



Photo by Roger William Theise

TODAY: Cortland County

TODAY: Cortland County is the Business Development Corporation's newsletter promoting industry and business growth in Cortland County.

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Among a host of projects undertaken recently in Cortland County, perhaps none has received more attention than the renovation of Wickwire Pool. Baby Boomers and later-generation residents fondly recall their youths spent at the pool, a gathering spot for kids and as iconic a symbol of “quality community” as any we have. As spring slowly turns to summer, we thought it appropriate to focus on the project and its long and winding road to completion.

We've also included an update on the comprehensive effort to revitalize the central business district, and have provided a few summaries of recently concluded state budget work that raised the minimum wage and enacted new family leave regulations.

You will also find inside some detail on the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program scheduled for Cortland County this summer at the Homer Intermediate School. The program provides health and human services to community members through the U.S. military, which uses IRT as a training tool.

We hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, don't hesitate to share any thoughts or ideas with us.

The BDC is Cortland County's principal economic development organization working for economic and community growth. Together, its programs, projects, and services aim to support existing businesses while promoting other job-creating opportunities across the county.



Garry L. VanGorder
Executive Director/CEO

Whether it was a recital of the history of Lebanon, his perspectives on the relationship between a well-kept community and economic development, or the proper time of year to order Kousa Mahshi, there was a lot to learn over a Pita Gourmet lunch with Jim Yaman.

I was fortunate to be among a number of people in Jim's lunch club over the years, and I will speak for them all when I say we are better—and so much smarter—for it.

Jim's passing in March at the age of 96 marked the end of a remarkable life dedicated to family, business, and community. When one particularly poignant tribute referred to him as a "community giant," I found myself nodding in agreement with the realization that very few among us will ever be remembered as such, and that no one will have earned that high praise more than Jim Yaman.

The signs of his work are all around Cortland: a prosperous real estate company with a signature home office that he was so proud of; housing developments from Hickory Park to Circle Drive and many in between; a community garden where an unsightly abandoned gas station once stood; and Yaman Park, a beautiful community asset that would never be what it is today without his ongoing philanthropy.

He was a driving force for community promotion, committing resources to video, CD and web productions touting not just Yaman Real Estate, but also the quality of our life here. He counseled mayors, finance directors, council people, town representatives, county officials and many others over the decades in their own efforts to move Cortland forward, and he was a tireless mentor to his own staff, teaching them the real estate business and, for many, serving as a catalyst for their own successes.

These are but small examples of his accomplishments, but the point is clear: Jim's heart and soul was in Cortland County, and he never shirked an opportunity to make a difference.

Jim Yaman's work is done, and he set a high standard for community leadership. Now, more than ever, we need others to begin shaping their own legacies.

On the cover: Park Maintenance Supervisor Dennis Gallagher (foreground) and Youth Bureau Director John McNerney examine the progress of Wickwire Pool in Suggett Park, which opens in June.

700

Cortland County jobs
created over past 12 months

15

Number of years since lower
county unemployment rate

3.6

Percent of county DSS
budget drop since 2012



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Ag Families Honored

The annual agriculture celebration banquet was held March 15 at Tinelli's Hathaway House in Solon, with two local families receiving recognition for their good work in the industry and contributions to the community.

Dick and Martha Bush, longtime members of the county fair board and volunteers in countless ag-related activities, were the recipients of the annual Geraldine Young Friend of Agriculture award, presented by the Cortland County Farm Bureau.

The Arnold Family, of Truxton, was honored as the county's Farm Family of the Year for its many years of work running a visionary family farm and for their collective contributions to the quality of life in the community.

The annual banquet is held in conjunction with National Agriculture Day and sponsored by the BDC, Tompkins Trust Company, and Farm Credit East.

Paid Family Leave

The 2016-17 state budget includes the longest and most comprehensive paid family leave program in the nation. When fully phased-in, employees will be eligible for 12 weeks of paid family leave when caring for an infant, a family member with a serious health condition or to relieve family pressures when someone is called to active military service.

Benefits will be phased-in beginning in 2018 at 50 percent of an employee's average weekly wage, capped to 50 percent of the statewide average weekly wage, and fully implemented in 2021 at 67 percent of their average weekly wage, capped to 67 percent of the statewide average weekly wage. Employees are eligible to participate after having worked for their employer for six months. The governor's office says this program will be funded entirely through a payroll deduction on employees, costing businesses nothing.

