

# People Inc. celebrates 25 years in Hamburg

By Luke Hammill  
HAMBURG SUN STAFF REPORTER

The nonprofit human services agency People Inc. on Nov. 8 celebrated 25 years of providing senior housing at the place where it all started, the Iris Senior Living complex on Sowles Road in Hamburg.

Joined by former Town of Hamburg Supervisor and U.S. Rep. Jack Quinn and representatives from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, People Inc. President Rhonda Frederick recalled why the nonprofit's first senior housing complex was built in Hamburg: It was originally supposed to be in West Seneca, but residents there didn't want an affordable housing development in their town.

"That community wasn't too keen on having affordable housing," Frederick said.

The project moved to Hamburg, at the corner of Sowles



Jack Quinn, former congressman and Hamburg supervisor, speaks at a celebration of the 25th anniversary of People Inc.'s first senior housing development, Iris Senior Living on Sowles Road. "Good things happen when good people work together," Quinn said.

and South Park Avenue, with the help of Quinn, then-Town Board member Jim Connolly and the late former Supervisor Patrick Hoak. Funding from HUD helped keep units

affordable for low-income seniors, and Hamburg Community Development grants expanded the facility to include a therapeutic pool and aerobics room.

"We collaborated with People Inc. over the years to do all this, and it's still here, 25 years later, being used every day," said Christopher Hull, Hamburg's director of community

development.

The Iris Senior Living development was the first of what eventually grew to 20 senior living projects comprising 875 apartments across Western New York for People Inc. The Iris complex is home to 49 seniors.

Hamburg continued to partner with People Inc. Its second senior-living site was in the Village of Blasdell, and the nonprofit is applying soon to open another Blasdell-based facility, Frederick said.

Lisa Pugliese, director of HUD's Buffalo field office, said at the ceremony that People Inc.'s growth over 25 years has been an "incredible achievement."

"You were able to provide these low-income seniors the ability to live independently in an affordable surrounding environment," Pugliese said.

Dorothy Mortek, one of the current tenants at Iris Senior Living, had the audience howling with laughter as she

described her living situation before she moved into the development. While she lived at her previous thin-walled apartment, Mortek's upstairs neighbor was a young woman who, once she began dating a new boyfriend, made a lot of noise. "Use your imagination," she said.

Once she moved in at Iris, she slept soundly through the night, free of disturbances, and when she woke up, she thought, "I've gotta be in heaven."

"You couldn't ask for any better living than here," Mortek said.

In his remarks, Quinn said he couldn't believe more than 25 years had passed since he and other town representatives saw the trouble the senior-living proposal was having in West Seneca and said, "That's the kind of project we want here."

"Good things happen when good people work together," Quinn said.

## Public has chance to comment on new telecom law Dec. 10

By Michael Petro  
HAMBURG SUN EDITOR

A new telecommunication facilities law has been drafted in the Town of Hamburg to address changing technology and the proliferation of micro-cells on towers, and the public will have an opportunity to hear about and comment on it at the Town Board's Dec. 10 meeting.

The town is in the midst of a second six-month moratorium to allow for updates to the law. Town Board members say the current law was adopted in 1996 and "does not address the changing technology related to these facilities."

Drew Reilly, the town's planning consultant, said there are already two companies interested in what the town decides because they'd like to put up new cell towers.

"The purpose is to get input, and you'll get input from the telecom companies," Reilly said. "I think

it's important to the town and going to be important to the future of all towns, who are struggling with this right now. It's the next wave of the new technology coming and it's going to make for more cell towers and more micro-cells."

Reilly said the new law comes from the existing town law and combines features from the laws recently passed in the towns of Tonawanda and Amherst, as well as some creative features to address micro-cells.

He added that the town should also consider adding fees for the cell tower companies to use town property and for access to the town's rights-of-way. New fees could be set in the town's fee structure but will not be included in the law.

"If you're going to have these things, you may as well get revenue from it," he said.

Reilly did not add to the new law, which is being scrutinized in Amherst, requiring that all cell tower companies with towers in the town come into compli-

ance with the new law in three years.

"I've heard that nobody agrees with that," Reilly said. "Amherst was just looking for litigation by including that."

The board held a public hearing on the moratorium in October of last year and passed it for the first time shortly afterward. Another public hearing was held in June and a six-month extension on cell towers was granted soon after.

Reilly said it will be a challenge to get this all done by the end of the year, which is when the latest moratorium concludes. He advised board members that they make any revisions necessary after the public gets a chance to chime in and then pass the law a week or two after the Town Board's Dec. 10 meeting. As of now, the board is slated to meet only once in December.

"You may have to have a special meeting the last week of December or something if you want to adopt this new law," Reilly said.

## Suicide prevention message to be shared at Hamburg schools

By Luke Hammill  
HAMBURG SUN STAFF REPORTER

Kevin Hines jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge in 2000, at the age of 19. And unlike 98 percent of the people who've made that jump, he lived.

Since then, Hines has shared a story of hope, recovery and suicide prevention, and in March, he'll tell that story to students in the Hamburg Central School District.

