



Chronicle Special Section

A 4-decade milestone in North Creek



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Adk. Tri-County Nursing & Rehab Center celebrates 40th anniversary

By Gordon Woodworth
Chronicle News Editor

Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in North Creek celebrates its 40th anniversary **today**, Thursday, Sept. 4, with a 2 p.m. open house.

The not-for-profit facility has 82 full-time residents and also provides adult day care services and outpatient physical and occupational therapy. It primarily serves residents of Warren, Essex and Hamilton Counties, but is not limited to that.

With 120 full- and part-time employees, it's also the largest year-round employer in a 30-mile radius, said Hal Payne, who is in his fifth year as its administrator and Chief Executive Officer.

"It's a family here," said Mr. Payne. "We have a very family-oriented group of residents and staff. We have mothers and daughters who work here. We have husbands and wives who work here. We have



Hal Payne, administrator & CEO of Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in North Creek, **chats with resident Shirley Banker**, the former Johnsbury Town assessor. The center opened on Sept. 4, 1974.

mothers and daughters working here and the grandmother is a resident.

"That's why the care is so good. Everyone knows everyone, and every one of the residents is connected in some way with someone on the staff."

Mr. Payne said a state Department of Health survey last year deemed the center deficiency-free, a rating so good that Mr. Payne calls it "unheard of."

"It would be a real concern if places like us closed," said Mr. Payne. Not only would it be bad for our residents, but the families would suffer greatly also if these rural facilities were to close. Places like us are very, very important, especially as the popula-

tion ages."

Adirondack Tri-County is tied to the Hudson Headwaters Health Network, whose North Creek office is in the Adirondack Tri-County building. Hudson Headwaters provides its physicians, physicians assistants and nurse practitioners.

Dr. John Rugge has been medical director for Adirondack Tri-County for more than 35 years. He said its importance can not be underestimated.

"If someone's parents or brother or sister becomes so disabled or so infirmed or so chronically ill that they can't make it at home, to move that relative 100 miles away is simply unconscionable," Dr. Rugge said.

"They are separated from their family and their community.

"What Adirondack Tri-County represents is, right in the middle of a big rural area, it's the kind of facility where people can still be in their own community, in

Please turn to next page

Lucia Ross, 98: 'I could not be in a better place'

If there is a grande dame of the Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, it is 98-year-old Lucia "Lucy" Ross.

She's from near Schroon Lake, and has been a resident here for seven years.

"Lucy is everyone's favorite," said administrator/CEO Hal Payne. You can't walk by her without her grabbing your hand and kissing it.

"She walks by my office 13 times a day. She sews, she helps in the garden. She's amazing."

Lucy said, "I love it here. I could not be in a better place. I know I have to be here, and I'm very content.

"There's nothing I can say bad about it. All of the activity girls are wonderful, the aides and nurses are very considerate...The food is very good, and any activities they suggest, I take part in. I play cards, do puzzles, and every now and then we have a movie, which is nice."

— Gordon Woodworth



82 residents, 120 staff & key role in health & well-being of north country

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40th anniversary of Adirondack Tri-County Nursing & Rehabilitation Center

Jamie Reynolds: 'I love the atmosphere, I feel that I'm accomplishing something'

Jamie Reynolds of Indian Lake is activities director at Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, and has worked there for 20 years.

"I love the atmosphere and the community," she said. "It's a close-knit, small-town facility with a lot of long-time employees and little turnover."

"A lot of us know many of the patients, and there are long-time friendships. That helps with the care. It's a little extra bond, something in common to talk about to make someone's day go a little nicer."

"This is definitely the best place that I have worked. I feel really comfortable here. A lot of days I go home and feel like I have accomplished something."



Dr. Rugge: How Adk. Tri-County got started; role of Dr. Jacques Grunblatt

Dr. John Rugge was a young physician just out of medical school living in Sodom, five miles outside of North Creek, when the Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center opened in 1974.

He said his initial involvement was "pretty tangential," but he joined the staff in 1975 and has been ATC's medical director for more than 35 years.

He says of the facility's origin, "A key mover was Dr. Jacques Grunblatt. He was a local physician doing general practice, and he understood how many people in these small towns eventually need levels of care that can't be provided in the home."

"And so, with many trips to Albany, he and other community leaders, Sterling Goodspeed [then the Town Supervisor] being one, convinced the state that there was need for a nursing facility in this part of the North Country, and then due to those two people especially, it was eventually located in North Creek...."

town. Medicare and private insurance pay us depending on the services we provide, and we are trying to increase that number to bring in more funds."

Mr. Payne said Medicaid pays \$149 a day per patient, but that Adirondack Tri-County's costs is \$220 a day.

He said a \$7.1-million state grant awarded to Adirondack Tri-County and three other small community nursing homes is helping to temporarily close that funding gap. Mr. Payne said Adirondack Tri-County will get about \$800,000 this year from the state grant, and \$810,000 next year. "That's how we make up the difference in what Medicaid pays vs. what our costs are."