Minimum Wage Detailed

Here's a closer look at new minimum wage standards set forth for upstate New York in the 2016-17 budget:

- The minimum wage would increase to \$9.70 at the end of 2016, then another 70 cents each year after until reaching \$12.50 on 12/31/2020—after which it will continue to increase to \$15 on an indexed schedule to be set by the Director of the Division of Budget (DOB) in consultation with the Department of Labor.
- The bill provides a safety valve to the increases. Beginning in 2019, the state DOB Director will conduct an annual analysis of the economy in each region and the effect of the minimum wage increases statewide to determine whether a temporary suspension of the scheduled increases is necessary. That analysis is submitted to the Department of Labor by the Division of Budget.
- It is estimated that more than 2.3 million people will be affected by the increases in the minimum wage.

Middle Class Tax Cut

The budget lowers personal income tax rates for middle class New Yorkers. With the middle class tax cuts of 2012, rates were lowered from 6.85 percent to 6.45 percent for taxpayers in the \$40,000 to \$150,000 income bracket, and to 6.65 percent in the \$150,000 to \$300,000 income bracket. Now, the rate will drop even further beginning in 2018 and will continue to drop to 5.5 percent when the cuts are fully phased in.

Cuomo says the new rates will save middle class New Yorkers nearly \$6.6 billion in the first four years, with annual savings reaching \$4.2 billion by 2025.



Cortland County BDC Chairman Mike McMahon (left) with 2016 Farm Family of the Year honorees Kathie Arnold and her son, Kirk, following the annual agriculture celebration banquet at Tinelli's Hathaway House. Also honored that evening were Dick and Martha Bush, the 2016 recipients of the Geraldine Young Friend of Agriculture award.

success story

Making a Splash

Cortland Celebrates Suggestt Park's Wickwire Pool Reopening

The first day of summer—June 20, 2016—promises to be a particularly exciting one for residents of the City of Cortland. That's because during the weekend prior to that day, city leaders will cut the ribbon on the new Wickwire Pool in Suggestt Park—a state-of-the-art swimming facility that has been five years in the making.

The pool was designed by Aquatica Pools and Water Parks, the same company that designed the pool at the SUNY Cortland Student Life Center. It replaces one built in 1946 that, in spite of some improvements, still had many elements of its original construction. The new pool is handicap accessible with a zero- to four-foot shallow section and a two-foot children's play area with spray features. A separated five- to eight-foot-deep area has eight competitive swim lanes and an eight-foot access stair. The facility features a completely updated mechanical system and a large deck to accommodate tables and chairs.

John McNerney, director of the Youth Bureau for the City of Cortland, oversees activities and operations at Suggestt Park and seven other local parks. "It's amazing how the community rallied around the Wickwire Pool project," he says. "Key to its success was a \$500,000 Environmental Protection Fund grant administered by New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; \$50,000 from the McDonald Foundation; and \$25,000 from the Cortland Community Foundation—in addition to contributions from hundreds of local donors."

McNerney says he was impressed by the ongoing fundraising efforts to make the project a reality. "There seemed to be no end to the creative ways



people came up with to help," he says. "The community sponsored softball and golf tournaments, there were bottle drives, a pizza shop even donated a day's worth of sales to the effort." SUNY Cortland students also pitched in. "A class devoted three semesters to creating community awareness for the project, and held a number of fundraisers," says McNerney. "They also gave presentations to the City Council on the positive impact the new pool would have on the city.

"We don't have a lot of resources in the City of Cortland's general operating budget, which is why we needed to get the community behind us long-term," McNerney says. "It took five years to get the leadership on board, develop fundraising strategies, solicit public feedback, engage an engineering firm, send the project out for bid, choose a builder and begin construction. The Cortland community stayed engaged with the project from beginning to end."

Green Space

The City of Cortland supports eight community parks, each with its own unique character. All the parks are open to the public year-round, weather permitting.



The new Wickwire Pool in Suggett Park is slated to open in June 2016. (Photo by Roger William Theise)



Photo by Bob Ellis



Photo by Bob Ellis

Despite its age, Wickwire Pool has remained a popular community attraction.

Suggett Park, at Homer Avenue and Madison Street, is 17.5 acres in size and located in the northwest section of the City of Cortland. Along with the new Wickwire Pool, the park has a playground, two basketball courts, open space with two softball fields and a semi-enclosed picnic pavilion.

Beaudry Park, on Scammell Street, is more than 10 acres in size and is located in the southern portion of the city, bordering Cortlandville. The park has one baseball and two softball fields, two basketball courts, a playground and a picnic pavilion. The park's hillside is popular for winter sledding and tubing.

