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Geneseo CURRENT

As we turn another page in Geneseo's story, we want to pause and say thank you – to our readers, our advertisers, and every community partner who continues to make *The Current* possible. Every page of this magazine reflects you: your businesses, your nonprofits, your events, your people.

We've heard your calls for a local newspaper, and while that isn't something our team can take on, we're proud of what *The Current Scene* has become – a publication that now reaches every home and business in Geneseo, four times a year, celebrating the people and places that make this community shine.

Our mission remains simple: to celebrate what's good, support what's local, and strengthen the ties that make Geneseo feel like home. When you shop with the businesses and support the nonprofits featured here, you help keep local stories alive.

From all of us at *The Current*, thank you for reading, for sharing, and for being part of a community that still believes local matters.

The Current Team

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The Current Scene

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FROM ONE TRUCK TO A LEGACY:

Wirth, Inc. Celebrates 60 Years of Plumbing, Perseverance, and Pride

In 1965, a young and energetic farm boy from Geneseo took a leap of faith—and unknowingly set the foundation for what would become one of the region’s most trusted family-owned businesses. Today, Wirth, Inc. celebrates its 60th anniversary, a milestone that not only honors six decades of plumbing expertise but also the evolution of the company into a full-service provider for plumbing, heating, cooling, HVAC, and geothermal needs. It’s a legacy built on service, family, and community.

Ray Wirth, approaching 90 in February, still remembers his start like it was yesterday. “I didn’t know what I wanted to do after high school,” he says. “College wasn’t for me, but I knew I wanted to work.” That work ethic led him from baling hay on his family’s farm to a plumbing apprenticeship with Vandemore Plumbing and Heating at just 17 years old.

After more than a decade learning the trade, Ray co-founded Becker & Wirth in 1965, eventually rebranding it into what is now Wirth, Inc.—a business that would steadily grow from plumbing roots into the heating and HVAC fields as customer needs expanded.

Building a Business, Building a Town

Wirth’s first major project—an expansion of Central Bank in the late ’60s—was both a challenge and a turning point. “It was a big deal for us,” he recalls. “But we figured it out. We had good people, and we made it happen.” From that point on, the company grew steadily, known not just for plumbing but for its people-first philosophy.

That commitment extended to employees, many of whom joined through the local high school’s co-op

program and stayed for decades. “One employee- Randy Rasmussen- stayed with us for 48 and a half years,” Ray says with pride. “We paid them well, treated them right, and in return, they helped us build something lasting.”

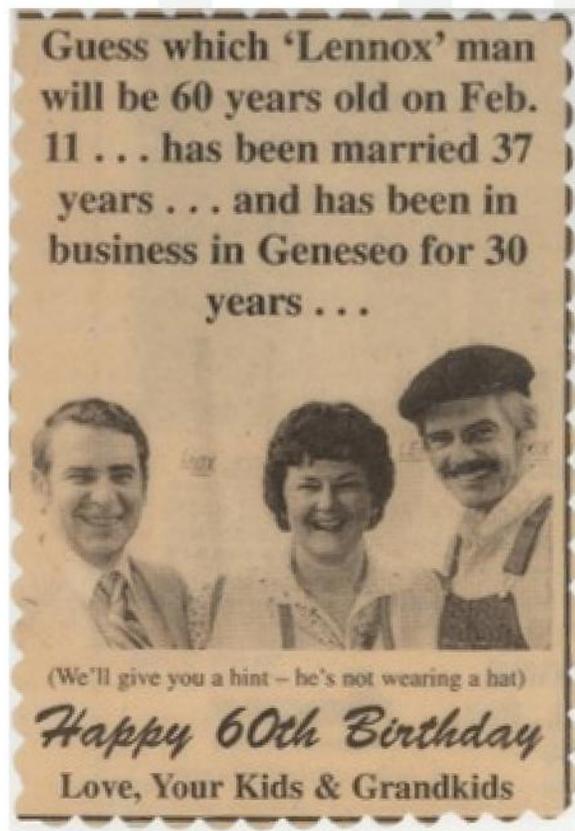
In 1979, needing more space, Wirth bought and remodeled the former Lee Lumberyard on Exchange Street—now a familiar landmark for longtime residents. Even the economic downturns of the early '80s didn't slow him down. Ray kept his team employed by flipping houses in the winter, sometimes selling those very homes to his own workers.

“Work with your hands and your brain – that’s how you build a life you’re proud of.”

A Family Business in Every Sense

Wirth, Inc. has always been more than just a business—it’s a family legacy. All five of Ray’s children have worked for the company at some point, with four still involved today. Sons Cory, Jason, and Ki now lead the day-to-day operations, while daughter Wendy handles office work. Daughter Jodi retired after 32 years of bookkeeping. “They’ve taken what I started and made it grow,” Ray says. “And they’re not driving Mercedes. They’re driving to job sites, getting dirty, doing the work.”

Ray’s late wife Judy, who passed away in 2004, played a critical role in the company’s early years—raising the kids and stepping in whenever needed. One of Ray’s fondest memories is of her loading the kids into the car and making a run to the Quad Cities to pick up parts for a job. “I’d give her money for McDonald’s,” he says with a laugh. “That was the treat. That’s just what we did. Everyone pitched in.”



A Culture of Craft and Community

From emergency night calls to decades-long relationships with customers, Wirth, Inc. built its name on service and integrity. Ray recalls one story in particular—a hot July night when he got a well pump running so a local farmer’s hogs could drink water. “That customer never forgot,” Ray says. “He told a contractor years later he’d only build his house if we did the plumbing.”

Even today, the next generation continues to uphold that legacy. Cory handles time books and works in the field. Jason manages crews and heads out to job sites. Ki bids large-scale jobs and oversees major projects. Wendy keeps the administrative side running smoothly.

The company has also remained involved in the high school co-op program that gave so many workers their start. “We’ve had great luck with co-op students,” Ray says. “They didn’t all stay in plumbing, but they learned how to work. That’s important.” He credits much of that success to his friend Ted McAvoy, whose steady commitment to bringing both boys and girls into the program helped create the strong pipeline of young workers the business still relies on today.

