



OUTLOOK 2024 ON THE CUSP OF SOMETHING GREAT

Cortland Standard

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: CORTLAND HAS PLENTY OF WATER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

BY SCOTT STEVE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Since the announcement of the regional micro-technology initiatives, the city of Cortland has been working with local leaders in many areas.

Some discussions are as simple as getting them to “buy in” that the Micron project and all the benefits and opportunities that come with it are real - even if they only accept 10% of it coming true and the impact that would bring. Other questions range from the negative effect of pulling people from current jobs, to positives of increases in housing, the service industry and demand for trades persons and larger spin offs.

Some are more complex discussions. Can we take on more water distribution or receive more wastewater? Let's say Preble wants to allow development of some farm land. Does that conflict with their zoning and/or comprehensive plan?

How do we get site-ready manufacturing and warehouse facilities and housing to promote investments and opportunities in the Cortland area without spoiling our best farming and environmental assets? How do we do it in an intelligent and forward-thinking manner without unintentional effects on quality of life, density, the environment and our beautiful backdrop in nature.

Our infrastructure is pretty well positioned. While some upgrading is needed for our existing needs, this could give us the capital toward larger investments that would otherwise be out of reach.

With regard to waste water, below is a breakdown of usage vs. capacity for the more important parameters:

Paramter	4-yr avg	Capacity	% reserve
Flow	5.45	9	39%
BOD	4668	9000	48%
TSS	6424	8200	22%
TKN	650	1900	66%
NH3	500	1500	67%
Phos	126	550	77%



Flow units are millions of gallons per day. All others are pounds per day. BOD is biochemical oxygen demand, a measure of the organic content. I imagine suppliers to Micron would not be producing high BOD wastewater, but that may be a misconception on my part.

TSS is total suspended solids, a measure of the particulate content of the water. That is the parameter we are closest to capacity on. TKN, NH3, and Phos are total Kjeldahl nitrogen, ammonia, and phosphorus, respectively and are associated with Chesapeake Bay limitations. We're in very good shape on all three of those parameters.

For assets, we have a professional, dedicated staff; a long history of developing innovative solutions to treatment challenges; and the support of the administration and council.

Challenges center mainly around the age of much of our equipment and buildings, though anticipated changes of leadership in a couple of years due to retirements may also bring challenges.

The city's water resources and infrastructure are capable of meeting the potential demands from new manufacturing and supporting services' industry.

Our current water demand in the City is 2.4 million gallons per day. Our municipal well No. 3 has the capacity to withdraw 3 million gallons a day. This does give us some room to increase demand for new customers, but we have to consider the potential for water main breaks and leaks to the system.

The actual demand increase on well No. 3 would be about 200,000 to 300,000 gallons per day. Any demand above this would require us to use municipal well No. 4, which has a capacity of 4 million gallons a day. Municipal well No. 4 has a higher cost to operate with a larger pump and motor, and an increase in demand also means more chlorine needed for treatment.

Both municipal wells have new or rebuilt pumps and motors so they are dependable. Our chlorination equipment has also been upgraded, so no challenges exist there.

Of course any time you increase demand, equipment will be operated more often which equals more wear and tear. Our last rebuilt pump for well No.3 lasted about 10 years, so that helps to prepare for future equipment needs.

Scott Steve is the mayor of the city of Cortland.



GREATER CORTLAND REALLY IS ON THE CUSP; JOIN US TO SEE HOW

BY EVAN GEIBEL
PUBLISHER

Over the past decade and a half, the greater Cortland area has prepared itself for the future. State grant funding has been and continues to be leveraged to improve downtown areas across the region. Public parks and other facilities in the city of Cortland are refurbished and accessible.

Municipalities have updated their master plans to prepare for growth and business development. Abandoned and vacant industrial sites have been prepared and marketed in an effort to put them back into productive use. Developers have brought online many additional units of market rate housing for young professionals and families.

That future may now be here. Major high-tech manufacturing operations are being established in neighboring Onondaga and Tompkins counties, which may

lead to support businesses being established closer to home, and population growth as workers find homes from which to commute.

Already, Tompkins Cortland Community College has established courses to teach students the necessary skills to work in this sector. Meanwhile, the closing of some longtime factories in the city of Cortland didn't leave those facilities vacant for long — new tenants moved in within a matter of months, including a major player in the state's burgeoning legal recreational cannabis industry. Other homegrown manufacturers, like Square Deal Machining in Marathon and a cluster of tech businesses at the former Smith-Corona property in South Cortland, continue to expand and thrive.



EVAN C. GEIBEL,
PUBLISHER OF THE
CORTLAND STANDARD

For too long, the greater Cortland area's story has centered on what we lost when major employers, including many factories, pulled out of town in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. After a period of transition, we are ready to write the next

chapter in our history, and discard the pessimism and defeatism that have too often characterized our community's perception of itself.

Are we ready for this moment? What additional steps do we need to take to fully capitalize on the opportunities now before us? What other factors will contribute to, or inhibit, our future success?

Welcome to this year's edition of the Cortland Standard's premier special section, Outlook 2024: "On the Cusp of Something Great." Our reporters, editors and contributing writers have ex-

plored the trends and forecasts that will affect our region in the coming years, and I'm excited for you to read what they've discovered.

As always, our staff has sought out perspectives from a broad swath of the community to give you the information you'll need to understand and navigate these exciting times.

I hope you enjoy the reporting we've assembled for this year's Outlook edition, and take the time to consider your role in the days to come. Whether you're a member of a local nonprofit organization or school group, running for elected office or just writing a letter to the editor, your voice and your vision are just as valid as anyone else's, and are crucial to our shared future.

The initiatives featured in Outlook 2024: "On the Cusp of Something Great" may be a good start, but it will take all of our efforts to make the most of the opportunities now before us. We're excited about what's to come, and hope you are, too.

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PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Site preparedness, housing, work force development among ways county will prepare for new industries

BY MARGARET MELLOTT
STAFF REPORTER
MMELLOTT@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

Cortland County is rife with potential, county officials said. Newcomers iSpice and Micron Technology bring the promise of new jobs – and maybe even new industries.

The county is also centrally located between federal technology hubs of chip manufacturing to the north, along Interstate 90, and batteries to the south, centered around Binghamton.

“Given our unique position right in the middle of both of those, right on the 81 corridor headed down to New York City or off to Toronto and points beyond, it just gives us a great location to help decide, what would we like to see?” said Legislator Beau Harbin (D-Cortland). “Do we want to continue to be primarily agriculture-based and rural and people might just commute to those additional high-paying jobs? There are just lots of different options.”

The U.S. Department of Commerce is sponsoring a funding opportunity for the tech hubs, allowing them to apply to receive between \$40 million and \$70 million each for implementation funding, totaling nearly \$500 million.

“Now’s a great time for us – because those opportunities exist – to really sit down and say, ‘OK, great: What would we like to see? What kind of future do we want to help develop and what do we want to protect and preserve?’” Harbin added.

Much of the development won’t be seen for another decade or two – but that gives time to plan, said Brendan O’Byrne, director of the Cortland County Business Development Corp. and Industrial Development Agency.

“I think a lot of our areas that are being identified as a gap throughout this process (long-term planning) are really consistent with what we’re seeing throughout upstate New York,” said Cortland County Planning Director Trisha Hiemstra. “Like a lack of work force for businesses; a need for more housing stock ... and a need for more child care opportunities at affordable costs; a need for affordable broadband internet access.”

FILLING THE GAPS

The closing of Voyant Beauty’s factories on Central Avenue and Huntington Street in Cortland in 2022 created opportunities for other companies like iSpice, which moved into the property at 121 Central Ave. in 2023.

However, when Voyant closed, it took more than 500 jobs with it. Though iSpice exchanged 350 jobs for \$3 million in tax breaks, it doesn’t account for the full amount of jobs lost.

“The 350 is just the baseline job numbers that they’re looking to create,” O’Byrne said. “Throughout the negotiation, in the process of getting the approval of PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) and sales tax benefits to the iSpice company, they had mentioned that they could see higher job numbers when the project is fully completed.”

Voyant had 309 direct employees and another 150 who worked through staffing agencies, the BDC/IDA reported. The 500 jobs constituted more than 2.8% of Cortland County’s 17,500 jobs, state data show.

“We’re also actively trying to recruit and engage other businesses to want to expand their businesses within Cortland, as well as trying to get other businesses to locate here as well to try to get those numbers up as well,” O’Byrne said.



The Cortland County Industrial Development Agency and Business Development Corp. awaits word from the state Department of Environmental Conservation about the Apex site’s environmental studies to see what work needs to be completed to get it shovel ready for future development.

MARGARET MELLOTT/STAFF REPORTER

Onondaga County is where microchip manufacturer Micron plans to build a 20,000-job manufacturing facility, spinning off similar industries and research stretching across the Interstate 90 corridor and dipping south to Binghamton.

Part of attracting industry and work force will be improving resources in the community, like site preparedness and housing, O’Byrne and Harbin said.

“We have the Apex site downtown, we’re currently waiting on the EPA to approve the environmental studies that were done on the site to tell us what kind of contamination is at the site and what type of cleanups need to happen before future development occurs on the site,” O’Byrne said.

“Even for a population who lives and works here today, housing is an issue,” Harbin said. “Broadband infrastructure is an issue, child-

care is an issue – so how do we want to look to fix some of those things and address some of those pressures that we already have, into the next decade and beyond?”

LONG-TERM PLANNING

In looking to plan for the incoming developments and guide the county through decision making over the next couple decades, the county is preparing a strategic development plan.

“The strategic development plan will also create, like, a base plate for other community agencies when they apply for grant opportunities,” Hiemstra said. “They can demonstrate in their grant application how their goal with their project is in alliance with the countywide strategic development plan. That gives a lot of credibility.”

See **PLANNING**, Page B1

BY JACOB MACK
STAFF REPORTER
JMACK@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

This report was initially published Aug. 3, 2023

‘IT’S GOING TO BE MASSIVE’ iSpice chose Cortland for space, but mostly its workers

Manouch Ilkhani, our CEO and president, chose this location isn’t just because of the building but because of the people in the area.”

The company has already hired about 30 workers, most of them former Voyant employees, Colistra said. More positions are expected to open up once the facility begins production.

“There’s a lot of know-how in the area and they’ve proven it in the area for over 40 years, so that was a big factor,” Colistra said. “This specific facility, it was Brockway in the ‘50s, then Smith-Corona, there’s a number of companies that operated on this exact site. There’s a lot of history here that we’re hoping to modernize.”

The Central Avenue facility sits on 15.6 acres designed and zoned for light industrial uses, with high ceilings and multiple loading docks, which were used by Voyant Beauty and ALPLA until they announced in October the closure of their Cortland operations by the end of 2022, eliminating nearly 500 jobs.

Colistra said that more than 100 truckloads of equipment are to be delivered to the facility, costing the company \$300,000 to \$400,000. The state announced last week that the New York Power Authority Board of Trustees awarded a 2.25-MW low-cost ReCharge NY power allocation to iSpice and that the firm plans to invest \$25 million into the building.

