

Summer 2015  
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A quarterly publication  
Editor: Teri Dunn Chace

# MSF Gazette

## MAIN STREET FIRST • LITTLE FALLS • NEW YORK



### LITTLE FALLS TO HOLD ITS FIRST ANNUAL CHEESE FESTIVAL

“Smile and say cheese!” and you will be happily in the spirit of the new 2015 Little Falls Cheese Festival scheduled for Saturday, July 11 from 11 am to 6 pm. Festival goers will have an unusual opportunity to sample and buy cheese from numerous local producers—including several nationally award-winning cheesemakers.

Entertainment will include live music and a short play presented by Little Falls Theater Company called “Where’s the Cheese?” Handouts about Little Falls’ cheese history will be available and will include a self-guided walking tour.

The West Main Street festival area (from Ann Street to 4th) will offer a variety of cheese styles and flavors as well as related products, including yogurt, farm butter, gourmet chocolates, artisanal breads, jams, spreads, mustards, flavored vinegars, flavored honey, handcrafted cutting and serving boards, screen-printed tea towels and much more.

Our local restaurants will get into the swing of things too: pizza, our hometown specialty, will be offered in several different locations and will give visitors a chance to choose their favorite. Look for warm quiche, luscious cheesecake, and

other specials.

Historically, Little Falls is an ideal place to hold a cheese festival to celebrate the food product that made us famous. Herkimer County’s nineteenth-century cheese production topped *a million boxes* shipped by 1874. The spring/summer Monday markets near the corner of Albany and South Ann Streets were crowded with farm wagons, agents, and salesmen competing for the best cheese at the best price. This bustling cheese market set the international price for cheese for several decades.

*continued on page 4*

### New Businesses Roundup!

*Main Street First welcomes the following recently opened businesses. We encourage everyone to stop in, check out, and support these newcomers!*

**Dragon's Lair**  
598 East Main St.: youth-oriented games, cards and comics

**Fitness Farmacy**  
441 West Main St.: group fitness and nutrition

**Klein Art Gallery & Coffee Restaurant**

566 East Main St.:  
Manhattan trendy art exhibitions and eatery

**Medicx21 Computer Repair**

4 West Main St.: computer repairs, services and reviews

*The following are businesses that are preparing to open soon:*

**Pilates Studio II**

608 East Main St.:  
body conditioning,  
authentic Classical Pilates

**Ruggiero's Ristorante**

546 East Main St.: Italian eatery

**Showcase Antiques**

375 Canal Place:  
estates, consignments + eBay specialists

**Vincent's Guitar Co.**

588 East Main St.:  
luthier and repair shop

Curious? Have feedback or ideas for us? Want to help? PLEASE JOIN US!

Next scheduled meetings:

Monday, June 15

Monday, June 29

Monday, July 13

Monday, July 27

Monday, August 10

@ 6:30 pm

690 East Main Street,  
Little Falls

*(For more details about our group, please see the back cover/p. 8)*

## *ABOUT LITTLE FALLS: It Took a Village...to Save a Theater: Go Digital or Go Dark*

After a two-year struggle, the Little Falls community was recently saved from the loss of an important community resource, our Valley Cinemas. When movie studios made the decision to switch from 35mm films to digital, many small movie theaters had to decide to either upgrade to more costly projectors or "go dark."

MSF interviewed Chris Anderson, owner of the Valley Cinemas, and Kevin Mihaly, director of the Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts (MVCA). The following are edited excerpts from those conversations.

### **Can you give us a brief history of what happened in the quest to save our local movie theater?**

#### **Anderson:**

I followed in the footsteps of other small theaters in the country and reached out to the community. We had two benefits and numerous donations, but we could see that this wasn't going to be enough to get us to our end result. A small group of community members came up with a solution. The plan was to partner with the MVCA, where people could use their donation as a business write-off. Eventually, we had enough money to purchase the first digital projector. The second projector was purchased thanks to a Community Foundation grant. We are now totally digital!

We feel like the community is involved more now by coming to the theater because they had involvement in keeping it open. We thank everyone for that. APPLAUSE TO EVERYONE THAT HELPED!!!!!!

### **What made the MVCA decide to enter into the process of assisting with the campaign to save Valley Cinemas?**

#### **Mihaly:**

The cinema and an individual member of the Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts approached us. We educated ourselves and talked to people both within and outside of our organization. The goal of trying to help the theater survive fit well with our mission.

With the help of various community leaders, we developed a strategy whereby MVCA would purchase the digital equipment and lease it back to the theater in exchange for programming opportunities.

