... Compare Prices
Parking In The Rear Of The Store
Rainchecks Always Available
Senior Citizens Prescription Discount



SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus continues to invest in the future of Chenango County -

Continued from page 25 ▶

place to ensure the success of their students.

Something SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus Executive Director Tom Pilwesi recognizes is that not all students are the same, and some may need different accommodations than others.

"I think the biggest challenge for somebody who's a non-traditional student is 'look, I work, I have a family, I can't go to a classroom and learn about something that I'm interested in even though I know it's going to advance my career,'" he said. "The flexible modality is so crucial to meeting students where they want to be."

The Norwich Campus has implemented five "flex rooms," which allow for in-person, virtual, and asynchronous learning. Students have the option to attend the class in person, or tune in virtually from their home. For those who can't make it in person or virtually at the time of the class, SUNY Morrisville offers recordings of the lectures for students to watch at a later time.

The college's tutoring services work similarly, with options for in-person or virtual sessions. SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus Community and Student Support Associate Rosie Frost said she also hosts Student Success Seminars on topics ranging from resume building to note taking strategies, to stress management skills. Students can attend these seminars in person, virtually, or watch recordings of them.

"We're all about fitting a working person's schedule. Somebody who has a family, who has other responsibilities, we want to make an education feasible," she said. "It's just all about helping them build the skills that will help them to be successful in education, but also in the workforce. We want them to not only come in and be successful in school, but prepare them for the job search."

The SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus also ensures student success by utilizing Starfish, a student retention software that alerts faculty and staff if a student is struggling in one of their courses. Staff members can then reach out to the student and offer tutoring and other assistance.

"At this campus, you're not falling through the cracks," said Frost.

While academic success is a large goal at the Norwich Campus, the school is also highly focused on student wellness, which they promote through their Wellness Program.

The program offers a wellness series called "Live a Life of Balance," which includes six to seven sessions per semester where a professional in the wellness industry visits the campus to teach students various ways they can focus on and improve their own wellbeing.

Sessions in the fall 2023 semester included making overnight oats, chair massages from students at the SUNY Morrisville main campus, and a visit from Kelly Cross, owner of Jasmine Moon Wellness, where students learned about the benefits of essential oils and crystals.

This spring, the series will include sessions on managing test anxiety, creating personal boundaries, understanding techno-stress, meditation, and making stress putty, among others.

"Our wellness program is just incredible," Pilewski said. "A holistic approach to student



Human Services students from the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus participated in the Applied Learning Conference in April, where they showcased the on-campus Wellness Center, which was designed and implemented in 2022. (Submitted photo)

success means, 'hey, how do I take care of myself when I have all these commitments, my schoolwork, how do I take care of myself physically and emotionally?' I'm very proud of what we do here."

Frost said wellness programs are built right into the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus schedule, ensuring they take place while students are at the campus but not while other classes are being held.

"We work to create a gap in the schedule between their classes so there is time for us to put that programming in, in the middle of things while they're here," Frost explained. "We don't want to make it after hours because, again, they have to go home, they have to make dinner, they have to be with their families. So we tried really hard to get that programming in when it's best for the students."

"We just have that extra time with our students. We have the ability to be one on one with each of them, where at a bigger campus they just don't necessarily have that capability," she continued. "That's an advantage here, that we get that time and we really get to know our students as people and see the full picture. The students come to me when they have issues not just here, but at home, because they know that I see them as a person, and that's a benefit. They're not a number here, they're a person."

The campus also touts an impressive Wellness Center, which was designed and implemented by students in the SUNY Morrisville Human Services program in 2022. The group repurposed a classroom at the Norwich Campus using Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) money awarded to the school, as well as some existing SUNY Morrisville funds that were available.

The room was transformed into a calm and comfortable space complete with low lighting, small couches, rugs, bean bag chairs, an Amazon Alexa for students to play music, an electric fireplace, massage

chairs, and many other wellness-oriented elements.

In addition to providing holistic support to their students, the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus is also focusing on connecting with students in local schools, and getting more high school students on the campus taking classes.

