

Take your comfort and productivity to the next level.
Step up efficiency and sustainability at ngrid.com/biz-cny.

nationalgrid

The Central New York **BUSINESS JOURNAL**

**SPECIAL REPORT:
BANKING &
CREDIT UNION REPORT
PAGES 6-12.**



CNYBJ.COM

WEEKLY EDITION | VOL. 37 | No. 31 | JULY 31, 2023 | \$3.00



AIS WINS \$98.5M AIR FORCE CONTRACT FOR AI RESEARCH

PAGE 3

PHOTO CREDIT: ASSURED INFORMATION SECURITY



PAGE 4

FINGER LAKES HEALTH'S AFFILIATION WITH UPMC BEGINS AUG. 1

PHOTO CREDIT: FINGER LAKES HEALTH



PAGE 5

NASCENTIA HEALTH UNVEILS RENOVATED BEECHES MANOR

PHOTO CREDIT: SOLOON QUINN STUDIOS

IT'S ALL BUSINESS

CENTRAL NEW YORK'S
SOURCE FOR BUSINESS
NEWS, DATA, AND EVENTS

cnybj.com



■ **INDEX:**

BRIEFS	2
BUSINESS CALENDAR	14
OPINION	13
PEOPLE ON THE MOVE	15
THE LIST	12

PRSRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SPRINGFIELD, MA
PERMIT NO. 142

The Central New York Business Journal
415 W. Fayette St.
Syracuse, N.Y. 13204

CNYBJ Data & Details

COMING UP:

August 7: Revitalize Mohawk Valley Feature Publication

August 14 List: Certified Women-Owned Businesses (20 Employees or Smaller)

August 14 Special Report: Innovation/Entrepreneur Resource Directory

August 21 List: Cultural and Performing-Arts Organizations

August 21 Special Report: Small Business

August 28 List: Commercial Law Firms

August 28 Special Report: Law/Accounting/Taxes

September 4 List: Manufacturers (100 employees or fewer)

September 4 Special Report: Energy/Environment/Sustainability/Manufacturing

September 11 List: Risk-Management Providers

September 11 Special Report: Employee Benefits/HR/Insurance

September 18 List: Certified Disabled-Veteran-Owned Businesses

September 18 Special Report: North Country Business/Veteran-Owned Businesses

September 25 Special Report: Revitalize Syracuse Feature Publication

October 2 List: Hospitals & Health Systems

October 2 Special Report: Health Care Quarterly

October 9 List: Document-Management Companies

October 9 Special Report: Cybersecurity

October 16 List: Health-Insurance Providers

October 16 Special Report: Cybersecurity

WRITERS/EDITORS:



Adam Rombel
Editor-in-Chief
arombel@cnybj.com
315.579.3902



Eric Reinhardt
Staff Writer
ereinhardt@cnybj.com
315.579.3915



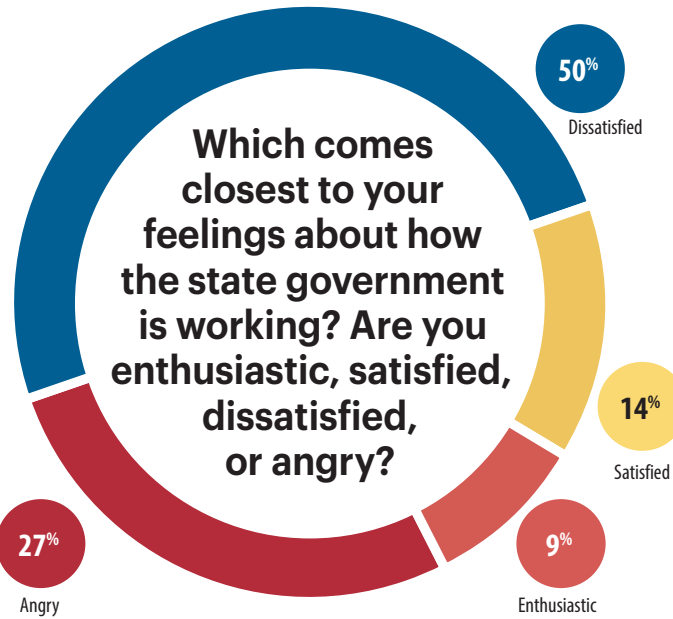
Traci DeLore
Staff Writer
tdelore@cnybj.com
315.579.3907

CNYBJ CANVASS

Here are the results of the latest poll on cnybj.com:

TOTAL RESPONSES:

86



CNYBJ Briefs



PHOTO CREDIT: BASSETT HEALTHCARE NETWORK WEBSITE

Valley Health Services receives Community Foundation grant for food heat-retention system

HERKIMER — Bassett Healthcare Network's Valley Health Services (VHS) in Herkimer received a \$7,500 grant from the Wesley and Marion Small Fund at The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties to purchase a Camduction Complete Heat System for hot-meal service at its facility.

The system is designed to retain the temperature, quality, and safety of foods being served bedside in a health-care facility.

"On behalf of our residents, we are very thankful for the meal-enhancing equipment we are able to

acquire," VHS Administrator Bryan Ehlinger said in a press release, adding the grant supports VHS in promoting optimal quality of life for older adults.

In its grant application, VHS said, "Palatable meals are essential to the enjoyment and wellbeing of our residents. In a nursing-home setting, the food-service program is more than a way to provide nourishment, but a highlighted experience."

VHS is a 160-bed long-term care and rehabilitation facility that offers inpatient and outpatient services. Founded in 1984, it's a corporately affiliated member of Bassett Healthcare Network

Area technology workforce-development programs receive funding

The New York State Pathways in Technology program received \$31.5 million in funding to use toward preparing students for high-skill jobs in technology, manufacturing, health care, and finance. Programs in Onondaga and Oneida counties received funding.

The New York State Pathways in Technology Early College High School (NYS P-TECH) Program incorporates an integrated program between four and six years long that combines high school, college, and career training. The program, a public-private partnership, provides students with mentorship and opportunities to learn through worksite visits, speakers, and internships.

The Syracuse Central School District, in partnership with Onondaga Community College and Micron Technology, received \$2.7 million.

Madison-Oneida BOCES — in partnership with Mohawk Valley Community College and MACNY, The Manufacturers Association — was

allocated \$2.85 million.

"Early workforce development and career mentorship allow students to discover their passions and talents, develop their skills, and build relationships with mentors who can guide them on their career journey and prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow," Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a press release. "This program will help ensure thousands of New York students can reach their full potential and gives employers access to a large pool of talent that can bring their enterprises to the next level."

Students in the program can receive an associate degree in a high-tech field and are first in line for a job with participating business partners following completion of the program. Career pathways begin in ninth grade and include workplace learning, as well as high school and college coursework. The pathway continues through two years of postsecondary career and technical education — culminating in an associate degree.



Grossman St. Amour partner named to Health Foundation for Western & Central New York board

SYRACUSE — Linda Gabor, partner at Syracuse-based Grossman St. Amour CPAs, has recently been appointed to the board of trustees of the Health Foundation for Western & Central New York.



Gabor

The Health Foundation for Western & Central New York is an independent private foundation that advocates for continuous improvement in health and health care for the people and communities of Western and Central New York. The board of trustees provides leadership, oversight, and strategic guidance to the Health Foundation.

Gabor has been with Grossman St. Amour CPAs since June 2007. She leads the firm's audit practice, employee benefits plan practice, and peer review practice. Gabor is a CPA in New York state and a certified fraud examiner. She is a graduate of Le Moyne College with a bachelor's degree in accounting and economics.

New York egg production drops 2.5 percent in June

Farms in New York state produced 142.3 million eggs in June, down 2.5 percent from 145.9 million eggs in the year-prior month, the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) recently reported.

The number of layers in the Empire State averaged 5.71 million in the sixth month of this year, down 1.2 percent from 5.78 million layers in the year-ago month. June egg production per 100 layers dipped 1.3 percent to 2,491 eggs in June compared to 2,524 eggs in June 2022.

In neighboring Pennsylvania, egg production rose just under 10 percent to nearly 686 million eggs in June from more than 625 million eggs a year earlier.

U.S. egg production totaled almost 9.08 billion eggs in June, up nearly 4.4 percent from about 8.7 billion eggs in June 2022.

New York milk production increases more than 3 percent

New York dairy farms produced 1.355 billion pounds of milk in June, up 3.4 percent from 1.311 billion pounds in the year-prior month, according to the monthly milk-production report that the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released on July 20.

Milk production per cow in the Empire State averaged 2,150 pounds in the sixth month of 2023, up 2.1 percent from 2,105 pounds in June 2022. The number of milk cows on farms in New York totaled 630,000 head in June, up 1.1 percent from 623,000 head in the year-earlier month, NASS reported.

New York dairy farms were paid an average of \$20.30 per hundredweight of milk in May, off 3.8 percent from \$21.10 in April, but down a sharp 22.1 percent from \$27.10 in May 2022.

AIS wins \$98.5M Air Force contract for AI research

BY TRACI DELORE
tdelore@cnybj.com

ROME — Rome cyber and information-security company Assured Information Security Inc. (AIS) was recently awarded an Artificial Intelligence-Based Endpoint Defense (ABED) \$98.5 million contract focused on researching artificial intelligence (AI)-based techniques.

The goal is to enhance the effectiveness and increase the autonomy of cyber capabilities being developed by the Air Force and its partnering combatant commands. It will result in the delivery of cyber capabilities with greater flexibility, wider applicability, increased precision, and better security, the company says.

“ABED is an opportunity for AIS to integrate and transition unprecedented defenses against the primary attack vectors employed by our adversaries, most notably embedding sophisticated attack code and data in digital files,” Salvatore Paladino, AIS director of cyber operations

research and development, said in a news release. The work will leverage AI and machine learning (ML) techniques to reduce the manpower and expertise required to operate cyber tools effectively, at scale, and at the pace of cyber, he added. The solutions will provide an advantage to the Air Force, the Department of Defense, and commercial entities.

AIS will complete the work at its Rome headquarters with an expected finish date of Sept. 30, 2028. The contract will create up to 10 new jobs at AIS and secure 50 existing jobs for the next five years, per the company. The Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome is the contracting authority for the award.

“This critical federal investment puts Central New York at the center of the transition into the new AI age right here in Rome, by investing in artificial intelligence to advance U.S. cyber capabilities and integrate new and unprecedented defenses against American adversaries,” U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) said.



PHOTO CREDIT: ASSURED INFORMATION SECURITY

Two software engineers on Assured Information Security's Agile Cyber Solutions (ACS) Team work together on a cyber research project at AIS headquarters in Rome, New York.

“This major \$98.5 million investment will not only strengthen our national security by harnessing the power of AI innovation, something I've been focusing on a lot recently in my new SAFE Innovation framework, but it will also provide a significant boost to the upstate economy and channel the talents of central New York's world-class workforce for years to come.”

ABED is a Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) Phase III award. The SBIR program is a competitive one that encourages domestic small businesses to

engage in federal research and development aimed at commercializing solutions. A phase III project focuses on work that builds upon things developed under prior SBIR agreements. This is the third phase III SBIR contract that AIS was awarded and the second in the last three years.

