FREE

In Little Falls Octotber 11, 2025

# MOHAWK VALLEY EXPRESS

VOLUME 5: NUMBER 10 OCTOBER 2025



# Join Little Falls' Celebration of the Seneca Chief and Erie Canal's Bicentennial on October 11

**By Dave Warner**

LITTLE FALLS, NY – As the replica Erie Canal Boat Seneca Chief progresses on its historic Bicentennial Voyage, Little Falls invites residents and visitors to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the canal's 1825 opening with a vibrant festival on October 11, 2025. The boat arrives at Benton's Landing around 11:30 a.m., offering a rare opportunity to step aboard and explore New York's waterway heritage.

The Erie Canal, dubbed "Clinton's Ditch" during its contentious build, opened on October 26, 1825, with the Seneca Chief departing Buffalo amid cannon salutes that echoed across the state in a "Grand Salute." This engineering feat not only boosted agriculture and industry but also facilitated westward migration, shaping America's expansion.

The Buffalo Maritime Center's replica, a community-built masterpiece featuring epoxy-sealed dynel cloth for durability and 1820s-style hardwood cabins, honors this by traversing the same route starting September 24, 2025. Along the way, it promotes dialogue on the canal's broader effects, including its role in displacing communities and altering landscapes, while fostering future-oriented conversations through tree plantings and water collections.

In Little Falls, BUG Country broadcasts live from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., with dignitaries' remarks at noon. Participate in the tree planting and water addition ceremonies, then enjoy boat tours from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sterzinar Park buzzes from noon to 6 p.m. with "Harvest"-themed vendors, food, and kids' activities.

At 2 p.m., guest speaker Tom Ryan takes the stage, followed by a Seneca Chief crew Q&A until 3 p.m.

Link to the past at the General Herkimer Home from 4 p.m. till closing with food trucks, beverages, music, pumpkin bowling, and candlelit wagon rides to a bateau display. Shuttles and a lantern-guided walk ensure accessibility.

Cap the day at Rock Valley Brewing's Country Music Festival from 2 p.m. until 11 p.m.

Details at thedailypost.digital/seneca-chief. For more information, reach Dave Warner at 315-867-9039 or dave.warner@creativeoutpost.org, or Cathy Cristman at 315-868-3248.

Funded in part by the NYS Canal Corporation and Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

# Ann Street Wine & Liquors Celebrates 50 Years of Family and Community in Little Falls

**By Dave Warner**




LITTLE FALLS, NY – Ann Street Wine & Liquors, a cornerstone of the Little Falls community, is marking its 50th anniversary this month, celebrating three generations of family ownership and a steadfast commitment to its neighbors.

From its humble beginnings in 1975 to its vibrant presence today, the store has thrived by adapting to changing times while staying true to its roots.

Ruth Pazzanese, the first-generation owner, recalls the store's origins: "When my husband and I moved here from Malboro, Massachusetts, in 1970, we never imagined we would end up running a liquor store. He was the plant manager at Salada Tea, but in 1975, he grew tired of big business and wanted something smaller, something of our own. That's when we bought the Sheehan Liquor store, which then became Ann Street Wine and Liquors."

For Ruth, the store was never just about selling bottles. "It was about people coming through the door and knowing they were welcome here," she says.

The early years were a labor of love, with Ruth and her husband working 12-hour days to establish the business. "It was a long haul," Ruth reflects. "The two of us ran it, split it up, but once we got out from under some of the expenses of buying it, it went along, and we've had loyal customers."

Beth Wein, Ruth's daughter and second-generation owner, stepped in after her father's passing in 2012 to help keep the family legacy alive. "When my father passed, I knew I needed to step in to help my mom and keep the store going," Beth says. Alongside her husband Doug, she modernized operations, introducing an updated point-of-sale system to streamline the business while preserving the values her parents instilled.

The store's trajectory shifted significantly with the arrival of Meghan Chlus, Ruth's granddaughter and the third-generation owner, who joined full-time in 2020. Meghan expanded the store's offerings to meet modern demands,

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# A Decade of Delight: Reflecting on the Little Falls Cheese Festival

**By Dave Warner**

LITTLE FALLS, NY – As the Mohawk Valley prepares to host the 10th annual Little Falls Cheese Festival on October 4, 2025, it's a perfect moment to look back on a decade of growth, resilience, and cheesy celebration.

From its modest beginnings in 2015 as a tribute to the city's 19th-century legacy as the nation's cheese capital, the festival has become New York State's premier gathering for artisan cheesemakers and food enthusiasts.