Frost said she works closely with the Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP), which is part of a statewide program to support and provide resources to middle and high schoolers, to help them graduate from high school and be prepared for college or vocational training.

LPP advocates have a strong presence in area schools, and Frost said they help get her in the door so she can meet with students and teach them about college readiness and the opportunities available at SUNY Morrisville.

"I can talk to them about the things that matter, the things that they have questions about, like college applications and college essays and things like that, and I can really make an impact," said Frost. "I can also say, hey, guess what? This week they have free SUNY applications and SUNY Morrisville has this program that you love. It never hurts to look into other options and have backups because then, guess what? They get in and they're like 'oh, I should check this out, because this person really helped me. Maybe that's how everybody there is.' And then maybe we're gaining more students that way."

This semester, Frost plans to visit DCMO BOCES as well, to give presentations on what SUNY Morrisville has to offer beyond their training at BOCES, and how they can move from BOCES to the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus.

BOCES also houses their New Visions program at the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus. High school seniors throughout the county come to the Norwich Campus to study law and government or health-related fields, and even earn some college credits.

Similarly, SUNY Morrisville offers the EDge Program, which allows juniors and seniors in local high schools to earn college credit by taking courses online. Available courses include Intro to Psychology, Intro to Sociology, Criminal Justice, and more.

Program offerings

For students out of high school, the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus offers a range of degree programs that fit nicely with the needs of Chenango County.

The Norwich Campus offers associate degree programs in Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Human Services, Individual Studies, and Nursing. In 2023, they also began offering their first bachelor's degree: Human Services Leadership B.P.S.

"Our degree programs, while it is a reduced number from what it used to be, are well suited to help the employers of Norwich and Chenango County," said Pilewski. "Business administration, criminal justice, human services, nursing. That's our bread and butter, that's the foundation of what we do here, and anybody who studies here can get really good employment right here."

Although they only offer one bachelor's degree, Pilewski said the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus can be a great way to kick off a student's college education. As credits are transferable between SUNY schools, students could take a handful of courses or earn an associate degree before transferring to another SUNY school to complete their bachelor's.

For students who want to learn but don't want to commit to a full degree program, the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus now offers micro-credential and certification programs, which were implemented last year.

In these programs, students take one to two courses for two semesters, and graduate with a certification or micro-credential.

The SUNY Morrisville

Norwich Campus currently offers a 21-credit Direct Support Professional (DSP) certificate program, where students learn about abnormal psychology, counselling and case management, helping processes and crisis intervention, and administration and management of human services.

Pilewski said the micro-credential is useful for professionals in the human services field who are looking to expand their knowledge and skill set. Plus, thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), SUNY Morrisville is able to offer the DSP micro-credential to human services professionals for free.

"A micro-credential is a taste of higher education that they wouldn't normally taste or get an opportunity for, but because of this grant tuition is covered. It's not costing them any money to get this micro-credential," Pilewski said. "It can advance their career. It could also lead to our human services bachelor's degree, which would be a huge win for both parties."

Pilewski said more micro-credential programs are in the works, including programs for entrepreneurship, human resources, customer relationship marketing, and Microsoft Office. The programs, if approved, would be available to high school students as well as adults.

"If a community member or non-traditional student was to take advantage of micro-credential programs, they're getting some college credit but also training that could be useful for starting a business, securing a job in marketing or sales, or human resources, as well as some clerical work that could use some Microsoft Office training as well," Pilewski said.

Investing in employees

SUNY Morrisville isn't just aiming for successful students; they also promote and support the success of their employees through several professional development opportunities.

The SUNY Center for

Professional Development offers online seminars to SUNY employees, most of which are free. Frost said she's attended several, including workshops on technology and APA style, as well as a SUNY conference on writing. She also attended a training seminar on the Starfish software at the SUNY Morrisville main campus this past fall.

In addition to online and in-house seminars, the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus also gives employees the opportunity to go to conferences out of the area. Last spring, Frost attended a conference on innovative technology in Oswego.

She said the four-day conference had a jam-packed schedule that covered a wide variety of subjects and speakers.

