

# INSIDE INSIGHTS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Sullivan County Manager's Office

March 2018



Sullivan County Manager Josh Potosek, left, Public Safety Commissioner Rick Sauer, center, and Sheriff's Deputy Lt. John Watson participated in multiple conference calls with town and village leaders in the days after the devastating March 2 blizzard.

## Responding to the call

From the Town of Lumberland to the Town of Rockland, from Cochetton to Woodbourne, the impacts of the fierce March 2 blizzard hammered virtually every corner of Sullivan County.

"At one point, about half the County was out of power," said County Manager Josh Potosek. "It looked as if a hurricane had swept through some of our towns, with trees and lines down all over."

Yet during and after this storm, towns, villages, fire departments, ambulance corps, the County, the State, even the Army, pulled together in a coordinated response that could well turn out to be the largest in Sullivan's history.

"We worked cooperatively to reopen roads, restore power and render aid to the thousands suffering through this disaster," recalled Potosek. "To everyone who gave so selflessly, thank you. You are the reason we are as resilient as we are."

## In This Issue

- An incredible year for the Office of Sustainable Energy
- Four stars for our Adult Care Center!
- We've got jobs
- Renaissance: Love Where You Live



Carol Roig, left, Stephen Stuart, center, and Heather Brown are the trio comprising the Office of Sustainable Energy, focused on finding new ways to power an entire County.

Departmental Spotlight: The Office of Sustainable Energy

## Energy in motion

This is turning out to be a banner year for the Sullivan County Office of Sustainable Energy (OSE).

Just in the past 12 months, OSE has led the County to achieving both Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities certification – a challenging undertaking for each, let alone both. Last May, an enormous two-megawatt solar array kicked off operations behind the Adult Care Center in Liberty. And OSE successfully persuaded the Legislature to adopt a Fleet Efficiency Policy for County vehicles, an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Reimbursement Program to develop charging stations Countywide, and a Benchmarking Policy that will track the County’s fuel usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

Now comes word that Sullivan County is host to the largest Community Distributed Generation solar array in New York State (in Callicoon), and despite being designated tax-exempt by the State, it will make payments in lieu of taxes through an innovative Sullivan County Industrial Development Agency program that has become a Statewide model.

“Clean energies are here,” affirms Sustainability Coordinator Heather Brown. “They’re just starting their ascent to becoming a dominant form of energy, and we are on the forefront of that.”

Brown and her skilled officemates, Carol Roig and Stephen Stuart, are leading the charge into this brave “green” world – not just because it’s good for the environment but for the taxpayer, as well.

“Not only can we reduce our carbon emissions, we can reduce our operating costs,” Brown notes, pointing out, for example, that the County’s brand new Ford Fusion hybrid sedan gets much better fuel efficiency than a comparable gasoline-powered car – as much as 97 MPGe.

Continued on page 5

## Charging into the future

What’s the Office of Sustainable Energy have in store for Sullivan County?

Here’s some of what’s on their plate for 2018:

- Establishing a network of electric vehicle charging stations
- Installing solar charging kiosks at County parks for electronic devices
- Providing training for town and village officials on solar development
- Hosting an educational forum about Community Choice Aggregation
- Initiating an update of the County’s existing Climate Action Plan
- Converting County parking lot and street lights to high-efficiency LEDs



Charging stations such as this one at the Thompson Town Hall may soon spread around the County.

## Four stars!

Sullivan County is proud to announce that the Adult Care Center (ACC) just earned a fourth star in the federal government's Five-Star Quality Rating System, up from the previous three-star ranking.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services created the Five-Star Quality Rating System to help people compare nursing homes more easily and identify areas about which they may want to ask questions. Nursing homes with 5 stars are considered to have much above average quality, and nursing homes with 1 star are considered to have quality much below average.

Factors considered include staffing levels, healthcare, plus the amount of successful community discharges and functional improvement.

## Got a question?

Try your legislator first, by calling the Sullivan County Legislature's office at 845-807-0435. They can direct you to the representative who is elected to serve you.