“There’s the \$25 million number, but we’re investing here smartly at first,” he said. “We’re really looking to be here for years to come. This is going to be the place where people can come in and start a career and grow with us and work here until they retire.”

Callista said iSpice began work on the facility June 2, and that making connections with local business development organizations has been painless.

“We’ve already met with Cortland County Workforce Development, who’s put us in touch with a number of the programs that are offered

here by the local universities, including Cornell,” Colistra said.

“This location is going to become the center hub for iSpice across the country,” he said. “We will have here not only production but we will have R&D facilities. ... I hope to work with partners around the county, you know, and the adjoining counties to make sure that this is successful because it’s going to take a village to do what we want to do.”

As for communications with the city, all is well, said Mayor Scott Steve.

“It is 110 percent great, we’ve talked about having child-care presence in their building, and the diversity in jobs they can have,” Steve said. “There seems to be entry-level positions with a lot of room for promotion into engineering, operators, material handlers, shipping, human resources, plenty of great diversity in jobs, unlike what was there before. I’m excited about that.”

But there’s a lot of work ahead for iSpice and its new team of employees until production at the facility can begin.

“We’re building a giant Mezzanine for our first production area, which is going to be 65 feet by 150 feet and it’ll be able to support forklifts on top of it so it’s going to be massive,” Callista said.

A ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION OPPORTUNITY IS KNOCKING ON MANY DOORS

BY ERIC MULVIHILL
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As the principal agency focused on economic development in Cortland County, The Cortland County Industrial Development Agency and Cortland County Business Development Corp. are uniquely aware of the opportunities that our community could benefit from with the planned investments in Micron in Onondaga County and New Energy New York in Broome County.

Cortland County’s location, its low cost of living, affordable properties, excellent schools, and terrific quality of life posi-

tion our community for the outside investment that is expected to occur because of growth outside of the county.

As we work with our partners to help guide and attract those investments, some of the challenges we face are a lack of updated comprehensive land-use plans, outdated zoning and initial reluctance to new possibilities from the community.

An organization like ours does not do anything without putting in the time and effort to analyze the potential benefits and threats of any new industry or business. When we take the time, do our due diligence and identify a worthwhile endeavor, we hope to have a constructive conversa-

tion with the community in hopes of coming to a consensus agreement, meeting the opportunity head-on and creating future successes in our community.

That’s not to say that change for the sake of change is a good idea; there are many time-honored traditions and hard lessons that have been established and learned by this community. Cortland County has seen the impact of large employers moving in and creating hundreds of jobs only to scale back and leave the community. While this has made the community reluctant to embrace new trends, it should not prohibit us from continuing to try again.

If Cortland County is going to reap the

potential opportunities on our doorstep, we will need to embrace the challenges that accompany such growth. Cortland County does not have a large supply of shovel-ready sites that are served with public utilities such as water, sewer, natural gas and broadband. To be able to attract supply-chain businesses and support existing companies, Cortland County needs strategic infrastructure investments that are supported by updated planning, zoning and the community. This tells potential investors what the community expectations are while providing a clear path for development.

See **OPPORTUNITY**, Page B1

2024 Outlook

“Trust in the Lord, and do good.” (Psalms 37:3)

“Love one another.” (1 John 3:23)

“Provide things honest.” (Romans 12:17)

“Refuse the evil and choose the good.” (Isaiah 7:15)

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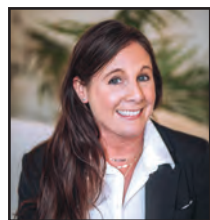
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FEBRUARY 17, 2024

'FIRST TO GET READY WINS THE RACE'

Cortland County prepares for population influx of Micron families



The Center for the Arts of Homer houses the Community Arts Challenge. Arts and culture are an important part of an area's quality of life, said Executive Director Ty Marshal.

LILY BYRNE/STAFF REPORTER

BY LILY BYRNE
STAFF REPORTER
LBYRNE@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

Cortland County's population may be growing in the next few years, so legislators and residents are taking steps now to make the area ready and welcoming.

Micron plans to build a \$100 billion microchip factory 40 miles north of Cortland that would create 50,000 jobs over 20 years. More companies and more jobs would come – and in fact have already acquired space – to feed materials to the Micron facility.

The population of Onondaga County is expected to grow 25% over the next 20 years, a real estate market report by Baruch College says. Cortland Mayor Scott Steve says it's impossible to calculate the potential growth for Cortland County.

"In speaking with other municipal and county leaders, our approach, like many, is to start preparing areas to allow growth, both commercially as well as residential," Steve said. "First to get ready wins the race."

Based on what is needed for housing already, and "up in the air" estimates, he believes it will be a 3% to 5% increase, he said.

HOUSING

"Currently, we have a crisis already," Steve said. "Whether it be homeless, assisted, low-income, work force and seniors, our problems remain vast as well as complicated. With managing needed improvement areas and incorporating increased density within our 4-square-mile city, we need to continue to partner with outlying towns and villages for benefit to all."

Michelle Enright, executive director of the Cortland County Convention and Visitors Bureau, said expanding housing and healthcare are the first steps to preparing for potential increase.

"The proactive steps that our local leaders are taking to fix some of the problems that our community is facing, with housing and infrastructure, is going to drastically improve quality of life in Cortland, and people are going to be able to see that," Enright said. "Look at the downtown revitalization projects that are going on in downtown Cortland and Homer."

One of these steps was established by legislators Jan. 25: a committee to create a

strategic development plan, which aims to assess the community and determine goals for it.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Another key aspect that is in motion is the necessary investments in education, she said. Tompkins Cortland Community College and Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services are teaching students the skills needed to work at the Micron factory.

"All of these are things that the county and community leaders are taking to try to create sustainable community growth, and making sure that when it does happen, we aren't taken off guard," Enright said.

Ty Marshal, executive director of Center for the Arts of Homer, said a welcoming and ready atmosphere is the key to preparing for an influx.

"People will not be able to help but discover the beauty, community mindedness, and creative opportunities that Cortland and Homer embody," Marshal said. "Our history, creativity, arts and cultural mindedness, alongside our quintessential 'American small town' feel will undoubtedly draw new members of our region to Cortland and Homer."

FAMILY-ORIENTED

Having activities is a huge draw for prospective residents, he said. This is also important for people who choose to live in Syracuse, but may want to visit Cortland for a weekend, Enright said.

"I think Cortland County has so much," she said. "On top of its natural beauty, just the abundance of outdoor recreation it has, its cultural heritage. ...There's so much to offer. Not only for the visitors, because not everyone is going to come live here. We want to be enticing for those who live in Syracuse."

"We must think not only about the employees of Micron themselves, but their partners and families," Marshal said. "Inviting employees, their partners and families to participate in everything the region has to offer will not only enhance current recreational, entertainment and dining options, but probably make room for more in the future."

Outside of the factory, there would also be job creation for the partners and families of Micron employees, Enright said. If a population influx happens, the community must be sure to foster any new businesses or amenities that come as a result.

"The hope is that with more people, new ideas come to the community," she said.

PLANNING

Continued from Page A3

The county's last strategic plan, adopted in 1978, highlighted the railway's role in economic growth. It called for better access to education, recreation and medical facilities. It predicted growth in Cortland, Truxton and Cincinnatus.

In the 45 years since, Smith-Corona and Brockway Motor Co. faded into history. Main Street in Cortland was redeveloped a couple of times. Most of the county has lost population, but some neighborhoods have grown.

Hiemstra is working with consultants MRB Group of Syracuse and EDR, an environmental planning and design firm, to help administer outreach and create the plan.

"We are working on finalizing our public engagement plan, which we'll be really posting soon and starting the campaign on where our meetings will be held and when," Hiemstra said.

"We're also going to be attending a series of pop-up events throughout the

spring and summer, where we're really going to be trying to reach the community everywhere we can," she added. "At the pop-up events, we'll be looking for some feedback and some input."

In addition to public meetings and pop-up events, there will also be online opportunities to provide input on the plan.

"We're here as a partner for the community and a strategic plan like that is trying to show where and how we can be a pivotal partner in that place," O'Bryan said. "Having an updated plan like that will help us to see where there's opportunity going forward in the future."

"This is our community-wide developed plan that we all will contribute to, and we will all have a part to play, because that's the only way it's going to succeed," Harbin said. "Otherwise, it'll simply go on a shelf and in 50 years, somebody will have to dust it off and do it all over again. That's not what I want to see come out of this."

OPPORTUNITY

Continued from Page A3

Workforce development continues to be a challenge. Cortland County is not unique in seeing its skilled workforce dwindle over the decades as labor has followed growth trends to other states or workers have retired and those critical skills have not been replaced.

Currently, workforce development in New York State is a zero-sum game, the best way to improve Cortland County's workforce immediately is to attract skilled workers from other communities. We do this by promoting our current assets such as outdoor recreation, quality schools, central location, easy access to quality healthcare and affordability, while developing new housing opportunities.

Another challenge is access to childcare. This issue disproportionately impacts women and low-income workers and is sidelining a huge segment of the potential workforce. Between the lack of availability and the cost associated with childcare, many workers

are forced to choose between staying home and raising children or committing a large portion of their salary for childcare. We have no easy answer to this problem as the cost and regulations associated with providing childcare continue to prevent the expansion of these services, however, this is an area where collaboration with our partners in government and the private sector could lead to improvements.

Cortland County has a once-in-a-generation opportunity knocking on multiple doorsteps, and the community is well-positioned to access these opportunities. The question we must answer is, are we willing to face the challenges, and will we embrace the change that accompanies such opportunities?

Eric Mulvihill is an economic development and community relations specialist with the Cortland County Business Development Corp. and Industrial Development Agency.

This story was initially published Jan. 9

ARTWORK IS A BIG PART OF THE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

BY JACK LAKOWSKY
STAFF REPORTER
JLAKOWSKY@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

Cortland's effort to bring more public art to the city begins in earnest this year, even as it completes the infrastructure work funded by its 2017 Downtown Revitalization Initiative, the mayor said Thursday.

"Artwork is a big part of the DRI," Mayor Scott Steve said.

Steve said the city's revived Arts Committee will begin crafting next month a comprehensive request for proposals soliciting artists who would then create murals and other public art.

"We'd have the committee review and pick what's best," Steve said. "We want to engage the community to vote on the ones they like best."

Art projects totaling \$200,000 are part of the overall campaign's final leg, the reports the city's DRI plan. The city will work with downtown businesses and property owners, SUNY Cortland, Tompkins Cortland Community College and the arts community, including the Cultural Council of Cortland County.

It's not fine art, but one 2024 project aiming to make downtown more attractive is the renovation of the facade at 89 Main St., across from the Cortland Post Office.



The city's Downtown Revitalization Initiative calls for beautifying the city with art and redone building facades. Cortland Mayor Scott Steve said this facade, at 89 Main St., is up for renovation this year.

JACK LAKOWSKY/STAFF REPORTER

That'll be great to have done," Steve said.

The DRI contributed \$600,000 to help the Cortland Repertory Theatre expand a parking lot. However, parking issues persist however, with unclear signage, said Kerby

Thompson, the theater's producing artistic director.

