

Spring/Summer Issue 2017



### The U District

2017 State of the County Address Highlights

Planning Department's New Interactive Maps

County employees raise money for The United Way, America's Greatest Heart Run & Walk, American Cancer Society and the Walk for Autism



*OC United celebrates all aspects of Oneida County government to unite and instill pride in the great work we achieve together.*



### From the County Executive

One of the things that I believe to be essential in my role as County Executive is taking bold stands to move this community forward. While some in the past may have been satisfied with the status quo, I continue to push the envelope in finding new ways to make our government more efficient and grow our region in ways never imagined.

Each year I highlight these initiatives in my State of the County Address, and this year was no different. Much attention has been garnered by the Arts, Sports and Entertainment District I proposed for downtown Utica, but other things such as shared services savings among our municipalities, opiate treatment, agriculture tourism and the continued growth at Griffiss International Airport are just as important and should not get lost in the shuffle.

Anthony J. Picente Jr.  
County Executive  
Oneida County



## A District for "U"

On May 16, Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. laid out his transformative vision for downtown Utica with concepts for an Arts, Sports and Entertainment District that will be anchored by an expanded Utica Memorial Auditorium, the American Craft Beer Museum and Innovation Center and the Utica Commons Casino.

"These elements, when taken in unison, will create a critical mass of visitors who will kick the revitalization of downtown Utica into overdrive," Picente said. "This unparalleled amount of investment will build upon the recent success of the Utica Memorial Auditorium and transform its surrounding area into a thriving Arts, Sports

and Entertainment District that will create jobs, spur economic development, provide additional amenities for our emerging high-tech workforce and establish Utica as a powerhouse tourism destination."

Surrounded at the Utica Memorial Auditorium by representatives from government, business, education, arts, sports and entertainment who support Picente's dynamic plan, the County Executive unveiled conceptual artist renderings for "The U District," which included the following features:

- **An expanded Utica Memorial Auditorium**
  - Luxury suites, exclusive loge

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## ... A District For "U"

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seating, women's bathrooms, restaurant, and office space, along with upgrades & renovations

- **Nexus Center**– The AUD's Sports Epicenter for recreation & tournament-based play
  - ◆ 350,000 projected annual visitors
  - ◆ Year-round, multifaceted sporting opportunities
- **The American Craft Beer Museum and Innovation Center**
  - ◆ 500,000 projected annual visitors
  - ◆ 100 full-time jobs and 75+ seasonal positions
- **The Utica Commons Casino**

- ◆ \$50 million investment by the Oneida Nation
- ◆ 750,000 projected annual visitors
- ◆ 200 full and part-time jobs
- 27.5 acres of improved downtown development
- Greenspaces for public gathering
- Public playground
- Food outlets and boutique retail development opportunities
- Improved streetscape design and pedestrian connectivity
- Public art installations

"As we near the end of phase one, the AUD continues to be the catalyst for 'The U District,' a

vision that has been in the works for five years," said Mohawk Valley Garden President Robert Esche. "The U District' will greatly enhance tourism, in turn sparking a prevalent rise in economic development. These concepts hold true to be very exciting for not only Utica but the region as a whole, as we narrow our vision to create a sports, arts and entertainment hub unheard of in like markets."

Picente cited the many benefits of a revitalized downtown district that, in conjunction with Mohawk Valley Health System's soon-to-be constructed state-of-the-art hospital, will create employment opportunities, add new revenue streams for economic growth, supply additional public parking, improve community health with green spaces and stimulate property values.

## STATE OF THE COUNTY 2017

### State of the County Address Highlights

The seeds for The U District were first planted in March during the County Executive's 2017 State of the County Address.

In addition to the downtown Utica Arts, Sports and Entertainment District, Picente also put forth several other proposals that are beginning to take shape as the year progresses.

#### Consolidation

In 2016, about \$624 million was spent between the county, cities, towns and villages on government operations alone. The County Executive reiterated that he will continue to pursue consolidation efforts and will convene a Shared Services Panel in June to gather all of the county's mayors and town supervisors to begin the process of formulating a savings plan that has been required by New York State.