Founded in 2001, AIS provides government and commercial customers with research, development, consulting, testing, forensics, remediation, and training services. AIS has more than 200 employees located throughout the U.S. ■

Walsh names new finance commissioner, Smart City manager

BY ERIC REINHARDT
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

SYRACUSE — Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh recently made two personnel announcements.

Walsh has named Michael Cannizzaro the City of Syracuse's new commissioner of finance. He also announced the appointment of Vincent Scipione as Syracuse's Smart City manager.

About Cannizzaro

Cannizzaro has been working for the city since 2020, having started as director of accounting before being appointed deputy commissioner of finance in 2022, Walsh's office said.

“Michael Cannizzaro takes over as finance commissioner with a deep knowledge of Syracuse's finances and a determination to further strengthen the City's fiscal condition,” Walsh said in a news release. “He has a strong track record of improving the City's financial processes and increasing the accuracy and timeliness of our reporting. Michael is also a well-respected leader in our finance department and across city government.”

Cannizzaro, a certified public accountant, has more than 12 years of experience in finance and accounting. He has worked for

major private companies and for regional and national accounting firms. As director of accounting with the city, Cannizzaro was instrumental in enabling Syracuse to eliminate material weaknesses in its annual audit in 2021, the first time in more than a decade, the mayor's office said.

Cannizzaro graduated from Henninger High School and is also a graduate of Cornell University.

He succeeds current finance commissioner Brad O'Connor, who is returning to a position in the private sector. O'Connor served the city for nearly four years, first as its deputy commissioner of finance and then as commissioner of finance from 2020-2023.

“I'm very grateful to Brad O'Connor for his service to the City of Syracuse. Under his leadership, Syracuse made major progress on its path to fiscal sustainability. Brad guided the City through the fiscal uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, helped build the City's fund balance to a responsible level, and played a critical role in improving the outlook the big credit ratings agencies have on Syracuse,” Walsh contended. “We are fortunate he brought his talents to city government.”

About Scipione

As Smart City manager, Scipione will



PHOTO CREDIT: CITY OF SYRACUSE

Michael Cannizzaro is now serving as commissioner of finance for the City of Syracuse. He previously was the deputy commissioner of finance. Cannizzaro succeeds Brad O'Connor, who is returning to a position in the private sector, the office of Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh said.



PHOTO CREDIT: CITY OF SYRACUSE

Vincent Scipione is now working as the City of Syracuse's Smart City manager, developing data-driven, smart-city infrastructure and programs, the office of Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh said.

develop data-driven, smart-city infrastructure and programs, Walsh's office said.

Scipione will work with other city departments such as the office of analytics, performance and innovation (API) and information technology to bring together a “diverse set of government, academic and private-sector partners.”

Reporting to the director of strategic initiatives, the role plays a “key part” in the Syracuse Surge strategy — Walsh's strategy for “inclusive growth in the New Economy.”

Scipione will support the development and implementation of local digital-equity plans, — including the community-broadband program — to address the “digital divide” in Syracuse. He will monitor the effectiveness of projects using Internet of Things and other “smart” systems to enable “more efficient and equitable” city operations.

He will also ensure projects maintain

alignment with data, privacy, and surveillance-related policies and plans.

Scipione previously worked in a technical capacity at Caterpillar, Inc. and at SIDEARM Sports. In his previous roles, he developed cloud-based infrastructure, automated deployment tools, and managed digital-product launches.

Scipione earned his master's degree in information management from Syracuse University, in addition to a certificate of advanced study in data science and his bachelor's degree in information management and technology.

He has since returned to the university as an adjunct professor in the School of Information Studies, which is also known as the iSchool. He is also a 2022 graduate of FOCUS Greater Syracuse's Citizens Academy and a founding member of the Salt Springs Neighborhood Association, Walsh's office said. ■



GET HIGH-QUALITY PLAQUES FROM THE ORIGINAL SOURCE!

Visit bjnn-newsstand.com or scan the QR code to see all options



Survey: New York manufacturing activity “held steady” in July

BY ERIC REINHARDT
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

Survey details

The new-orders index was little changed at 3.3, indicating that orders edged higher, and the shipments index fell 9 points to 13.4, pointing to an increase in shipments, “though at a slower pace than last month,” the New York Fed said.

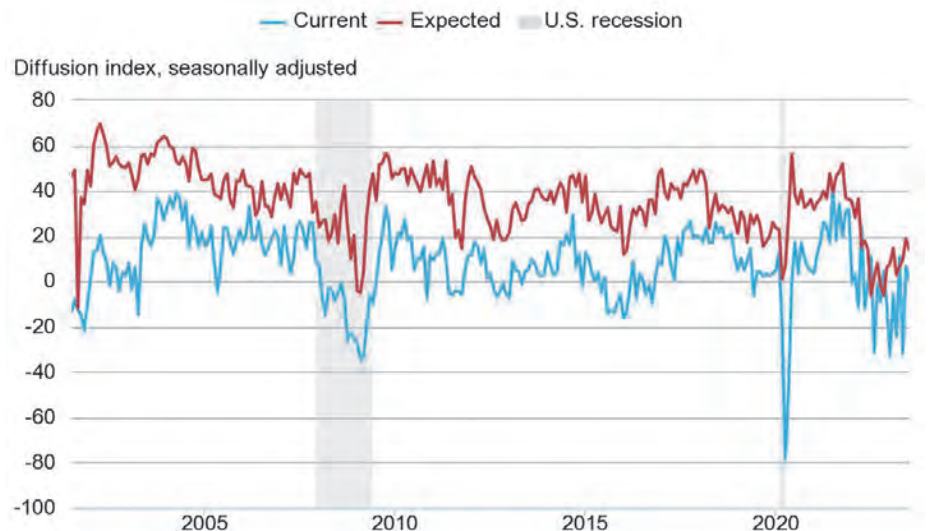
At -8.8, the unfilled-orders index remained negative for a third straight month, a sign that unfilled orders continued to decline. The inventories index also remained negative at -10.8, indicating that inventories moved lower.

The delivery times index came in at -6.9, suggesting that delivery times shortened.

The index for number of employees climbed into positive territory for the first time since January and, at 4.7, “pointed to a small increase” in employment. The average-workweek index rose to 0.3, indicating little change in hours worked.

Price increases continued to “moderate.” The prices-paid index fell 5 points to 16.7, and the prices-received index fell 5 points to 3.9. The prices-paid index has

General Business Conditions



VISUAL CREDIT: NEW YORK FED WEBSITE

The Empire State Manufacturing Survey general business-conditions index fell 6 points in July to 1.1.

The index had climbed 38 points in June to 6.6 after plummeting 43 points in May to -31.8. The general business-conditions index is the monthly gauge on New York’s manufacturing sector.

The July reading — based on firms responding to the survey — indicates business activity “held steady” in New York State, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York said in its July 17 report.

A positive reading indicates expansion or growth in manufacturing activity, while a negative index number shows a decline in the sector.

The survey found 29 percent of respondents reported that conditions had improved over the month, while 27 percent said that conditions had worsened, the New York Fed said.

It also found that new orders “inched up” and shipments “expanded.”

now fallen nearly 50 points over the past year, and the prices-received index has declined a “cumulative” 27 points, the New York Fed said.

The index for future business conditions edged down to 14.3, indicating that while conditions are expected to improve, optimism remained subdued. New orders and shipments are expected to increase modestly, delivery times are anticipated to continue to shorten,

and employment is expected to expand modestly.

The capital spending index fell 5 points to 2.9, suggesting that capital spending plans “remained soft.”

The New York Fed distributes the Empire State Manufacturing Survey on the first day of each month to the same pool of about 200 manufacturing executives in New York. On average, about 100 executives return responses. ■

Finger Lakes Health’s affiliation with URMC begins Aug. 1

BY ERIC REINHARDT
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

GENEVA — Finger Lakes Health (FLH) will officially join the health system led by the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) on Aug. 1.

Officials of both institutions announced the affiliation during a July 6 news conference in Geneva.

The affiliation seeks to “maintain and expand access to high-quality health services close to home” in the communities of eastern Ontario, Seneca, Yates, and Wayne counties served by Finger Lakes Health. It follows a recently signed agreement to collaborate with New York State Attorney General Letitia James to ensure the affiliation meets the health-care needs of Finger Lakes residents, FLH said.

“Affiliation ensures that we can continue to provide vital services for all our patients and focus on expanding their health care choices in the years to come,” Dr. Jose Acevedo, president and CEO of Finger Lakes Health, said. “We are proud to join the University of Rochester Medical Center, a center of research and patient care with a reputation for exceptional innovation, quality, and safety.”

Acevedo will continue overseeing all administrative operations and patient services provided by the new affiliate, which will be known as UR Medicine Finger Lakes Health.

Acevedo noted the advantages of joining a health system that has built “meaningful, productive” affiliations with other rural hospitals in upstate New York at a time when rural hospitals in other parts of the country are “financially fragile and at risk of closure.”

“This connection to one of the nation’s leading academic medical centers will build upon established clinical partnerships, increase access to specialty care, and enhance our ability to serve our communities for generations to come,” Acevedo noted.

About FLH

Finger Lakes Health currently employs about 1,350 doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, and staff members who will join more than 27,000 faculty and staff members employed by URMC and its UR Medicine affiliates.

As a new affiliate, FLH adds two inpatient hospitals — Geneva General in Geneva and Soldiers & Sailors

Memorial in Penn Yan — along with four long-term care facilities and 13 physician practices.

UR Medicine, the health system led by URMC, already includes Strong Memorial and Highland Hospitals in Rochester; Thompson Health in Canandaigua; Noyes Health in Dansville; Jones Memorial Hospital in Wellsville; and St. James Hospital in Hornell, as well as nursing homes, senior-housing facilities, home health providers, and physician groups.

Geneva General Hospital and Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hospital in Penn Yan will retain local governance by community boards, with three URMC representatives joining the Finger Lakes Health board of directors and three FLH representatives joining the URMC board.

Moving forward

The affiliation will now proceed after several years of planning and following anti-trust investigations by the Federal Trade Commission and New York State Attorney General’s office.

The systems provided “extensive” documents and data demonstrating “substantial benefits” to patients and communities served by other rural hospitals after they joined UR Medicine, and showing that the same will be true for Finger Lakes Health. The parties will develop a detailed plan for maintaining and expanding patient services in the Finger Lakes Health service area, reporting progress to the attorney general annually for five years.

“We thank Attorney General James for her support in making this affiliation happen,” Dr. Mark Taubman, CEO of the University of Rochester Medical Center, said. “We are also grateful to [U.S.] Senator Chuck Schumer and Congressman Joe Morelle, who expressed strong support for the affiliation to federal and state regulators.”

Expanding on existing collaborations

Taubman noted that URMC and its physicians already collaborate with Finger Lakes Health to provide cardiology, stroke care, cancer treatment, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, urology and vascular-care services in the Finger Lakes Health service area. That includes performing surgeries at Geneva General Hospital and Finger Lakes Surgery Center.