Looking Forward

Today, Wirth, Inc. has grown to forty-seven employees and a fleet of forty trucks, serving the community with a full range of plumbing, heating,

cooling, HVAC, and geothermal services. The evolution from a single-truck plumbing operation to a comprehensive mechanical contractor is a point of pride—and a testament to Ray’s “work hard, treat people right” philosophy.

When asked about the future, Ray’s hope is simple: that the company continues—maybe even as an employee-owned operation someday. “That would be the dream,” he says. “Let the people who helped build it keep it going.”

Now retired, Ray still drops by to help, share stories, and check in. “I didn’t do anything anyone else couldn’t do,” he says humbly. “I just worked hard, treated people right, and never stopped moving.”

“

I want to thank the people of this area—and the surrounding towns—for their confidence in us. For trusting us with their homes, their businesses, and their families' needs.

They stuck with us. Some folks could’ve gone somewhere else for a cheaper water heater, but they said, ‘No, I’m calling Ray Wirth.’ And that loyalty? That’s meant everything to me and my family.

Ray Wirth & Family

”

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Shadow Lake

WEDDING VENUE

Geneseo's Hidden Gem for Weddings and Events

Opened in 2022, Shadow Lake Wedding Venue was created to bring a high-quality, full-service event space to rural Geneseo. Once a campground, the property has been transformed into a scenic lakeside destination that blends natural beauty with elegant simplicity.

Owned and operated by seven local couples, the venue was built with a shared vision — to create a beautiful space for both couples and the community to enjoy.

Nestled on 144 acres just north of Geneseo, Shadow Lake offers mature trees, abundant wildlife, and a stunning 90-acre lake as the backdrop for unforgettable celebrations. Guests enjoy a lakeside ceremony site, a spacious 275-guest tent with bar service, and wide-open views from every angle. The property is fully accessible, non-smoking, and thoughtfully designed for comfort.

Whether you're planning an intimate ceremony or a grand event under the stars, Shadow Lake combines timeless elegance, community spirit, and natural charm — right here in Geneseo.

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THE CURRENT WEEKLY



The *Geneseo Current* is your go-to source for local news, sports, lifestyle features, and community happenings—all in one place.

Our *Current Weekly* email newsletter is delivered every Friday before noon, keeping you up to date and ready for the weekend.

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SCAN ME



Fighting Childhood Cancer, Here in Geneseo

How one local family turned loss into hope-- and created a lasting legacy for children battling cancer.



In 2019, Matt and Jeanna Francis launched the Brantley Francis Foundation in Geneseo with one clear mission: to honor the memory of their son by supporting pediatric cancer patients and their families. What began as one family's tribute has grown into a movement of hope — helping kids fight, families rest, and the community give back.

"We can't change every diagnosis-- but we can make sure no child fights alone."

The Mission: To positively influence pediatric cancer patients and their families.

BRANTLEY FRANCIS FOUNDATION

Featured Non-Profit



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families going through
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Community Events

Local fundraisers like
the annual golf outing
& community picnic
bring families together
and raise awareness



Community Support

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and research to uplift
kids and their families

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Sponsor an Event: brantleyfrancisfoundation.org



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Public Interest Project Update: Enhancing Geneseo's Infrastructure and Community

The City of Geneseo saw a productive 2025, with major progress on replacing early-20th-century infrastructure. The first phase of the N. State Street Project (Park to Wells) was completed in Fall 2025, and phase two (Wells to Ogden) begins in early Spring 2026. This work includes full replacement of water, sewer, and storm systems, along with new streets, sidewalks, and decorative lighting from Park Street to Ogden Avenue.

Additional water service improvements occurred on Orange Street, Chicago Street, and Olivia Drive. The city's fifth water well is expected to go into service this Spring on the north side of town, and a test well is scheduled in budget year 2026 to begin developing a deep well for the south end.

Thanks to support from the Miller Foundation, the Geneseo Foundation, and local student and Girl Scout Hannah McGee, a new performance stage was completed in Richmond Hill Park in October. The City Council is continuing efforts to construct a pedestrian bridge over the Geneseo Creek at State & Oakwood to improve pedestrian safety.

Investments through the Downtown TIF Façade Grant Fund were made to multiple businesses in

our Historic District to support the rehabilitation of these historic structures and the occupying businesses that call the Historic District home. Additionally, in May of 2025, Geneseo Electric was awarded the "Excellence in Reliability" award in Springfield, IL.

Looking ahead to 2026, the city's priority remains updating critical infrastructure. The north water tower will be rehabilitated and repainted; plans are underway for a phosphorus removal system at the wastewater treatment plant to meet EPA requirements by 2030; and Geneseo Electric will continue distribution and power plant upgrades while undergoing an independent planning review to guide the next decade of improvements. The police department will complete upgrades to the shooting range, making it a certified law enforcement training facility. Pedestrian infrastructure improvements continue with planned sidewalk installation on the east side of Chicago Street between Exchange Street and Wells.

The City of Geneseo remains committed to improving infrastructure, community spaces and quality of life for residents and visitors. For additional information, please give me a call at 309-944-6419.

Brandon Maeglin, Geneseo City Administrator

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THE RAINMAKER
Dramatic comedy by N. RICHARD NASH

heaven help me
COMEDY BY JOE SIMONELLI

July 9-12 & 16-19

Directed by Dana Skiles

Aug 20-23 & 27-30

Directed by Jennifer Kingry

Picasso at the Lapin Agile
A COMEDY BY STEVE MARTIN

COLLECTED STORIES

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a Drama by DONALD MARGUILES

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Directed by Jonathan Grafft

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More information coming soon. For the latest updates, visit our website at rhplayers.com and sign up for emails.