MVCA has been in existence for over 30 years and has a solid, well-established foundation and our membership is strong. We started telling the story of what we learned to our members and to the community at large...and people began to respond. We received small and large donations, not just locally but from as far away as Florida.

*(continued on p. 3)*

*"It's a great project to support. The theater is a real key to a lot of towns."*

*Jan Squadrito, senior program officer with The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc.*

## *ABOUT LITTLE FALLS: It Took a Village...to Save a Theater: Go Digital or Go Dark (continued from p. 2)*

The most exciting moment happened when we received a call from The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc. They had learned about our campaign and suggested that we write a grant. They appreciated our creativity with the lease arrangement and suggested that they might be able to assist. At that point, we were approximately \$30,000 short of our goal. We had a great team that worked diligently on the grant and the Community Foundation provided wonderful guidance throughout. It was a very happy day when we received word from The Foundation that they were investing in our campaign in the amount of \$30,000: Valley Cinemas saved!

### **How do you envision the community and the MVCA benefiting from this collaboration? Mihaly:**

First, the partnership will keep a movie theater open in Little Falls. The people of Little Falls will have a local theater where they can go to see a first-run major motion picture. Some of us can even walk to the theater from our homes or after a night out at a local restaurant. Also, the people of the surrounding area can come to Little Falls and see a movie without having to drive farther.

Secondly, MVCA now has the ability to schedule programming at the theater during selected periods each month. We can bring in movies that normally would not be shown in town. In late April, we brought in our first movie, with the showing of the 2015 Academy Award-winning Best Picture, "Birdman." In May, it was "Still Alice." Also in May we had a special presentation of Herkimer College's 5th Annual Student Film Showcase, which featured original works by students in the Communications Arts: Digital Filmmaking curriculum.

We're putting together a film committee that will help us generate new programming ideas. If anyone might like to assist with this group, please contact MVCA.

*--Pat Frezza-Gressler*



Photo credit: Pat Frezza-Gressler

# UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

## JUNE

- Thursday, 6/18. "Super Third Thursday." From 3 to 7 pm, Starving Artists & Craft Booths on Main Street. Also: sidewalk chalk artist Mark Verri, a free showing of "Jurassic World," kids' carnival games, a random act of kindness giveaway, great food. From 5:30 to 7:30 pm, enjoy the music of Kevin, Glenn & Elliot at the M&T clock tower. (Please see our flyer, visit [www.shoplittlefallsny.com](http://www.shoplittlefallsny.com) or check the Facebook page for full details.)
- Tuesday, 6/23. 5:30 pm. Little Falls Historical Society annual picnic at Rotary Park; please bring a dish to share

## JULY

- Tuesday, 7/7. 7 pm. Monthly Common Council meeting. Little Falls City Hall.
- Saturday, 7/11. 11 am to 6 pm. Little Falls Cheese Festival. (Please visit [www.littlefallscheesefestival.com](http://www.littlefallscheesefestival.com) for details.)
- Thursday, 7/16. "Super Third Thursday." Vendor fair, stargazing with astronomers, free movie, Maypole dancing, water-color lessons, kids' games, and a children's talent show from 5:30 to 6:30 pm, followed by Steve Falvo and the Easy Money Band. Community picnic at Canal Place from 4 to 10 pm! (Please see our flyer, visit [www.shoplittlefallsny.com](http://www.shoplittlefallsny.com) or check the Facebook page for full details.)

## AUGUST

- Tuesday, 8/4. 7 pm. Monthly Common Council meeting. Little Falls City Hall.
- Saturday, 8/10 to Sunday, 8/16. Annual citywide CANAL CELEBRATION (see notice below).
- Wednesday, 8/12. 5 pm. Canal Celebration's Community Picnic at Rotary Park. Indie band Sirsy, great food, duck races. Fireworks!
- Thursday, 8/20. "Third Thursday" at participating area businesses. (Please visit [www.shoplittlefallsny.com](http://www.shoplittlefallsny.com) or the Facebook page for full details.)

### *Cheese Festival (continued from page 1)*

Herkimer County full cream cheeses were well-known as far away as London. Thanks once more to David H. Burrell for his dairy-business genius, cheese-production inventions, and his dairy experiments to improve the quality of the milk used in production. Those were the glory days of one of the best quality foods we ever produced!

Admission and parking are free. For more details, including a list of vendors, please visit [www.littlefallscheesefestival.com](http://www.littlefallscheesefestival.com).