Under the affiliation plan, URMC will work with Finger Lakes Health to expand access to a range of primary and



Finger Lakes Health, which includes Geneva General Hospital (seen here), recently announced an affiliation agreement with the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC), which takes effect Aug. 1.

PHOTO CREDIT: FINGER LAKES HEALTH

specialty-care services; support implementation of the electronic medical record used by all UR Medicine affiliates to provide patients a “seamless care experience;” build operational efficiencies through group purchasing; and help recruit physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants.

“Our mission as a health system is to provide families across upstate New York with high-quality patient care as close to home as possible for nearly all their medical needs, with access to highly specialized services by traveling no farther than Rochester,” Taubman said. “We have high regard for Dr. Acevedo and his leadership team, and look forward to working more closely to expand access to care for Finger Lakes families.”

“Extensive” search for a partner

The affiliation process began in June 2019 with Finger Lakes Health’s board of directors initiating a request for proposals for potential partners. FLH sought to serve its large patient base in eastern Ontario, Seneca, Yates, and Wayne counties with “comprehensive and patient-centered” medical care.

“Our board was committed to serving our communities’ health-care needs,” Menzo Case, chair of the Finger Lakes Health board of directors, said. “The University of Rochester Medical Center clearly emerged as the best partner aligned with our mission, committed to our communities, and assuring ease of access to services close to home.”

The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the formal affiliation, but in October 2020, the two organizations entered into a management-services agreement that the New York State Department of Health approved. The management-services agreement focused on expanding the “longstanding collaborative relationships” between Finger Lakes Health and URMC physicians and served as a “meaningful step” toward the affiliation, the health organizations said. ■

Nascentia unveils renovated Beeches Manor

BY TRACI DELORE
tdelore@cnybj.com

ROME — Nascentia Health recently cut the ribbon on the newly renovated Beeches Manor, the first phase of improvements and changes planned at the Beeches complex.

The health-care agency has had an office on the Beeches property since about 2011, COO Cheryl Manna says. About a decade in, Destito Realty, Inc. reached out to Nascentia about purchasing the property, she notes, and Nascentia became the new owner in April 2021.

Work began soon after on the Manor. It needed some TLC, Manna says, and was a priority because it's also the hub of the property.

The Hayner Hoyt Corporation of Syracuse served as general contractor for the project, which updated the kitchen, three banquet rooms, and pub. That included all-new restaurant-grade equipment for the kitchen, restoring or replacing flooring, plaster and woodwork restoration, gas-fireplace inserts, installing new windows, replacing the HVAC system, and new state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment. Copper donated by Revere Copper was incorporated into the bar area.

The goal was to not only modernize things, but also keep the charm and appeal of the 1917 stone mansion, she says. Rather than replace all the old furniture, much was left with new pieces scattered here and there.

The Manor has room for up to 450 people for events, and can also host smaller gatherings like corporate meetings, bridal and baby showers, and seminars. There is an outdoor deck, as well as a lawn area large enough to hold an event tent.

The space is still available for rental for events, and Manna says Nascentia also hopes to make use of the space for the residents it will have on the property even-

tually. The pub will soon be open to the public for light dinner fare a few days a week.

Future Manor renovations include restoring the second floor to provide guest accommodations.

The next phase of renovations in the multi-year plan to transform the Beeches property into an active adult retirement community includes renovating the Beeches Inn into 55 units of accessible senior housing. Future development will include patio homes.

Some housing may be for sale, while other units are leased, Manna says. Those details are still being worked out as plans are drawn up.

“One of the things we were excited about was the ability to create some housing on the property,” she says. “The right kind of housing is hard to come by for seniors.”

Nascentia is applying for Homes and Community Renewal funding as well as Health Care Transformation funding from the state for the next phase of the project, which includes the housing as well as transforming one of the buildings on the property into a larger office for Nascentia.

The medical offices would house Nascentia's current operations, Manna says, and also be large enough to provide other services such as primary care.

Other planned work includes repairing an existing pool, including restoring the adjacent stone pool house, and possibly adding fountains with some outdoor seating. Nascentia would also like to add a second pool and other outdoor amenities such as pickleball courts, a gazebo, walking trails, cart paths, and a pavilion.

In the lower level of the Manor, “we're looking at possibly adding gym or spa services,” Manna says.

“It's really going to be a hopping property when it's finished,” she quips.

Nascentia Health is a home-health-care agency serving



PHOTO CREDIT: SOLON QUINN STUDIOS

Nascentia Health held a ribbon cutting on July 20 to show off renovations to Beeches Manor including an update to its kitchen, three banquet rooms, and pub. The next phase of the project will add senior housing to the Beeches property.

48 counties. It employs more than 500 people at offices in Syracuse, Rome, Rochester, Buffalo, and Albany. ■

Oswego County gets \$1.8M in state matching funds after shared-services tax savings

BY ERIC REINHARDT
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

OSWEGO — Oswego County is receiving nearly \$1.8 million in state matching funds resulting from taxpayer savings through shared services in 2020.

The funding is provided through the County-Wide Shared Services Initiative (CWSSI), the New York Department of State announced recently. CWSSI provides a one-time state match of county and local-government taxpayer savings achieved in the first year of implementation of new shared-services projects.

“Our County-Wide Shared Services Initiative plays a critical role in helping local governments run more efficiently and effectively,” New York State Secretary of State Robert Rodriguez said in a news release. “Through this program, Oswego County worked together with its local government partners to identify new and creative ways to share services, delivering real savings for taxpayers that will repeat annually for years to come.”

Pharmacy benefit, highway equipment

As part of the CWSSI, Oswego County created a shared-services plan that identi-

fied ways to consolidate services and save taxpayer money through government efficiencies in services and community programs. The two shared-services projects that were implemented as part of this plan and resulted in taxpayer savings included a pharmacy benefit coalition and the sharing of highway equipment.

Oswego County partnered with Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse to create a pharmacy-benefit coalition. This partnership allows the county to reduce spending associated with administering employee benefit plans and save taxpayer dollars, while also reducing prescription-drug costs for employees. Oswego County had more than \$1.7 million in taxpayer savings

in 2020 as a result of this partnership.

At the same time, Oswego County obtained a piece of highway equipment called a screener that was shared between the towns of Richland and Sandy Creek. A screener is used to refine waste roadway materials for wintertime application and is usually towed behind a large utility vehicle, such as a dump truck.

Oswego County generated \$35,702 in taxpayer savings in 2020 as a result, and Richland and Sandy Creek each produced \$4,133 in taxpayer savings, for a total of \$43,969. ■



Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo Presents

Brew at the Zoo

Friday, August 4
5:30 - 8 p.m.

- Regional **craft beers, wines & beverages**
- Local food trucks
- Live entertainment
- Silent auction
- Animals on evening exhibit including **koalas** and **Asian elephants**,
- and much more!

FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO PURCHASE TICKETS

SCAN ME!

BANKING & CREDIT UNION REPORT



Cooperative Federal, a Syracuse credit union, on July 21 held a formal-opening ceremony for its relocated branch at 1816 Erie Boulevard East in Syracuse. The new location replaces a branch that had operated at 723 Westcott St. since 1994.

PHOTO CREDIT: COOPERATIVE FEDERAL

Cooperative Federal formally opens its relocated branch on Erie Boulevard

BY ERIC REINHARDT
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

SYRACUSE — Cooperative Federal, a credit union founded and headquartered in Syracuse, on July 21 formally opened its relocated office at 1816 Erie Boulevard East in Syracuse.

The credit union's Erie Boulevard location replaced a branch formerly located just under 1 mile away at 723 Westcott St., where Cooperative Federal operated from 1994 through this spring.

The new branch, which has 21 employees, had a "soft opening" on April 20, Meagan Weatherby, development and communications manager for Cooperative Federal, tells CNYBJ in an email.

From this new location, Cooperative Federal contends it offers "expanded access" to financial services for homeownership, small business, personal banking, and credit, "with a focus on reaching

people and communities that have been unjustly excluded from wealth."

"Since our founding over 40 years ago, Cooperative Federal has been more than a financial institution — we are part of the movement for racial and economic justice," Christina Sauve, CEO of Cooperative Federal, noted in a news release about the grand-opening event. "We use the tools of finance to help uplift Syracuse neighborhoods, unlocking opportunities for homebuyers, entrepreneurs, and people from all walks of life."

Sauve went on to say. "Above all, Coop Fed's work is grounded in a commitment to inclusion and solidarity. We know that the only way to reckon with current and historical injustice is to support one another and work side by side."

The Erie Boulevard East office is now the credit union's largest branch, offering updated amenities including drive-through service. It represents a "centralized hub"

for member service, lending, financial counseling, community development, and back-office operations, including off-street parking.

"As the only Minority Depository Institution [MDI] in the Central NY region, Cooperative Federal has the potential and the responsibility to serve more people," Sauve said.

MDIs are banks and credit unions where people of color are the majority of the account holders, board leaders, and service-area residents. Cooperative Federal currently serves nearly 6,000 households, small businesses and community organizations, and is on a mission to double that number over the next several years.

"By moving into a larger and more centrally located facility, in a highly diverse neighborhood, Cooperative Federal will build on our founders' legacy and rise to the challenges facing Syracuse today,"

Sauve added. "We welcome all the people of Syracuse to join us."

The credit union was founded by community organizers in 1982 with a mission to "provide equitable access to capital" for homeownership, small business, and personal finance, per the credit union.

The new branch is also located in a certified opportunity zone, meaning it is designated by local government as a priority area for economic development. Through its presence, Cooperative Federal says it aims to support development that is "inclusive, sustainable, equitable, and beneficial to neighborhood residents who are predominantly people of color living in low-income households."

Besides the new Erie Boulevard location, Cooperative Federal also has locations at 401 South Avenue (inside the Southwest Community Center), 800 North Salina St., and 516 Burt St. (inside the Syracuse Housing Authority). ■

AmeriCU announces major expansion of membership field

BY TRACI DELORE
tdelore@cnybj.com

ROME — Big things are happening at AmeriCU Credit Union.

The Rome-based credit union began this year with several strategic moves that set the organization up for continued growth, including opening a virtual branch and other innovative technology as well as adding several new positions, including three business-relations managers.



Belle

“We have experienced considerable organic growth,” AmeriCU CEO Ronald Belle says. Now, the credit union hopes to bump up that growth by expanding its field of membership into 15 additional counties.

The credit union has served the nine counties of Cayuga, Cortland, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, and Oswego for many years. Now, it has approval from the New York State Department of Financial Services to expand its field of membership to include Broome, Chenango, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, Otsego, St. Lawrence, Seneca, Schoharie, Tioga, Tompkins, and Wayne counties.

“That’s a significant increase for us,”

Belle says. AmeriCU currently has about 60,000 members and has been growing membership between steadily in recent years. With the expanded field of membership, AmeriCU now has access to a population of about 2.2 million people to further grow membership, he adds. AmeriCU already has some members in those counties, which represents a natural expansion outward from the counties the credit union has already served.