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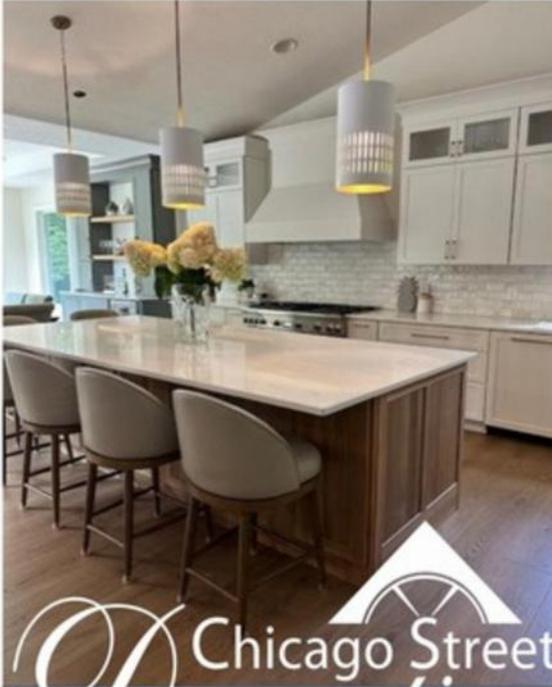


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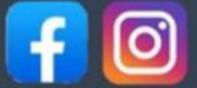
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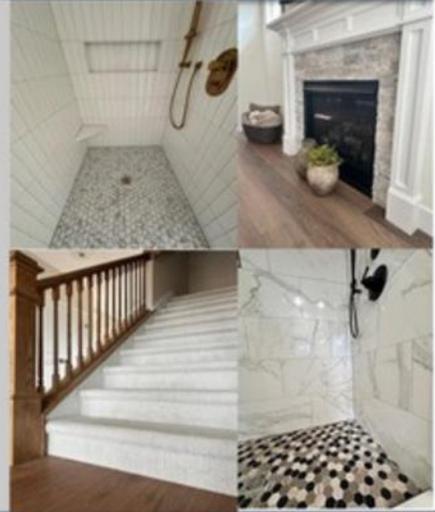
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Begin Again, Gently.

“
*Let this year be less about becoming
someone new, and more about being
kind to the person you already are.*
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There's something about January that makes everything feel both brand new and strangely familiar. The calendar resets, the world exhales, and we all start scribbling plans for the person we think we're supposed to become. We vow to be more — more organized, more grateful, more intentional, more productive. But in that rush toward “better,” we forget how exhausting it is to constantly rebuild ourselves from scratch.

Every year, we talk about “fresh starts,” but maybe the start of a new year isn't about reinventing — maybe it's about remembering. Remembering what mattered before life got loud. Remembering who we were before we started comparing ourselves to everyone else. Remembering that growth doesn't always look like movement. Sometimes it looks like stillness, like standing your ground in the middle of uncertainty and saying: I'm still here.

This year, instead of chasing the illusion of perfection, what if we chose gentleness? What if we looked at our goals as guidelines, not guarantees — as invitations to grow rather than demands to improve? There's power in wanting

more for yourself, yes. But there's also power in resting, forgiving, and letting yourself exist without apology.

You don't have to have it all figured out by January 1st. You don't have to fix everything you wish were different. You're allowed to carry some of last year's mess into this one — because life doesn't pause for clean transitions. Change happens quietly, in the small ways: the decision to try again, the effort to show up, the kindness you extend to yourself when no one's watching.

So this year, be bold enough to set goals — and gentle enough to release them when they stop serving you. Measure progress not in perfect habits but in how often you choose hope over fear, calm over chaos, forgiveness over guilt. Maybe the point isn't to start over at all — maybe it's just to start honestly.

Here's to showing up as you are — hopeful, tired, uncertain, and still trying. That's enough. It always has been.

Winter Safety Simplified

Smart, simple tips to keep your home, car, and family protected.

AT HOME

- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors monthly.
- Change furnace filters and clear vents of dust or debris.
- Keep a three-day supply of food, water, and medication on-hand.
- Never use an oven or grill for heat.
- Mark your home's exterior gas shutoff and main water valve in case of emergency.

ON THE ROAD

- Keep a half tank of gas at all times.
- Pack an emergency kit with a blanket, flashlight, jumper cables, and snacks.
- Check tire pressure weekly.
- Replace worn wiper blades and fill up on washer fluid.
- Brush snow off your roof and headlights before driving.

FOR THE FAMILY

- Dress in layers — moisture-wicking base, insulating middle, windproof outer.
- Add reflective gear for evening walks or runs.
- Take smaller steps on ice, and sprinkle salt or sand on slick driveways.

IN CASE OF OUTAGE

- Charge phones, flashlights, and battery packs in advance of adverse weather.
- Keep a list of emergency contacts written down — not just in your phone.
- Unplug electronics when power goes out to avoid surges when power returns.



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Hidden History: Myron McHenry

Geneseo's Wizard of the Homestretch

Based on research by Steve Kastorff, featured in the *Hidden History* series

One of America's greatest harness racers got his start right here in Geneseo. Myron McHenry, born in 1856 near the lost town of Pink Prairie, grew up on a Henry County farm and learned to race by challenging neighbors with his father's workhorses. His first official race was four chaotic laps around Galva's town square.

By 1881, McHenry was competing at Geneseo's original racetrack, earning his first win and quickly becoming a name across northern Illinois. He soon joined the Grand Circuit, racing in major cities from Cleveland to New York.

Ignoring his father's doubts, McHenry took a small-town mare named Mabel A east—and shocked elite competitors. By the early 1890s, he ranked among the nation's top five harness drivers. At Chicago's 1893 World's Fair, after a dramatic come-from-behind victory, his once-skeptical father stood in the grandstand shouting, "That's my son!"

Dubbed "The Wizard of the Homestretch," McHenry became known for his thrilling late-race charges. He was the first driver to breed, train, and drive a winner in one of Kentucky's major races and later trained the legendary Dan Patch.

McHenry raced until illness brought him home to Geneseo, where he died in 1911 at age 55. In 1958, he entered the Harness Racing Hall of Fame—a hometown hero who rose from dusty county tracks to national fame.