The Hamburg School Board on Tuesday approved a \$10,000 agreement that will bring Hines to Hamburg High School and Hamburg Middle School on March 7.

Tuesday's meeting was held in the newly renovated Hamburg High School library. The renovation, part of the district's \$9.9 million capital project approved by voters in 2016, had been delayed by a few months but is now complete.

Hines will speak at 9 a.m. at the high school, 12:30 p.m.

at the middle school and again at 7 p.m. at the middle school, with the Hamburg community being invited to the evening event.

Hines will also meet March 8 with district staff, according to the agreement. The presentations will last about an hour.

Hines, who was diagnosed as a teenager with bipolar disorder, speaks "about the role of mental illness and about what people in communities can do to help young people who are suffering from mental illness and considering suicide," said Superintendent Michael R. Cornell.

Cornell said Hamburg students have seen Hines in video clips associated with the district's mental health first aid training program.

"Just seeing him in the video is compelling and moving," Cornell said. "I can only imagine what it's like to see him in person."

Cornell added that while it's "unfortunate" that

suicide is a topic the district has to confront, it is important for educators to extend help and resources to young people who are "hurting."

### Board votes on confidential document at special meeting

In other district news, the school board during a special meeting Nov. 8 voted to approve a personnel-related measure, but district officials declined to reveal specifics Tuesday.

The vote came during a closed-door executive session called to discuss "current litigation relating to a particular individual's employment with the district," meeting minutes show. The measure that was approved is labeled in meeting minutes as simply "Confidential Schedule A1."

Cornell acknowledged that the case involved a personnel matter: New York's Open Meetings Law stipulates that public bodies can't vote during executive session to appropriate public moneys.

## A toast to the vets



Karen Gioia / Special to The Sun

At the podium, Commander John Grotke leads a toast during the Veterans Day ceremony at the American Legion in the Village of Hamburg on Sunday. See more photos on A12.

## Applications being accepted for Hometown Heroes Banner Project

The Hamburg Hometown Heroes Banner Project will begin its eighth year in April and banners will be hung throughout the Village of Hamburg until November 2019 and then given to the family as a keepsake.

Applications can be picked up now and submitted by Feb. 1 at the Hamburg Village and Hamburg Town halls on 100 Main St. and 6100 South Park Ave. Forty applicants will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Those nominated can be alive or deceased, must have served in any branch of the military and must have been from or lived in Hamburg at some point in their life.

Banners cost \$125 to make and donations in any amount are appreciated. According to project organizer Sue Jantzi, individuals, community leaders and groups/organizations can support and help continue this initiative of honoring local veterans by making a donation.

"It makes families of the veterans very happy to honor and see their loved ones who served our country on the streets of Hamburg," Jantzi said. "It is very touching to see how much it means to them and their family."

Banners are hung on Buffalo Street, between Legion and Union streets, and on Main Street

between Center and Lake streets. Jantzi said if an applicant's family has a specific location they would like to hang their banner, the request can be accommodated.

For more information, email GJant@aol.com or call 649-3384.

### Applications being accepted for Eden Hometown Banners

A sample Hometown Hero banner was unveiled during Veterans Day ceremonies Sunday at Newell-Faulkner Post 880, 2912 Legion Drive, in Eden.

The program will begin next year in Eden and banners will be hung on Main Street. It will be similar to the program run in Hamburg in which banners line Main and Buffalo streets. Applications are available at the Post, Eden Town Hall and Eden Shurfine.

The banners cost \$150 to make. Applicants are encouraged but not required to purchase a banner and donations are gratefully accepted.

Checks can be made payable to Newell Faulkner Post 880 with the memo "Hometown Heroes Project," and should be mailed to Newell Faulkner Post 880, Attn: Karen Ferguson, 2912 Legion Drive, Eden, NY 14057.

### ON THE AGENDA

#### Monday, Nov. 19:

**Angola Village Board**, 7 p.m., Angola Village Hall, 41 Commercial St.

**Hamburg Town Board**, 7 p.m. (work session), 8 p.m. (regular meeting) Hamburg Town Hall, 6100 South Park Ave.

**Hamburg Village Board**, 5:30 p.m. (work session), 7 p.m. (regular meeting), Village Hall, council room, 100 Main St.

#### Tuesday, Nov. 20:

**Frontier Board of Education**, 7 p.m. (workshop), at

Frontier Educational Center, board room, 5120 Orchard Ave.

**Eden Board of Education**, 7 p.m., Eden Junior/Senior High School, EE Auditorium, 3150 Schoolview Road.

**Lake Shore Board of Education**, 7 p.m. (regular meeting), Senior High Library Media Center, 959 Beach Road, Angola.

#### Wednesday, Nov. 21:

**Hamburg Town Planning Board**, 6:30 p.m., Hamburg Town Hall, Room 7B in base-

ment, 6100 South Park Ave.

**Boston Town Board**, 7:30 p.m., Boston Town Hall, 8500 Boston State Road.

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