The organization just received the approval in July, Belle says, so there aren’t any immediate plans to open branches in those counties. “With the virtual branch, members in the new county can interact with us without a branch,” he notes.

Belle expects new branches will happen after careful planning and also anticipates employment to grow beyond the current 400 employees in order to maintain the level of service that credit-union members expect.

He credits his team and that level of service they provide, combined with all the same technology that big banks offer, with AmeriCU’s continued membership growth. Advancements such as video teller machines, which connect members in real time with AmeriCU staff via video, and the credit union’s virtual financial center provide a variety of ways for members to transact their business.



PHOTO CREDIT: AMERICU

The formula allows those who want to interact in person to visit a branch and have that experience, while those who prefer to use technology to handle their banking can do that instead, he says. The mix keeps AmeriCU relevant to members of all ages, and as a result, he says the credit union has seen growth across all age brackets.

AmeriCU is actively working to expand its commercial membership as well. Historically, credit unions were seen as financial institutions for individual consumers, but the reality is that AmeriCU offers the same products and services as a bank, Belle says.

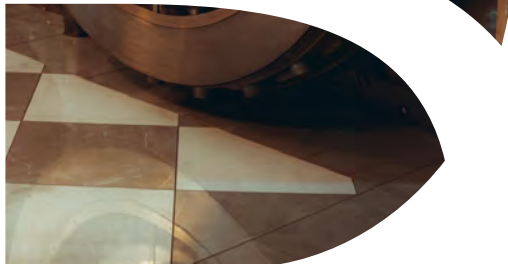
“I do think there’s an opportunity for credit unions to expand in that space,” he adds. Banks serve the business community well — and so do credit unions, he says.

Being local also helps the credit union serve its members — both individuals and

businesses, Belle notes. “Our deposits are local. Our loans are local,” he says. “Local matters to people.”

Beyond that, AmeriCU works to invest in the communities it does business in, he says. Managers are encouraged to be active on the boards of organizations within the community. On top of that, the credit union added a “personal day of meaning” to its employee benefits this year. That benefit gives each employee eight paid hours each year to devote to volunteering at an organization that’s important to them to the tune of between 2,000 and 2,500 volunteer hours annually. Additionally, AmeriCU supports about 150 organizations in those communities in some way, and that number will only grow as AmeriCU expands, Belle says.

AmeriCU serves its 160,000 members at 20 branch locations in Central and Northern New York. ■



We see your vision through

From regional banks to international financial institutions, Harris Beach’s Financial Institutions team brings extensive knowledge of the industry’s ever-changing market. We’ll help you close commercial and real estate loan transactions, meet FDIC regulatory compliance requirements, handle bankruptcy and restructuring proceedings, address cybersecurity protection, comply with digital currency regulation, and litigate virtually any type of individual or class action matter a financial institution encounters.



HARRIS BEACH PLLC
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Discover True Engagement®

CONNECT WITH OUR EXPERIENCED TEAM AT
HARRISBEACH.COM



Financial Institutions Team Member
Seth T. Hiland
shiland@harrisbeach.com | 607.330.7721
119 East Seneca St., Ithaca, NY 14850
333 West Washington St., Suite 200 Syracuse, NY 13202

Five Star Bank promotes Bader to chief information security officer

BY ERIC REINHARDT
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

WARSAW, N.Y. — Financial Institutions, Inc. (NASDAQ: FISI), parent company of Five Star Bank, on July 24 announced that it has promoted Scott Bader to serve as the bank's senior VP and chief information security officer (CISO).

In his role, Bader will be responsible for the "execution and evolution" of the bank's information and cybersecurity program, as well as compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements regarding information access, security, and privacy.

"Scott is an exceptional and proven leader who I'm confident will help the bank achieve its strategic goals while ensuring customer and bank information is maintained in a highly secure manner," Gary Pacos, chief risk officer of Five

Star Bank, said in a release. "Having led Five Star Bank's technology function through significant growth during the past 15 years, Scott has strong technology experience, deep institutional knowledge and a keen understanding of the sophisticated threats facing the financial services industry today, all of which are key to supporting Five Star Bank and its affiliates into the future."

Bader background

Since joining Five Star Bank in 2008, Bader has taken on "steadily increasing" responsibility in the information security and technology functions.

From 2010-2014, he led the launch of the bank's information-security program as senior VP and information security officer and technology services manager. Since 2014, Bader has served as senior VP and technology services

director and played an integral role in the bank's digital transformation.

Prior to joining Five Star Bank, Bader worked in progressive technology roles at retailer Chico's FAS, Inc. He also served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1990-1994, working on an international counterintelligence team.

Five Star Bank and Financial Institutions, Inc. are headquartered in Warsaw in Wyoming County in Western New York. Five Star Bank has about 50 branches throughout Western and Central New York. Its CNY branches include offices in Auburn, Waterloo, Geneva, Ovid, Horseheads, and Elmira. Five Star Bank recently expanded into the Syracuse market with a new commercial-loan production office at 115 Solar St. in the city's Franklin Square area.

Financial Institutions, Inc. has about \$6 billion in assets, offering banking, insurance, and wealth-management products and services through a network of subsidiaries. ■



Bader



PHOTO CREDIT: SFCU

Sidney Federal Credit Union (SFCU) Board Chairman Scott McLean and CEO Jim Reynolds ceremonially broke ground on the credit union's Cicero branch. The project should wrap up by the end of this year or early in 2024.

Community Bank System leaders prepare for transition

BY TRACI DELORE
tdelore@cnybj.com

DeWITT — Community Bank System, Inc. (NYSE: CBU) will have a new leader in the new year, but don't expect too many things to change at the banking company.

"We've built a company that is very diversified and very stable," incoming President/CEO Dimitar A. Karaivanov says in an interview with CNYBJ. With a significant banking business (Community Bank, N.A.), insurance business (OneGroup NY), benefits business (BPAS), and wealth-management business (Community Bank Wealth Management), "we have all the pieces in place," he says.

Current Community Bank System President/CEO Mark E. Tryniski will retire on Dec. 31 from the role he has filled since 2006.

Karaivanov will bring with him a new intensity level and energy to the role with plans to continue on the same growth path, including attracting both top talent and top clients.

While the banking climate remains in a bit of turmoil amid current economic and interest-rate conditions, Community Bank has built a reputation of trust and permanence, he says. It's a business

model that is sustainable and bolstered by the company's diversification.

"A lot of our competitors are, frankly, just a bank," Karaivanov says. About one-third of Community Bank's income comes from outside the banking business, he says. That diversification helps the company weather volatility in the industry.

The banking company has focused on steady and consistent growth, he adds. Excluding one-time gains and losses, Community Bank System generated \$176.6 million in total operating revenue in the first quarter of 2023, up 10 percent from the prior year's first quarter and up 0.4 percent from the fourth quarter of 2022.

Community Bank's approach isn't flashy, but it's stable and sustainable. The result is a bank that's just the right size. It's a sweet spot, Karaivanov says, between being big enough to offer a robust menu of products and services and small enough to provide a boutique experience for customers. The banking company has 3,000 employees and 200 bank branches throughout New York, northeast Pennsylvania, Vermont, and western Massachusetts.

While Community Bank has relied on acquisitions in the past for growth, today organic growth has doubled over the company's historic rate, Karaivanov says. Acquisitions remain a growth option

when the right opportunity comes along, he adds.

Going forward, one of the things Karaivanov is most enthusiastic about is the staff he will lead. "I just couldn't be more excited about the talent we have at the company," he says. "I'm just amazed every day. I think we're in the best position we've ever been in because we have the best people we ever have."

Tryniski says he counts Karaivanov as one of those talented people, noting that he tried to get his successor to join the banking company for the better part of a decade before Karaivanov finally joined Community Bank System in June 2021 as executive VP of financial services and corporate development.

Looking back on his years of leading the company, Tryniski is proud of the company's evolution, but is even more proud of its culture and mission of integrity, excellence, teamwork, and humility. "To me, that's most important," he says.

Looking ahead toward retirement, Tryniski says he's ready. "I don't have anything left to do on my to-do list when it comes to professional aspirations," he says. Instead, he's looking forward to spending more time with his friends and family, especially his grandchildren, having more time for his motorcycles, and "watching Dimitar from the bleachers continue to grow and prosper with this company." ■



Tryniski



Karaivanov

SFCU breaks ground on new Cicero branch office

BY TRACI DELORE
tdelore@cnybj.com

CICERO — Sidney Federal Credit Union (SFCU) recently formally broke ground on its first Syracuse-area branch at 8062 Brewerton Road in Cicero.

Construction will begin as soon as the town approves permits, with plans to complete the project by the end of this year or early 2024.

Principle Design Engineering, PLLC of Norwich is the project architect while S.J. Thomas Co., Inc. of Syracuse is the general contractor.

Once complete, the new Cicero branch will feature the same concierge-style concept the credit union established in its Amsterdam branch with personal teller pods and video-enabled interactive teller machines that connect members virtually with an SFCU representative. The 3,000-square-foot building will also feature a community room that can be used for events such as financial-wellness seminars and first-time homebuyer classes.

The new Cicero branch became possible after SFCU expanded its field of membership in 2022 to include Onondaga, Cortland, Essex, and Hamilton counties. The credit union had already served Chenango, Delaware, Fulton, Madison, Montgomery, Otsego, and Schoharie counties and portions of Broome, Oneida, and Herkimer counties.

Headquartered in Sidney, SFCU has more than 67,000 members and assets of \$865 million. Other branch locations include Sidney, Oneonta (2), Green, Norwich (2), Walton, Delhi, Hancock, Bainbridge, and Amsterdam. ■

CFCU Community Credit Union names assistant VP of business lending

BY JOURNAL STAFF
news@cnybj.com

ITHACA — CFCU Community Credit Union has promoted Margo Korowajczyk to assistant VP, business lending.

She oversees the business-loan portfolio and is responsible for analyzing all business-lending documentation, the credit union said in a release. As part of

her new role, Korowajczyk will annually obtain and analyze financial statements and current tax returns in order to evaluate cash flow and viability of the business. She will also work toward limiting CFCU's risk of losses by monitoring the quality of the loan portfolio while keeping management informed of potential losses, trends, and compliance problems, CFCU said.

Korowajczyk will train, support, and oversee the activities of the credit analyst(s), documentation specialist, and administrative assistant positions at the credit union.

Outside of work, Korowajczyk volunteers as the chairperson of the Town of Harford Zoning Board. She also serves as a member of the State Theater of Ithaca's Finance Committee.

CFCU Community Credit Union is a nonprofit financial institution serving residents in Tompkins, Cortland, Seneca, Cayuga, and Ontario counties.



Korowajczyk

Find out how where you bank can help **you** *and* your **community.**



Where you bank matters and Visions is proof. When you join the Visions family, you fuel a mission of community service that builds a better place to live, work, and play for all of us. What do you get in return? The strength of a \$5.6 billion credit union that has your back and exists to support your financial well-being.