Image from Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame



Image from Find a Grave Memorial Site

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SENIOR & ACTIVE LIVING EXPO

Empowering Seniors.
Supporting Families.

A community event designed to connect seniors, their families, and caregivers with local businesses and resources that support aging well.



April 17



10am - 1pm



Geneseo Community Center

A FLIGHT TO REMEMBER

Lt. Col. Roy ‘Tony’ Simon’s Journey of Service and Honor

by Claudia Loucks
adapted for publication

For those who know Roy “Tony” Simon, patriotism isn’t just a word — it’s a way of life. The Geneseo Air Force veteran has dedicated his life to service, so when the opportunity arose to take part in an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., he knew it was something special.

Lt. Col. Simon, a career Air Force pilot and Vietnam veteran, joined Honor Flight #52 on April 12, 2022, alongside roughly 80 fellow veterans and an equal number of volunteer guardians. The one-day trip, departing from the Quad City International Airport, brought veterans to the nation’s capital to visit memorials built in their honor.

“The whole experience was remarkable,” Simon said. “From the moment we left to the moment we returned, people showed us such incredible support. There were crowds cheering at both airports — people who didn’t even know us, clapping, waving flags, singing patriotic songs. It brought tears to my eyes.”

The Honor Flight program covers the full cost for veterans, while guardians—volunteers who assist throughout the day—pay their own way. The remainder



Lt. Col. Roy (Tony) Simon, photographed at the Vietnam Memorial in Geneseo City Park, wearing the jacket and cap from his Honor Flight. (Photo by Claudia Loucks)

of the trip is funded by community organizations; in Simon’s case, the Back Road Music Festival in Galva helped make Flight #52 possible.

Making the journey even more meaningful, Simon’s son, Tony Jr., traveled from San Antonio, Texas, to serve as his father’s guardian. When another veteran arrived without one, Tony Jr. immediately volunteered to help. “I was so proud of him for doing the right thing,” Simon said.

The day was filled with visits to the nation's memorials and cemeteries — a powerful reminder of sacrifice and gratitude. “Every part of the day was a highlight,” Simon recalled. “It’s an experience I’ll never forget.”

Simon’s life of service began humbly. Before enlisting, he had never even flown in an airplane. Accepted into the Air Force Aviation Cadet program, he earned his pilot wings in 1956 and spent more than two decades flying missions across the globe — from Greenland to Africa to Southeast Asia. During the Vietnam War, Simon volunteered for special operations, flying 120 night combat missions in heavily armed gunships.

“We would not be free without the sacrifice of our veterans. We can never forget what they’ve done.”
— Lt. Col. Tony Simon

Over the years, he logged more than 10,000 flight hours and earned numerous commendations, including the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters. He retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1978.



Today, Simon still displays the same deep pride that guided his career. “I love my country and the flag that represents it,” he said. “We would not be free without the sacrifice of our veterans. We can never forget what they’ve done.”

Reflecting on his Honor Flight, Simon said it reaffirmed his faith in the American spirit. “It reminded me that most Americans are thankful for what our veterans represent,” he said. “If you’re a veteran, go. Don’t hesitate. It’s an experience that will stay with you forever.”

26 Things to Look Forward to — in 2026 —

From hometown traditions to national moments— here's what's coming that'll make you smile.

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | Richmond Hill Players Season
Geneseo
see page 13 for details | 6 | Beaux Arts Fair
Figge Art Museum
May 9-10, 2026 |
| 2 | 2026 Winter Olympics
Milan & Cortina, Italy
February 2-22, 2026 | 7 | Chalk Art Fest
Schwiebert Park
May 30-31, 2026 |
| 3 | Gathering of the Green
River Center
March 18-21, 2026 | 8 | QC Pet Expo
River Center
June 13-14, 2026 |
| 4 | EICC Gaming Convention
EICC- Urban Campus
April 17-18, 2026 | 9 | Geneseo Music Fest
Geneseo
June 19-21, 2026 |
| 5 | Geneseo Art Walk
Geneseo
April 25, 2026 | 10 | John Deere Classic
TPC Deere Run, Silvis
June 29 - July 5 |

11 **US 250th Anniversary**
July 4, 2026

12 **Floatzilla**
Mississippi River
August 2026

13 **Tug Fest**
LeClaire
August 13-15, 2026

14 **Henry County Fair**
Cambridge
Summer 2026

15 **Bix Fest**
Davenport
July 30 - August 1, 2026

16 **Mississippi Valley Fair**
Davenport
August 4-9, 2026

17 **Illinois State Fair**
Springfield
August 13-23, 2026

18 **Alternating Currents**
Davenport
August 13-16, 2026

19 **Xtream Grand Prix**
Rock Island
September 5-6, 2026

20 **Trains, Planes, & Automobiles**
Geneseo
September 10-12, 2026

21 **Vintage Farm Show**
Atkinson
September 19, 2026

22 **Antique Engine & Tractor Show**
Geneseo
September 18-20, 2026

23 **QC Marathon**
Davenport
September 26-27, 2026

24 **State Street Market**
Geneseo
October 3, 2026

25 **Scarecrow Row**
Geneseo City Park
October 31, 2026

26 **Christmas Walk**
Geneseo
December 12, 2026

*From small town parades
to national celebrations,
2026 is shaping up to be
a year of excitement!*

Scan here for
a printable
version



Practical New Year Finance Planning



January is the perfect time to take stock — not just of your goals, but of your finances.

Whether you're focused on paying down debt, saving for a big purchase, or simply feeling more in control, a few small changes can make a big difference over the course of the year.

Money management doesn't have to be complicated — it just needs consistency. A few intentional steps now can set you up for a stronger, less stressful year ahead.



Start with a Snapshot

Look honestly at your income, spending, and savings. Review bank statements, credit card summaries, and subscription services you may no longer use.



Build (or Rebuild) Your Emergency Fund

Experts recommend saving at least three to six months of expenses. Start with \$500, then aim higher as the year goes on. Set up an automatic transfer so saving happens without extra effort.