"I went to as much of that as I could. I just picked and chose what fit best, and it really equipped me to come back here and implement those things," said Frost. "I really try to take advantage of everything I can because I think there's no amount of learning that is enough, personally."

Although it was a SUNY conference, Frost said there were faculty and staff from private institutions as well. She said the opportunity to meet so many other academic professionals helped her to cultivate a network she can go to for help and guidance if needed.

"It created a network of people that I could reach out to from other institutions where I could say, 'hey, you guys did this here, could you walk me through like what you think the best practice is? Because I'm working on this and just something's not right. Can you help me?'" she said. "That was really inspiring because you can get really isolated in your one SUNY school, but when you go to these conferences, you're meeting people from all over the state who really want you to succeed."

Pilewski said Dr. Julianne Burton, an assistant professor of social science and coordinator of the Human Services Program and Human Services Institute at the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus, regularly attends conferences, and just recently returned from a week-long conference in New Orleans that focused on human services.

Most importantly, Pilewski said, the opportunities for training and professional development apply to all staff members at the Norwich Campus, not just a select few.

"Our maintenance crew, our facilities people, had a two-day training back in November. So it's everybody within SUNY is encouraged to take advantage of training," he said. "With technology the way it is, you can get training in little pieces on lunch breaks, and you can get it in summertime trainings, or you can get it going away to faraway places. So one of the benefits of working at SUNY is everybody believes very much in professional development, and offering it to all, not just some."

Beyond structured trainings and seminars, Frost said the entire SUNY and SUNY Morrisville culture and community is one of learning and helping each other grow.

"My colleagues are very good about sharing knowledge. I came in and I said, this is what I really want to do, and it was right away people were on board and they're like, 'hey I'm working on this, would you

Continued on page 29 ▶

SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus continues to invest in the future of Chenango County -

Continued from page 28 ▶

like to be involved in this to help me learn and to grow?" said Frost. "One of the most amazing things about coming to work here was I felt very supported in my endeavors to continue to grow, continue to learn."

Perhaps because of this positive culture rife with opportunity, the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus has seen a high retention rate with employees. Pilewski said it's not uncommon for employees to work at the college for over a decade, and that most recent staff turnover was due to employees retiring.

That being said, one of the challenges SUNY Morrisville has seen when it comes to hiring staff is finding qualified individuals to teach in their Nursing Program, which requires a master's degree.

"We currently are working on hiring a new nursing faculty so that we can expand the nursing program to full capacity. We've been working on this for a little while now, so that I foresee is a challenge but it's also probably a big goal for us. We want our nursing program at full capacity," said Frost.

"The pool of people qualified to teach in an RN program is very small. That is a challenge," said Pilewski. "What's the draw to get more education? But there's awfully rewarding careers available in education, in nursing, for sure ... but there's not a lot of retired nurses that want to be in education, especially if we require a master's degree. Do they really want to go get more schooling to start a new career?"

What makes it even more challenging is that several other schools in the state are seeking nursing professors, oftentimes in larger areas such as Utica, Syracuse, or Albany.

"If you do an internet search for nursing faculty positions, you'll see that SUNY Poly has one, Utica University has one, SUNY Morrisville has them in both places, here and

in Morrisville," Pilewski said. "There's just so much opportunity and that just provides a level of challenge that I think is difficult to overcome at this very point."

He said their greatest asset in this case is word of mouth advertising. Fortunately, both Pilewski and Frost have found the Chenango County community to be caring and supportive, and cheering on the school's success.

Community of caring

"This is a community that cares," said Frost. "We all want to see each other succeed."

The Chenango County community has done nothing but lift up the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus to help both the school and its students be successful. Frost said the institution has found many community partnerships that have already helped in a myriad of ways, and can contribute to the future success of SUNY Morrisville.

"Just building those partnerships, being able to call on them when we need somebody to take an intern, or we want to create these micro-credentials, it's been a benefit. It's huge, and we want more of that," Frost said. "We want these partners to tell us what they need, so that we can come up with new micro-credentials. We can come up with ways to prepare this community to take on the fields that we have here."