The signs say parking is for business owners and residents only, so people from outside the city, and some from the area, are unclear where and when they can park without risk of ticketing, he said. It's a discouraging factor to out-

towners coming to stimulate the local economy. Regardless of whether it's part of the DRI projects, Thompson hopes the city will fix the signs within the year.

However, it's still too early to measure the benefit to the theater from the parking expansion, Thompson said. The COVID-19 pandemic discouraged people from going out to performance venues.

"It's helping, but it's hard to truly judge because everyone's juggling other factors," Thompson said.

Steve said another parking lot that should be finished this year would add 52 spots to the Groton Avenue parking lot.

Steve said this year the city is trying to keep engineering costs down. One major project is a storm drain near Central Avenue and Main Street, with a price tag exceeding \$500,000, although up to half the funding can come from a state grant.

"First and foremost, we're going to pursue a different design to mitigate costs to us," Steve said.

The Main Street reconstruction project should be done by Labor Day, Steve said, and the city aims to have it done before SUNY Cortland students return for the fall semester.

This story was initially published Jan. 25

WORK CONTINUES TO REVIVE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH

BY LILY BYRNE
STAFF REPORTER
LBYRNE@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

A brainstorming group has begun meeting in Homer to figure out how to use the 191-year-old little white church when work is completed to convert it to a community center, organizers said, hoping to gain funding next spring.

Physical work remains in limbo, says Joe Cortese, development coordinator and project manager for Center for the Arts of Homer, but that hasn't stopped a Community Advisory Council from planning the little white church's transformation.

Once standing as the tallest building on the Village Green in Homer, the Calvary Episcopal Church, known as the little white church, is being restored to be a cultural and community center, though funding won't be announced until March or April.

The brainstormers include the village of Homer, the Homer Central School District, the Homer Landmark Society and the First Religious Society of Homer, all of which would be part of a future advisory committee, wrote Ty Marshall, the executive director of the Center for the Arts.

The Center for the Arts of Homer also took a few years of planning, said Linda Dickerson Hartsock of Homer, a Syracuse University professor of creative entrepreneurship, co-creator of Center for the Arts of Homer, and former executive director of the Cortland County Industrial Development Agency.

Dickerson Hartsock created a Community Advisory Council 23 years ago, when she began looking for ideas for the former Baptist Church, she said.

"You really want to engage as many stakeholders as possible in envisioning what it is that you're thinking about creating, because that will ensure that it will be utilized and embraced," she said.

The brainstorming group for the little white church, which has met twice, includes young people from Homer who are involved in arts, culture, agriculture, history, health, human services and nonprofits, she said. They come from a variety of backgrounds and social groups.

"At that time, the founders always envisioned that in 20 to 25 years from now, we would be able to turn this over to the next generation of community leaders to take it to the next chapter," she said. "I'm so delighted to see young community leaders stepping up, taking a seat at that table, and being a part of the planning."

The center reached an agreement to buy the Little White Church Community Center for \$2 from the village of Homer in October 2022. The price was largely symbolic; the village bought the church for \$1; the center paid with an actual \$2 bill.

"It's going to be named something different," Cortese said. "It's going to have a much more inclusive name; it's not going to sound like the church for little white people."

The village of Homer was awarded a \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant in February — its third application for the funding. Over a 10-month period, a local planning committee reviewed potential project applications to cut the list to submit to the state for final selection.

The latest list of requests includes \$1.2 million for a \$2.5 million reconstruction project; the village finds out next spring whether the project makes the cut. Cortese said the church has an immediate need for \$180,000. Water damage has caused some of the wooden beams to rot into mud, which is slowly pulling the church downwards.

While the issue is fixable, he said, steel beams would have to be put under the structure, and the church would have to be lifted above the foundation. The walls and rotten parts would be replaced, a new foundation would be dug out,



A group in Homer is brainstorming ways to use the little white church, located on the Homer Village Green, which is in the planning stages of being turned into a community and cultural center.

LILY BYRNE/STAFF REPORTER

and new walls, flooring and wooden framing would be laid before the church could be put back down.

"If we can't get the money to do that, we can't do the work," Cortese said. "It's not like, 'well, if we get half of it, we'll be OK.'"

It would also be costly to remove and restore the stained glass windows, although Cortese believes they will receive enough funding.

"I have a lot of faith and good judgment in the Local Planning Committee members," he said. "The people from the state and the other agencies that were at these meetings, you could just tell that they liked the project, too. The key word for any project in the DRI is transformational, and of all the projects proposed, this project is the most transformative."

Bryn Carr, committee member and director of Cortland Collective Impact Initiatives, loves the building's intimacy and acoustics.

"The location is perfect," Carr said. "It's really part of that whole Homer Green community space feeling, so I think it will really build the feeling of Homer being a center of arts and culture and activity, and a community hub."

The goal is to have programming that reaches all groups of the population, Cortese said, with programming that appeals to senior citizens, immigrants and the LGBTQ community.

"It's going to be a community space for whatever the community needs," Carr said. "That might be black-box theater, small concerts, preschool groups or dance classes."

ON THE CUSP? PERHAPS WE'RE ALREADY THERE

BY BOB HAIGHT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

"On the Cusp of Something Great": I found this theme very fitting and interesting. I think we could say we've been there, maybe we've always been there, on the cusp, that is. Our manufacturing and agricultural background has treated us well and I love talking about our "blue-collar" mentality.

In fact, it's the reason I'm in my position now, I wouldn't have replied to a chamber ad in any other type of community.

I think "being on the cusp" may be reframed as, "others are on the cusp of finding out what makes the Cortland area such a wonderful place."

I love talking with visitors, especially those here for the first time, and hearing what they love about us. I hear about our beautiful countryside, our quaint downtowns, local restaurants, outdoor recreational activities, festivals, live music, and the campus.

They don't even know about our schools (public and private), our growing manufacturers, affordable housing, safe neighborhoods,

our outstanding public servants, and how tight knit our community is. We're not on the cusp in any of those areas, we're there and have been there. Now as others find that out, we'll see an influx and here are some areas we're challenged to improve on.

Our Chamber has legislative priorities and causes that guide our work. Those include workforce development, housing and childcare. Each is important for a vibrant community and business success.

As people look to Central New York to do business and to live, they will undoubtedly find us. After all, you'll be able to have double the house at half the price of what you might pay in the vicinity of the new Micron plant, or any of the up-and-coming technology corridors.

But of course, talk with any local potential home buyers or our real estate companies and they'll tell you about the lack of inventory. There are currently many buyers for each home coming on the market. Where else do we need housing? From our standpoint we need senior housing, market rate housing, affordable housing, student housing, and accessible housing.

That's right, we need housing in every category.

There is a need to revamp the housing stock we already have and to continue developing our historic structures to accommodate apartments where there was previously commercial space. We'll continue to advocate for housing improvements and for the path to be paved more easily for those doing it the right way.

Childcare, or better termed, early childhood education is critical to our workforce, today and tomorrow. By tomorrow I mean in 20 years when these kids reach employment age. Today's workforce is more productive, takes less unplanned time off, and spends more time at work when they have dependable, reliable childcare.

And those kids in care today will be more productive adults, tomorrow's workforce, if they have childcare that stimulates their brain development. This is why our Chamber is advocating for revamping early childhood education in our communities.

Recently someone said, "It's a difficult proposition." Not really, was my answer, it's just an expensive one. Children should be educated from birth, or make that 6 weeks old if you prefer, but not starting at pre-k or kindergarten. Education from birth to 5 years old is more vital than

education during the teen years so why do we choose to begin our public education at 3, 4, or 5 years old? We will get this right, we have to get this right, for all of our sakes.

Workforce was my last challenge. Most employees are hungry for more dependable employees, and many are willing to train. These are jobs often leading to long-term careers and great benefits. Young people don't have to leave our area to find good employment and experienced workers are sought after and valued. They can even be used in the training role for the next generation of workers. While our local economy is strong, it could be even better if we could fully employ our businesses.

Would more childcare lead to more employment? Would additional housing lead to more employment? Would additional training for all employees lead to a more productive workforce? You can see the answer and why we work in each area.

We can have it all here and it's more important than ever because others are "on the cusp" of finding us.

Bob Haight is president and chief executive officer of the Cortland County Chamber of Commerce.

This report was initially published Dec. 18, 2023

DRYDEN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION JUST GETTING STARTED

BY LILY BYRNE
STAFF REPORTER
LBYRNE@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

DRYDEN — The business district in Dryden is tidier; the village has a few more events, too. The community has a new mural and a year and a half after the Dryden Business Association formed to help the community with a state grant, it's only just getting started.

Having the Downtown Business Association shows the people looking at New York Forward grant applications a commitment to improving the downtown commercial district, said Brad Will, principal architect for Ashokan Architecture and Planning and member of the association.

"It lends credibility," Will said recently. "It shows that there's an effort and a commitment to doing something that's going to improve what could be described as an underutilized, slightly depressed center; bring back that certain glory-day, commercial success and activity."

The New York Forward program aims to enliven downtown areas in small and rural communities with grants of either \$4.5 million or \$2.25 million. The business association formed in the spring of 2022 to help the village win one. It didn't then, but it's a finalist in the latest round.

"Business groups are helpful to municipalities when it comes to writing letters of support for grant applications and building support for projects," said Deputy Town Supervisor Dan Lamb.

Moravia won such a grant earlier this year for \$2.25 million. Cortland and the village of Homer each won \$10 million grants in a similar program, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

COMMUNITY-MINDED ACTIVITIES

Other than these applications, the Downtown Business Association has been focusing on "community-minded activities" since its creation in March 2022, Will said, such as partnering with the Southworth Library for a holiday celebration last year.

Business owners also agreed to keep their business' surroundings clean, said Kayla Lane, co-owner of the Corner Brew and a co-owner of Dryden Apartment Co.

"For Dryden specifically, there's a lot that makes us feel like a small town, so this business association, at least for myself, has shown



Beth Wright, owner of Claybird Studio, at 15 W. Main St., joined the Downtown Business Association before her business opened in August. In the 18 months since the organization was created to help land a state grant, the group has completed a number of projects to improve the community

PHOTO PROVIDED BY DRYDEN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

me that there's more than what you think in Dryden, especially because it's not just the village; it expands through the town," Lane said. "It's shown in numbers all that we have in common, and all that we have locally for businesses, which has been really humbling."

The Downtown Business Association has supplied volunteers for a mural at the Montgomery Park playground to honor one of the association's founders, Mary Kirkwyland, who died in January.

Kirkwyland, who owned Wintersun Nursery and Lyrical Landscapes, spent a lot of time working on beautification projects in Dryden, Lane said.

"There's been some traction and activity amongst even the new businesses that have opened," Lane said.

Beth Wright, owner of Claybird Studio, at 15 W. Main St., joined the Downtown Business Association before her business opened in August. Her landlord, Will, was excited to have an arts-oriented business in the space, she said in August.

"She's filling up her classes, which is great," Will said. "She could be part of a new trajectory for downtown Dryden to become more arts-centric; a place where storefronts get filled with art-related activities, retail, education, whatever it is."

WEBSITE AND TC3

Some potential goals for the Downtown Business Association are to create a website, and to connect the students of Tompkins County Community College to the town, an aspect of the New York Forward grant.

