Praise for Norwich/Chenango County

There are many free public dinners sponsored by local churches. These can’t really make a dent in food insecurity since they’re only weekly, but they are a great resource for a meal and fellowship.

There are many great community events available. Pumpkinfest, Colorscape, the Summer Concert Series, Movies Under the Stars, the Youth Bureau programs were all cited as examples.

Wonderful collaborations are happening in this community. One example – Spelling Bee Club held weekly on Thursdays at Guernsey Memorial Library by Martha Ryan and several local families. This effort can be a model for other efforts like a STEAM club, etc. The Bee Club will hopefully be able to participate with the Literary Arts Tent at Colorscape next year.

The Library is seen as a safe, neutral place by members of the community.

Constructive Criticisms for Norwich/Chenango County

People have complained of boredom, especially related to having enough to do for kids. There’s a need for a centralized place to post all of the events happening in the area so people know what is happening. It would be great if the calendar would also have the option of adding the event to the users’ own personal calendars and also would allow for making online reservations for the event. An app being developed for the Canasawacta Valley Free Methodist Church was mentioned as a way the church will communicate with its congregation. Their tech person may be willing to share with the community at large for broader use of the app. Possible hosts mentioned were the Chamber of Commerce and the Norwich City School District. Having Snapcodes and/or QR codes on advertising would help.

There is a dearth of quality, affordable childcare in our region. 40% of our population is ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) and the high cost of child care is one of the contributing factors. Interruptions in childcare also contribute to the loss of jobs for many.

Transportation is a huge issue for our area. Our population is spread across a wide geographic area with few transportation options. Bus service is very limited. There are few taxi companies and they are very expensive. Services like Uber are not having a huge impact.

Many feel there is a lack of a strong work ethic these days.

The volunteer pool seems to be shrinking and aging, leaving needed work to be done by fewer people.

It is a shame to see the many empty buildings in Norwich. Could they be used to provide better affordable housing or space for new businesses.

It would be wonderful to expand the options for college in Norwich. Some people don’t want to go away to college or don’t have the option of going away because of family obligations, expenses, etc. There is some expansion of bachelor’s options planned for the Norwich campus of SUNY Morrisville.

Negativity expressed about the younger generations is a problem. People need to recognize that these folks are the future. We need to expand the opportunities available for young people in the region. We need more college opportunities and better work options. Otherwise young folks will move away from the region.

Chenango Memorial Hospital closing its dental clinic for financial reasons is going to have a huge impact. It is the only dental provider in the county which provides care to Medicaid patients. Those patients who pursue dental care down in Binghamton are now going to cost an additional $150 dollars in transportation. There is also no walk-in clinic in Norwich nor an optical care provider that provides Medicaid/Medicare services. Apparently there are also currently no oncology services at CMH. The Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement rates are too low to be attractive. Mention was made of the great need for the Chenango Cares clinics recently sponsored and coordinated by the United Way.

The city is bearing the brunt of paying for ambulance services for the entire county. The county isn’t paying its fair share for ambulance services.

Counties that have a lot of Medicaid users are bearing the burden of paying for it, causing more high-income individuals to move away and compounding the issue further. Universal healthcare is needed.

Marcas Findt of Public Health, sent a letter promising to share copies of an upcoming “Community Health Assessment 2019-2023” next spring.

There is a drug problem in this area. How many people are aware that there’s controlled medical waste disposal in the parking lot of the Eaton Center that is sponsored by STAP (Southern Tier AIDS Program?) They also have a syringe exchange weekly. People need to be able to connect with the Chenango Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition.

Initiative supported by the state, like the recent changes to cover cancer care for volunteer firefighters, are then forced onto local government to pay for. If the state makes mandates, they also should fund them.

The Youth Bureau’s programs are seeing decreased participation. It has even been increasingly difficult to hire youth help to run the programs. Parents seem to be less interested in getting their kids to programs and children are spending increasing amounts of time playing on devices instead of wanting to get out and be involved.

Spotty free wifi access in the city has been brought up as an issue for people. The library has seen lots of usage on the grounds and after hours. Might there be an interest in city-wide free wifi access?

CNY has lost one million in population, mostly because of jobs that have left the area. The people who are left tend to be lower income because the jobs have left and those that remain are not higher paying. It is felt that our population is more representative of low-income individuals than high- and mid-income.

Businesses have trouble recruiting workers to move here. Poor internet access, poor housing choices, and other quality of life issues keep them from coming here.

Some communities, like Windsor have been able to grow. People are moving there from downstate to retire there for a better quality of life. Families of the retirees tend to follow their parents. The people that are moving there are opening small businesses like bakeries, etc. Is this something that can be promoted here?

Internet providers are not regulated by the state like phone providers. If your phone services breaks down, it must be repaired within a certain number of hours. This isn’t true for Internet providers.

Young people want to move somewhere that they feel they can make a difference. Is this someplace where they can do that? Can we make it be? How can we promote it as such?