Randall Park, on Randall Street, covers six acres and is located adjacent to Randall Elementary School in the south-central area of the city. The park provides residents with four lighted tennis courts, a playground and open space with one softball field.

Dexter Park, on Elm Street, is roughly six acres in size and is located at the eastern end of the city. The park has a basketball court, playground, open space with a softball field, two tennis courts and a small picnic pavilion.

Yaman Park, on Kennedy Parkway, covers 17 acres and is located at the northeast corner of the city bordering the Tioughnioga River. The park has a manmade lake with beach and swimming area, three picnic pavilions and a collection of smaller picnic areas with grills, a playground, basketball courts, a skateboard park, a boat

launch, and the river shoreline for fishing.

Courthouse Park, on Church and Greenbush Streets, is 2.5 acres in size and is partly owned by Cortland County. It is located in the center of the city bordering downtown and is the site of many community cultural events. It features open lawns with benches and trees, a fountain, historic monuments and a veterans' memorial.

Ted Testa Park, on Starr Road, was developed by the Town of Cortlandville and is managed by the Youth Bureau. The 16-acre park has two regulation little league fields, two multi-purpose soccer and lacrosse fields, and a softball field.

Citizens Park, on Rt. 281 in Cortlandville, is a seven-acre park that is managed by the Youth Bureau. It features a large pavilion, basketball court, volleyball court, ballfields, horse shoe pit and play area.

"Public parks and the programs they foster play a vital role in the quality of life of every city," McNerney concludes. "If you don't have strong, healthy parks, you don't have a strong, healthy community."

Cuomo Appoints Business Study Group

Gov. Andrew Cuomo and legislative leaders have formed a temporary Business Regulation Council that will review the state's business climate.

The council will make recommendations on ways to decrease the cost of doing business in the state while not compromising protections for workers. The council will hold forums and meetings to hear from stakeholders. Recommendations will be due by June 3, so they can be considered before the end of the legislative session, scheduled for June 16.

"This action builds upon the progress our administration has made to lower taxes and improve this state's economic climate, while also ensuring workers are being treated fairly," Cuomo said in a statement. "I look forward to receiving the Council's recommendations and I thank the members for working with us to find ways to further lower the costs of doing business and build a stronger and more prosperous New York for all."

The appointees to the seven-member council are:

- Mario Cilent, President of the New York State AFL-CIO
- Ted Potriku, President and CEO of the Retail Council of New York State
- Kathryn Wylde, President and CEO of the Partnership for New York City
- Heather Briccetti, President and CEO, The Business Council of New York State, Inc.
- Dean Norton, President, New York Farm Bureau
- Gary LaBarbera, President, Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York
- Robert Grey, Chair, New York Workers' Compensation Alliance

Cortland County BDC Revolving Loan Fund Program

The BDC facilitates business recruitment and retention in many ways, including the management of its \$500,000 revolving loan fund.

Dozens of loans have been granted over the years as an alternative to or complement to traditional loan financing. While our underwriting is designed to protect the agency's investment, it is also structured in a way that recognizes the challenges new and existing small businesses face in today's competitive marketplace.

Eligible borrowers include for-profit manufacturing, professional, service, and commercial businesses. Retail businesses will also be considered on a case-by-case basis. Eligible applicants include sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, and limited liability corporations. At least 50 percent of a project cost must be provided by the borrower (bank or private financing, borrower equity).

Loans are capped at \$100,000 or 50 percent of eligible project costs, whichever is less. The minimum loan amount is \$10,000. For complete details call our office at 607/756-5005 or see the website at cortlandbusiness.com.

Businesses have access to numerous resources at the local, state, regional and federal level to help them succeed. In addition to Cortland County's Business Assistance Programs, here are other resources to help your business:

Cortland County Government

60 Central Avenue
Cortland, NY 13045
cortland-co.org

County Planning Department

37 Church Street
Cortland, NY 13045
cortland-co.org/Planning/index.html

Cortland County Health Department

60 Central Avenue
Cortland, NY 13045
cchd.cortland-co.org/

City of Cortland

25 Court Street
Cortland, NY 13045
cortland.org

Town of Cortlandville

3577 Terrace Road
Cortland, NY 13045
cortlandville.org

Town of Homer

31 N. Main Street
Homer, NY 13077
townofhomer.org

Village of Homer

Homer, NY 13077
homerny.org

*For more resources visit us online at
cortlandbusiness.com/resources/*

Downtown Cortland Community Perceptions Survey Will Help Formulate a Roadmap for the Future

This spring, the City of Cortland and the Cortland Downtown Partnership—a group formed 10 years ago to enhance and promote the commercial and cultural offerings of historic downtown Cortland—invited input from the community on downtown needs and other initiatives currently under way for the central business district, with the goal of formulating an economic development strategy for the area for the next 5 to 10 years.