Despite challenges like rain, heat, and a global pandemic, it has flourished into a vibrant community event, drawing thousands to Main Street each year. This milestone anniversary introduces exciting new features, building on a rich history of innovation and tradition.

The festival's early years laid a strong foundation. In 2018, the fourth annual event on July 14 drew around 4,000 attendees, with over 50 vendors offering more than 120 cheese varieties. Organizer Kyrie Felio captured its mission: "We continue to maintain the heart of our mission, which is to celebrate New York State artisanal cheesemakers and historical involvement with Little Falls."

That year introduced "Markers on Main," showcasing artisans like glassblowers and jewelers, and added mead tastings from Heartsease Hill Meadery alongside wines. Elaine Cobb invited exploration: "The festival is located on Main Street, but the entire city will be full of energy. We encourage everyone who comes to the festival to explore Little Falls and see all we have to offer."

Post-event reflections highlighted the festival's impact. At a volunteers' picnic in Rotary Park, Felio noted a "constant stream of people" and praised the crafters' fair for drawing crowds to the west end.

Co-founder Alice Laurenson emphasized the draw: "Our focus has always been to bring people from as far away as we can to Little Falls to buy quality New York State cheese." Her husband, Tom, added, "They have to come here to get cheeses that they really can't get anywhere else."

Vendor Andy McEvoy from Paca Gardens called it a "record festival," with "excited and happy people of all ages," despite the July heat.

In 2019, the fifth festival on July 13 expanded to over 80 vendors and 120 cheeses, incorporating craft beverages from Olde York Farm Distillery. Sophie Newsome of the distillery remarked, "Cheese and spirits may not seem like the most obvious pairing, but as someone who worked as a cheesemonger, I can say you'd be surprised at how well they go together."

Entertainment included 10 musical acts and the play "Where's the Cheesemonger?" by Angela Harris. Talent booker Kevin Hughes promised variety: "There will be a lot of variety... We've brought back some wonderful acts from last year and are bringing in more amazing talent this year."

Attendance reached about 6,000, prompting Mayor Mark Blask to exclaim, "What a fantastic day for Little Falls… I'm absolutely overwhelmed by the number of people." Logo contest winner Raema Rotindo, vending her Rockerbox Garlic spices, recalled the prior year's "constant stream of people."

The 2020 festival faced a significant setback with the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to its cancellation. Organizers responded with the "Keep Cheese Alive" initiative, encouraging online sales and direct purchases to support vendors.

Teri Chace, a key committee member, urged, "Small producers are in dire straits right now... We must help them survive." The hiatus spurred planning for a rescheduled 2021 event in October.

The sixth festival on October 2, 2021, marked a triumphant return, drawing a record-shattering 8,000 attendees. Chace explained the date shift: "In mid-July, the attendees AND the cheeses were melting!"

New features included shuttle buses, a Food Truck Food Court, and partnerships with the Central New York Cheese Trail. Vendor Juli Webster called it "my best show ever," while cheesemakers Cindy and Tim Powers said, "It was amazing talking with so many people."

Chace affirmed, "We plan to keep our festival in autumn, going forward."

The seventh festival in 2022 aimed to be the largest yet, with expanded cheeses and

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introducing ready-to-drink (RTD) canned cocktails and bolstering the bourbon and wine selections.

"There's so much competition, so we were forced to evolve, or we would have gone away," Meghan explains. "I revamped the entire store and created a huge new sector of RTD canned cocktails. That shift has been so important in attracting younger customers and keeping our shelves relevant."

Meghan's focus on customer relationships has been key to the store's continued success. "When someone asks for something new, I do everything I can to bring it in and make the process as easy as possible for them," she says. "That's how you keep a community happy—by listening, adapting, and always showing people they matter."

In June 2025, Meghan transitioned to a full-time role at Morgan Stanley, where she is training to become a financial advisor, but she remains a guiding force behind the scenes at Ann Street.

"Ann Street taught me how to work hard, how to juggle responsibilities, how to listen to people, and how to earn trust by doing what's best for them," she says. "Now with my full-time career and still overseeing the liquor store—these qualities are more important than ever."

The store's success is also due to its dedicated staff, including long-time employee Sandy, who has been with the family for over 20 years, and newer team member Josh, who have taken on significant daily responsibilities. "Customers always light up when they see Sandy behind the register," Meghan notes, "just as they do with the rest of the dedicated staff who make the shop feel like home."