--Nan Ressue



### **28th Annual Canal Celebration, Aug. 10 - 16**

The Annual Canal Celebration, spanning 28 consecutive years, represents a recognition of the community, its heritage, and the spirit that makes Little Falls a unique place in the Mohawk Valley. Canal Celebration has welcomed thousands of visitors to Little Falls, attending dozens of family-oriented programs held throughout the week. These programs are made possible through the dedicated efforts of approximately a hundred-plus individuals, representing local organizations, businesses, industries as well as the City of Little Falls.

For full lineup of all of this year's fun and festive activities and plans, please visit: <http://www.littlefallsny.com/canaldays/schedule.html>

## COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD: News, Updates, Volunteer Opportunities

The Little Falls Micro Fund is now open for business. If you or someone you know needs one-time financial help in the form of an interest-free loan of \$2,500 or less, please contact:



**Little Falls Micro Fund**  
Helping Our Community Grow

P.O. Box 817, Little Falls, NY 13365

[littlefallsmicrofund@gmail.com](mailto:littlefallsmicrofund@gmail.com)

[www.littlefallsmicrofund.org](http://www.littlefallsmicrofund.org)

(315) 219-9393

### Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful

is reorganizing and expanding opportunities for volunteers. If not you, who? If not now, when? Find us on Facebook--find out more!

**PLEASE DON'T LITTER!!!**

"Volunteers are not paid -- not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

--Sherri Anderson



Photo credit: Bart Carrig

The **Little Falls Community Garden** (next to St. Paul's Universalist Church on Albany Street downtown) needs helpers--gardeners, weeders, anyone willing to supervise and work with youth groups, and, later in the summer, harvesters. All food is donated to the Little Falls Food Bank on Furnace Street. *Get outdoors, get exercise, and help your community!*

Please call Chris Van Meter at (315) 717-8299 or send an email to [dcvan4004@aol.com](mailto:dcvan4004@aol.com)

### LITTLE FALLS RADIO, ON THE AIR!

1610 AM



Listeners and suggestions always welcome, but we'd also love to get some volunteer technical staff and program presenters or even DJs.

Get involved: visit us at 524 E. Main Street, send us an email at [info@littlefallsradio.us](mailto:info@littlefallsradio.us), "friend" us on Facebook, or visit our website at: <https://littlefallsradio.wordpress.com/little-falls-radio/>

## *Bellinger View's Inaugural Concert a Big Success*

May 16 was no ordinary Saturday in Little Falls. The monumental wooden doors of the Masonic Temple were wide open to welcome 150 people for a night that will forever resound in the hearts and minds of all in attendance. The building's well-preserved elegant architecture and high inside ceilings made a perfect setting for the magic and rich artistry that transpired throughout the evening.

Bellinger View Performing Arts presented "Opera and Broadway Treasures." To say the whole event was a grand success would be an understatement. It was a night of music, laughter, and perhaps a few tears. Performer and audience were as one—an enthusiastic standing ovation rewarded the brilliant performances and paid testament to the audience's awe.

Vlad Ifinca, the event's Artistic Director, along with Lee Hall, the Executive Director of Bellinger View Performing Arts, deserve resounding credit for the two hours of fanciful delight.

Ifinca's piano talent began the show, providing the soundtrack to John Moore's vocal performance of "Largo al Factotum" from *The Barber of Seville*. Off and running, Moore's high energy raised the bar for the acts to follow.

Kristen Mengelkoch brought captivating yet comic relief to the stage in her performances, including the parody number "On My Phone." But she also wrenched hearts with "If I Loved You" from *Carousel*.

Peter Volpe captivated the audience with his astounding vocals in "Ol' Man River" and Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine." Mezzo-soprano Janara Kellerman's "sultry,

elegant, and compelling" reputation held sway on this evening. Her flair for the dramatic was on display during her performances of cabaret favorites "Blue" and "Amor."

The concert paid tribute to former Little Falls resident Norma S. Newton, who after successfully pursuing a career in music, came back to reclaim the family farm. The



Photo credit: Jessica Kelly

tribute was well-paid. Although Norma passed in 2008, if here today, she surely would have been honored by the event she inspired.

Events like this one symbolize the potential this city has as a center for the arts, a conservator of history, and an evolving community of like minds. Bellinger View Performing Arts plans to bring similar programming to the city of Little Falls in the near future.