The college had an increase of 13.6% in post-high school full-time students this year, President Amy Kremenek said. This is the second straight year that the school has seen a double-digit increase.

"There's a lot of things we can do to help connect the student body with the local restaurants and shops, so they are aware that they have a town right there," he said. "Dryden is a really well-positioned town, right between Cortland and Ithaca, and the DBA can certainly help the village out."

Potential ways of doing this include additional signs, or having a publication that highlights and maps out the businesses, he said. It's been difficult to pursue projects like this, because the association members are so busy with their businesses.

"It's kind of a good problem," he said. "Businesses are doing pretty well post-pandemic."

SLOW TIMES

However, the group does face some growing pains, Lane said. It has no immediate projects, in part because business owners are busy during the holiday season.

"We're a year and a half in at this point, and I guess we've had some growing pains where it's hard to keep the momentum, but we've tried to do that," Will said. "We're still a very young organization, and we'll keep growing as we get past our sophomore slump."

Members also must figure out exactly what kind of organization they want to be, Lane said, such as possibly becoming a 501(C)(6) or (C)(3). The Tompkins Chamber Office has become a fiscal sponsor of the association, Lane said.

Still, the association helps business owners network, Lane said.

"I don't think we've seen that in a while; where we can get together and have some camaraderie," she said. "Because we're not the big box stores, it's nice to share in the business experience, whether it's positive, or maybe some hurdles, we can feel like we're all it together."

"However small we are now, we are just at the very beginning," Will said. "Once we invest more energy and time into it, we will grow at a sustainable rate, and do something good for both the businesses and the community."

ON THE CUSP OF SOMETHING GREAT, BUT FOR WHOM?

BY ERIN VALLELY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As a disabled individual and disability advocate at Access to Independence residing outside of Onondaga County, I have not yet heard how Micron will benefit our local disability community.

Their promise of jobs and new opportunities does not come with a specific commitment to hiring disabled individuals, or commitments to invest in addressing specific disability employment barriers.

However, Micron's pledge to hire a historically underrepresented and diverse workforce gives me hope. To embrace Micron's visionary attitude, I have dreamed of the ways they could become a leader in disability employment in our region.

Hiring Practices

- Job descriptions will be clear and inclusive without unnecessary requirements.
- Accommodation needs will be asked about and honored during interviews.
- Interview questions will be provided at least three days in advance.

Work Accommodations and Culture:

- Employees will have access to flexible work locations and schedules.
- Employees will be actively encouraged to share accessibility needs with teammates, knowing they will be honored whenever possible without retaliation or negative attitudes.
- Diversity training will teach staff how to actively create an inclusive workplace.

Education and Training Opportunities:

- Education and training opportunities will be fully accessible.
- Job coaching services, mentorship programs and continuing educational opportunity support will be available to all employees.
- Employee advancement will be supported to the greatest extent possible.

Healthcare:

- High-quality health insurance will be provided to all employees so no family will worry about medical expenses or emergencies.



- A wellness department with mental health counselors, health activity program coordinators and incentives will make it easy for employees to prioritize their wellbeing.
- All employees will have unlimited sick time with supportive accommodation plans being established if usage interferes with job performance.

Accessible Housing:

- Housing projects will be universally designed and accessible to all employees and their family members.
- Housing rates will include all utilities and not exceed 30% of the given employee's monthly income.
- An internal grant system will support accessibility renovations for those living in privately owned homes so people can meet their and their family's needs.

Transportation:

- Investments in surrounding transporta-

tion systems will ensure people can get to work.

- Cross-county transportation shuttles will be funded to ensure a lack of public transit is not a barrier to employment.
- Accessible transportation will be provided for all off-site activities and opportunities without requiring prior requests.

Community Supports:

- Investments in personal aide service programs so employees can get the help they need to have a successful career.
- Investments in job skill-training programs to ready all individuals for new work opportunities.
- Investments in inclusive social activities and respite programs to help people maintain a healthy work/life balance.

While these ideas are specific to Micron, these recommendations apply to all organizations, to varying degrees, across our area. Until we prioritize accessibility and in-

clusion for all community members, we will not reach our full potential.

Being on the cusp of greatness is not tied to a single opportunity. People often forget accessible opportunities and inclusive practices benefit everyone, not just those with disabilities.

When all businesses and communities prioritize health, wellness, and diversity initiatives, society benefits.

Since joining the Cortland community in 2021, I have witnessed steady movement toward increasing accessibility and inclusion. Organizations are reaching out to Access to Independence for advice on ways to improve, and financial investments are being made to create a more accessible community.

We look forward to working with all organizations in our region striving toward a more inclusive future for everyone. Reach out to us at 607-753-7363 or by email at info@aticortland.org.

Erin Vallely is an advocacy specialist at Access to Independence in Cortland.

SPONSORED CONTENT

NEW YEAR, NEW HOME?

It's a new year and for some, it's a time for establishing goals and new routines. If one of those goals is finding and purchasing a new home, there are a few things to consider.

First, take some time to look at your weekly and monthly budget. Also consider any savings you might have accumulated. Do you know how much you might be able to afford each month for a mortgage payment? If you have a current mortgage, do you want to spend the same, less or do you think your income could support an increase in this area? Do you have enough for a down payment that could potentially reduce the number of years you are paying against a mortgage?

There are many things to consider especially if you are simply browsing through the MLS listings at this point, or noticing homes for sale in your favorite neighborhood. There's a lot to take into consideration, but you don't have to do it alone. The First National Bank of Dryden can be a trusted partner in the home buying process, start to finish.

We recommend meeting with a loan officer at the very first thought of buying a home — even before you start looking. It's important to be realistic about what you can afford before you start to imagine yourself in the home of your dreams. At the First National Bank of Dryden, we walk through every step of the process with you. We're a trusted partner from the moment you walk into our office, through to the day you walk through your new front door.

There are many options for financing a mortgage these days, but none as personal as the local bank that has been in your community for over a century. We've spent 122 years getting to know, and building relationships with our customers, helping each person with their unique banking needs. Visit us online at DrydenBank.com or at any one of our four locations in Cortland, Homer or Dryden and let's get started on those financial goals for 2024!

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- Salvation Army
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- Homer Center for the Arts
- Cortland County Emergency Responders
- CNY Living History Center Museum
- And Many More



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Learn more at www.cortlandbreakfastrotary.org

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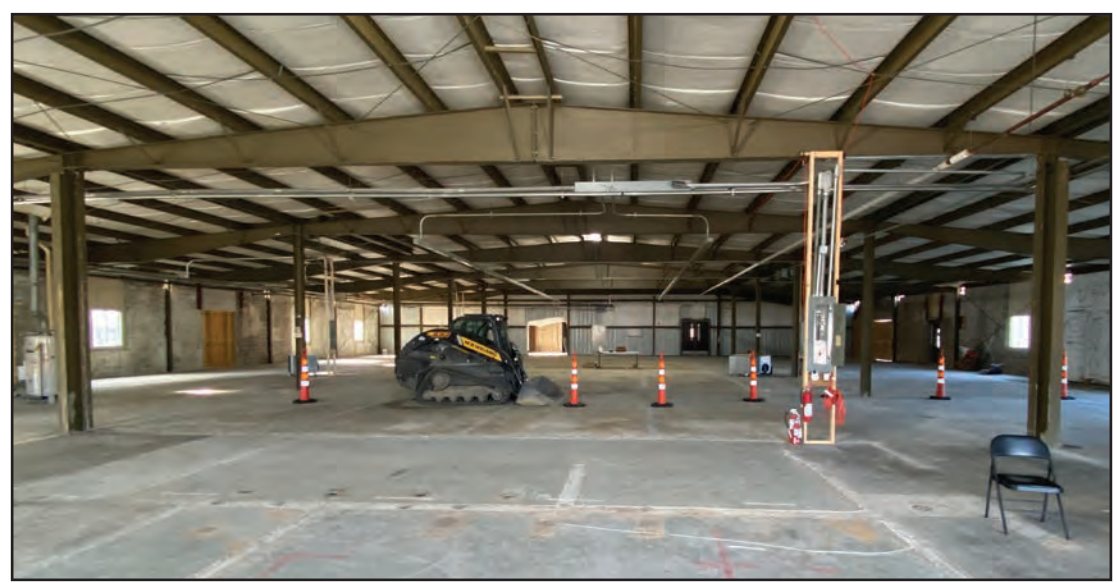
FEBRUARY 17, 2024

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS PLAN ONE-STOP SHOPPING TO INCREASE EFFICIENCIES



Guthrie is renovating space on Route 281 to consolidate a number of services, as is Cayuga Medical and Family Health Network, creating single locations both easier to access and more efficient to operate.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY GUTHRIE CORTLAND MEDICAL CENTER



A vacant building on Route 281 in Cortland is being renovated to create space for primary care, laboratory testing and imaging for Guthrie Cortland Medical Center.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY GUTHRIE MEDICAL CENTER

BY KEVIN T. CONLON
CITY EDITOR
KCONLON@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

Planning for the long-term future of health care in the greater Cortland area can be difficult, as providers of medical services adjust to the changing needs of the community. The three largest healthcare organizations operating in the area — Cayuga Medical Center, Family Health Network and Guthrie Cortland Medical Center — had struggled through nationwide staffing shortages for physicians and nurses, a particularly acute problem in rural counties. They introduced technology, consolidated facilities and created solutions as they deal with current and anticipated demands.

"You have to adjust the sails when the wind is blowing," said Kim Osborne, CEO of Family Health Network. "Our goal for 20

or 30 years, the most basic is just ensuring that we have primary care in a rural community. That, in and of itself, in this day and age is a challenge. We're always looking at creative ways."

"Providing access to quality healthcare in Cortland has been a focus of ours since opening our Urgent Care in 1999," said Dr. Martin Stallone, CEO for Cayuga Health. "We consider the health of Cortland area residents be to our responsibility, and to that end, will continually strive to improve the level of services we offer here."

While Guthrie Cortland does long-range planning for facilities and technology, to various degrees, much of what it does is respond to changing community needs with goals to meet them, said Kansas Underwood, chief nursing officer and vice president of operations at the medical center.

"Things can constantly change," Underwood said. Guthrie is focusing on staffing,

technology and meeting community needs.

NEW FACILITIES

The three largest healthcare providers in the greater Cortland area have all built or are planning facilities that consolidate services and take advantage of efficiencies of scale. Cayuga Medical Center opened a 21,200-square-foot primary care facility on Route 13 in Cortlandville in 2022. Work has begun for a 32,000-square-foot facility on Route 281 in Cortland for primary care and specialty care services for Guthrie Cortland. Plans are in the works for Family Health Networks' 12,000-square-foot building behind its headquarters on Route 281 in Homer, across from Homer High School.

"We are trying to do a one-stop shop," said Guthrie's Underwood.

Half of the building will house an increasing number of primary-care physicians, and the laboratory facilities and imaging

services to support those physicians. The other half will accommodate specialty medical staff. Which additional services will be included will depend on which Guthrie determines are most needed, and that will change over time, Underwood said.

While health care providers operate independently, they do work together at times to fill gaps in health care coverage in the community.