In an era of online shopping and wine subscription boxes, Ann Street Wine & Liquors stands out for its personal touch.

"There's still something to be said for coming in and tangibly being able to shop for products and have a connection with the people in your community," Beth says. "That's the value that we have here, and that's something that's important, obviously, to the community of Little Falls, which is why we've been able to thrive for 50 years."

As the store celebrates its golden anniversary, Meghan reflects on its enduring legacy: "It's rare to see a small-town business last through three generations. We're still here today because we have been dedicated not just to the store, but to family and to staying together for our community, who continue to support us through the years."

For Ruth, now almost 90, the anniversary is a testament to the vision she and her husband shared: "Community has always been at the heart of this business. It was never just about bottles on the shelf."

Meghan stated, "This year is doubly special because it's the store's 50th anniversary and my nana's 90th birthday in November. To celebrate, we'll be giving our loyal customers a special gift at the holidays in addition to the calendars we always give away to show our appreciation."

"We're offering a current promo: giving away free tote bags with any purchase of 6 bottles or more at the store, and we'll be featuring wine tastings again on Thursdays or Saturdays through the end of the year, starting with the cheese festival," she said.

Ann Street Wine & Liquors remains a beacon of community spirit in, proving that a small-town shop can thrive for half a century by prioritizing people over profits.




**Photo by Dave Warner - Three generations have kept Ann Street Wine & Liquors successful. Left to Right: Beth Wein, Meghan Chlus, and Ruth Pazzanese.**



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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS - OCTOBER 2025

### City of Little Falls

**October 4, 2025**
Little Falls Cheese Festival on Main Street from 10 am until 5 pm. The Little Falls Cheese Festival has become known as New York State's premier gathering of cheesemakers, reminiscent of its early history as the nation's cheese market capital. With 80 booths, 22 New York cheesemakers, and over 120 varieties of cheese to sample, the 2024 festival drew an estimated 15,000 visitors to the community from all over the Northeast.

**October 7, 2025**
Traffic Committee - 6 pm. City Hall. Mayor's Conference Room.

**October 7, 2025**
Common Council Meeting—Bills 6:30 pm and Regular Session 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers in City Hall.

**October 11, 2025**
The Erie Canal Boat Seneca Chief has embarked on its Bicentennial Voyage from Buffalo to New York Harbor, commemorating Gov. DeWitt Clinton's 1825 inaugural journey. It will arrive in Little Falls on October 11, 2025, before noon and tie up at Benton's Landing in Canal Place from noon until 5 pm. While here, the City of Little Falls will have a one-day festival celebrating its arrival, encompassing all of Canal Place. For details visit thedailypost.digital/seneca-chief/

**October 11, 2025**
Rock Valley Country Music Festival from 2 pm until 11 pm at Rock Valley Brewing Company in Canal Place, Little Falls.

**October 14, 2025**
Police and Fire Commission Meeting—Bills 8:30 a.m. and Regular Session 9:00 a.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room in City Hall.

**October 14, 2025**
Recreation/Harbor Commission Meeting—Regular Session 6:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room in City Hall.

**October 15, 2025**
Golf Commission Meeting—Regular Meeting: 8:00 a.m. at the Little Falls Municipal Golf Course.

**October 20, 2025**
Board of Public Works Meeting—Bills 5:30 pm and Regular Session 6:00 pm in the Mayor's Conference Room in City Hall.

**October 22, 2025**
Urban Renewal Board Meeting—Regular Session, 8:15 a.m., in the Mayor's Conference Room in City Hall.

**October 22, 2025**
Charles D. Stahl Annual Municipality Open House from 9 am until 3 pm., 697 Snells Bush Road, Little Falls 13365.

**October 27, 2025**
Planning Board Meeting—At 10 am in the Conference Room in City Hall. Work on the City's Comprehensive Plan.

**October 31, 2025**
Halloween in Little Falls from 5:30 - 7:30 pm. Halloween in Little Falls is a fun, family-friendly event that draws children and adults from all over the area. It's an evening of visiting with friends, taking the family out, looking at the Halloween decorations, and a City-wide night of community spirit.

**November 4, 2025**
Election Day in the City from 6 am until 9 pm.

### Ilion

**October 16-18, 2025**
Annual Fall Rummage Sale St Augustine Church, 78 Second St Ilion, NY. Second Floor, Enter thru the double red doors in back. Thursday October 16th 9am-4 pm, Friday October 17th 9am-4 pm, Saturday October 18th 9 am - 12 noon. Saturday is Bag Day - Get 2 white bags for $5.00.