Tackle Debt Strategically

List all your debts, including interest rates, and focus first on paying off high-interest balances.



Adjust Your Budget for 2026 Goals

Whether you want to travel, remodel, or grow your business, earmark funds monthly.



Review Insurance and Benefits

Review your health, auto, and life insurance coverage. Make sure you're not overpaying — or underprotected.



Get Professional Guidance

Financial advisors, accountants, and local banks can help you fine-tune your strategy. Many offer free consultations to review your plan or set up automatic savings programs.

2026 SPECIAL SECTIONS

A new theme every month

Every month, we share a new digital special section—sometimes two—through interactive flipbooks filled with stories, resources, and community highlights. Have an idea for a future digital special section? Email sarah@geneseocurrent.com.

JANUARY

Health & Wellness • Weddings & Events

Start the year with simple ideas for feeling your best, along with local inspiration for weddings, receptions, and milestone celebrations.

FEBRUARY

Finances & Taxes

Helpful, down-to-earth guidance for budgeting, planning, and navigating money decisions during tax season.

MARCH

Spring Farm • Spring Home

Fresh starts indoors and out—from spring planning in the fields to home projects, yard refreshes, and outdoor living.

APRIL

Pet Lovers • Senior Living

A blend of two beloved topics: caring for the pets who brighten our days and supporting the seniors who enrich our community with wisdom and experience.

MAY

Small Business Spotlight • Memorial Day

Stories of local makers and small businesses, paired with coverage that honors Memorial Day traditions, veterans, and community remembrance.

JUNE

Summer Kickoff

Outdoor fun, travel, events, and warm-weather ideas to help you make the most of the summer season.



GENESEO **MAPLE LEAFS**

FOOTBALL 2025

Discipline, grit, and a quarterfinal run

Geneseo football's 2025 season wasn't defined by a single game or moment. It was defined by growth—steady, measurable, undeniable growth—and by a team that learned what it meant to respond to adversity rather than react to it. For Coach Matt Furlong, that transformation is the true story of the year.

"If you had told me at the start of the season that this group would evolve the way it did, I wouldn't have believed it," Furlong said. "But the buy-in became real. They learned how to handle hard situations, how to trust each other, and how to play the style of football we demand."

The Leafs finished 9-3, but the record only hints at how far they developed. Their improvement was visible week to week—something Geneseo Hall of Fame coach Denny Diericx noted when he said he had "never seen a football team improve so much in just one season."

The Real Turning Point: United Township

For Furlong, the season's turning point wasn't late in the year—it happened much earlier.

"United Township had been favored to win the league, and we found ourselves down late," he said. "But the players didn't panic. It was the first game when we showed the ability to respond—not react—to adversity."

From that moment forward, the team carried a different kind of confidence. They had gained proof of concept: that they could execute under pressure, adjust when challenged, and win against teams with equal or greater talent.

"That win sparked something," Furlong said. "You could feel it."



What Made This Team Special

According to Furlong, the Leafs' rise came down to preparation, composure, and physicality. "The group learned the value of practice reps," he said, and they began taking advantage of every one. Early in the year, adversity often triggered panic, but that shifted as the season progressed. "We learned to respond instead—to adjust, learn, and get better as the game went on. Emotion stopped controlling us." And once they embraced the physical demands of the sport, things changed quickly. "Football has an element of controlled violence," Furlong said. "After Week 1, our blocking, finishing of runs, defeating blocks, tackling—everything got better. That physicality helped us wear teams down."

A Town That Showed Up

Furlong credits the team's trajectory not only to the players, but to the support system around them. "The support from parents and boosters—especially later in the season—was outstanding," he said. "They handled the logistics, and that let the coaches and kids stay focused on football."

As the season continued, the gameday environment transformed. "You could feel the excitement grow," Furlong said. "The extra energy in the stadium gives players a little extra motivation."

The excitement around the program is evident in the growing youth numbers, the middle school and GYF players showing up on game days, and the strong participation in football camps.

The Standard Going Forward

When Furlong looks at this team, the enduring impact isn't the wins—it's the standard they established. "The dedication in the offseason, the weight room, summer camps, preparation during the season, the style they played with—that's the expectation moving forward," he said. Momentum is building, and the program is benefitting at every level.