*The event raised nearly \$4,000 for Main Street First, which will use this donation wisely to further its various community-strengthening projects. Special thanks to Terry Tippin for donating the space in her beautiful home, the former Masonic Temple.*

--Carly Proulx

*"Music is a world within itself, it is a language we all understand."  
--Stevie Wonder*

## *BRAINSTORMING: How to 'Switch' Your Thinking about Little Falls*

In their best-selling book, *Switch*, authors Chip and Dan Heath tell the story of Jerry Sternin, a man who learned a valuable lesson about change while working for the Save the Children organization. In 1990, the country of Vietnam asked Save the Children to come to the country and find a solution for childhood malnutrition. Save the Children asked Jerry to lead the effort. His task was daunting. He knew that malnutrition was the result of several complex problems, including near-universal poverty, a scarcity of clean water, and a rural population largely ignorant of nutrition. These causes would be hard to correct in a lifetime or more. Jerry was given six months.

When faced with complex problems, we have a tendency to think the solution must be equally complex. This isn't always the case. Jerry knew he couldn't fix the complex causes of malnutrition, so he did something different and looked for Vietnamese children who were *not* malnourished, what the Heaths refer to as "Bright Spots." Jerry's team fanned out to different villages in Vietnam and studied the food preparation and eating habits of the few families whose children were well-nourished. They found that these families did several simple yet important things differently than the families with malnourished children. Jerry's team then recruited women from these families to teach other families how to replicate these nutritional practices. Within six months, 65% of the children in Vietnam were better nourished and stayed that way. It's estimated that the work of Jerry's team has now helped

nearly 2.2 million children. Jerry was able to change the situation because he was focused on "Bright Spots." He studied what was working and applied what he learned to what wasn't working.

Little Falls, like many Mohawk Valley cities and towns, faces a number of challenges that also have complex causes, mostly related to our economy, and the economy of the region. But yet, there are "Bright Spots" in Little Falls—industries and businesses that are doing very well, even thriving. It seems that some storefronts on Main St. have a new business every six months, but some have been successful for years. Do these businesses have anything in common? Could it help us attract other sustainable businesses to the city? Or, take the number of neglected apartment houses that are slowly falling into a state of disrepair beyond saving. We should persist in our efforts to get these irresponsible landlords to address the state of their properties, but maybe we should also invest some time in learning how to attract more of the responsible landlords. What made them buy property in Little Falls? Why do they properly maintain their properties while so many others neglect them? How do we find more of these types of landlords?

While the complex causes of our region's problems should still be addressed, we should also be mindful to look for "Bright Spots," small successes that can be highly leveraged to help our community change.

*--Rob Richard*



PO Box 65  
Little Falls, NY 13365

**Main Street First** is an organization of Little Falls residents, as well as other stakeholders in the cultural and commercial life of our city.

**Main Street First** does not act on the behalf of individual businesses in Little Falls, but is dedicated to the interests of our residents in preserving and revitalizing the Little Falls City Center.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** We constitute ourselves a voluntary association under the name **Main Street First**, for the charitable purposes of combating community deterioration in Little Falls, New York, by organizing the community to create sustainable initiatives to revitalize the city. The members of this association support the economic revitalization of Little Falls through Smart Growth principles, the creation of a comprehensive Master Plan, the participation of all interested parties in directing our city's future, city-wide residential revitalization, the development of green and sustainable technologies throughout our community, historic preservation efforts and increased recreational facilities.

## MSF'S SHORT-TERM GOALS

- ❖ Continue to work with local businesses to promote monthly "Third Thursday" events.
- ❖ Expand and develop our network of volunteers.

## MSF'S LONG-TERM GOALS

- ❖ Continue to expand and improve the "Think Local Little Falls" venture.
- ❖ Position MSF as a strong partner with Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful (KMVB).
- ❖ Pursue grant opportunities for projects aligned with MSF's mission and principles.

*These are the sorts of things we discuss and plan at our meetings. Join us! Bring your ideas, skills, and energy and help us reach these and other good goals for our community.*

To receive a copy of this quarterly newsletter electronically, please send your request to: [mainstreetfirst@yahoo.com](mailto:mainstreetfirst@yahoo.com).



## HOW TO JOIN MSF

If you would like to get involved, have questions or ideas, or are thinking of joining, we invite you to come to our meetings—everyone is welcome!

Email us at:

[mainstreetfirst@yahoo.com](mailto:mainstreetfirst@yahoo.com)

Visit our website at:

[www.mainstreetfirstny.com](http://www.mainstreetfirstny.com)

Visit our blog at:

<http://mainstreetfirst.wordpress.com/>

Facebook:

"like" the Main Street First page  
"like" the Think Local Little Falls page