For example, Cayuga Medical Center and Family Health Network brought in an endocrinologist because there was none in the community. The doctor initially worked at Family Health Network and has since moved to the new Cayuga Medical Associates facility in Cortlandville.

"We're technically competitors, but we see the value of collaboration," said Dr. Doug Rahner, chief medical officer of Family Health Care.

See **HEALTH**, Page C3

Family Health Network of Central New York, Inc. Works to Fulfill their Mission to Provide Accessible, Patient-Centered, High-Quality, and Equitable Health Care for All!

Family Health Network of Central New York, Inc. (FHN) is on the brink of expansion and growth in 2024! In late Spring of this year, FHN will be breaking ground on a brand new 12,000 square foot state-of-the-art Health Center that will include Pediatric and OB/GYN services, as well as same day acute care access for their patients. FHN's current Pediatric services at their 24 Groton Avenue location in Cortland will relocate to the new building on Technology Place in Homer, behind the FHN Administrative Building, sometime in the late spring of 2025.

This new Health Center will bring both combined and expanded services, tailored to convenience for patients seeking obstetric and pediatric care for themselves and their family, as well as an opportunity to address same day acute care needs for all FHN patients.

Same day access is critical to the continuity of care patients receive, and addresses the health care accessibility all individuals deserve. As the new Health Center will be conveniently located off the 81 interstate, patients will benefit from ease of access and continuity of care within their primary care network, rather than being directed to another health care system for their acute care needs.

FHN is not only expanding their services, but also expanding their Provider Team! FHN is excited to announce they are welcoming Kelly Hirsch, FNP, to their experienced and knowledgeable Provider Team in the Spring of 2024! The addition of Kelly to the FHN team will be instrumental in the expansion and growth that is forthcoming for FHN, as she will be caring for patients out of both the Cortland Family Practice Health Center on Route 281, and the current Pediatric & Family Practice Health Center on Groton Ave in Cortland. Patients and staff will benefit from Kelly's impressive career and experience in the healthcare field. Kelly will be accepting new patients and all are encouraged to obtain a Release of Records Form for any patient looking to establish care with her. To schedule an appointment with Kelly, please contact the Cortland Family Practice Health Center at 607-758-3008 or the Pediatric and Family Practice Health Center at 607-753-3774.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), FHN serves as the primary safety net provider for this region of Central New York. FHN provides family practice primary care, pediatrics, dentistry, occupational health services, obstetrics/gynecology, school-based health services, behavioral health services, medication assisted treatment services (SUD), 340B pharmacy services, insurance enrollment, and care coordination. FHN has five medical health centers, one including dental services, four school-based health centers, a school based dental program that rotates between six schools, and one Mobile Medical Unit. Proudly served are the residents of both Cortland and Cayuga County; as well as the contiguous counties of Tompkins, Onondaga, Madison, Chenango, Broome, and Tioga.

FHN is always accepting new patients and never turns patients away due to an inability to pay. Their sliding fee program is available to all patients who qualify, regardless of insurance status. FHN also employs a Certified Applications Counselor, Lisa Tinelli-Marshall, who can assist in insurance enrollment for individuals and their family. FHN has maintained Patient Centered Medical Home recognition since 2011, and continues to achieve annual Quality Awards, including HRSA's Silver and Bronze Quality leader badges, and Advancing Health Information Technology for Quality. In 2023, FHN was one of only 12 Community Health Centers nationwide who was awarded the Maternal and Child Health Quality Badge, and the only health center to be awarded in New York State.

All FHN Health Centers are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, with extended evening hours of operation in various locations. The dental office is open Monday through Thursday from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM. Saturday hours are available at the Cortland Family Practice Health Center from 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Open access appointment slots are available and allow for same day appointments. FHN also offers telehealth and telephonic appointments to accommodate patient's needs. If you need to reach a FHN Provider for a non-life threatening issue when the Health Centers are closed, please call 607-756-0405 or toll free at 1-833-954-0489. Professional Staff are on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



Kelly Hirsch, FNP

For more information, please call 607-753-3797 or visit FHN's website at www.familyhealthnetwork.org.

EXPECT NEW EMERGENCY CARE AND A NEW MEDICAL BUILDING AT GUTHRIE

BY JENNIFER YARTYM
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Change. Advancement. Growth. At Guthrie, we're not afraid of these words; we embrace them. When you welcomed us into this community in 2019, it was about more than fulfilling a promise we made; it was about meeting your needs.

A glimpse into the past shows us what Guthrie will continue to deliver to this community in the months and years to come. In the five short years since affiliating with Cortland Regional Medical Center, despite a pandemic, Guthrie built a state-of-the-art cancer center, installed a PET CT for enhanced diagnosis and became part of the cutting-edge Guthrie Pulse Center network, offering additional provider and nursing resources, virtually, to our bedside teams. That means more jobs and more people caring for you and your loved ones.

We replaced nearly all of our traveling staff with full-time caregivers who call this region home. The travelers we want walking through our doors are those coming for jobs, a fresh start, or home, to visit family and friends.

So, what does the future hold? As a trusted health care partner, we are committed to providing you with the care you need, when and where you need it. We are continually assessing community needs, which enabled us to quickly open our OB/GYN Clinic and our



Imaging equipment installed at Guthrie Cortland Medical Center is among improvements in services at the facility in recent years.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY GUTHRIE CORTLAND MEDICAL CENTER

Infectious Diseases Clinic. It's also why we introduced a new outpatient nutrition therapy program and dyslexia diagnosis program.

We understand it's not just about new services; it's also important to offer more of what's working. A largely rural setting should not mean

a lack of necessary resources close to home.

Our new medical office building in Cortland, scheduled to open this fall, will offer additional primary care providers in a larger, more comfortable, convenient setting, along with imaging services for walk-in patients.

That's in addition to specialty services that will be determined based on community need.

This spring, we're renovating our Emergency Department, an area many consider the face of a hospital. This "facelift" will nearly double the number of ED patient rooms, with some set aside for members of our community needing assistance with behavioral health needs. It's the first step in our goal of providing support to members of the community who are suffering from mental health issues.

To combat the ongoing national nurse shortage, we continue to partner with Tompkins Cortland Community College and BOCES to develop a pipeline of well-educated caregivers for the roles we need.

At Guthrie Cortland Medical Center, we talk about providing a "community feel" with the support and resources of a large system. With the addition of Lourdes Hospital and its affiliated medical offices, that system is now much, much larger.

With a future that appears to offer promise and more people coming to this community, we stand ready to care for them, because we are always planning for what's to come. Guthrie chose this community five years ago, for a reason. We've always known Cortland has been "on the cusp of something great."

Jennifer Yartym is the president of Guthrie Cortland Medical Center.

This story was initially published Dec. 30, 2023

START PLANNING NOW

Incoming developments could change Cortland County's economic landscape

BY MARGARET MELLOTT

STAFF REPORTER
MMELLOTT@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

Cortland could see increased traffic. It could see an influx of workers, students and families. It might even see new industries — but first, it needs to plan.

Between newcomers — like iSpice and Micron Technology — and the federal technology hubs of chip manufacturing to the north, along the state Thruway, and batteries to the south, centered around Binghamton, Cortland County is centrally located. What could this mean?

While it's likely decades before Cortland will see some of the major growth those industries will bring, it's important to start planning and thinking now, officials said.

"Start planning sooner than later," said Waterford Town Supervisor Jack Lawler, who saw the town through a semiconductor manufacturing development. "It's never too early to start planning and, and really get organized so that people, organizations whose resources will be needed down the road are involved as soon as possible."

Brendan O'Bryan, executive director of the Cortland County Business Development Corp. and Industrial Development Agency, said it'll probably be 20 to 30 years until Cortland sees some of the changes brought by the incoming developments.

"To keep it very optimistic, I would want to think that we're going to see a lot of housing built in the area to support both developments to the south, as well as to the north," O'Bryan said.

President Joe Biden announced the federal technology hub list in October, which included the semiconductor manufacturing tech hub of the Buffalo-Rochester-Syracuse corridor and the battery tech hub of the Southern Tier, centered around Binghamton.

"We could see an influx of population to support the employment needs that we're seeing from supply chain businesses to support the tech advancements to the north to the south; and advancements with our career readiness programs to make sure the people that are currently living here to support those businesses so that people are getting employed," O'Bryan said.

Onondaga County is where microchip manufacturer Micron plans to build a 20,000-job manufacturing facility, spinning off similar industries and research stretching across the Thruway corridor and dipping south to Binghamton.

Binghamton University is where the inventor of the lithium-ion battery, Nobel Prize winner M. Stanley Whittingham, does his research, and where a number of battery and energy-storage firms have been established.

The U.S. Department of Commerce is sponsoring a funding opportunity for the tech hubs, allowing them to apply to receive between \$40 million and \$70 million each for implementation funding, totaling nearly \$500 million.

Cortland has representatives on both the Central New York Regional Planning and Devel-

opment Board, which includes Syracuse, and the Southern Tier 8 Regional Board — both organizations support the growth and development of their communities, including in technology.

One of the challenges, O'Bryan said, will be providing housing to an influx of workers.

"I think one of the primary biggest challenges is housing," he said. "We're currently at pretty high capacity for what we have for housing right now and what's currently on the market is very expensive and interest rates are high. So, in order to get people to look at the area, we're going to want to make sure that there's enough housing opportunities within the county to support those systems."

"I'd say a secondary challenge is just making sure the development that's going to possibly come to Cortland County is supported and wanted by the community that currently lives here," he added. "We don't want to try to force a square peg into a round hole."

To prepare for these developments, O'Bryan is recommending municipalities review and update their strategic or comprehensive plans, which function as a guide for policy making and funding decisions, and are implemented over a longer period of time — often 10 to 20 years.

"My primary focus on what I'm trying to advise people on doing is to look at their strategic plans within their community," O'Bryan said. "Look at the plans, look at how outdated they are and see if they need to be updated. Talk with the community members. Going back to what I said before — you don't want to try to fit that square peg into a round hole."

"So if your community members are saying we do not want X, Y and Z in our community, do update those plans to reflect that — to make sure that it shows this is what this community is open to and this is what this community is not open to," he added.

Nearly 20 years ago, GlobalFoundries — a semiconductor manufacturer — announced a development in Saratoga County. The facility in Malta, less than 20 miles from Waterford, is much like the development Cortland will see with the incoming Micron project, just 40 minutes north in Clay.

Lawler has been town supervisor since 1994, seeing the development through its announcement, construction and opening in 2009. He said the changes, particularly in the last decade, have come with many benefits, albeit a few challenges, too.

"We felt some of the effects very quickly in the sense that a lot of work had to be done before the plant, before construction could really start," Lawler said. "For example, just to bring in the amount of power; the power generation to the site took a couple of years. We had to build a brand new water plant — 27 miles of pipe that took a year and a half to build, but it took probably two years, two and a half years to plan."

"That water plant provides a lot of the county with water, not just GlobalFoundries," he added. "I think something like over half of our county

now gets their drinking water from that plant."

The initial \$2 billion project employs approximately 3,000 people, Lawler said. However, the investment continues to grow. Since the facility's construction, GlobalFoundries has invested more than \$15 billion in developing facilities in Saratoga County.