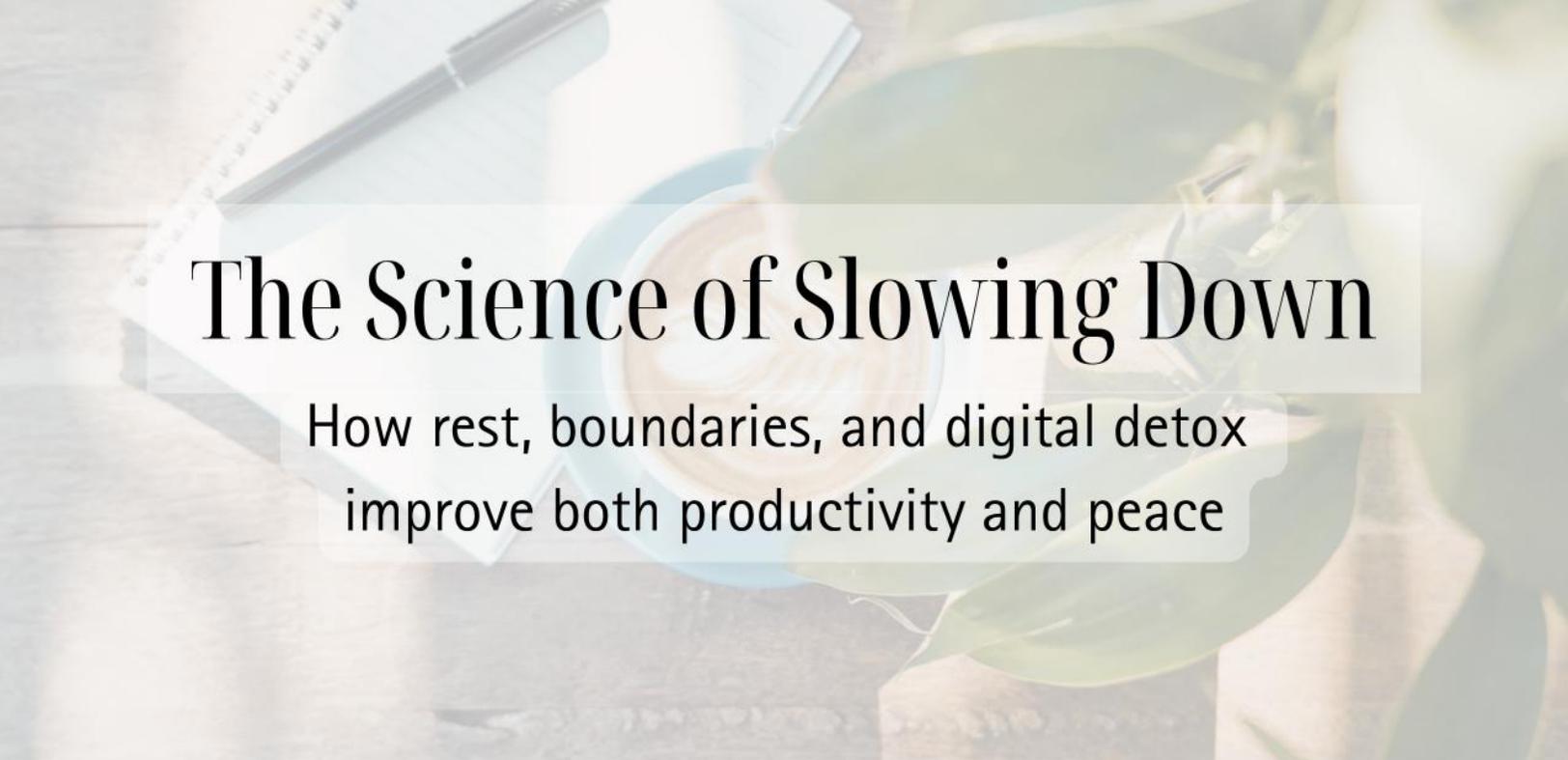
"Seeing the growth in the youth program numbers, the number of middle schoolers and GYF players in attendance, and the participation in our football camps makes the excitement around the program evident," he said.

Furlong believes that foundation is what will carry Geneseo into future seasons: a shared belief in the work, a commitment to growth, and a culture that continues to strengthen year after year. "We can be happy with what we accomplished," he said. "But we can never be content with it. We have to grow with it."

7
consecutive wins

5
opponents held
under 14 points

5
double-digit
wins



The Science of Slowing Down

How rest, boundaries, and digital detox
improve both productivity and peace

Rest is not a reward for success — it's the foundation that makes success possible.”

— Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith

We live in a world that celebrates the hustle — full calendars, fast results, constant connection. But neuroscience is beginning to prove what many of us already feel: slowing down doesn't mean falling behind. In fact, true rest and digital distance sharpen focus, nurture creativity, and reset the emotional circuitry that keeps us grounded.

Our bodies were never designed to operate at full charge every hour of the day. When we slow down — even briefly — the brain reorganizes memories, strengthens problem-solving pathways, and restores balance. Science calls it the default mode network. We call it peace.

BOUNDARIES THAT BUILD BALANCE

Slowing down means setting filters, not walls. Protect an hour of quiet each day. Make one day plan-free. End work with a ritual — close the laptop, step outside, breathe. Boundaries build rhythm, and rhythm keeps burnout away.

REST AS RECOVERY — NOT REWARD

Rest isn't earned; it's essential. Whether it's a quiet walk, ten minutes of journaling, or simply doing nothing — your body uses stillness to restore energy. Neuroscientists note that even light daydreaming helps the brain file memories and form creative insights.

SLOWING DOWN TO MOVE FORWARD

Here's the paradox: when you rest, you rise. When you unplug, you reconnect. When you do less, you become more present. True productivity isn't found in motion — it's born in stillness.

THE DIGITAL DETOX CONNECTION

Every scroll and ping triggers a dopamine spike. Small, harmless doses that train our brains to crave stimulation. Reset by making meals, mornings, or your bedroom phone-free. Within days, sleep deepens, patience grows, and conversations feel real again.

“When you slow down, the important things stop rushing past you.”



PLANTING SEEDS & BUILDING LEADERS: INSIDE GENESEO'S AWARD-WINNING FFA CHAPTER

For the students of Geneseo High School's FFA chapter, agriculture is more than a class elective – it's a calling. From earning national honors to giving back through community service, these young leaders are showing what it means to grow something meaningful.

BEYOND THE BARN

The Geneseo FFA Chapter is part of the National FFA Organization – a nationwide network that prepares students for leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. Members explore environmental science, business management, animal science, and community outreach while building valuable life and career skills.

A YEAR OF MILESTONES

Geneseo FFA members have made a powerful mark on both the state and national stages this year. The State Horse Evaluation Team --

Dawsyn McDonald, Annabelle Betcher, Jacey Gehl, and Bailey Koning – earned their spot at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis. They placed 9th nationally and earned a Gold ranking.

Two students also reached major individual milestones:

- **Bella Bailey** received the State Supervised Occupational Experience Award in the Human & Public Services category for her mentorship work in an after-school program.
- **Maycie Sims** earned a \$1,000 SAE grant from the Brett Begemann Foundation to expand her agricultural education project.

The chapter joined Illinois FFA's exclusive \$3,000 Club, contributing over \$3,200 to the Illinois Foundation FFA – one of the accomplishments that helped Geneseo earn a National Chapter Award Finalist designation and a 3-Star Rating, the highest national distinction.

SERVICE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

While “Hat Day” is well-known, it represents only a small part of the chapter’s outreach. Members participate in year-round community service, including:

- E-Waste Collection Drives
- Volunteering at the Henry County Humane Society
- Adopt-A-Highway cleanups
- Farmer Fuel Packs with a local insurance company

These efforts strengthen the chapter’s connection to the community and reflect leadership through service.