Or look up who you're seeking directly, via the County's website:  
[co.sullivan.ny.us](http://co.sullivan.ny.us)

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## Fall in love with where you live

From the edges of the Shawangunk Mountains to the foothills of the Catskills; between the Delaware River and the Neversink Reservoir, you will find the revitalized main streets, hamlets, beautiful, active public spaces that make up Sullivan County.

Throughout, there are projects dreamed of and created by grassroots volunteers. They are attractions on their own, hosting events and activities that draw people from throughout and outside Sullivan County.

Love of Place Matters. That's the focus for Sullivan Renaissance in 2018 and the theme of its annual conference the weekend of April 27-28. Love Where You Live will be set against the beautiful backdrop of Bethel Woods Center for the Arts.

The conference weekend will feature Dr. Joel Fuhrman, renowned author and family physician who has appeared on "Dr. Oz" and who will speak about nutrition and eating your way to good health.

Community development strategist Peter Kageyama, author of the book "Love Where You Live," will talk about bottom-up community development and the amazing people who make change happen – amazing people like those we have here in Sullivan County, who are working every day to make our communities better.

A Spring Market will offer a variety of products from the County and the surrounding region. Health screenings and an afternoon walk of the Bethel Woods grounds will be worth looking forward to as we transition from this tough winter into spring.

Recipients of the 2018 Sullivan Renaissance Beautification, Municipal Partnership and Community Development Grants will be announced. Learn about ways that you and your family can participate and be involved in the grassroots work of these projects.

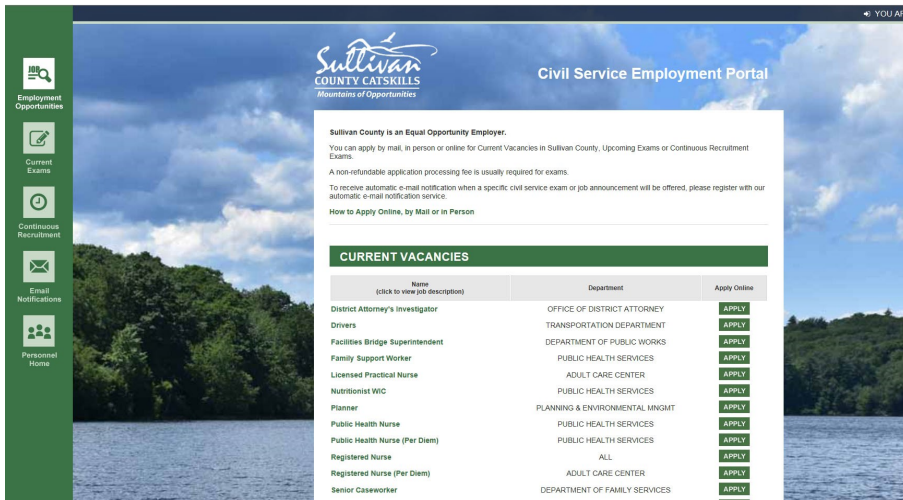
There are hundreds – thousands – of reasons why we love living here in Sullivan County. What's yours?

# New jobs require a new look

Have you checked out Sullivan County's new Job Opportunities page? Have a look: <https://sullivan-portal.mycivilservice.com/joboppjs>

Not only can you see what jobs we offer, you can apply on the spot! And you can learn all about the Civil Service exams necessary for many of these positions.

"The design of this portal offers a hint of what's to come when we debut a completely revamped County website later this year," hinted County Manager Josh Potosek. "I encourage everyone to share this page with their friends and family."



## Raising wages

In preparation for the State-required minimum wage of \$15 an hour, Sullivan County this month raised all full-time employees making minimum wage to \$14 an hour.

The full \$15/hour rate will be reached next year, in line with the State mandate.

"This goes beyond any mandate, however," said County Manager Josh Potosek. "This is a step in addressing the attraction and retention of valuable employees throughout our workforce."

# Marketing a hidden treasure: the County Airport

The timing is right for a sustained return on taxpayers' investment from the Sullivan County International Airport, and County leaders are working on achieving that goal by attracting ... what else? ... investors.

What's available? Hangar space — existing & potential. The contract for fixed base operations (FBO), to provide services to meet a new era of growth. Room for flight schools, aviation mechanics schools and other aviation-related enterprises.