**So, let's get started! Stop by our
Central New York branches or visit us online.**

VISIONS
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

visionsfcu.org/cares

SYRACUSE
500 Erie Blvd. W.

CICERO
5788 Circle Dr. E.

New York | New Jersey | Pennsylvania

Federally insured by NCUA.

Key Elements of a Successful Credit-Union Strategy for 2024

Strategy is a big word. It has different meanings for different people. Most credit unions have a strategy,



**JEFF
PAILLE**
Viewpoint

or at least something they refer to as a strategy. Some think of a strategic plan as a document that is produced in a nice binder and goes on a shelf. Others think of a plan with metrics that are measured every so often to chart progress toward goals.

It is likely that your credit union has revisited strategy a number of times in recent years. The disruption of COVID led to significant changes in approach, different considerations of risk, and unexpected opportunities in 2020. The last three years have continuously brought challenges that require strategic response, including embracing new ways to interact with members, challenges related to too much liquidity (then later too little liquidity), personnel management in a tight job market, on-going cybersecurity threats and risks, and a host of others. Whether you updated the documents in your strategy binder or not, you no doubt adjusted your credit union's strategy.

Emerging from the COVID disruption has included a series of fast-paced changes. The changes themselves are important but even more critical is the pace of change. Has your credit union kept up? How do you compare to other financial

institutions? Are you able to assess your strategic positioning and shift strategy as circumstances change?

Often, the biggest question posed by credit-union leaders is regarding what topics a credit union should strategize about. Or what the future will hold in terms of interest rates, inflation, etc. However, before you get into specific strategic topics, and before there is an attempt to execute a strategy, you need to think about how you "do" strategy.

To get started, there are three factors that are seen more often in high performing credit unions and not as often in credit unions that are not as high performing. Furthermore, these characteristics tend to indicate higher performance regardless of the credit union's strategic objectives or initiatives. The three factors are:

1. Relentless Execution. High performing credit unions likely have both strategy components of a nicely put together strategy document and quantitative metrics against which progress is measured. But the reason they are high performing is that they consistently embrace the strategy as an integral part of everyday operations.

Most often, successful strategy is one or two "big" decisions followed by relentless day-to-day execution. It's almost more of an attitude. Think: "We're doing this. Everyday. All the time."

There is a strong temptation to "do" strategy and put the nice document on a shelf for occasional admiration. Check it off the list and be "done." Giving in to

this temptation dooms your organization to continue doing what it's been doing, the way it's been doing it, and renders the strategic thought worthless as it will not convert to strategic action.

High performing credit unions emphasize the need to change behavior. This includes consistent communication about what you're trying to do and why. It includes pointing out what behavior is expected and calling out when that behavior is not happening.

This is not easy. This is why high performing credit unions look different than the rest of the bunch.

2. Agility. High performing credit unions are organized in a manner that allows them to gather information effectively, evaluate that information, consider stakeholder input, make decisions, and execute.

Think about March 2020. Like just about every organization of any kind, your credit union probably made decisions to change procedures and practices incredibly quickly. You had no choice at that time. You just did it. Now that we're three-plus years removed from that disruption, do you decide and execute with a sense of urgency and importance, or are you more casual about it?

High performing credit unions have embraced the idea that decision-making, even for big decisions, doesn't have to be a long, drawn-out process. Some credit unions used to make strategic decisions with multiple board-meeting presentations and discussions over a series of months. Some of those credit unions have moved to a quicker process designed around committee work and fewer board discussions. This hasn't diminished the role of the board. If anything, board members who participate in the committee work are more engaged than they were before.

The pace of change is simply too fast in the current environment to allow your credit union's tradition or some pre-set

board meeting schedule to force you to wait to make a strategic move.

3. Focus on People. A lot of strategy discussions, and strategy documents, have a lot of content in the form of facts and figures. Even more often, they have numbers and graphs focused on predicting the future. What's going to happen with interest rates? Is there going to be a recession? etc.

High performing credit unions think about those things too, but they roll out a strategy that focuses on the people. Most often, the people in this context are the credit union's employees. What impact does this strategy have on employees? To the extent employees must change their behavior, is credit-union leadership preparing all personnel for that change? Are you communicating the "why" effectively? Are you making it matter to the individuals who will actually execute the strategy?

This must go well beyond handing out a sharp-looking strategy document or making an announcement at a staff meeting. And it must be consistently part of every communication with all personnel, not just the leadership team. High performing credit unions celebrate the strategy as something that makes the credit union a great place to be. They include elements specifically related to the strategy in every person's performance objectives and goals, and evaluate people in all roles against those expectations.

There are a lot of specific strategic topics with which credit unions must deal in the current environment. But regardless of your credit union's specific strategy elements, how you formulate and roll out the strategy is what ultimately determines that strategy's success. There is a huge opportunity to move your credit union forward in a high-performing manner. ■

Jeff Paille is a partner at The Bonadio Group accounting and consulting firm. He is focused on serving credit unions and tax-exempt organizations.

ELIZABETH AMBROSE
and ELIZABETH DEMISSE
BRIDGES CORNELL HEIGHTS

powerful services *-or-* personal service

we chose both

Many banks make you choose between business banking and personal service. But Tompkins has a different view of choice. Here you can choose a bank that offers powerful business banking products and a completely different level of personal service. | tompkinsbank.com

TOMPKINS
your bank of choice BANKING | INSURANCE | WEALTH

Deposit and loan products are offered through Tompkins Community Bank, Member FDIC. Investments and insurance products are not FDIC insured, are not bank guaranteed, and may lose value. Tompkins Insurance is licensed to conduct insurance business in all 50 states. 4/23



Peoples Security Bank appoints Earley as assistant branch manager in Binghamton office

BY JOURNAL STAFF
news@cnybj.com

BINGHAMTON — Peoples Security Bank & Trust recently announced that it has promoted Duane Earley to assistant branch manager of its Binghamton office.

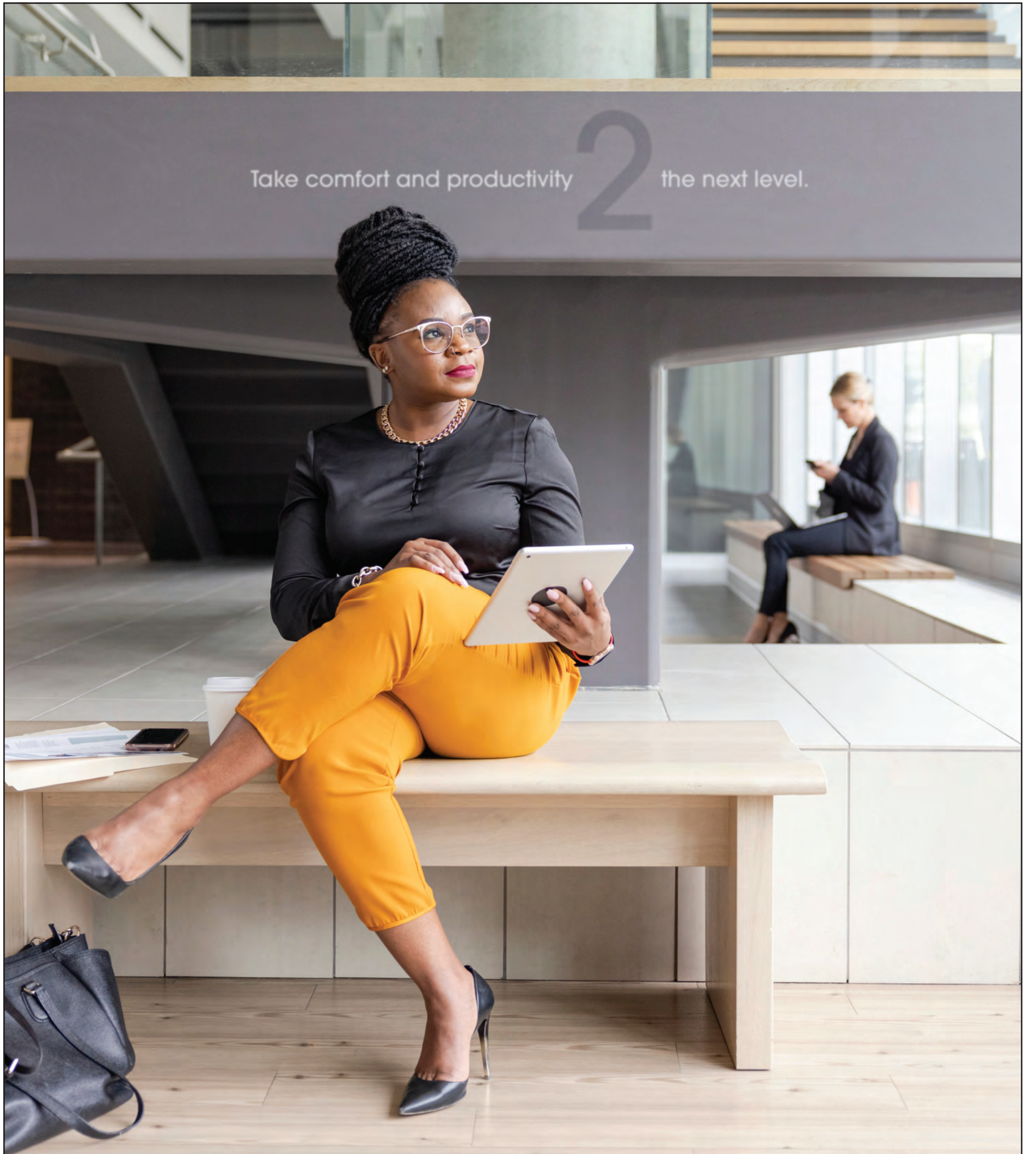
With this new position, Earley will take on a more active role in establishing a team-based culture and developing positive sales growth at the branch, the bank said in a release. Earley will be responsible for ensuring area customers receive the best in banking services, offering personal financial guidance, and developing relationships with area businesses.



Earley has nine years of banking experience with Peoples Security Bank. He has certifications in bank operations, general banking, customer service, and notary. Earley graduated from SUNY Oneonta with a bachelor's degree in business economics.

Peoples Security Bank & Trust — headquartered in Scranton, Pennsylvania — operates 28 full-service branches in 13 counties across Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. The bank has two Southern Tier of New York branches — the office in Binghamton, plus another in Conklin. It also has a pair of offices just across the border in northern Pennsylvania, in Hallstead and Susquehanna, respectively. ■

Take comfort and productivity **2** the next level.



Step up efficiency and sustainability.