Pilewski said since he was brought on as executive director last year, local organizations have welcomed him with open arms. He said Commerce Chenango specifically has been a major help with getting their foot in the door at area schools.

"Commerce Chenango has just been a tremendous partner in bringing me to various meetings where I can talk about how we can help the community," said Pilewski.

"I've been to a few social events where Sal Testani would just say, 'come here, I've got some people I want you to meet.' And then lo and behold a couple of days later I get an email from that person saying, 'hey, we met at the Commerce Chenango event, can we get together and have a cup of coffee? I want to talk to you about this initiative or that initiative.' It's really a great feeling knowing that when I come to work, if there's somebody I need to meet, I can be introduced to those people without any effort at all."

The SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus has also established a new relationship with CDO Workforce, further



The SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus places a big emphasis on student well-being through their Wellness Program, which provides activities and programming each semester for students to relax and learn about stress management. One of their programs in 2023 was a session with Jasmine Moon Wellness Owner Kelly Cross, who taught students the benefits of essential oils and crystals. (Submitted photo)

connecting the college to the Chenango County workforce, and individuals who may be looking to further their education or earn credentials.

Frost said she's been hard at work developing relationships with local school administrators, such as principals and superintendents, as well as school guidance counselors. She said these partnerships make it easier to get in front of high school students to teach them about college readiness, and spread the word about all the opportunities at SUNY Morrisville.

She said her position at the school used to be split among multiple employees. Now, having one employee to focus on building these relationships has allowed school partnerships to thrive.

"Getting in front of these students is just super important and everybody is super supportive of it, because they want their students to thrive, and it was like all of a sudden they had somebody at SUNY Morrisville who was reaching out and who could solely focus on that," Frost said. "It's really allowed me to focus on a lot of these things, and I think this community was really waiting for that."

Another opportunity for community collaboration Frost is exploring is utilizing LPP to connect with students as young as fifth grade.

"One of the things I love about LPP is we start with fifth graders, and then we're moving

up. I just think if you can build those relationships with a fifth grader, by the time they're a senior what will that yield for us and for that student?" she said. "Those relationships are so valuable to those students, too. They need to know that somebody cares and somebody believes in them, and I just feel that having LPP here is invaluable, it really is, to building those relationships."

Pilewski said the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus is supported by county government as well, who provides the school with grant funding each year. He said the funds directly support the school's operational

budget, which helps them to further their mission and vision.

The Norwich Campus also aims to give back to the community when they can. Frost said she worked closely with LPP to facilitate the annual Angel Tree clothing drive, which collects specific clothing items for families in need during the holidays.

After donations are collected, volunteers spend hours organizing and wrapping the clothes to be picked up by participating families.

"The week prior, our community room was full of all these donations, and those donations don't get packaged up for people to come pick up unless

somebody devotes an entire work day. It's really amazing," Pilewski said. "That day, the months leading up to that, is just indicative of how much this community means to SUNY Morrisville. Did we get any new students out of that endeavor? Of course not. We did it because it's the right thing to do, and the community needed somebody to step up and run this event, and LPP does it every year."

Pilewski and Frost hope the community will continue to support the Norwich Campus and their goal of providing accessible education to the Chenango County area.

Frost said something simple area residents can do to support the college is like and follow their social media pages, as word of mouth is one of the largest ways opportunities at SUNY Morrisville are spread.

"A small thing anybody could do is go follow and like our social media pages. If you have the ability, you have lots of friends out there that are younger and thinking about college or even thinking about going back, if you can just share some of the content that we're putting out there," she said. "We want to reach more people. We know there are more people to reach and we're working on expanding that presence. So just that little thing helps. It doesn't have to be a big huge gesture, just follow our Facebook page. That's really a big help to us."

"We appreciate the support of this community. We couldn't do what we do without it."

For more information on the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus, visit Morrisville.edu/norwich, the SUNY Morrisville Norwich Campus Facebook page, or [@sunymorrisvillenorwich](https://www.instagram.com/sunymorrisvillenorwich) on Instagram.