He also called for a discussion to combine the Part County Sewer District and the Mohawk Valley Water Authority into one entity that could save residents millions of dollars in service and repair costs.

#### Opiate Treatment

Progress was made last year in the fight against opiate addiction, including the opening of a methadone clinic in Rome, the installation of MedX return units throughout the community, a partnership between the county and the Center for Family and Life Recovery to fund an edu-

cational and prevention effort, and the creation of two new positions to help the assist family members through the recovery system.

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## ...State of the County

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A steering committee co-chaired by the County Executive, District Attorney Scott McNamara and Sheriff Rob Maciol, also convened to help the Oneida County Opiate Task Force in prioritizing its needs to accomplish its goals of increasing prevention, prompting recovery efforts and creating community links to end service gaps.

Oneida County will be opening a second methadone clinic in Utica this year, and in collaboration with five counties and the Hutchings Psychiatric Center, is in the planning stages of opening a Regional Crisis Center for Addictions and a crisis respite services model for children up to age 18. A mobile crisis service team will also remove barriers imposed by transportation issues. The District Attorney has announced a plan to ask law enforcement agencies to treat every opiate overdose death as an active homicide as well.

### Vision 2020

Vision 2020 has been successful in continuing to prepare the region for an economy immersed in advanced technologies while creating a community that meets the needs of a growing population. Last year the initiative made strides in the areas of education, access and housing. In 2016 the number of internships tripled from 2013, the first-ever job opportunity and career day for ninth graders took place and the Pathways to Technology and Early College high School Program was created.

The initiative also improved economic opportunities for minority and immigrant populations, and expanded transportation connectivity alternatives and accessibility for all through improved bike trails, digitized bike and pedestrian maps, a business needs assessment survey and a funding application for smart technology-connected roadways.

### Agriculture Tourism

Oneida County has 1,066 farms covering 26.5 percent of its total acreage and about \$133 million in total farm sales generated each year. The county's tourism sector supports 19,000 direct and indirect jobs and is a \$1.3 billion industry.

The county's ag-tourism committee has looked for ways to bolster the synergy between the two by creating a new inventory for all ag-tourism assets and launching an advertising campaign to market them. An ag-incubator is in the process of being finalized, and the Agricultural-Friendly

Oneida County Initiative will soon launch with the goal of creating a guide to assist municipalities and businesses in navigating zoning, regulations and planning in order to expand and create more ag-tourism. Along with Cornell Cooperative Extension, a farmland protection plan was completed that lays out five goals and 37 action items to further ag-tourism as well.

### Griffiss International Airport

The airport continues to be the anchor tenant of the Griffiss Business and Technology Park and this year, a list of priority projects was developed that will position it as a cornerstone of development for the entire region.

The County Executive announced the intended creation of the Griffiss UAS Innovation Center that will renovate Building 100 and create a space for research, development, testing and manufacturing of unmanned aircraft systems. Along with Mohawk Valley Community College, the county will also develop a UAS Technology Business Incubator inside the center and the college will offer a two-year UAS degree program.

The airport's maintenance, repair and operations tenant space will also be expanded creating more than 200 new local jobs, and the MRO career education pipeline will be solidified by expanding the MVCC's Airframe and Power Certificate Training Program.

Finally, the airport will embark on becoming a commercial hub for regional travel to support new business and tourism by seeking state assistance to construct a 20,000 square-foot passenger terminal building addition.

### Economic Development

While nanotechnology remains vital to the economic future of the region, and the County Executive vowed to continue aggressively pursuing all leads when it comes to finding a tenant at the Marcy Nanosite, he also expressed the need to widen that focus.

He announced a reboot of the county's economic development strategy that will zero in on downtown development, small business expansion and creation, innovation and incubation, tourism, education, cybersecurity, UAS, the airport and more.

This new focus will include the creation of a Director of Economic Development who will lead all of the county's economic development efforts and work with the county's governmental and community partners to implement a universal approach.

## Did You Know?

### Interactive Maps Added to County Website

The Oneida County Planning Department recently added three interactive maps to the county's website that encourages government efficiency and supports critical aspects of our community.