Count on our team of experts to help with **energy-efficient strategies, high-efficiency heat pumps and EV charging** you need to move your facility toward a cleaner energy future.

nationalgrid

Learn more at ngrid.com/biz-cny



CREDIT UNIONS

Ranked by No. of FT Employees¹

Rank	Name Address Phone/Website	FT Employees Members	No. CNY Branches No. Total Branches	Total Assets: 2023 2022	Total Shares & Deposits Total Loans	Top Executive	Year Chartered
1.	Broadview FCU² 704 S. Crouse Ave. Syracuse, NY 13210 (800) 727-3328/broadviewfcu.com	1,401 469,481	8 65	\$8.28B \$5.59B	\$7.36B \$5.93B	Michael J. Castellana, President & CEO	1934
2.	Visions Federal Credit Union 3301 Country Club Road Endwell, NY 13760 (607) 786-2000/visionsfcu.org	784 249,894	30 56	\$5.75B \$5.63B	\$4.47B \$3.72B	Tyrone Muse, President & CEO	1966
3.	Empower FCU 1 Member Way Syracuse, NY 13212 (315) 477-2200/empowerfcu.com	619 252,331	26 31	\$3.25B \$2.93B	\$2.82B \$2.39B	Ryan McIntyre, President & CEO	1939
4.	AmeriCU Credit Union 1916 Black River Blvd. Rome, NY 13440 (315) 356-3000/americu.org	394 159,187	18 19	\$2.72B \$2.57B	\$2.26B \$2.24B	Ronald Belle, President & CEO	1950
5.	Corning Federal Credit Union 1100 Clemens Center Parkway Elmira, NY 14901 (800) 677-8506/corningcu.org	393 157,062	5 22	\$2.33B \$2.3B	\$2.03B \$2.07B	Gary Grinnell, President & CEO	1936
6.	The Summit FCU 1400 Erie Blvd. E. Syracuse, NY 13210 (315) 478-4325/summitfcu.org	245 91,327	4 15	\$1.32B \$1.22B	\$1.13B \$1.07B	Laurie Baker, President & CEO	1941
7.	First Source FCU 4451 Commercial Drive New Hartford, NY 13413 (315) 735-8571/fsource.org	228 58,018	5 5	\$931.92M \$836.62M	\$805.89M \$868.11M	Thomas Neumann, President & CEO	1938
8.	CFCU Community Credit Union 1030 Craft Road Ithaca, NY 14850 (607) 257-8500/myfcu.com	227 82,395	15 15	\$1.41B \$1.41B	\$1.22B \$1.07B	Lisa Whitaker, President & CEO	1953
9.	Sidney FCU 65 Genesee St. Greene, NY 13778 (877) 642-7328 /sfcuonline.org	192 66,376	3 10	\$834.69M \$703.07M	\$749.59M \$674.69M	Jim H. Reynolds, President & CEO	1949
10.	Northern FCU 138 Factory St. Watertown, NY 13601 (315) 782-0155/mynorthern.com	146 43,416	11 11	\$620.19M \$442.79M	\$546.31M \$513.67M	Daniel St. Hilaire, President & CEO	1955
11.	First Heritage Federal Credit Union 1707 Cedar St. Elmira, NY 14904 (607) 734-0231/fhfcu.org	136 44,942	3 9	\$699.03M \$668.1M	\$630.46M \$482.1M	Thomas J. Pisano, President & CEO	1954
12.	SeaComm Federal Credit Union 30 Stearns St. Massena, NY 13662 (315) 764-0566/seacomm.org	128 53,220	5 9	\$808.9M \$769.62M	\$687.21M \$419.02M	Scott Wilson, President & CEO	1963
13.	GPO FCU 4311 Middle Settlement Road New Hartford, NY 13413 (315) 724-1654/gpofcu.com	100 37,046	9 9	\$488.01M \$442.95M	\$435.48M \$254.68M	Nicholas Mayhew, President & CEO	1978
14.	SECNY Federal Credit Union 4727 W. Seneca Turnpike Syracuse, NY 13215 (315) 469-5599/secny.org	58 15,597	5 6	\$283.14M \$272.41M	\$260.51M \$144.51M	Walter M. Bobesky, President & CEO	1971
15.	St. Lawrence FCU 800 Commerce Park Drive Ogdensburg, NY 13669 (315) 393-3530/stlawrfcu.com	56 12,402	6 6	\$230.88M \$208.36M	\$212.39M \$157.21M	Todd R. Mashaw, CEO	1954
16.	Oswego County FCU 90 E. Bridge St. Oswego, NY 13126 (315) 343-7822/oswegofcu.org	49 12,786	6 6	\$131.36M \$132.73M	\$118.01M \$92.81M	William Carhart, CEO	1975
17.	Access FCU 6 Franklin Ave. Clinton, NY 13323 (315) 557-1000/accessfcu.org	42 22,874	5 5	\$253.34M \$252.21M	\$232.68M \$145.5M	Thomas L. Owens, President & CEO	1947
18.	GHS FCU 910 Front St. Binghamton, NY 13905 (607) 723-7962/ghsfcu.com	36 19,798	3 3	\$226.4M \$219.38M	\$211.31M \$157.59M	Shawn Wolbert, President & CEO	1940
19.	Syracuse Cooperative FCU 1816 Erie Blvd. E. Syracuse, NY 13210 (315) 471-1116/cooperativefederal.org	24 5,889	7 7	\$35.09M \$33.88M	\$30.51M \$28M	Christina Suave, CEO	1982
20.	ACMG Federal Credit Union 1753 Milton Ave. Solvay, NY 13209 (315) 488-4433/acmgfcu.org	20 6,445	2 2	\$89.24M \$89.1M	\$81.53M \$46.2M	Brian F. May, President	1953
21.	Auburn Community FCU 65 Wright Circle Auburn, NY 13021 (315) 253-2934/auburnfcu.com	19 7,647	3 3	\$124.41M \$124.6M	\$110.65M \$26.44M	Saverio (Sam) A. Scro, CEO	1936
22.	Compass FCU 131 George St. Oswego, NY 13126 (315) 342-5300/compassfcu.com	18 7,805	6 6	\$91.38M \$88.46M	\$74.25M \$51.17M	Jennifer Rupert, Manager	1966
23.	Nucor Employees Credit Union 5362 Railroad St. Chemung, NY 14825 (607) 529-9002/nucorcu.com	9 7,615	2 12	\$68.81M \$64.65M	\$59.88M \$29.73M	Richard C. Ryan, Jr., Manager	1962
	UHS Employees FCU 33-57 Harrison St. Johnson City, NY 13790 (607) 763-6565/cuonlineuhs.org	9 3,286	4 4	\$24.01M \$25.29M	\$21.67M \$14.26M	Kay L. Murray, CEO	1974
	State CS Employees FCU 317 Washington St. Watertown, NY 13601 (315) 785-2400/statecs.org	9 2,553	2 2	\$34.73M \$29.86M	\$31.54M \$29.22M	Jacqueline Ramirez, CEO	1964
26.	Mohawk Valley FCU 9212 River Road Marcy, NY 13403 (315) 624-2950/mohawkvalleyfcu.com	8 3,370	2 2	\$48.1M \$48.45M	\$41.81M \$24.53M	Crystal D. Sicilia, Manager & CEO	1971
	Westar FCU 2565 Hambletonian Way Camillus, NY 13031 (315) 672-7827/westarnet.com	8 2,530	3 3	\$37.98M \$36.77M	\$34.57M \$13.88M	Karen F. Grabowski, President & CEO	1963
28.	Rome Teachers FCU 924 Turin St. Rome, NY 13440 (315) 336-7810/rtfcu.com	7 3,055	2 2	\$56.02M \$55.9M	\$49.45M \$21.59M	Tracy M. Worden, CEO	1958
29.	Syracuse Postal FCU 5640 E. Taft Road Syracuse, NY 13220 (315) 458-5550/NA	3 1,119	2 2	\$18.62M \$18.55M	\$17.01M \$2.2M	Robert M. Medico, CEO	1989

THE LIST

Research by Vance Marriner
vmarriner@cnybj.com
(315) 579-3911
Twitter: @cnybjresearch

UPCOMING LISTS:

August 14

Certified Woman-Owned
Businesses (20 Employees or
Fewer)

August 21

Cultural & Performing Arts
Organizations

FOOTNOTES

1. Among credit unions with 2 or more branches in CNY
2. Previously listed as SEFCU

ABOUT THE LIST

Information is from the NCUA 5300 report and credit union websites. Current year financial data is through 3/30/23. Additional data for this list came from previously reported information from other lists. While *The Business Journal* strives to print accurate information, it is not possible to independently verify all data submitted. We reserve the right to edit entries or delete categories for space considerations.

Central New York includes Broome, Cayuga, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, St. Lawrence, Seneca, Tioga, and Tompkins counties.

WANT TO BE ON THE LIST?

If your company would like to be considered for next year's list, or another list, please email: vmarriner@cnybj.com

The Central New York
BUSINESS JOURNAL

JULY 31, 2023
VOL. XXXVII, NO. 31

NEWS

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Adam Rombel
arombel@cnybj.com

STAFF WRITERS
Traci DeLore
tdelore@cnybj.com

Eric Reinhardt
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Erin Zehr
ewebb@cnybj.com

RESEARCH DIRECTOR
Vance Marriner
vmarriner@cnybj.com

COLUMNISTS
Will Barclay
Lee Hamilton

SALES

Kelly Bailey
kbailey@cnybj.com

Steve Pollock
spollock@cnybj.com

CIRCULATION

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Raviv Neshet
(315) 579-3927
circulation@cnybj.com

ADMINISTRATIVE

PUBLISHER
Marny Neshet
mnesher@cnybj.com

OFFICE MANAGER
Patty Martino
officemanager@cnybj.com

The Central New York Business Journal (ISSN #1050-3005) is published every week by CNY Business Review, Inc. All contents copyrighted 2023. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher.

Cover Price \$3.00

Subscription Rate \$95 per year

Call (315) 579-3927

New Election Laws Should Have New Yorkers Concerned

What Democrats say about creating fair and equitable elections in New York and what Democrats do regarding those elections are growing increasingly further apart.



WILL BARCLAY
Opinion

While claiming recent changes in election laws are to improve turnout and democracy in the state, it is clear the motivation behind many of these policies is to suit their agenda.

The only thing worse than blatantly political-driven policy is doing so under the guise of democracy.

The trend began several years ago when the majority conferences decided to ignore a bipartisan, voter-approved constitutional amendment passed in 2014 designed to guide the Independent Redistricting Commission's work. Instead, they used their newfound majority in the Senate as an impetus to completely rewrite redistricting procedures, which ultimately allowed them to draw their own lines. What an incredible coincidence the merits of the amendment they helped negotiate and

pass no longer met muster once the legislature saw a change in its composition.

Now, after New York Republicans won Congressional seats in 2022, helping to flip control of the U.S. House of Representatives, Democrats are ignoring the will of the people and establishing their own electoral lines. The Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court recently ordered the state's congressional maps to, again, be redrawn. An appeal of this decision is imminent, but it should never have been necessary in the first place.

Making matters worse, several other pieces of highly suspect legislation were recently passed including measures to expand absentee voting, move local elections to even-numbered years, and dictate where constitutional challenges to election law can be heard. On the surface, these bills might sound benign. Of course, near-universal absentee ballots will greatly increase the risk of election fraud, changing the election cycle will undoubtedly drown local issues out at the expense of national ones and micromanaging court

"Of course, near-universal absentee ballots will greatly increase the risk of election fraud..."

venues means cases will be heard in a select few venues that just so happen to have extremely high concentrations of Democrat representation.