MOHAWK VALLEY EXPRESS

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# Open House and Tours of 1786 Isaac Paris House - Fort Plain

Step into the past at the Open House and Tour of the 1786 Isaac Paris House, located BEHIND 105 Mohawk St., Fort Plain, NY on Sunday, October 12, between 2:00 and 4:00 PM.

The house was originally a trading post and dwelling for Isaac Paris, Jr. He became head of his family at the tender age of 16 when his father and brother were killed at the Battle of Oriskany.

There will also be a program on Diefendorf Hall - Recent Renovations and its Relevance to Fort Plain's History.

The open house, tours, and program are sponsored by the Fort Plain Chapter, NS Daughters of the American Revolution to commemorate the 135 Anniversary of the founding of their society on October 11, 1890. Refreshments will be provided.

# Fall Craft Fair Scheduled

The Cullen Pumpkin Farm, located at 587 Cullen Road, Richfield Springs, is once again hosting the 5th Annual Fall Craft Fair to be held on Saturday, October 4 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Fall Craft Fair is coordinated, and will benefit, the Women's Guild of the Church of Christ Uniting, Richfield Springs.

The Richfield Youth Sports organization will be returning with their food booth.

Over 60 crafters are coming from near and far showcasing exclusively a wide variety of handcrafted items.

Application deadline is October 1. Crafters can e-mail fallcraftfair@yahoo.com for space availability after the application deadline.

# Rummage & Bake Sale

Trinity Lutheran Church of Stone Arabia, RT 10N, Palatine Bridge, will hold a Rummage and Bake Sale - Friday, October 17, 2025 (Rummage only) and Saturday, October 18, 2025 (Rummage and Bake) 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM each day. Items available at the sale are Matchbox Cars, children's books, glassware, vintage and household items and many more treasures.

# Irish Film Series - "Man of Aran"

UTICA – The Irish Cultural Center of the Mohawk Valley continues its fall Irish film series on Thursday October 23 at 7PM , when we will be presenting the 1934 film "Man of Aran".

"Man of Aran" is a 1934 Irish fictional documentary film shot, written and directed by Robert J. Flaherty about life on the Aran Islands off the western coast of Ireland. It portrays characters living in premodern conditions, documenting their daily routines such as fishing off high cliffs, farming potatoes where there is little soil, and hunting for huge basking sharks to get liver oil for lamps. Some situations are fabricated, such as one scene in which the shark fishermen are almost lost at sea in a sudden gale. Additionally, the family members shown are

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# Little Falls Public Library Calendar

## OCTOBER

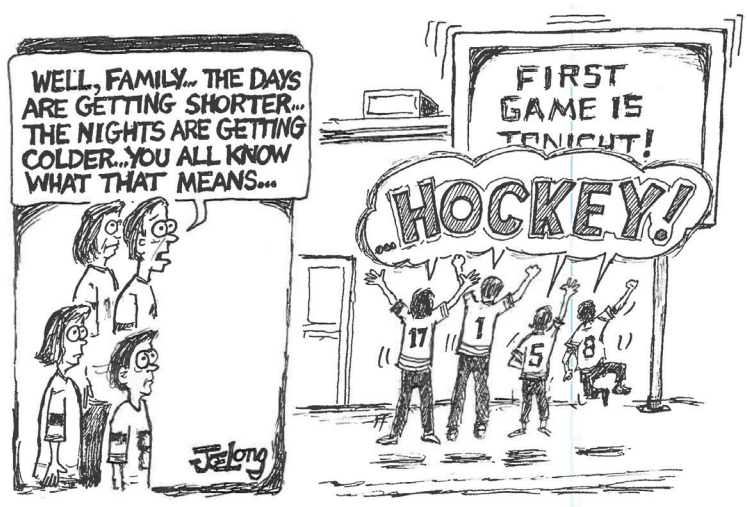
| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **HOURS** M-Th: 10-7 F: 10-5 Sat: 10-3 Closed Sun | | | 1 Flash Fiction 6pm | 2 Homeschool Hangout 2pm; Sewing Circle 4pm | 3 Playdate Plus 10:15am | 4 Knitting & Crochet 11am |
| 5 CLOSED | 6 Railroad Group 5pm | 7 Sensory Playdate 10:15am; Chair Yoga 10:15am | 8 Bright Beginnings 10 & 11:15am; Flash Fiction 6pm | 9 Homeschool Hangout 2pm; Sewing Circle 4pm; Medicare and Medicaid Talk 5pm | 10 Playdate Plus 10:15am | 11 Knitting & Crochet 11am |
| 12 CLOSED | 13 CLOSED | 14 Chair Yoga 10:15am | 15 Bright Beginnings 10 & 11:15am; Flash Fiction 6pm | 16 Homeschool Hangout 2pm; Sewing Circle 4pm | 17 Playdate Plus 10:15am | 18 Knitting & Crochet 11am; Spinners 1pm |
| 19 CLOSED | 20 YA Book Club 5:30pm | 21 Chair Yoga 10:15am; Sensory Playdate 10:15am; Lego Club 3:30pm; Spoken Play Lit Circle 5:30pm | 22 Bright Beginnings 10 & 11:15am; Flash Fiction 6pm | 23 Homeschool Hangout 2pm; Sewing Circle 4pm | 24 Early Morning Library 8-10am; Playdate Plus 10:15am | 25 Knitting & Crochet 11am |
| 26 CLOSED | 27 Book Club 5:30pm | 28 Chair Yoga 10:15am | 29 Bright Beginnings 10 & 11:15am; Flash Fiction 6pm | 30 Homeschool Hangout 2pm; Sewing Circle 4pm; Watercolor w/Vicki 5:30pm | 31 Playdate Plus 10:15am | |