“Seeing students discover their passion for agriculture is what makes this work so meaningful.”

- Jacqueline Walters-Wetzell

PROGRAMS THAT GROW FUTURE LEADERS

Middle School Ag Club

With the help of volunteer DeeAnn Kuster, FFA members lead hands-on activities that build early interest in agriculture and encourage students to pursue ag courses in high school.

FFA Plot Program

Students manage the chapter’s agricultural plot from seed selection through harvest. Community member Ross Dwyer provides critical support as students gain real-world agronomy experience.

Ag in the Classroom

Members visit 1st- and 5th-grade classrooms throughout the year, reading ag-themed books, donating them to teachers, and guiding students through interactive learning activities that connect agriculture to everyday life.



From left: Kali Herberg, Jacey Gehl, Annabelle Betcher, and Dawsyn McDonald represented Geneseo FFA at the National Horse Judging Contest, earning a Gold Team Ranking and placing 9th nationwide. Individually, McDonald and Betcher earned Gold, Gehl and Herberg earned Silver, and both McDonald and Gehl earned the Equine Management & Evaluation Certification.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

This December, agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor Jacqueline Wetzell will be honored as the Region 4 Outstanding Early Career Teacher Award winner at the National Association of Agricultural Educators Conference in Nashville. Region 4 includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and Missouri.

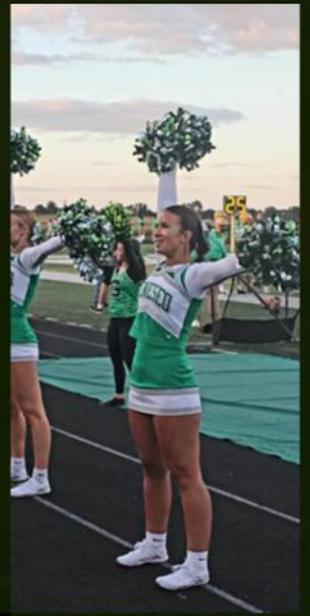
LOOKING AHEAD

From national recognition to local impact, Geneseo FFA continues to thrive as one of the region’s most active and accomplished student organizations. Whether evaluating horses, cleaning highways, or mentoring future ag leaders, these students are cultivating skills – and community pride – that will last for years to come.



VALLEY
INSURANCE GROUP

This story is presented by Valley Insurance, proud supporter of GHS FFA.









ROOTED IN PRIDE

When people first hear “Geneseo Maple Leafs,” they often assume it’s a nod to Canada. But our story runs closer to home – and a lot deeper in the soil.

When Geneseo’s first settlers arrived from New York in 1836, they brought more than tools and timber wagons. They brought trees – thousands of young maple saplings – to line the streets of their new settlement on the prairie.

Those early pioneers named the town after their home back east (“Geneseo” meaning beautiful valley in Seneca), but it was the trees that gave the place its character.

By the late 1800s, the shady, maple-lined avenues were a source of pride and a mark of identity. The town even earned the nickname “Maple City.”

When Geneseo High School began forming athletic teams in the early 1900s, they needed a name that captured the town’s spirit. “Leafs” – short for Maple Leafs – felt natural.

It wasn’t fierce or flashy, but it was ours. It represented strength in roots, beauty in endurance, and a quiet kind of pride that doesn’t fade with the seasons.

Generations of athletes have since worn the green and white, carrying that symbol of growth and resilience onto every field and court.

The Maple Leaf has become shorthand for Geneseo itself – seen on welcome signs, yearbooks, and banners lining State Street. It’s a reminder that even in a world that changes fast, this town still stands tall, rooted in something simple and lasting.



Meeting Families Where They Are-- with Love and Dignity

A Geneseo community resource for parents and children in need



In communities across the Midwest, one organization is quietly making a difference for new parents facing the challenges of infancy – especially when resources are tight. Swaddling Clothes collects and provides essential items like maternity wear, baby clothes, diapers, bottles, formula, and more – all at no cost to families in need.

Here's how it works: generous donors contribute new and gently used items. At each location, a "shopping day" is scheduled, allowing families to browse and select what they need most. When those items are no longer needed, they can be returned for other families to use – keeping the cycle of giving going strong.

Beyond clothing and gear, Swaddling Clothes connects parents to other community resources, including local counseling, health care, and family support services. This makes it more than just a clothing program – it's a network of care designed to strengthen families from the start.

In essence, Swaddling Clothes serves as a vital community resource – connecting generosity with need, supporting families during one of life's most transformative seasons, and reminding us that no parent should have to prepare for a new baby alone.



Because no parent
should have to
prepare for a new
baby alone.



Families can “shop” for essentials in a calm, welcoming space.

What this means for the community:

Immediate Relief: New parents don’t have to face the cost and stress of acquiring basic necessities before their child even arrives.

Dignified Support: The “shopping” model offers choice and respect, allowing families to find what truly fits their needs.

Community Connection: With multiple branches and partnerships, Swaddling Clothes creates a reliable local network for families across the region.



How You Can Help

Donate Items

New and gently used baby clothes, diapers, bottles, blankets, and maternity wear are always welcome.

1

Give Financially

Monetary donations help purchase high-demand essentials like formula, wipes, and car seats.

2

Volunteer Your Time

Help sort donations, restock shelves, or assist families on “shopping days.”

3

Visit Concordia Lutheran’s Swaddling Clothes Store

Open monthly on the second Thursday from 4-7pm and fourth Saturday from 9-12
316 S Oakwood Ave, Geneseo | 309-944-3993 | geneseo@swaddlingclothes.org

MEAL PREP MADE SIMPLE



How to eat better, save time, and stress less – one hour at a time.



Pick Your Prep Window

Choose one block of time-- Sunday afternoon or a quiet weeknight-- to plan, shop, and prep. Set a timer for 60 minutes so it doesn't feel endless.



Plan Before You Chop

Write down 3-4 meals you'll actually eat. Group ingredients that overlap to save money and effort.