These changes are too obvious to ignore. The Democrats' defense of these moves has been, unsurprisingly, shrouded in political double-talk about democratic ideals. None of that is the case. These measures are a clear assault on fair elections. Ignoring the will of the people and concentrating decision-making into the hands of a select few in charge flies in direct opposition to the democratic principles guiding equitable elections. I am appalled at the audacity of these measures and will continue to fight passionately for representative elections in New York state. ■

William (Will) A. Barclay, 54, Republican, is the New York Assembly minority leader and represents the 120th New York Assembly District, which encompasses all of Oswego County, as well as parts of Jefferson and Cayuga counties.

NATO's relevance no longer in question

All eyes were on NATO [recently] as leaders of its member nations met in Lithuania to debate key issues, including their response to Russia's war against Ukraine. That marked quite a change — a positive one — in the status of the 74-year-old organization.



LEE HAMILTON
Opinion

Just a few years ago, critics were writing NATO off as an institution that had served its purpose. The Soviet Union, its old nemesis, had collapsed. Donald Trump, as president, bashed NATO allies for not carrying their weight and reportedly threatened to pull the U.S. out of the alliance. French President Emmanuel Macron famously remarked that NATO was experiencing "brain death."

But everything changed on Feb. 24, 2022, when Vladimir Putin sent Russian troops into Ukraine. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, writing recently in *Foreign Affairs*, called the invasion "a turning point in history." Now there was no question about NATO's relevance.

The alliance has been the framework for nations to oppose Russian expansionism, and the United States has played a leadership role. While Ukraine isn't yet a NATO member, it sees a revitalized alliance and deepening Western cooperation, as the WSJ notes.

At the summit in Lithuania, NATO members agreed to what Stoltenberg called a "strong package" of support for Ukraine,

including a multi-year plan for strengthening Ukraine's military, creation of a NATO-Ukraine Council to consult on issues, and a pathway for Ukraine to become a NATO member. President Joe Biden, in a speech at the end of the summit, praised NATO unity and said Putin is "making a bad bet" by doubting its staying power.

NATO was created in 1949, in response to the devastation of Europe caused by World War II. An estimated 36.5 million Europeans had been killed and millions were displaced. There were real concerns that national rivalries would reassert themselves and another war would break out. The Soviet Union posed a clear threat.

The NATO treaty bound the initial 12 nations to mutual self-defense, declaring that an attack on one would be considered an attack on all. The pact deterred Soviet aggression and did so without warfare. NATO has rightly been called the largest and most successful military alliance in history.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO focused on terrorism, ethnic violence, and civil war. It grew to include dozens of nations, several former Soviet republics among them. But, under Putin, Russia stepped up its aggression, fighting with the Republic of Georgia and Chechnya separatists and annexing parts of Ukraine, including Crimea, in 2014. When Russia troops drove into Ukraine proper last year, a line was crossed.

More nations sought NATO membership and the security it would bring. Finland, a formerly nonaligned state that shares an 830-mile border with Russia, became the 31st member this year. Sweden

will soon become No. 32 now that Turkey has dropped its objections.

Ukraine, for obvious reasons, is eager to join as well. In the leadup to last week's summit, Zelensky expressed impatience and said NATO's criteria for membership were vague and "absurd." But with the promise in Lithuania of more support, he appeared to be satisfied.

NATO has worked hard to project unity. That may be hard to maintain. Europe has relied on Russia and Ukraine for energy and food, and the war has had economic consequences. Some NATO countries, particularly those in Russia's shadow, were ready to admit Ukraine to membership now. The U.S. and other members have been cautious, concerned that admitting Ukraine could provoke a wider conflict with Russia.

These kinds of disagreements among friends are to be expected in any large alliance. What's important is that NATO members work through them and stay focused on our common interests. A strong and unified NATO has made the world safer for almost 75 years. We must work so that it continues to do so. ■

Lee Hamilton, 92, is a senior advisor for the Indiana University (IU) Center on Representative Government, distinguished scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, and professor of practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. Hamilton, a Democrat, was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years (1965-1999), representing a district in south-central Indiana.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

Email us at movers@cnybj.com

AUGUST 1

■ **Greater Oswego-Fulton Chamber of Commerce (GOFCC) Summer Celebration & BBQ** from 4-6 p.m. at Kristen's Kitchen at Battle Island State Park Golf Course, 2150 NYS Route 48, Fulton. Enjoy delicious food and beverages, live music, and networking. Cost is \$55 per person for GOFCC members, \$65 for non-members. For more information and to register, visit: <https://centerstateceo.com/news-events/gofcc-summer-celebration-bbq>

AUGUST 2

■ **Lunch and Learn with the Office of the Advocate for Business** webinar from 12-1 p.m. The Workers' Compensation Board will present a webinar on the basics of the workers' compensation system, including insurance

types, coverage requirements, and employers' obligations under the law. Sessions are free and there will be time at the end for questions. Registration is not required. You can join this session via the following link: <https://www.wcb.ny.gov/webinars/#employers>

AUGUST 8

■ **Tompkins Chamber Business After Hours** event from 5-7 p.m. at Atlas Bowl, 61 W. Main St., Trumansburg. This is the chamber's premier networking event where attendees can connect with hundreds of chamber members and community leaders. Cost is \$15 for members in advance; it's \$20 for non-members or at the door. For more information, including registration details, visit: <https://business.tompkinschamber.org/events/details/business-after-hours-at-atlas-bowl-august-2023-191818>

AUGUST 10

■ **2023 Greater Binghamton Job & Career Fair** from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at SUNY Broome Ice Center, 901 Upper Front St., Binghamton. For more information and to register, visit: <https://business.greaterbinghamtonchamber.com/events/details/2023-greater-binghamton-job-career-fair-8999?calendarMonth=2023-08-01>

AUGUST 15

■ **Greater Liverpool Chamber of Commerce Luncheon Connection** from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at Home Team Pub, 7990 Oswego Road, Liverpool. Connect with members on the outdoor patio and perhaps play some cornhole. Cost is \$18. For more information and to register, visit: <https://liverpoolchamber.com/events-calendar/#!event/2023/8/15/luncheon-connection>

AUGUST 16

■ **MACNY Clambake** from 4-7:30 p.m. at The

Spinning Wheel, 7384 Thompson Road, North Syracuse. Join MACNY, The Manufacturers Association for food, music, and fun at its annual clambake. The association says the event is great for company picnics, client/vendor appreciation, and other large groups. Register at <https://events-calendar.secure.force.com/Events?id=a0B3s00000Ewk5G> or contact Justyna Valencia, member engagement manager at MACNY at: jvalencia@macny.org

AUGUST 22

■ **Tompkins Chamber Women in Business Roundtable** from 3-4:30 p.m. at CRN Events & 1 Step Coaching and Consulting 2149 Slaterville Road, Ithaca (park in the lot off Landon Road). Attendees gather for conversation and connection with women business and nonprofit leaders from all throughout Tompkins County and the broader chamber membership. For more information, including registration details, visit: <https://business.tompkinschamber.org/events/details/women-in-business-roundtable-hosted-by-crn-events-1-step-coaching-and-consulting-191949>

CNY BUSINESS DIRECTORY



Human Resource Management
Payroll & Tax Administration
Employee Benefits & Administration

HR Technology & Reporting
Workers' Comp & Risk Management
Retirement Plans & Savings

StaffLeasingNY.com
Tailored HR & Benefits Solutions

Call us today
315.641.3600



Cory LaDuke
Associate Real Estate Broker

The Atrium
2 Clinton Square, Suite 120
Syracuse, NY 13202
Office: 315-472-2020 ext. 108
Cell: 315-877-3951
Fax: 315-472-8774
Email: claduke@jfrealestate.com
www.jfrealestate.com



Gregory Zimmer
Sales & Leasing Consultant

By Appointment: 315-256-7602
gregzimmersellscadillacs@USA.com



Cadillac
CREST CADILLAC
717 WEST GENESEE ST
SYRACUSE, NY 13204



Zoey
ADVERTISING

LEARN MORE!



Barter with Bernie and 15,000 other businesses.
Ask him how you can increase your company's sales.



Bernie Bregman, Networking Consultant
C 315.430.5249
bernardbregman@gmail.com




Charlie's Mattress Factory

Charlie Van Patten
Owner and Mattress Maker

MATTRESS MAKERS OF SYRACUSE
315.565.4025 | MattressMakersSyracuse.com

Located on Bridge Street, just behind Henry Wilson Jewelers



IT'S TIME FOR PRIME HEATING AND AIR

315.802.4287 | PrimeHeatingAndAir.com
RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL HVAC SERVICES

A great place to work.



NICOLE MCQUAID
Human Resources Manager
nmcquaid@clintonsditch.com

CLINTON'S DITCH COOPERATIVE COMPANY
"The Pepsi Place"
8478 Pardee Rd, Cicero, NY 13039



Apply for fantastic opportunities at clintonsditch.com

Business leaders who need an experienced commercial real estate specialist, call **Joe**.

315.575.4845



THE Scripa Group
5771 Miller Rd, Brewerton, NY 13029
ScripaGroup.com | Joe@ScripaGroup.com

Joseph Scripa
NYS Licensed RE Broker

Call VisTec Today!
(315) 423-2000

www.visualtec.com
contact@visualtec.com

VISUAL TECHNOLOGIES



Digital Conferencing • Event Production • Design & Integration • AV Sales & Rental

SHARE YOUR BUSINESS ON THE LOCAL SHOW

With Tom & Steve!

Call 315.471.7700 for more information

Brought to you by **GEDDES FEDERAL SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION**
Saturdays at 11 am

Brought to you by **SAFE HARBOR WILLS & TRUSTS**
Sundays at 7 am

Locally produced by Zoey Advertising

Professional Pest Management (315) 598-4046



Pest Master

Jerome Snyder OWNER
jerome@pestmaster.com

YOUR PARTNER IN PEST CONTROL

New York State Certified Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business

Asset Protection and Estate Planning for Families, Professionals, and Business Owners

Attorney John M. Murphy, Jr., Esq.



SAFE HARBOR WILLS & TRUSTS
The Asset Protection Law Firm
315-451-4700

6702 Buckley Road, Syracuse, NY 13212 | John@safeharborwillsandtrusts.com

THE BOOK OF LISTS IS NOW AVAILABLE!
VISIT BJNN-NEWSSTAND.COM

Scan the QR code to purchase your copy



PEOPLE ON THE MOVE NEWS

ACCOUNTING

MATTHEW LUMMIS has joined the FustCharles certified public accounting firm as an associate. He will provide performance audit services to health care and not-for-profit organizations. Lummis received his bachelor's degree in accounting from SUNY Oswego. He previously interned with the firm. **SARAH FAZIO** has joined FustCharles as an audit associate. Fazio received her bachelor's degree in accounting from SUNY Oswego and previously interned with the firm.



Lummis



Fazio

She is currently working to complete the examination requirements to earn her certified public accountant (CPA) license.