The project represents the largest industrial investment in the state, reports the state Economic Development Council. The facility's construction called for approximately 6 million man hours and 4,600 construction and support jobs, the council reports.

However, the development has increased traffic, Lawler said.

"This plant runs 24/7, pretty much 365," he said. "Three-thousand people work there and the plant is located in a small town. So, how do we move that many people in and out of there every day? And how do we do it in a way that respects and minimally disrupts the quality of life for the people who live in that town? And that's very important, because it's easy to say, 'This is a great idea. Let's do it,' until you live on the street that's going to have 500 more cars a day going by."

"You've got to do two things," he added. "You've got to engage the public, especially the public that's more affected than others, and you've got to be honest, transparent and you have to provide solutions for their concern. I think it's really important early on so people don't feel like their concerns won't be listened to or won't be acted on. It comes down to getting everybody at the table, being transparent in what you're going to do, and start planning as soon as possible."

Lawler's best advice: engage everyone and confirm finances as soon as possible.

"Make sure that all the stakeholders are represented at the table," Lawler said. "You don't want to be a year and a half down the road and find out that National Grid isn't fully on board because they didn't know how much power was going to be needed. Or they didn't know until late because then it can take them a year or two years or more to plan on major power upgrades and I'm just using them as an example."

"Get your financing as ironclad as possible," he added. "If the state says they're going to give you money, get that documented. Get it? Get that money in hand as soon as possible because the state is — as any municipal official will tell you — getting the state to follow through on promises is sometimes challenging."

The Research Triangle Park of North Carolina is located between three top research universities — Duke University, North Carolina State University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Much like the Research Triangle, Cortland is centrally located between research universities — Cornell University, 20 miles southwest of downtown Cortland; Syracuse University and Upstate Medical University, nearly 35 miles north; and Binghamton University, which is about 45 miles south.

The Research Triangle of North Carolina was founded in 1959, after the state ranked 47 out of 48 in the nation per capita income. At the time, university graduates were leaving the state in search of better jobs. To better retain potential workers, the Research Triangle was formed — and is now home to more than 7,000 businesses.

"We get a ton of people from New York that are living in North Carolina, and they know that the jobs are here," said Ryan Combs, executive director of the Research Triangle Regional Partnership. "We have customized training from our community colleges. We have a really good community college system and so for the bigger companies that may be producing something, part of the incentive that the state of North Carolina will give is they provide money to the community college to do custom training."

Similarly, Tompkins Cortland Community College offers microcredential programs: short programs consisting of two to six classes that students can take to learn specific skill sets that can help prepare them to work certain jobs, according to the TC3 website.

The customizable programs were created in 2019 to respond to local employer needs, and what skill sets they require from their employees — like its semiconductor microcredential program. The college didn't know Micron planned to come when it began developing the program, but knew of the need for semiconductor workers nationwide.

While the microcredential programs are new, TC3 has long provided job training.

Carrie Coates Whitmore, the director of Continuing Education and Workforce Development at TC3, has said the college tries to keep pace with industry, and respond to its needs. If one year, there is a lot of growth in the healthcare field, TC3 will focus on getting students into that pipeline.

One of the benefits of having programs that match with local industry needs is retaining the work force, Combs said. However, quality of life is an important factor in retention.

"People have moved in and invested in these communities and are popping up with great restaurants and bar scenes," he said. "It's really become a place to live — it doesn't feel as small as it used to be. I actually was born and raised in Raleigh, and I can tell you, it's changed a lot in my lifetime. But the other thing is, Raleigh is a totally different field and Durham; Durham has a totally different feel than Chapel Hill."

"You have these different options for everybody," Combs added. "You can live in a condo downtown; you can live on a farm, 30 minutes outside of town. There's something for everybody to choose from. You're two hours from the beach; three hours from the mountains. The quality of life plays a big part, but I do think the influx of companies that have moved to the triangle are really helping keep people here — good jobs, good salaries. I think all that plays into why we're able to keep people in the triangle."

This story was initially published Feb. 18, 2023

THE CALL OF THE ROAD

Van provides healthcare – and dry socks

BY MARGARET MELLOTT
STAFF REPORTER
MMELLOTT@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

The homeless man could barely walk. His back was sore; his legs numb and weak. "I wish I had a primary care doctor," he told the man in front of him. Dr. Doug Rahner looked at him: "You do now." In January, Family Health Network started sending its mobile medical unit to Loaves and Fishes from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every third Thursday of the month. Loaves and Fishes, 13 Court St., Cortland, provides free food to people who need it. The medical van provides free medical care to the same people.

"This service is an extension of what the community can do for its citizens," said Rahner, Family Health Network's chief medical officer. "And we've been blessed by the goodwill and generosity of many people to help us get here. And so I'm grateful for those people that are willing to help in any way."

ALTERNATIVE HEALTHCARE

The federal Department of Health and Human Services lists five general social factors that affect a person's health:

- Economic stability.
- Education and quality.
- Healthcare access and quality.
- Neighborhood and built environment.
- Social and community context.

The issue isn't just about the money. Poorly educated people are less likely to have jobs that provide insurance. Neighborhoods filled with violence or environmental hazards have their effect. People lacking social support are more likely to have health problems. It's not just one cause, the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion reports.

"Just promoting healthy choices won't eliminate these and other health disparities," it states.

"Instead, public health organizations and their partners in sectors like education, transportation, and housing need to take action to improve the conditions in people's environments."

"When we look at health care, if you really have a more global view, it's really looking at those factors that impact care that are not occurring in a medical setting," Rahner said. "Something that we call social determinants of health and when you're homeless, particularly winter in Central New York, there are huge issues regarding that." "Research shows that the social determinants



Dr. Doug Rahner, second from left, exits the examination room to ask for help from the medical van's staff. The van was parking outside Cortland Loaves and Fishes to bring care to at-risk populations.

MARGARET MELLOTT/STAFF REPORTER

can be more important than health care or lifestyle choices in influencing health," the World Health Organization states, and can account for 30% to 55% of health outcomes. "In addition, estimates show that the contribution of sectors outside health to population health outcomes exceeds the contribution from the health sector.

"Social determinants of health is a big thing for healthcare right now," said Kate Alm, Family Health Network's chief strategy officer. "And

meeting the needs of patients, not just medically, but holistically in terms of any of the other things that may limit them to be able to receive healthcare services – so transportation or food or housing or even simple needs like keeping your feet warm or keeping your body warm with a jacket."

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HOMELESS

Last month, Homer Men and Boys store provided three dozen pairs of socks and more than 25 hats. Wednesday, the owners called Rahner and offered six boxes of down jackets.

"So the first foray was getting socks. The folks at Homer Men and Boys were extremely generous in giving us thermal socks and wool hats," Rahner said. "Because if you're homeless, feet are a big issue; they're on their feet a lot. And when you're in the elements, they get really roughed up. Once you've taken care of a bad case of frostbite on a homeless person, you never forget it." Sometimes however, warm socks and a jacket just aren't enough.

"A gentleman who came in today (Thursday), and he came on with injuries because he was assaulted with a sledgehammer two weeks before," Rahner said. "I was the first doctor who was looking after his injuries. Unfortunately, that's one of the realities when you're homeless. Violence is just around the corner. That's part of what this population deals with: When am I going to get beaten up?"

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE A DOCTOR?

Thursday was an overcast day and though unseasonably warm, a chill remained in the air. The van parked between two trees on Court Street, which Cortland Mayor Scott Steve had trimmed so the van wouldn't hit branches. Parked, the van expands like an RV, giving more room to the patients and staff.

If not standing outside waiting for patients, one of the staff keeps an eye out of the window to make sure nobody is missed. A woman walks up to the van. "Can I get a large jacket and a pair of socks?"

A staff member retreats inside to search for the right size. It's not long before she pops back out and hands them off, asking, "Would you like to see a doctor while you're here?"

The woman said no, but inside the van, Rahner was already with two patients. One had blood work taken and the other received an eye examination for a potential injury.

CORTLAND'S REAL ASSETS ARE ITS CARING PEOPLE

BY LISA HOESCHLE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The world around us – both locally and nationally – is changing. COVID had an immense impact on our communities, but cannot be blamed for all that is happening in our little corner of the universe.

Drug overdose and deaths, homelessness, hunger, lack of access to health care – all are becoming greater problems than ever. And there are many opinions as to why we are experiencing these issues today and how to address them.

"Why do they come to the library to sleep?"

"Why can't she just get a job?"

"I would never have been allowed to get away with that."

"Let them keep taking drugs by saving their lives? Why should we spend our hard earned money on that?"

"Put them in jail."

These are comments I hear quite often in my work in mental health and substance use treatment. And sometimes they are hard to hear.



Care coordinator Kelcie Hofmann prepares an eye examination tool for the next patient in Family Health Network's moving medical unit.

MARGARET MELLOTT/STAFF REPORTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Family Health Network won a \$330,000 state grant for the \$500,000, 42-foot-long medical van, which includes a pair of examination rooms, a waiting room and a lab room for testing.

The van, delivered Aug. 10, makes house calls, after a fashion. It provides primary care, vaccinations and COVID-19 tests. It can go almost anywhere, but initial plans had it making routine stops in McGraw, Truxton and South Otselic.

"We serve anybody regardless of your ability to pay," Alm said, adding the van charges using a sliding fee. "Basically, if you qualify for your family and your income size, your services could be waived 100%. With this population, that is definitely something that's great to offer and that care can be essentially completely waived of cost. And we'll see anybody."

Lauren Osborne, Family Health Network's director of quality services, said she hopes Family Health Network can partner with other organizations.

"We continue to work with different organizations and communities in Cortland and surrounding areas that are interested in working with us," Osborne said. "But also to identify areas where we know that there's limited access that we serve. We continue to work with those folks that we're happy to entertain any other outreach from time to time."

"We've actually had discussions really preliminarily about partnering with other agencies that may be able to come and provide that service at the same time," Alm said.

CARE FOR A LIFETIME

Thirty years ago, Rahner started his career doing just this – providing healthcare to homeless people in Washington, D.C., through a medical van. It never left his heart.

"So I did that. For four years. And I left that job, but it never quite left me," Rahner said. "So I'm thrilled to be doing this."

Rahner exited the van with the patient who just had blood drawn. In a joking and overdramatized manner, the man wept, saying, "They just took my blood."

He and Rahner laughed, then the man asked, "You sent my prescription over?" Of course, Rahner said.

Before the man left, the two fist bumped. The man had a primary care doctor.

HEALTH

Continued from Page C1

ANTICIPATING NEEDS

Osborne said she and the CEO of Guthrie Cortland meet once a month to discuss how they can fill community needs.

A major renovation to the Guthrie Cortland Medical Center emergency department, including four rooms for patients with urgent mental health issues, is in the works, Underwood said. The total number of beds in the department will increase to 23 from 14.

The medical center in 2021 opened a cancer treatment center at its facility on Homer Avenue in Cortland and an Obstetrics and Gynecology office on Groton Avenue in Cortland to fill community needs. An infectious disease physician was also hired recently to staff a new clinic.

Stallone added that this spring, a women's health program specific to breast health is being added to their 260 Tompkins Street location. The new specialty will provide consultations for conditions including breast cancer, disease, anomalies and genetics; along with lymphedema and oncoplastic surgery.