The new applications are similar to Google Maps, but focus on local information relevant to our county and region and include:

- Oneida County Agriculture Districts
- Oneida County Agriculture Tourism Destinations
- Oneida & Herkimer County Traffic Counts

These user friendly maps aim to become valuable tools for the public allowing residents and visitors the ability to drill down to everything from specific agricultural parcel information to tourist attraction contact info to the speed limit of individual county roads.

The interactive maps can be accessed by visiting:  
<http://www.ocgov.net/oneida/planning/WebMappingApplications>



# Oneida County Employees Continue to Give to Multiple Causes

Over the past few months, the generosity of Oneida County Employees has continued to grow as many individuals and groups donated their time, money and effort to multiple organizations and causes.

## United Way

Employees of Oneida County donated \$21,062.50 to the 2017 fundraising campaign of the United Way, and a check was presented by the committee to the organization in April.

The money was raised by a number of means including payroll deductions, one-time contributions, dress down days, raffles and a bake sale.

The county's 2017 United Way fundraising efforts were overseen by a 10-person committee that was comprised of June Hanrahan, Judy Ingalls, Valerie Laymon, Sherri LaSalle, Nancy Nicholl, Phyllis Ricco, Kathy Scalise, Jackie St. Thomas, John P. Talerico and Donna Tyler.

The donations will go toward supporting initiatives of the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area, as well of those of the United Way of Rome and Western Oneida County. The contributions will benefit such things as services and education regarding obesity, mental health, STDs, bullying, pregnancy prevention and drug abuse, and efforts to keep students in school and seniors in their homes.



Front Row (L-R): Carli Sterling, United Way Campaign Coordinator; June Hanrahan, Oneida County United Way Committee; Jackie St. Thomas, Oneida County United Way Committee; Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr.; United Way Executive Director Brenda Episcopo; Judy Ingalls, Oneida County United Way Committee.

Back Row (L-R): Valerie Laymon, Oneida County United Way Committee; Nancy Nicholl, Oneida County United Way Committee; Sherri LaSalle, Oneida County United Way Committee; John P. Talerico, Oneida County United Way Committee; Enesa Sabanagic, United Way & CNY Labor Council; and Kristyn Bucciero, United Way Director of Development.



## America's Greatest Heart Run & Walk

America's Greatest Heart Run & Walk took place in early March, and county employees raised \$2,190 from support bracelets that were sold as part of a Dress Down Day.

Additionally, County Executive Picente raised \$505 through the Heart Run & Walk's Treadmill Challenge that took place the day before, in which he went head-to-head with Utica College Head Football Coach Blaise Faggiano.

(L-R) Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. battles Utica College Head Football Coach Blaise Faggiano in the America's Greatest Heart Run & Walk Treadmill Challenge on March 3.

## Colon Cancer Awareness

Also in March, county employees raised \$1,275 for the American Cancer Society's colon cancer research through support bracelets sold as part of a Dress Down Day.

To raise colon cancer awareness throughout the month, the county also lit the County Office Building blue and the Health Department also partnered with RoSo's Café and Bagg's Square Café in Utica, and Kunkel Ambulance, to promote awareness of the disease throughout the community.

Full-time county employees receive eight hours of paid leave per year to obtain cancer screenings, and in some cases, those without health insurance can have a screening paid for by Health Department's Cancer Services Program.



## Autism Awareness

All April-long, county employees raised awareness for Autism in a variety of ways.

The County Office Building was lit up in multiple colors to reflect the rainbow ribbon that represents Autism awareness, and a bake sale organized by employees from the Department of Social Services and bracelets from a dress down day raised \$1,791 for the Kelberman Center's 10th Annual Walk for Autism.

Several other employees also raised money individually by participating in the Walk for Autism, including Foster Care Case Manager Marissa Montana-Guzman, who walked in honor of her son Luciano.



Pictured: (L-R) Adoptions & Foster Care Worker Shanice Walker, County Executive Picente and Foster Care Case Manager Marissa Montana-Guzman.