Once again, Howard Hanna Real Estate was able to help 180 people in Chenango County to either buy or sell a home. We **THANK YOU** for your continued support and trust in our agents.

Home ownership is a big decision. Let us help you step by step. It all begins with a conversation. Call today!

Considering a career change? Visit www.HannaCareers.com



Real Estate Services

Howard Hanna makes it easy with our one-stop shopping. Real Estate, Mortgages, Insurance.

CALL US TODAY!

6095 State Hwy. 12, Norwich, NY 13815 • office: 607-336-8080
39 Main Street, Sidney, NY 13838 • office: 607-563-1020

howardhanna.com



ROLLING ANTIQUER'S OLD CAR CLUB
57th Annual
Auto Show
& FLEA MARKET
Chenango County Fairgrounds - 168 East Main St., Norwich, NY 13815
MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND 2024

SATURDAY, MAY 25
Muscle Cars & Street Rods

SUNDAY, MAY 26
Antique & Classic Cars

Show Up! Show Off!
Don't leave your antique or classic vehicle in the barn or garage!
REGISTER FOR THE SHOW!

OPEN DAILY 8 AM - 5 PM
Rain or Shine
General Admission \$10
Children under 12 Free

Rolling Antiquer's Old Car Club, Norwich Region AACA
Show Forms & Information at www.raocc.org
Pre-show Registration Due by May 1, 2024

- Antiques and Collectibles
- Antique Cars
- Muscle Cars
- Military Vehicles
- Street Rods
- Motorcycles
- Antique Engines

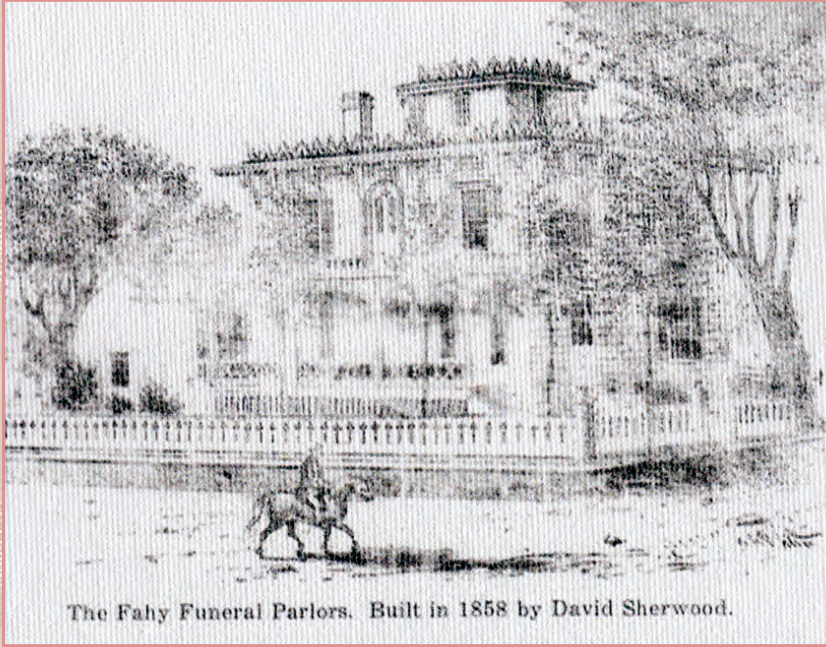
Saturday & Sunday

- Food & Beverages
- D.J. Music Service
- Free Shuttle Buses to and from parking lots
- Camping
- No refunds
- No pets