## Emma's Corner




**Emma Canastar is a Sophomore at Little Falls High School, where she is a member of the National Junior Honor Society and the Little Falls Drama Club.**

## Joe Long's Pencil Pathway




## SENIOR MEALS FOR OCTOBER

To reserve a meal, call the Herkimer County Office for the Aging at least one business day in advance, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 315-867-1204 or 315-867-1634. If you will not be home for meals, call 315-867-1204 at least a day in advance. All sites are handicapped accessible.

Oct 01 - Beef stroganoff, egg noodles, broccoli, peaches.
Oct 02 - Macaroni and cheese, green beans, stewed tomatoes and zucchini, pears.
Oct 03 - Cheesy ham and rice casserole, beets, cauliflower, ice cream.
Oct 06 - Pork chops, stuffing, country blend vegetables, fruit.
Oct 07 - Ziti with meatballs, tossed salad, garlic roll, cookie.
Oct 08 - Tuna noodle casserole, Brussels sprouts, squash, fruited gelatin.
Oct 09 - Chicken and biscuits, mashed potatoes, peas, brownie.
Oct 10 - Roast beef dinner, rice pilaf, lima beans, fresh fruit.
Oct 13 - Closed for Columbus Day.
Oct 14 - Cream of broccoli soup, chicken salad on roll, warm three-bean salad, fruit cocktail.
Oct 15 - Oktoberfest, kielbasa with sauerkraut, German potato salad, red cabbage, black forest birthday cake.
Oct 16 - Roast turkey dinner, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, pudding.
Oct 17 - Beef stew with vegetables, wax beans, biscuit, apple.
Oct 20 - Pizza burger, O'Brien potatoes, carrot coins, pineapple.
Oct 21 - Omelet, hash browns, sausage, muffin, fresh fruit.
Oct 22 - Chicken and wild rice casserole, corn, warm applesauce, chef's choice pie.
Oct 23 - Ham and scalloped potatoes, peas and carrots, apple crisp.
Oct 24 - Fish on a bun, au gratin potatoes, spinach, banana.
Oct 27 - Chicken fricassee, mashed potatoes, broccoli, Mandarin oranges.
Oct 28 - Spanish rice, wax beans, zucchini, cookie.
Oct 29 - BBQ beef on a bun, baked beans, Sonoma blend vegetables, ice cream.
Oct 30 - Cream of potato soup, egg salad on roll, green beans, peaches.
Oct 31 - Lasagna, Itallian blend vegetables, garlic knot, banana bread.

All meals are served with 8 ounces of milk, a slice of bread, and margarine. Desserts have no concentrated sweets. The suggested donation is $3. Mail donations to Herkimer County OFA, 109 Mary St., Suite 2501, Herkimer, NY 13350. Envelopes are available from drivers.

**FILM From Page 4**

not actually related, having been chosen from among the islanders for their photogenic qualities.

Commentary will be provided by Jeffrey A. Miller, PhD. Utica University Professor of Communication and Media prior to the film.

Our films will be shown in the H.A.R.P. Museum on the second floor of the Irish Cultural Center of the Mohawk Valley, 623 Columbia St, Utica. The venue is wheelchair accessible. Our films are free to attend but we gratefully accept donations. We ask that you register at https://bit.ly/4lLc0Cn or call and leave a message at 315-733-4228 Ext 6.