Family Health Network has also been working to fill the need, and for a time had the only physician who was delivering babies in Cortland County, Rahner said.

Mental health services, especially for youths and people in rural communities, is a challenge to provide, said Rahner, who noted that his organization has hired staff and created relationships with providers with which they consult to provide services.

One goal of Family Health Network's planned facility is to provide on-demand care for people who suddenly become sick and need to see a doctor that day. Additional doctors will be hired. Many area doctors cannot quickly see patients on short notice because of the work load and scheduled appointments, Osborne said. That leaves patients who suddenly become sick relying on more expensive and overburdened urgent care facilities and hospital emergency rooms, where care is typically more expensive.

NURSING SHORTAGE TO WORSEN

Family Health Network operates six health facilities across the Cortland County area – Cincinnatus, Marathon and Moravia health centers, Moravia Dental Center, and two offices in Cortland: Pediatric & Family Practice Health Center and the Cortland Family Practice Health Center. The rural clinics provide services in areas that would otherwise lack ad-

equated health care.

A mobile medical unit put in service a year ago has helped it to make further inroads into rural communities.

"The mobile unit for the first time allows us to bring care where it's needed," Osborne said.

Guthrie is working with colleges and other schools with nursing programs to fill the current shortage of nurses in this area, which follows the nationwide trend, Underwood said. The demand is expected to worsen with the coming "Silver Tsunami" as many older nurses are expected to retire soon.

"By 2030, we'll probably have the largest nursing shortage that we have had in the last 50 years," Underwood said.

To help fill the gap, Guthrie has expanded training programs through boards of cooperative educational services programs in Auburn, Norwich and Liverpool, in some cases is paying for students to obtain their licensed practical nurse degrees. While the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES' J.M. McDonald Center in Cortlandville does not have a nursing program, Guthrie would like to work with BOCES to develop such a program that included clinical training at the medical center, Underwood said.

"We are trying to create multiple paths and we are sponsoring many of those individuals," she said, noting people can apply for a training program funded by Guthrie. "We pay 100% of the cost."

Tompkins Cortland Community College also has a nursing education program that provides many graduates for jobs at Guthrie and new training options are being created to provide more flexibility for students, Underwood said.

Family Health Network is working with medical schools to establish a program to attract area residents who would receive part of their training at the network's local clinics, Rahner said. An existing program does the same for physician assistants and nurse practitioners, he said. Graduates of medical programs often take jobs upon graduation in areas where they have done their residencies, Rahner said.

New technology has been incorporated in the Guthrie medical center and through other Guthrie facilities in recent years and more improvements are expected over time, Underwood said. The recent purchase of Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton will further expand the system and benefit the Cortland area.

"We're constantly adapting," Underwood said. "We anticipate significant growth but we don't know where or when."

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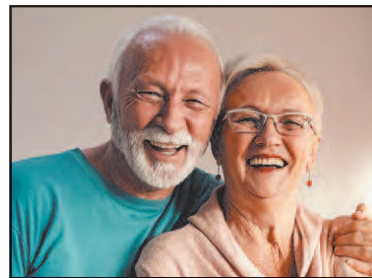


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COMMUNITY COLLEGES, BOCES AND OTHER COLLABORATE TO TRAIN MICROELECTRONICS WORKFORCE

MEDIUM-SIZED CAMPUS CREATES A BIG IMPACT

BY ERIK J. BITTERBAUM
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Cortland is home to champions, both on the SUNY Cortland campus and throughout our greater community.

We saw proof of it this past December, as our football team captured the hearts of Red Dragons and fans everywhere with an extraordinary run to its first-ever national championship.

It was a thrill to witness the game and to see the highlight replays on ESPN. But among my most unforgettable memories was the scene the night after the game, when the team returned to campus following a long bus ride back from Salem, Va.

An impressive escort of local police and fire departments led the team's procession. Highway signs and a fireworks display greeted them on Route 281. And most notably, a large crowd of cheering Red Dragon fans — students, alumni, families and many community members — gathered outside the university's Stadium Complex to welcome back the team to Cortland.

Anyone attending that joint celebration could feel that Cortland and the surrounding communities truly are poised for amazing things.

Of course, this most recent championship speaks to something greater that extends beyond trophies and game results. Interest in the university is at an all-time high, with more than 16,000 applications received from prospective first-year students for Fall 2024. First-year student retention has reached 81%, well above the national average.

This recent success also symbolizes the impressive work that SUNY Cortland leads in many other arenas: in our classrooms, in our research laboratories and out in the workplace. Just as Cortland County is on the cusp of something great as the region prepares for upstate New York's technology growth, SUNY Cortland is being called on to address critical needs in areas where the university excels.

Within the natural sciences, associate professors Laura Eierman and Andrea Dávalos in the university's Biological Sciences Department are leading a research team that recently was

awarded a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation grant worth \$98,630 to study invasive worm species impacting nearby soil ecosystems.

This funding will help support new equipment and crucial undergraduate research opportunities in field ecology and molecular genetics. This project was one of only four research-based grants included as part of a larger effort by New York state to reduce the impact of invasive species on natural resources and the economy.

Earlier this year, when outdoors.com named SUNY Cortland among the nation's best campuses for outdoor experiences, it was a nod not only to the university's facilities in Raquette Lake, but to the abundant recreational and educational opportunities available in the beautiful natural areas around Cortland. This includes the nearby Hoxie Gorge Nature Preserve, where important field study takes place. SUNY Cortland's newest major in tourism and recreation is designed for students who want to facilitate visitor experiences and drive economic development. Our Cortland students will pursue internships taking place everywhere from New York State Parks to local arts venues.

And when it comes to workforce readiness, SUNY Cortland's Career Services is leading impressive work. This student-focused center is using \$281,700 in New York state funding to support 50 new internship and living stipends annually, to be awarded to students pursuing previously unpaid, full-time applied learning experiences. The university also will create 12 new paid internships on campus and support two new technology platforms aimed at internship advising, networking and career development.

These efforts from the past several weeks and months, along with several other honors and new initiatives, suggest that SUNY Cortland is well-positioned to help its surrounding community seize opportunity and meet challenges in the years ahead.

We're proud to be champions across our region, New York state and the nation.

Erik J. Bitterbaum is the president of SUNY Cortland.



Tompkins Cortland Community College student Jason Rossow of Dryden tinkers with a traffic light simulator. Rossow is enrolled in the college's microcredentialing program designed with future employees of Micron in mind.

BY JACK LAKOWSKY
STAFF REPORTER
JLAKOWSKY@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

Administrators at greater Cortland area colleges are investing in new technology and staff to meet the needs of the \$100 billion Micron Technology memory chip factory project in Clay, set to bring tens of thousands of jobs to the region.

Mike Grieb, associate professor of applied engineering technology at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, said that after Micron announced its plans to build the chip fabrication facility, or "chip fab," OCC created two paths for students to learn electromechanical technology, a one-year certificate and a two-year associate's.

Tompkins Cortland Community College President Amy Kremenek said the Micron announcement spurred a frenzy of activity at the Dryden school.

"This college has been focused on a number of programs that are well-positioned to support the success of Micron, as well as a number of local employers."

"It's going really well," Grieb said. The programs launched in the fall, with 36 students enrolled in the certificate program. Once they complete it, students can then enroll in the two-year program. An additional 18 are signed up for spring, filling the program.

"There's already a strong demand for these types of graduates," Grieb said. "Once we get them out there, they're employable and have a good opportunity in the workplace. The feedback from Micron is this is a solid foundation for their techs."

Grieb said OCC, Onondaga County and the state pooled \$15 million to renovate the school's technology center. The school added a clean room simulator — a controlled environment where most airborne particulates are removed — with equipment and tools supplied by Micron, which has said the Clay project will take 20 years.

"We're talking this week about curriculum around that equipment," Grieb said. The clean room will serve students for decades to come.

See **WORKFORCE**, Page D3

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TOMPKINS CORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FEBRUARY 17, 2024

TC3 PIVOTS TO HELP WITH MICRON, OTHER EMPLOYERS

BY AMY KREMENEK
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Over its 55-year history, Tompkins Cortland Community College has benefited from the steady investment in an array of assets, including our physical plant, equipment, academic and workforce programs, student support and services, partnerships, and dedicated faculty and staff, all of which are committed to serving the needs of this community.

Uniquely American, our sector of higher education is designed as the “community’s colleges,” meaning that our programs and services are focused on the needs of this region. The vast majority of our students are local, and our graduates stay local, powering local industries like health care, technology, business, public service and more.

Our local sponsors, Cortland County and Tompkins County, also recognize the enormous potential and impact provided by TC3, and we are grateful to them for their steadfast support over the years.

Recently, the college updated its comprehensive economic impact study, which was conducted by an independent outside firm. Among the findings were that TC3 provides an annual economic impact of more than \$57 million, with a return to taxpayers of \$1.70 for every dollar invested based on added tax revenue, higher lifetime earnings of graduates, increased business output, reduced demand for government services and overall public sector savings.

At TC3, we know that local people want to secure good, local jobs so that they can work, raise families, and contribute to the overall quality of life in our area. We also know that local employers want to hire well-qualified local people for the many good jobs available.

In 2022, the announcement of the Micron project in Onondaga County brought a whole new level of excitement for the entire region. TC3 is well-positioned to support the success of Micron, as well as estab-



Community colleges are preparing a new generation of technicians with new programs. Tompkins Cortland Community College also added staff to help returning college students.

JACK LAKOWSKY/STAFF REPORTER

lished local employers such as Pall Cortland, Menlo Micro and Odyssey Semiconductor, with programs like our microcredentials in Micro-Nano Fabrication Safety and Electrical Engineering Technician, associate degrees in Applied Science and Technology and in Construction and Environmental Technology, and our robust partnership with Cornell University’s NanoScale Facility and their world-class cleanroom.

At the same time, TC3 is continuing to pursue new opportunities to help ensure that our community benefits from economic growth and prosperity. We are investing in new opportunities, joining the Future Ready Innovation Workforce Consortium that is focused on partnerships and path-

ways to education and employment in the semiconductor industry.

We recently secured nearly \$1 million in SUNY supplemental funding to develop new programs in Vacuum Technology and Metrology, both essential, in-demand skills in high tech. We are also actively seeking new partnerships, including a National Science Foundation-funded semiconductor training program designed for veterans and their family members in collaboration with Penn State University, as well as early college and career education programs that serve local high school students in partnership with OCM-BOCES and TST-BOCES.

Looking back to 1968 when TC3 was founded, the world was very different

and one could only imagine the possibilities to be realized. The investments made those many years ago have paid off – with thousands of TC3 alumni in the workforce using the knowledge and skills they developed at their local community college.

Fast-forward another 50-plus years into the future, the investments we are making today will continue to pay off for future generations of local residents, employers, leaders and families in Cortland County. You can count on TC3 to continue to be at the forefront, always focused here, always the “community’s college.”

Amy Kremenek is the president of Tompkins Cortland Community College.