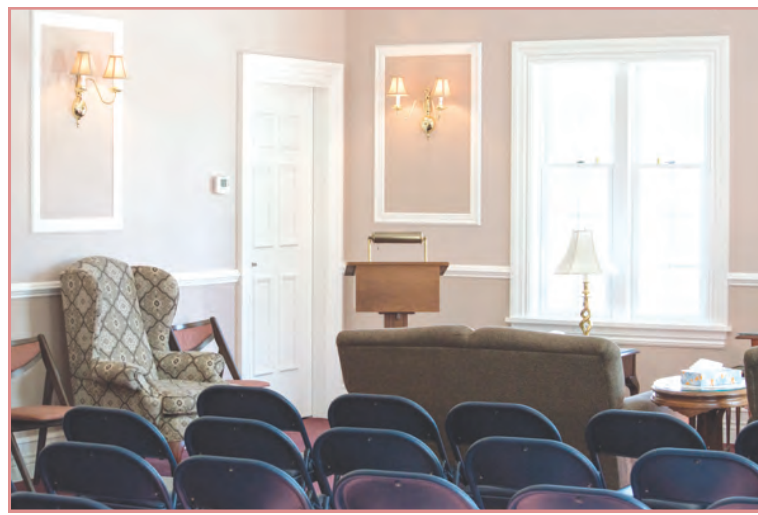
MUSCLE CARS (2019 & Older) Dan 607-226-4919	ANTIQUE & CLASSIC CARS (1999 & Older) Dick 607-336-2277	GENERAL ANTIQUES Sylvia 607-334-5038
CAR PARTS Allan 607-334-2907	ANTIQUE ENGINE DISPLAY Allan 607-334-2907	

R. J. FAHY FUNERAL HOME

A Tradition of Service Since 1939



The Fahy Funeral Parlor. Built in 1858 by David Sherwood.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

As a locally operated funeral home in Norwich, we focus on providing families personal attention throughout the funeral planning process. Several staff members grew up in the area and continue to call it home. This enables our team to offer compassionate care while meeting the needs of our community. At R. J. Fahy Funeral Home, your family becomes a part of ours.

CELEBRATE YOUR LOVED ONE

As we carefully guide you through the planning process, we'll discuss affordable funeral and cremation options as well as suggest innovative ways to honor life.

PRE-PLANNING SERVICES

In addition to serving families who have an immediate need, our staff can also help plan ahead a funeral service. Preparing for the future keeps costs managed and ensures your wishes are met. We can arrange every detail, including casket or urn choices and final resting places in nearby cemeteries and mausoleums. Those who plan in advance also spare their loved ones from making important decisions during a difficult time.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

We hope you allow us the privilege to serve you during your time of need. Please contact R. J. Fahy Funeral Home to learn more about burial and cremation services or to tour our Norwich funeral home. Funeral planning can seem overwhelming. Losing a family member is an emotional experience, and grief can make the funeral planning process difficult. Pre-planning final arrangements helps relieve your family of both emotional and financial burdens. However, we also offer support to those who have an immediate need to plan a funeral for a family member or friend who has passed away. Whatever your need, R.J. Fahy Funeral Home® is here to help. We guide you every step of the way—from choosing between traditional burial planning and cremation, designing a religious ceremony or a celebration of life, and deciding on cemetery property. We even offer grief support services for you and your family.

Our Difference

We want you to feel confident planning a funeral for yourself or a loved one. Here are some of the unique benefits we offer to help relieve your family of emotional and financial burdens.

- National plan transferability
- Personal Planning Guide
- Free online obituary
- Price protection
- Experts in honoring veterans
- Away from home protection
- Celebration of life
- Compassion help line
- 100% Price Guarantee on Pre-Planning

"As my loved one had purchased a pre-paid cremation a number of years ago, this was the only, most local, funeral home that honored their product. They were most helpful and honest while assisting us during this difficult time."

~Verified Cremation Customer May 2019

"My family has known the Fahy family for years. My Grandfather's arrangements were made with them in 1959. I had made my Mother's arrangements in August 2016. She passed away in December 2017 and was cremated. Calling hours, obituary and Mass were arranged by Fahy's for April 2018 on what would have been her 100th Birthday"

~Verified Cremation Customer & Memorial Service Customer

Here for you when you need us.



Michael C Wright
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

R.J. Fahy Funeral Home
116 North Broad St.
Norwich, NY 13815
607-334-8833

www.fahyfuneralhome.com

**Handicap Accessible Facility*



David P Beardsley
MANAGER