This film was made possible through a generous sponsorship from the Bank of Utica.

# Irish Ghosts, Banshees, & Fairies

UTICA – Join us at The H.A.R.P. Museum at the Irish Cultural Center of the Mohawk Valley on Wednesday October 29 at 7:00 PM for tales and songs that celebrate Ireland's Samhain or Halloween tradition. In this darkening time of year, Samhain arrives to herald autumn down its slide to winter, when the barrier between the living and the dead is thinnest.

This evening we will present stories collected in 19th century rural Ireland. Stories and songs from a time when science wasn't so sure of itself. Tales and tunes of banshees and fiends, musical fairies - not the nice kind - and of course ghosts. We endeavor here this evening to embrace the dark and shorten the night. The name Amadán Dubh hails from Irish folklore and refers to the "dark fool" or "dark fairy". A trickster fairy, Amadán Dubh is the "bringer of madness and oblivion…haunting the hills after sunset playing reed pipes to work his magic."

Tonight, Amadán Dubh possesses Sue Romero,

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## Ghosts From Page 5

Allyson Sklar, Mike Hoke, and Mike Carroll.

The event will be held at the Irish Cultural Center of the Mohawk Valley, 623 Columbia St, Utica, NY. The Irish Cultural Center and the H.A.R.P. Museum are wheelchair accessible and open to all. Please register at this link http://bit.ly/4nmMCEa to attend this free event or leave a message at the ICC 315-733-4228 Extension 6. Donations are gratefully accepted.













## CHEESE From Page 2

beverages. A highlight was "Les Moutons," a Canadian troupe's sheep reenactment performance. Chace enthused, "We are all so excited for Les Moutons... It certainly won't be something they'll soon forget!"

Attendance stabilized around 8,000, cementing the October slot.

In 2023, the eighth festival persevered through rain, drawing thousands for the Cheesy 5K and vendor booths. Jeff Winders of Willow Running noted, "We try to make it fun for people." A historical booth from Herkimer Home featured 18th-century dairy demos, with site manager Michael Roets stating, "The dairy industry was absolutely crucial to the Mohawk Valley in the 18th century."

Chace added, "We're obviously very proud of the role Little Falls plays in the history of the cheese industry." Practical tips included using shuttles and bringing cooler bags.

Last year's ninth festival set a new benchmark, attracting 14,000–15,000 attendees under ideal weather. Chace described it as "remarkable," crediting volunteers and planning more buses for 2025.

An after-party at Rock City Brewery supported the New York Cheese Council. Scot Nolan emphasized the festival's ethos: "We're not just an outdoor agricultural mall... we're a full-fledged celebration of New York's rich cheesemaking heritage."

For its 10th anniversary, the festival is introducing new attractions. A New Orleans-style second-line parade with brass instruments and festive marching will launch the day at 10 a.m. Food options are expanding with trucks in the vacant CVS lot, offering crepes, waffles, and coffee, and one near the caboose serving Utica-style riggies and greens.

The "Rhythm and Rinds" annex at the Rock Valley Brewing Company will feature beer, wine, live bands, and pre-packaged cheese boxes for easy pairing.

Author Karina Moss will sign her popular "cheesy mystery" books, and enhanced shuttle services will include a stop near the annex. Chace, reflecting on the milestone, said, "We've made history every year... this year, we're looking to pay tribute to our city's roots."

From its humble start to a decade of growth, the Little Falls Cheese Festival has woven itself into the fabric of the community, blending culinary excellence with small-town charm.

As Chace noted in 2018, "Every year, it's a little bit better." This October, with new features and a nod to its storied past, the festival is poised to be the cheesiest yet.

For more details, visit www.littlefallscheesefestival.com.

# Trapped by 3.99 Miles? Appointed vs. Elected City Treasurer

**OpEd By City of Little Falls Mayor Deborah Kaufman**

Population Decline

As the leaves turn in our beautiful city nestled along the Mohawk River, we're facing a quiet crisis that's anything but picturesque. Our population has been steadily declining—from 4,850 in 2015 to an estimated 4,490 in 2025, a loss of over 7% in a decade, steeper than nearby Amsterdam's 4% drop or Gloversville's 3.2% decline—straining resources and making every role in city government more critical than ever.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the office of the city treasurer, where, over the past eight months, only two individuals have applied for the position. Heartbreakingly, neither was willing to subject themselves to the grueling cycle of running for elected office every four years. This isn't just a blip; it's a symptom of a system that's outlived its usefulness in a small community of 3.99 square

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miles like ours.