What's the airport have to offer? A 6,300-foot paved runway. Fuel, tiedown & hangar facilities. Instrument landing system.

What's nearby? Bethel Woods Center for the Arts (on the site of the 1969 Woodstock festival), Resorts World Catskills, Route 17 (slated to become Interstate 86), Catskill Regional Medical Center, an industrial park, and more.

Our request for proposals for the FBO is available at <http://co.sullivan.ny.us/Departments/DepartmentsNZ/Purchasing/RequestforProposals/R1816FixedBaseOperatoratAirport/tabid/4009/Default.aspx>. For more info, contact Airport Administrator Jim Arnott at 845-807-0326.



## It's not where we are but where we're going

While Sullivan County's Health Outcome ranking for 2018 (according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) remains at 61 out of 62 counties Statewide, our numbers are getting better — and there's more to come.

"Part of what is driving this number, similar to other counties across the nation, is the premature death rate," says Public Health Director Nancy McGraw. "The incidence rates of cancer, heart disease and accidents (unintentional injuries) are the three leading causes for this premature death rate per 100,000 (age-adjusted). If one looks at the trends over a longer period of time, the premature death rate has decreased in Sullivan County from a high of 8,247 per 100,000 in 2011 to 7,566 per 100,000 in 2016."

"The Health Factors ranking for Sullivan County improved from number 58 last year to 47," she adds. "Health factors include health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. We've seen improvements in many of these areas."

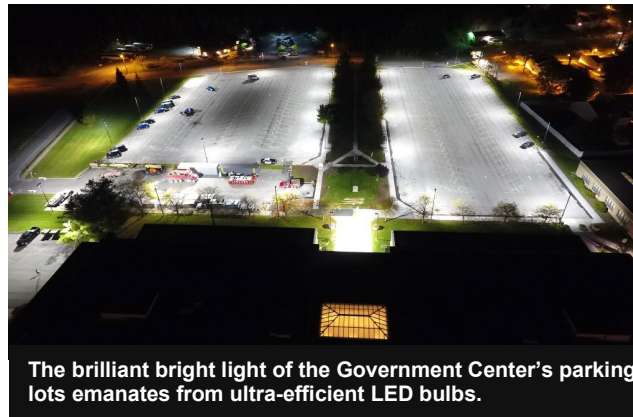
# OSE: On an electrifying track...

Continued from page 2

In collaboration with the Division of Public Works and the New York Power Authority, OSE has also helped transition the Government Center in Monticello from hundreds of old, inefficient lights and heating/cooling fixtures to long-lasting LEDs and an updated, energy-sipping HVAC system.

That's a lot of successes for a County department only a year old, having been officially funded in January 2017, but then again, Sullivan County has had a forward-looking approach in this area for more than a decade.

In 2005, the County commissioned a study of wind resources, followed by the adoption of a Green Vision Statement in 2007. OSE itself was established in 2008, but the realities of the Great Recession delayed its rollout, with the County instead relying on a contract with



The brilliant bright light of the Government Center's parking lots emanates from ultra-efficient LED bulbs.

the nonprofit Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development (from where Carol and Stephen originated). Nevertheless, "green" projects continued, from the construction of a 15-kilowatt solar array at the Transportation Center near White Lake to the completion of the Sullivan County Climate Action Plan.

Now, with a fully staffed office in place, Brown and crew are

rolling out a new resource guide, matching property owners with grants and loans to take advantage of renewables, and pursuing every energy efficiency they can find (see sidebar).

"I have the two best staff members in Sullivan County," boasts Brown (all of whom, including her, are longtime County residents). "Stephen brings an incredible level of technical expertise, and Carol brings communication skills and the ability to present it on an accessible level."

For those who may question the need for OSE, Brown is adamant: "We need to make sure our local municipalities, businesses and citizens have a resource they can trust in this growing field — one that doesn't stand to benefit financially. It's good to have an unbiased voice in all this."

She also points to one of the main reasons OSE exists at all: County Manager Josh Potossek, who ensured funding would be made available for the office once the worst of the Recession dissipated.

"He had that foresight that the County had to be able to respond to our constituency, to be a clearinghouse for information on clean energy technologies and policies," she explains. "He was spot-on. It's really taking off right now."