This was accomplished through surveys which were developed and analyzed by the Community Land Use and Economics (CLUE) Group, a consulting firm that helps community leaders create vibrant downtowns and neighborhood commercial centers. The CLUE Group's work focuses on developing forward-looking economic transformation strategies, with particular emphasis on cultivating locally owned businesses, removing regulatory and financial barriers, creating effective incentives to stimulate new investment, reusing older and historic commercial buildings, and outlining practical implementation plans. Their clients include local and state governments, nonprofit organizations, business improvement districts, developers, and planning firms in the U.S. and abroad.

The survey findings will go a long way in helping define downtown Cortland's future, as well as the city's plans to pursue N.Y. Gov. Andrew Cuomo's \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative—a comprehensive approach to transform a designated downtown area ripe for growth into a flourishing neighborhood that the next generation of New Yorkers will want to call home.

"A thriving downtown can provide a tremendous boost to the local economy," Gov. Cuomo said at the launch of the initiative. "This will transform a select downtown neighborhood into a vibrant place for people to live, work and raise a family—which will also help attract new investments and businesses for years to come."

"We knew we needed a current market analysis that included qualitative data of residents and demographic data on what downtown Cortland can support," says Adam Megivern, executive director of the Cortland Downtown Partnership. "The surveys targeted three key groups—the public, business owners and city leadership—because it was important to see if there was a disparity of vision between these stakeholders."



Photo by Bob Ellis

The City of Cortland and the Cortland Downtown Partnership are using the results of the recent community survey to formulate an economic development strategy for historic downtown Cortland for the next 5 to 10 years.

"We received close to 700 survey responses, which is very good for a city our size," Megivern says. "It's a testament to how engaged our community is in our future."

The survey findings will go a long way in helping define downtown Cortland's future, as well as the city's plans to pursue a \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative from New York State.

On April 20, the CLUE Group presented the analyzed data which, in part, defined the businesses, services and organizations that would best develop and succeed downtown. City leadership has already begun to incorporate the data into its planning. "The findings give us solid data versus a 'wish list' for the future," Megivern says. "It is an important tool for future growth, as well as for recruiting and fundraising."

The CLUE Group presentation was videoed and is available for anyone interested in viewing it. Visit the Cortland Downtown Partnership website (cortlanddowntown.com) for more information.



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Cortland County offers the best in small town living with easy access to some of the nation's top metro centers.

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Department of Defense Program Provides Medical, Dental, Optometry and Veterinary Services to Community Members in Need

The Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) is a U.S. military volunteer program that provides experience opportunities for military personnel while addressing the needs of underserved American communities.

Through the program, military units develop their skills by performing services in communities that otherwise would not have the resources to conduct them on their own. The goal of this civil-military partnership is to improve military readiness while simultaneously providing quality services to communities throughout the United States.

This summer, Cortland County will take part in the program through an IRT grant that provides free medical, dental, optometry and veterinary services for the county's uninsured or underinsured population. The program will be held July 15-24 at Homer Intermediate School.

Dan Dineen, director of planning for the Cortland County Planning Department, is spearheading the program. Dineen first became aware of IRT as a member of the Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board—a regional planning and economic development organization serving the rural counties and communities of Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie, Tioga and Tompkins, that identifies and addresses multi-

county issues to improve quality of life in the region.

"Last year, the board received an IRT grant for medical and veterinary services for the City of Norwich in Chenango County that was a big success," Dineen says. "Over a period of 10 days they performed

more than 5,000 free procedures that otherwise would have cost residents \$1.3 million. We knew this would be a valuable service for residents of Cortland County as well, so we applied for and received a similar grant for this year."

Dineen says the medical services provided will involve basic screenings, while dental services will cover cleanings, fillings, and extractions, optometry services will include eye exams and free single-focal-lens glasses, and veterinary services will cover pet spaying, neutering and rabies vaccinations.

Organizers are now looking for community volunteers to help make the program a success.

"We need 900 volunteers to assist with a range

of non-medical duties," Dineen says. Those interested in pitching in should visit the web site healthycortland.org and register as volunteers.

Dineen says organizers are also looking for donations to offset expenses. "We have a \$15,000 budget, most of which has already been designated for security," he says. "We're looking to the community to help with much-needed additional funding."



Through IRT, communities receive valuable health care services that might otherwise be unavailable to them.