NY State Requirement for Elected Positions

New York election law requires an elected official to reside in the community it serves, which has been fine for many years until our decline in population makes it impossible to find qualified candidates for positions as critical as our city treasurer's position, where CPA-level accounting skills are required. The only way to expand the geographic draw area is to change the charter to allow an appointed Treasurer for the City.

A Necessary Change

We must change with the times and adjust the way we do business for Little Falls to thrive. This November, voters will have an opportunity to approve the referendum to shift the treasurer from an elected to an appointed position. This change, proposed in Local Law #7 of 2025, isn't about stripping away democracy—it's about injecting professionalism, accountability, and fiscal prudence into a role that safeguards millions of taxpayer dollars annually.

Currently, an elected treasurer must reside within the 3.99 square miles of the City of Little Falls, a restriction that severely limits our candidate pool. Meanwhile, our current treasurer and deputy treasurer (whom we are very fond of) live just outside in the bordering communities of the Town of Little Falls and Dolgeville, less than six miles away, highlighting how arbitrary this boundary is.

An appointed treasurer opens the door to qualified professionals from nearby communities, expanding our talent pool without sacrificing local ties. Let's break down why this matters further.

Increased Talent Pool

First, consider the talent pool. In an elected system, we're at the mercy of whoever musters the courage (or connections) to campaign, regardless of qualifications. We've seen this play out before: candidates without senior accounting experience stepping into a job that demands it, forcing the municipality to foot the bill for the elected role and hire a separate expert to actually handle the books. That's double-dipping on salaries in a budget already pinched by our shrinking tax base.

Research by economist Alexander Whalley, studying hundreds of cities, found that elected treasurers often lack the specialized expertise needed for complex fiscal tasks, leading to higher costs—sometimes 13–23% more in borrowing expenses alone—because they prioritize voter appeal over technical skill.

An appointed treasurer flips the script. The mayor, with common council consent, can nominate top-tier candidates—certified accountants, financial wizards from nearby communities like the Town of Little Falls, Dolgeville, Manheim, Herkimer, or Utica—allowing us to get the best candidate for the job.

Background Checks

But expertise alone isn't enough if we can't ensure trust. Elected officials in New York, including our treasurer, operate without the rigorous vetting we demand of appointed hires. There's no authority for credit checks, criminal background checks, or deep dives into financial/work history—despite entrusting them with the stewardship of our collective millions.

In a world where data breaches and fiscal scandals make headlines, this blind spot is unacceptable. Appointing the treasurer allows us to conduct these essential screenings upfront, building a firewall against risks that could drain our coffers or erode public faith.

Accountability

Accountability takes an even darker turn with elections. If an elected treasurer underperforms—mishandling funds, missing deadlines, or simply lacking the skills—no quick fix exists. New York law ties removal to the governor, and only for egregious misconduct, not mere incompetence. Extreme behavior might trigger intervention, but garden-variety shortcomings? You're stuck until the next election cycle, potentially years of dysfunction.

Whalley's research underscores this: elected treasurers, insulated by their independence, can persist in suboptimal financial decisions, costing cities millions over time. We've seen this inertia elsewhere. Why risk it here? An appointed treasurer under civil service protections changes that equation. They can only be removed for just cause—think proven malfeasance, not political whims—offering stability across mayoral transitions. From one administration to the next, our finances stay steady, shielded from partisan churn.

Unified Oversight

And speaking of the mayor: In our current setup, the elected treasurer doesn't report to the chief executive officer (mayor), who holds oversight over city operations. Whalley's study confirms this disconnect leads to inefficiencies, as elected treasurers operate in silos, often ignoring broader city goals to avoid electoral risks.

The mayor can approve budgets and veto resolutions, yet the treasurer operates in a parallel universe, unaligned with strategic priorities. Appointing the role integrates it into the executive structure, fostering collaboration without compromising checks and balances.

Little Falls has flirted with this reform before—a 2021 ballot measure to appoint the treasurer failed by a narrow margin. But that was before our population fell further, before candidate shortages became acute, and before I highlighted these very challenges in recent discussions.

The stakes are higher now. Our city isn't a sprawling metropolis; it's a tight-knit community where every dollar counts, every decision echoes.

This November, join us in voting yes on the treasurer referendum. It's a pragmatic step toward a more professional, secure, and responsive government—one that honors our past while securing our future.