The housing situation overall is poor here. The choices are not attractive and are too expensive. This is true for apartments and homes for young and old alike. Some people have jobs here but have to buy or rent out of town to find something they like that they can afford. Seniors have few choices for single-level homes they can afford. HOST (Housing Opportunities of the Southern Tier) can help with housing for people who have a mental health diagnosis or AIDS and who have 3 or more ER visits within the past year. When it is below 32 degrees F, Monday – Friday, Department of Social Services is able to help with housing within certain parameters. The Chenango Housing Council should be brought into any discussions.

There is a need for better computer skills in the workplace.

Transportation is a huge barrier for people needing work.

People in Norwich don’t know one another anymore. There’s little sense of community. Most people aren’t invested and involved in anything.

The downsizing of Roots & Wings is going to hit the community hard.

County and state and city governments need to start working together on community planning, improvement, and development.

Some feel that Norwich doesn’t have the infrastructure needed even if new businesses come and offer more jobs in the area. The people that are here do not have the training needed by the employers here.

It was expressed by some that they don’t really know what is being discussed in the meetings of various government organizations. Maybe better dissemination of information is needed? Is there a way the library can help with that?

NYConnects provides information to people who need long term care services in the area. One thing they’ve noticed is that there are many more people needing services than there are service providers. Qualified people are in short supply. Those who are qualified are getting paid too little and transportation is an issue for them to get to people in the rural areas. There are increased offerings at DCMO BOCES and SUNY Morrisville to educate people to enter jobs in this area. Is there a tuition forgiveness program for service providers to impoverished areas like there is for teachers? Would Commerce Chenango have a role in attracting more qualified healthcare personnel here? Also, people retire here for the lower cost of living and rural area, but then can’t get the help they need. Stafkings is one of their major sources for recruiting workers.

There are various directories available that not everyone may be aware of. Examples include the Chenango County Government Directory at <https://www.co.chenango.ny.us/clerk/documents/co.pdf> and the Chenango County Resource Guide at <https://www.co.chenango.ny.us/mental-hygiene-services/documents/Resource%20Guide.pdf>.

Any organizations offering services to the community should contact Victoria Mitchell from the Chenango United Way for 211 forms.

There need to be better jobs and better workers available in the community. Many companies have high end jobs and have to recruit from outside the area. There are low end jobs available. There is room for more adult education, non-traditional education, apprenticeships, etc. There is much anti-union sentiment lately but people don’t realize that unions provide training and good jobs.

Library Takeaways

The Library can provide information packages to back up the suggestions different groups may want to take to local governments or other organizations. We could help research the topics so the groups can have ammunition. How many dental providers are needed by a population our size? How many walk-in clinics per capita for a population our size?

The library can coordinate the provision of information needed for people to connect up with the events happening in the community and the services provided by the community. Commerce Chenango seems an obvious place to try to collaborate with, along with the 211 service. The creation of a Chenango app is indicated. CV Free Church has a tech person working on an app for the church and they think he’d likely be willing to work on one for us as well. Maybe looking at some of the conference apps might be useful. Right now information is available in each individual organization and getting it is difficult.

Maybe the library can be a conduit to various government bodies, disseminating information and providing a place for interest groups to meet and providing them with background information on the issues they’re trying to impact. Would have to be careful to make sure we’re supporting any groups that approach us and not seeming partisan in any way.

The Library needs to better use its collaborations for publicizing, especially actively handing out fliers at the desk and also making sure the schools and churches have the information. We will check with the school to see what is the best and easiest way for them – emailing teachers or sending over fliers or coming and physically putting fliers in mailboxes. Also should find out when newsletters from the school will be sent and send the events calendars to them for inclusion.

Poetry Slam for Colorscape is no more, but we will still find a way to include poetry at the Literary Arts Tent and also perhaps through an event at the library. How this will work with the book sale the same weekend will have to be discussed.

There were mentions of the need for a Makerspace. Organizations to approach to collaborate on this effort would be the 4H, Chenango Arts Council, the NHS Robotics Team, DCMO BOCES, the FFA, and Commerce Chenango, all of whom are working on similar efforts or have mentioned interest. Sherburne/Earlville is a nearby school that has one, so we may want to ask them for advice.

If we ever redo the floor in the meeting room, we should consider something that is more dance-friendly. The Norwich Dance Club would love to be able to offer programs here.

There is an information kiosk available at Opportunities for Chenango that is a direct link to the 211 service. Maybe the library should have one here or consider reaching out and establishing one or more elsewhere. Walmart was mentioned as a good place.

The Chenango County Government Directory at <https://www.co.chenango.ny.us/clerk/documents/co.pdf> and the Chenango County Resource Guide at <https://www.co.chenango.ny.us/mental-hygiene-services/documents/Resource%20Guide.pdf> are useful and should be included on the library’s web site.

Look at the possibility of a Chenango County Intranet or app that lists services and events. Work with Commerce Chenango to see if all of this information can get into their packets that they give to people moving to the area.

Might be a good idea to have an event that highlights different clubs so that they can recruit members – archaeology club, dance club, birding club, hiking club, garden club, book clubs, etc.