ADVERTISING, MARKETING & PR

Pinckney Hugo Group, a full-service marketing communications firm, has hired **ITING CHRISTINA TROUT**, of Syracuse, as a senior art director and **MEGAN RUFFALO**, of Whitesboro, as a junior art director. Prior to joining Pinckney Hugo Group, Trout was a senior design director at ZASH Global Media and Entertainment. She also gained experience in marketing as a creative manager at Gaylord Archival and as a graphic designer at CXtec. Trout



Trout



Ruffalo

has an MBA degree in entrepreneurial and small business operations from Utica University, a master of fine arts degree in film and video from the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University, and a bachelor of fine arts degree in visual communication design from Da-Yeh University in Taiwan. Ruffalo has a bachelor of fine arts degree in visual-communication design from Nazareth College.

TECHNOLOGY

ZARKO BAJANSKI has joined BeerBoard as a sales-development executive. The company is a Syracuse-based provider

of technology solutions and alcohol management to restaurants, bars, and beer companies. Bajanski brings experience as a senior-level sales executive within advertising, health-care education, marketing and staffing, where his primary focus was on business development, client relationships, and account management. In the last 10 years, Bajanski has produced a multi-million-dollar account portfolio and earned numerous company awards for his efforts. BeerBoard's clients include restaurant chains such as Buffalo Wild Wings, Hooters, Twin Peaks, WingHouse, Mellow Mushroom, and Hickory Tavern. BeerBoard also partners with major brewers like Molson Coors, Boston Beer, Constellation Brands, Lagunitas, Heineken, Diageo, Yuengling, and Sierra Nevada. ■

Race in Admissions after U.S. Supreme Court Decision

On June 29, 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its long-awaited decision in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. (SFFA) v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*. The Court considered the admissions practices of Harvard College and University of North Carolina (UNC) and found that neither could withstand the "strict scrutiny" demanded for race-based admissions decisions. Although nominally about these two particular admissions programs, the Supreme Court's rationale for its ruling leaves virtually no possibility that race-based admissions practices will withstand judicial challenge.

Harvard and UNC's Admissions Programs: Harvard and UNC's admissions policies considered the race of the applicant. At Harvard, the admissions committee made a conscious effort to ensure there would not be a "dramatic drop-off" in its minority acceptance rate in any year. Additionally, an applicant's race was among one of only a few factors considered at the end of the admissions process (legacy and athlete statuses being among the others) as Harvard determined its final admissions cohort. At UNC, an applicant's minority race could earn the applicant a "plus" factor in the ratings process. The impact of the race "plus" factor could be "significant" in the decision to admit the student or not.

The Supreme Court's Ruling: The Court explained that an admissions policy that factors race must pass "strict scrutiny" analysis. "Strict scrutiny" is a multipart test: Are the means used "further compelling government interests" and, if yes, are they "narrowly tailored — meaning 'necessary' to achieve that interest." In reviewing its own precedent, the Court acknowledged that it had, in the past, accepted that the goal of "obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a racially diverse student body" was a sufficiently compelling interest. However, the majority of justices in this *SFFA v. Harvard* decision drew upon significant cautionary language in those prior decisions, such as "a university's freedom was not unlimited," and that certain approaches, such as a quota system, have consistently been held to be impermissible. The Court explained that its precedent on race-conscious admissions practices always presumed these practices would have a reasonable end point. To that point, in 2003, although upholding race-conscious admissions practices, the Court had announced, "[w]e expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved

today."

The *SFFA v. Harvard* decision struck down both Harvard and UNC's admissions processes on the grounds they: (1) fail strict scrutiny; (2) use race as a "negative" against certain groups and also as a stereotype; and (3) have no end point.

First, as to strict scrutiny, the Supreme Court concluded that both Harvard and UNC point to what the Court characterizes as amorphous, immeasurable goals, such as "training future leaders in the public and private sectors," which "cannot be subjected to meaningful judicial review" and therefore cannot survive strict scrutiny. Likewise, as to the second strict-scrutiny prong — whether the means are narrowly tailored to achieve the compelling interest — the Court concluded that the institutions "fail to articulate a meaningful connection between the means they employ and the goals they pursue."

Second, and arguably even more significantly, the Supreme Court held these admissions practices failed in that they employ race as a "negative." The Court noted the admissions process is a "zero-sum" proposition: There are a limited number of seats in any admissions class, and an applicant either is or is not admitted. That being the case, the Court went on to find that an applicant's race being a positive or "plus" factor for them necessarily means that the race of an applicant of a non-favored demographic group is a negative. The Court also concluded that what it perceived as a practice of equating diversity of race with diversity of viewpoint fails as impermissible stereotyping.

Finally, the Supreme Court emphasized the admissions programs at issue, and the justifications and means they employ, have no "logical end point." The institutions argued (among other things) that their programs will end when they achieve "meaningful representation and meaningful diversity," but while they attempted to assert that this approach was not numbers-based, the Court concluded that it indeed is, which the Court held is "well established" as being "patently unconstitutional," and, per the Court, essentially guarantees "that race will always be relevant."

The Impact of the Decision

It is difficult to overstate the impact of the *SFFA v. Harvard* decision within the context of admissions decisions. For decades, the nation's highest court had found permissible a limited, constrained consideration of race in the college and university

admissions decision-making processes. The Supreme Court's *SFFA v. Harvard* decision is the practical end to this approach.

The Court did not hold that race could never be a lawful factor in admissions. However, the standards articulated in *SFFA v. Harvard* set the bar so high as to make nearly impossible the future use of race as a lawful admissions criterion. With this decision, the Court rejects as impermissibly amorphous and immeasurable the societal interests that previously had been accepted, and the Court finds impermissibly stereotypical the assumption that racial diversity equates to diversity of academic discussion. The Court dismisses as similarly immeasurable benefits of diversity not dependent on viewpoint diversity, such as enhancing appreciation, respect, and empathy, as well as cross-racial understanding, and learning to live with others of different backgrounds and experiences.

Further, the Court's "zero-sum" analysis is especially consequential. The Court reasons that, if one applicant's race is a positive for them in the admissions process, the inescapable analog is that another applicant's different race is a negative for them in the admissions process. The majority of the Court finds no way to reconcile such a result as anything other than unlawful race discrimination. This, then, is the unsolvable puzzle for any institution that seeks to isolate race as a factor in its admissions process.

Despite this, the Court's ruling does not foreclose entirely an admissions process that is conscious of other factors that may in some instances have a correlation to race, nor does it mandate that institutions shield themselves from any knowledge of an applicant's race. For instance, the Court's decision expressly acknowledges that colleges and universities may consider challenges overcome by students in their lived experiences that contribute to the individual personal characteristics and qualities they may bring to a campus community, including how race affected their life, "be it through discrimination, inspiration or otherwise." Thus, an institution could elicit this sort of information in an essay response and consider such characteristics a factor in favor of the applicant, provided that it does not do so based on the applicant's race per se. Among other things, this means that an institution may need to treat an applicant who overcame the adverse impact of discrimination similarly to an applicant who overcame arguably comparable challenges such as poverty, homelessness, refugee status, etc. Similarly, a college or university could con-



LISA R. FELDMAN, LAURA H. HARSHBARGER & PHILIP J. ZACCHEO
Viewpoint

sider socio-economic disadvantage or other life circumstance that may explain why an applicant's academic performance in high school is not indicative of their fullest potential (e.g., significant family hardships) or, at the other end of the spectrum, a student with unusually enriching life experiences (e.g., a student fluent in multiple languages who has spent summers abroad or has culturally significant knowledge, talents or interests). The needle to be threaded is to ensure that these considerations are not a subterfuge or proxy for the consideration of race.

The *SFFA v. Harvard* decision also does not foreclose the possibility of other measures designed to create a diverse student body, such as targeted recruiting efforts to draw a more diverse applicant pool. Such practices may well be the next frontier of admissions litigation, but for now they remain potentially permissible if designed and implemented properly.

[On June 29], the Department of Education (DOE) released a fact sheet responding to the Supreme Court decision. In the fact sheet (<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-president-biden-announces-actions-promote-educational-opportunity-and-diversity-colleges-and-universities>), the DOE promises to issue guidance documents within the next 45 days setting forth diversity-related admissions practices that remain legal despite the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling.

Colleges and universities face a new legal landscape. The admissions process must be re-examined carefully in light of this landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision. ■

Lisa R. Feldman is an associate in the New York City office of Syracuse-based Bond, Schoeneck & King PLLC. Contact her at lfeldman@bsk.com. Laura H. Harshbarger is a member (partner) in Bond's Syracuse office and co-deputy chair of the firm's labor and employment practice. Contact her at lharshbarger@bsk.com. Philip J. Zaccheo is a member (partner) in Bond's Syracuse office and co-chair of the firm's higher education practice. Contact him at pzaccheo@bsk.com. This article is drawn and edited from the law firm's website.

CNY BUSINESS JOURNAL 40 Under Forty

PRESENTED BY
M&T Bank

Congratulations!

Billy Barlow
City of Oswego

Victoria Bracco
American Fashion Network

James Burt
Landscapes East of CNY

Jeffrey Carpenter
Cliff's Local Market

Sarah Carroll, PE, PTOE
Creighton Manning Engineering

Vincent Cioci
Luck Grove Telecom, Inc

Timothy Crosby
SIDEARM Sports

Brittany DeAngelis
Mark Antony Homes

Cristina Distefano
Oneida Nation Enterprises

William Finch, PE
Barton & Loguidice

Patrick Fiorenza
Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc.

Andrew Flamik
Usherwood Office Technology

Zach Forward
Barclay Damon LLP

James Hunter
Robineau Media

Mike Lane
Reagan Companies

Merissa Lynch
COR Development Company LLC

Juliet Maloff
CNY Community Foundation

David Esteban Mariano
YMCA of Central New York

Stacy Miller
Merit Apprenticeship Alliance, Inc.

Jennifer Moore
M3 Placement and Partnership

Jonathan Parry
SmartKable Power Solutions, Inc

Larkin Podsiedlik
Cornell Cooperative Extension-Madison

Mickel Pompeii CPA, CDA
Dannible & McKee, LLP

John Reade
Quanterion Solutions Incorporated

Corey Riley
Westhill High School

Christian Samara, CPA
Dermody, Burke & Brown, CPAs, LLC

Benjamin Sio
CenterState CEO

Tanner Stewart
Stewart Financial-Northwestern Mutual

Eden Strachan
Black Girls Don't Get Love

Jennifer Telesky
NBT Bank

Megan Thomas, Esq.
OCWA

Michael Thompson, PE
CHA Consulting, Inc.

Joseph Verardo
Binghamton University

Casey White
Chimera Integrations, LLC

Ashley Whitt
Sidney FCU

Robert Wimler
Nascentia Health

Leah Witmer, ALJ
City of Syracuse

Stephanie Worden
Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs

Emily Zaengle
Stone Quarry Art Park

John Zell
Luck Grove Telecom, Inc

**Join the celebration on Thursday, November 2, 2023
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM • Oncenter**

BIZEVENTZ.COM