Little Falls deserves a treasurer chosen for their accounting knowledge and skill.







## Dolgeville Community Band has successful 2025 season

Under the direction of Katlin Wolford, The Dolgeville Community Band presented a concert in June at The Art and Music Festival at DCS in Dolgeville and concerts in July at the ballfield next to the playground in Dolgeville.

A concert in July, a part of The Little Falls Public Library Summer Concert Series at Eastern Park in Little Falls, and a concert in August at The New Hartford Community Band Festival at the New Hartford Village Green in New Hartford.

**Please See PHOTO on Page 8**

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We want your news, sports, community events, league scores, obits, anniversaries, weddings, everything!

# Students Gear Up for FAA Certification and High-Flying Careers

**By Dave Warner**

LITTLE FALLS, N.Y. - The Little Falls High School's drone program is equipping students with cutting-edge skills and a pathway to lucrative careers in aviation technology.

Led by teacher Chris Snell, the semester-long course introduces teens to drone operation, airspace regulations, and weather dynamics, culminating in the chance to earn the FAA's TRUST certificate and prepare for the Part 107 remote pilot license — a credential that unlocks commercial drone work.

Snell, who launched the program to bring emerging tech to the school, emphasized its real-world relevance. "We started with basic in-house flying and built up to flight simulators, drone building, and Part 107 prep," he said. "The goal is to connect students to internships and get their names out there for careers in drones."

Snell highlighted the program's growth and the determination of participants, noting that one student passed the exam while three others scored in the high 60s last year - just shy of the 70% passing mark.

Students like Xavier Regan and John Almaviva have embraced the hands-on learning. Regan, who joined partly for the financial potential, described drones as "another form to capture videos" and linked the coursework to his freshman Earth science class. "A lot of it relates to weather stuff," he said.

The most challenging aspect? "Studying for the test and actually going and taking it." Looking ahead, Regan plans to partner with realtors for aerial photography gigs.

Almaviva echoed the practical appeal, calling the class "very helpful" for future prospects. "You learn all about weather programs, airspace — when you can fly and when you can't — and how to actually fly the drone," he explained.

The course awards the TRUST certificate automatically, paving the way for the Part 107 exam, which Almaviva has yet to take. "That's what you need to make money," he added, though he felt unprepared after the class. He envisions entrepreneurial paths, such as starting a small business to measure farmland for farmers, snapping house photos for realtors, or mapping construction sites.

As drone technology booms, Snell sees a sky's-the-limit job market for graduates. "Drone delivery is huge — Amazon and Walmart are pushing it, and it's just around the corner here in upstate New York," he said.

Agriculture offers roles in field monitoring, where drones assess moisture levels and guide irrigation alongside robotics. Other avenues include real estate photography, replacing fireworks with programmable drone light shows, and search-and-rescue operations using infrared cameras.

Snell aims to expand the curriculum next year with autonomous programming and specialized equipment for farming and emergency response, even suggesting drone swarms for school events like football games.

To ensure accessibility, Snell seeks community sponsors to cover the $150 Part 107 exam fee per student, allowing more young pilots to certify without financial barriers.

With the industry's rapid growth — from delivery fleets to precision agriculture — Little Falls students are positioned to lead the charge in this aerial revolution.

**PHOTO From Page 7**



**Photo & Story submitted by Dawna Crossman - First Row Left to Right Jade Broat, Michelle Teta, Jessica Pollak, Sara Reardon, Jessica Bladek, Lillian Bladek, Linda Roche, Amy Haas. Second Row Left to Right Dawna Crossman, Deborah Marucci, Nancy Schuyler, Anna Thayer, Ashley Robotham, Annalysse Guenthner, Quinn Mosenthin, Karlie Vokins, Sara Busch, Brennan Bladek, Andrea Vance, Emma Gage, Lenore Signorelli, Barry Gage. Third Row Left to Right Mark Case, Philip Nash, Francis Roche, Darian Howe, Harrison Zogby, Anthony Dangler, Logan Hopson, Bob Harvey, Brianna Yaghy, Nicholas Mosher, Dean Handy, Jaron Case, Micah Handy, Rachael Pollak, Briana Randall, Anthony Lyon, Peter Holmes, Gary Busch, Erin Thayer, Andrea Thayer. Fourth Row Left to Right Ginger Countryman, Sidney Roche, Maighen Ehryle, Shaad Madison, Donna DeRosa, Colin Comstock, Ryan Simpson. Director Katlin Wolford not in photo.**