This story was initially published Nov. 16, 2023

SUNY CORTLAND NAMED A TOP DISABILITY-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

BY LILY BYRNE
STAFF REPORTER
LBYRNE@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

SUNY Cortland has been named among the top 50 colleges in the nation to accommodate people with disabilities, and 2021 graduate Jenny Riekert can explain why.

“I almost always received the accommodations I needed,” Riekert said in November. “Some professors did give me a hard time, which led to me advocating for myself, but Sue and Jeremy in the Disability Office are literal angels on Earth and do not play around. They even gave me a job in the office to allow me to advocate on campus, which I really enjoyed.”

SUNY Cortland was ranked 42nd in a nationwide list of disability-friendly schools on Intelligent.com, a data analysis website for colleges.

SUNY Cortland Communications Director Frederic Pierce says the school having the largest public teacher education program in New York helps.

“A big part of that is training teachers in inclusive education, and inclusive physical education,” Pierce said. “What all this means is it’s also part of our academics, and that makes people more sensitive to issues surrounding disabilities.”

The school ranked just above Rochester Institute of Technology and Stanford University.

Riekert, a 2021 communications graduate, said that the school was accommodating to her disability, TAR syndrome, a disorder characterized by low levels of platelets in the blood, and the absence of the long, thin bones in the forearms.

The Disability Services office serves as a liaison between students and the professors and faculty to make sure accommodations are met, Pierce said.

Riekert received time and a half for all exams to accommodate for hand fatigue. The only area of campus which she ever had issues with was the Residence Life and Housing department, who forgot to give her disability housing for her sophomore year, she said.

“We are all going to become disabled one day, which is why I’m so passionate about disability advocacy and disability rights for all,” she said. “When you make something accessible for one, you make it accessible for all.”

She has seen accessibility improvements in the school since 2018, such as the renovations of ramps by the Memorial Library, she said, and food restrictions are also taken very seriously in campus dining.

“It’s something that we’ve always taken a measure of pride in,” Pierce said. “SUNY Cortland is a school, first and foremost, of access. We mean that as a public institution, not only by making it affordable for students to get a quality degree, but for making it accessible to people of all backgrounds, ethnicities, religions and abilities. This is something that we have put a lot of effort into.”

There is always room for improvement in accessibility, Riekert said. The school could also improve on making the school actively inviting to those with disabilities, she said.

Nicole Rampanelli, a senior musical theater major, has a learning disability that challenges her visual learning and auditory processing skills. SUNY Cortland was accommodating, she said. She receives extra time on assignments, and text-to-speech when needed.

“These accommodations are helpful to me to help me successfully finish tests without rushing to do my best and helping me fully understand the context behind each question,” Rampanelli said.

“SUNY Cortland takes a more holistic approach,” Pierce said. “It’s really up to the faculty, staff and student body as a whole to welcome people of all abilities, to provide assistance when it’s needed, and to

treat people who have disabilities just like they would anybody else, so they have not only the same opportunity to get an education, but so they can become part of the fabric of campus life.”

WORKFORCE

Continued from Page D1

Grieb said OCC is starting to put together a microcredentialing program for semiconductor manufacturing, an accelerated course path. Grieb said the school is moving at an even pace, wanting to avoid overloading the regional job market.

OCC also has new programs for students looking to work not directly for Micron, but adjacent to it.

“We have a new construction management AAS degree that would help create construction managers, supervisors. There’ll be a lot of new construction, residential and commercial.”

Next fall, OCC will start its welding technology program, another field to spike in demand once Micron gets building. OCC’s business school started offering a new supply chain management degree.

For about a year, TC3 has had a microcredentialing program in electrical engineering technology and an applied science and technology program.

TC3 is trying to get technicians in the pipeline to Micron and other manufacturers early, working with the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services. The school consortium is working with high schools to offer a program to earn credits toward the college’s microcredential and engineering programs, Kremenek said.

“It’s a pathway for high school students to get started on some of these fast-growing, high-need professions,” Kremenek said.

Kremenek said the college, OCM BOCES and the school districts want to make a “future-ready work force.”

Kremenek said TC3’s main partner in designing its new programs was Cornell University. Cornell already has its own clean room, saving TC3 the cost and effort of building its own.

TC3 expects the applied science and tech program will grow to 50 students over the next three years, and the microcredentialing programs could have up to 36, school officials said.

Kremenek said until recently students enrolled in microcredentialing programs couldn’t get financial aid. That changed a few weeks ago when the state announced tuition assistance for non-degree programs.

TC3 expects more nontraditional students – older, with or without families to care for. Kremenek said planning for this, the college hired a counselor specifically to help nontraditional students navigate their responsibilities and their education.

Carrie Coates Whitmore, TC3’s director of continuing education and workforce development, said TC3 wants to offer a free program for military veterans and their families in the future to learn about and gain skills for the semiconductor industry, and has applied for grant funding to do so.

“We’re still waiting final word,” Whitmore said. “Should we get that, we could roll that program out in under a year.”



Students make silicon wafers in the Cornell Nanoscale Facility in January.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY RYAN YOUNG



Students work on a mechanical project in Phillips Hall as a part of the ALAS program in January.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY RYAN YOUNG

COLLEGES ACROSS UPSTATE NEW YORK GEAR UP TO TRAIN NEW ENGINEERS

BY DOUG SCHNEIDER

STAFF REPORTER
DSCHNEIDER@CORTLANDSTANDARD.COM

High school students from across Tompkins County, including Dryden and Groton, work in a Cornell University laboratory using high-tech devices they'd use in jobs in a semiconductor chip-making operation proposed for the Syracuse suburbs.

In Troy, students at a four-year college share space with two-year-students in state-of-the-art Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute labs, during a five-year RPI program designed to prepare them to work in the semiconductor industry.

In Rochester, college students spend two full semesters working at L3-Harris Technologies – or another of the estimated 3,000 Western New York businesses that produce products dependent on “chips” – as part of a Rochester Institute of Technology program.

Each is an example of how colleges across New York state are seizing the opportunity to provide some of what graduates — and their future employers



Students work on a mechanical project in Phillips Hall as part of the ATLAS program in January.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY PAUL NEWMAN

High schoolers in Cortland and nearby counties have a number of colleges, public and private, which have strong engineering programs. Cornell, Binghamton University and Syracuse are in counties adjacent to Cortland. A range of schools – SUNY Albany, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology, and SUNY Polytechnic Institute all have advanced engineering-research programs and are within a three-hour drive of Cortland.

Micron's plant is one of four the company hopes to build, now that Congress has approved the CHIPS and Science Act, which President Biden signed into law in 2022. In total, the four plants “would be the size of 10 football fields” and create an estimated 40,000 jobs, the MIT Technology Review reported in July.

In one way, the semiconductor and battery industries are much like other industries that have boomed over the years in New York state:

*Film, and the chemicals to turn it into photos, in Rochester.

*Chemicals, and later air-conditioners, in Syracuse.

*Shoes, and later computers, in Binghamton.

The Micron jobs – stemming from their reliance on semiconductors, which must be manufactured in “cleanrooms” – will require engineering students to learn special skills as college students.

How have things changed? If a janitor wants to mop a floor, he needs to know to use ion-free water in a “cleanroom,” a specialized environment that requires workers to wear special coveralls, including booties. Thomas Pennell, process integration specialist and education/outreach coordinator at Cornell University's Nanoscale Facility, said welding also poses challenges, beyond flipping down a visor and lighting a torch.

But still, students are attracted to “new types of engineering they probably hadn't considered,” he said. “It's unique and immersive, and really opens their eyes” as students learn things about working in specialized environments.

How can he tell that lessons being taught appeal to participants? “If I hear a kid say, ‘That's so cool,’ just once during the day, I got the win,” he told Cornell Chronicle for a Jan. 31 story.

Upstate New York colleges, both two- and four-year, have begun adjusting their engineering programs to prepare for Micron's arrival.

“It's a great time to major in engineering,” said Christopher Harris, assistant vice president for government and community relations at Rochester Institute of Technology. He said RIT recently has broken school records several times for the number of engineering students who enrolled.

RIT and several upstate universities encourage, or would welcome, collaboration.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and nearby Hudson Valley Community College, both in Troy, unveiled on Feb. 5 a partnership and announced six “semiconductor scholars,” from HVCC. The six learn in lab space at RPI. RPI professors teach the courses; HV students are eligible for financial “merit awards” if they enroll later at RPI.

Harris, of Rochester, said one New York school making progress in its program means benefits will be seen at other colleges. He cites RIT's student body as an example.

“Increased (graduate school) enrollment at Cornell means we'll see more (undergraduate engineering enrollment) at RIT,” Harris said, as RIT's undergraduate population grows when students see growth in the program at Cornell, which engineering students find has an attractive grad program.

College officials are encouraging their professors to collaborate with other schools. “The workforce is kind of the achilles heel,” for New York, said Garde, RPI engineering dean. He said RPI, which he called the oldest technological university in North America, acknowledges that fact and works to address it, welcomes partnerships with other colleges.



Dryden High School senior Mckenna Crocker participates in the ATLAS program at Cornell University.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY RYAN YOUNG

— need to adequately staff businesses within the next couple years.

Micron Technology, a Boise, Idaho, company, has acquired land less than 50 miles north of Cortland on which it plans a mega-fabrication, a.k.a. “mega-fab,” plant. The company says the giant cleanroom, on which construction would begin this year, would directly create 9,000 jobs and 20,000 over time. The plant would be the largest private investment in New York state history.

Where will those employees come from?



Dryden High School senior Mckenna Crocker participants in the ATLAS program at Cornell University.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY RYAN YOUNG



Dryden High School senior Mckenna Crocker participants in the ATLAS program at Cornell University.

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UNDERAGE DRINKING MYTHS and FACTS

Do you know the difference between these myths and facts about underage drinking in Cortland County and beyond? Let's clear the air.


<p>MYTH #1 Most kids in Cortland County drink alcohol.</p>	<p>FACT! In Cortland County, a survey of 7th-12th graders shows that only 8.4% have consumed alcohol in the past month, and only 25% have ever tried it, indicating the majority of local teens do not drink.</p>
<p>MYTH #2 I can't do anything to stop my kid from drinking, they'll do it no matter what.</p>	<p>FACT! Teens with trusting relationships and clear family rules about alcohol from their parents tend to start drinking later. Parents can also directly reduce their child's access to alcohol, especially since home is where most Cortland County teens obtain it.</p>
<p>MYTH #3 It's better to wait until kids are older to talk about the dangers of alcohol.</p>	<p>FACT! The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests beginning talks about alcohol by age nine. Early and regular conversations are key to addressing early exposure and peer pressure.</p>
<p>MYTH #4 Allowing kids to drink at home is a "safe" option.</p>	<p>FACT! A study found that kids given alcohol by their parents are more likely to binge drink and suffer alcohol-related harm. Cortland County enforces a social host law, penalizing adults who let minors drink on their property with fines or jail time.</p>
<p>MYTH #5 European teens may drink more responsibly due to early, guided exposure at home, unlike teens in the U.S.</p>	<p>FACT! European teens typically drink more and get drunk at younger ages compared to American teens, with U.S. youth drinking less frequently than their counterparts in Western Europe, Iceland being the exception.</p>

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