Prep by Category

Cook grains, roast veggies, and bake proteins all at once. Store in clear containers so you can "shop your fridge" later.



Keep it Simple

Start with one breakfast, one lunch, one dinner. Add more once it feels easy-- progress over perfection.



Make it Enjoyable

Put on music, light a candle, call it kitchen therapy.

Prep Like a Pro

- Label your containers with painter's tape and dates.
- Keep prepped snacks at eye level in the fridge.
- Store grains and proteins separately for versatility.

*One hour of prep =
five days of peace.*



Slow Cooker Tuscan White Bean Soup

Ingredients

- 2 cans (15 oz) white beans (cannellini or Great Northern), drained and rinsed
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- ½ tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups fresh spinach or kale, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Freshly grated Parmesan, for serving



Warm, rustic, and full of flavor – this cozy slow-cooker soup is perfect for cold January nights.

Instructions

1. In a slow cooker, combine beans, onion, carrots, celery, garlic, tomatoes, broth, and seasonings.
2. Cover and cook on low for 6–8 hours or high for 3–4 hours, until vegetables are tender.
3. Stir in the spinach (or kale) and olive oil. Cook for another 10–15 minutes until greens wilt.
4. Serve warm, topped with Parmesan.

Cinnamon Apple Overnight Oats



Start your morning with a breakfast that's cozy, quick, and tastes like apple pie – no oven required.

Ingredients

- ½ cup old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup milk (any kind)
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ¼ cup diced apple (fresh or sautéed)
 - ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp maple syrup or honey
 - ¼ tsp vanilla extract
 - Pinch of salt

Instructions

1. In a mason jar or container, stir together oats, milk, applesauce, apple, cinnamon, maple syrup, vanilla, and salt.
2. Cover and refrigerate overnight (or at least 6 hours).
3. In the morning, stir and enjoy cold, or warm in the microwave for 30–45 seconds.

Optional toppings: chopped nuts, extra apples, or a dollop of yogurt.

introducing The Current Pulse

Your monthly dose of wellness, local expertise, and better living — from The Current.



Fitness & Movement



Mental Wellness



Preventive Health



Food & Nutrition

Health and wellness look different for everyone — and in every season of life. For some, it's about staying active or getting stronger; for others, it's about finding balance, reducing stress, or simply feeling more connected to the community around them. Whatever wellness means to you, we want The Current to be a trusted source for local, approachable information that fits real lives right here in Geneseo.

That's why we're proud to introduce The Current Pulse — a new monthly digital section dedicated to living well, inside and out. Each month, The Pulse will focus on a specific area of wellness, bringing you stories, tips, and expert perspectives from right here in our community. From nutrition and fitness to mental health and preventive care, every feature will be designed to inform, inspire, and support your journey toward better living.

We heard you loud and clear in our recent reader survey: you wanted more health content — information that's reliable, easy to understand, and grounded in local expertise. In response, we've partnered with Hammond-Henry Hospital and other area health providers to ensure every story, interview, and article reflects the quality care and experience available close to home.

Whether you're looking for practical advice, new ideas for healthier routines, or inspiring stories of resilience from your neighbors, The Current Pulse will deliver health content that's timely, trustworthy, and relevant. Because taking care of yourself — and each other — starts with staying informed.

January

New Year, Better You!

Fresh starts,
goal setting, and
simple lifestyle
changes for
lasting wellness



February

Heart Health

Nutrition, fitness,
and stress
management for
cardiovascular
health



March

Mind Matters

Spotlight on
mental health,
stress relief, and
mindfulness
practices



Where Health Meets
Hometown—Your Current Pulse

SCAN HERE



Eye Surgeons Associates
Medical • Surgical • Optical
Celebrating 35 Years



“A DAY IN GENESEO” – LOCAL MAD LIBS

Ask for someone to fill in the blanks – but don’t let them see the story – then read your finished story out loud!

How to Play:

“Give me an adjective.”

It was a _____ (adjective) morning in Geneseo when I woke up to the sound of _____ (animal plural) outside my window.

“Give me a word for plural animals.”

I grabbed my _____ (noun) and headed downtown for a _____ (adjective) breakfast at _____ (local restaurant).

“Give me the name of a local restaurant.”

On my way down State Street, I ran into _____ (person’s name) carrying a _____ (noun) bigger than a _____ (farm animal)!

Grammar Refresher-

adjective-describing word

After breakfast, I drove past _____ (local landmark), where a group of _____ (plural noun) were practicing their _____ (sport or hobby).

noun-person, place, or thing

The air smelled like _____ (food) and small-town pride.

Later, I met friends at _____ (local park or hangout) for a _____ (adjective) afternoon of fun.

We even spotted _____ (celebrity or fictional character) buying _____ (snack) at Casey’s!



As the sun set over _____ (local feature – e.g., “the football field” or “the cornfields”), I thought,

“There’s no place like Geneseo – home of the Maple Leafs!”

SHARE YOUR SCENE

We're putting together something special for the next issue of *The Scene*-- and we want your work to be part of it.

Do you paint, write, photograph, or create? We're looking for original photography, poetry, drawings, and short written reflections inspired by small-town life, community, or creativity in everyday moments.

Selected submissions will be featured in our next magazine-- both in print and online. It's a chance to showcase your work to thousands of local readers who love seeing our region through creative eyes.

How to Submit

1. Scan the QR code below or visit the digital submission form.
2. Upload your files (JPG, PNG, or PDF formats).
3. Include your name and short caption or artist note.



What We're Looking For

- **Photography**- local landmarks, nature, people, everyday life
- **Poetry & Short Writing**- 200 words or less- thoughtful, original, inspired by home or community
- **Artwork**- drawings, digital art, or sketches that capture the spirit of small-town living

Creative doesn't have to be complicated-- it just has to be yours.



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY.

PROUD SUPPORTER OF GENESEO AND THE HENRY COUNTY COMMUNITY SINCE 1974.

Along with the dedicated men and women of our Springfield Armory family, we stand for the spirit of American innovation in the defense of freedom and independence.