The four nursing homes that received the grant call themselves the Blue Line Group. They also meet regularly seeking ways to share services and reduce costs.

Mr. Payne said that Adirondack Tri-County is also home to the only Medical Model Adult Day Care center in Warren County. He said the center gets paid "closer to what it is costing us" for these users.

A bus drives a 30-mile loop, picking up day care recipients, who eat two meals at

"I can't exactly remember when I started. It may not have been until 1975, but early on Dr. Grunblatt had been looking for physicians to help take care of the patients who were there. At that point it was a 42-bed facility. That certainly wasn't a caseload that one physician could handle...and there weren't very many physicians then, so I was enlisted to help out."

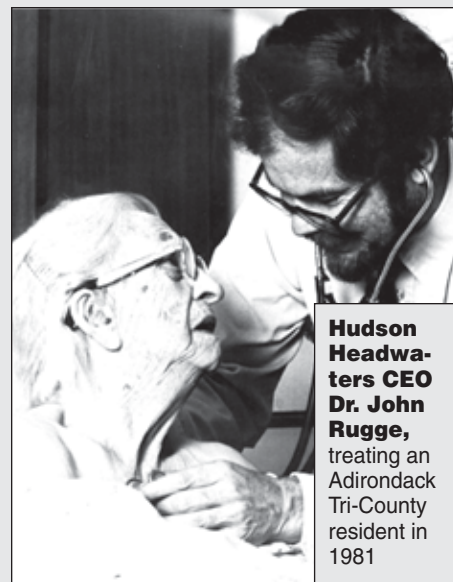
Now, Dr. Rugge said, "I see patients on a fill-in basis. My primary responsibilities there are administrative in terms of policy setting and quality review."

"Dr. Jim Hindson is our lead physician for the facility, and Tom Warrington is a PA who has been there for many years. The two of them carry the lion's share of the work. Dr. Daniel Way also does a lot of care-giving."

"And we have a fairly sizable group of Hudson Headwaters physicians who do become available as the schedule dictates so there is coverage 52 weeks a year."

Hudson Headwaters' North Creek Health Center has been situated since 1978 in one wing of the facility.

"The Town of Johnsbury, with assistance from the Town of Minerva, carries



Hudson Headwaters CEO Dr. John Rugge, treating an Adirondack Tri-County resident in 1981

the burden of the lease," Dr. Rugge said. "The local towns are very supportive of Hudson Headwaters and they pay for the facility for us." — Gordon Woodworth

Lets people stay 'in their own neighborhood'

From previous page

their own neighborhood, and taken care of by their neighbors and their friends and their family members. That speaks to the quality and importance of the service being provided in North Creek."

The center, governed by a 10-person board, is funded mostly by Medicaid reimbursements. Mr. Payne said 80% of its residents are Medicaid eligible, "and the rest are Medicare or private insurance patients. Our rehab patients are all Medicare patients."

Mr. Payne said Adirondack Tri-County "receives no subsidies from any county or

the center and can also be seen by doctors and dentists and receive physical and occupational therapy."

Board president Karen Smith says ATC "is a facility that creates a home environment for loved ones. It's clean, it's compas-

sionate. When you walk in the door, you don't know it's a nursing home. It smells nice, it's friendly...it's just a nice place. And the good folks who work there are there to take care of patients. It's not just a job."

Maria Radyn, 71, loves the Day Care program: 'I never missed a day'

Maria Radyn, a native of Poland who lived near Philadelphia for 49 years, moved to Warrensburg to live with her son in 2012.

"I have been here two years and four months, and I have never missed a day here," she said, sitting in the Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center's Adult Day Care room.

"The bus picks me up every morning, we have a beautiful breakfast here, some people shower, some people exercise, we play games and do puzzles, and at noon we have a beautiful lunch. I'm here five

days a week. It keeps my brain active.

"We can also see doctors, nutritionists and dentists, and we go on trips, to Lake George and Schroon Lake and Minerva. Last week we went to Indian Lake for a picnic."

"The people are so nice here. I like everything about it — the food, the exercise, how people care about you. Hal [Payne] really cares about this place."

If it wasn't for the adult day care, Ms. Radyn said, "I'd be miserable at home, watching TV all day. That's no good. My son works at the school. I'd be alone."

"I'm 71, but I feel like 50. I'm a lucky dog."



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Charlotte Bessey made this anniversary quilt that now hangs in the front lobby. She also made a similar full quilt and throw pillow for the live auction at the Oct. 19 "Sail-a-bration" gala on the *Adirondac*.
Chronicle photo/Gordon Woodworth

Norma Gregson, 89, is short-term rehab patient

Norma Gregson, 89, is a short-term rehabilitation patient at Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, but she says, "I'm planning to live here."

"It's a pleasant atmosphere, and all of the nurses and attendants and physical therapists are very nice and very helpful in trying to help us get better."

"I have made some new friends, and I'm hoping to start with some activities soon."

The Long Island na-



tive says her sister-in-law Nancy Sylvester in Warrensburg and brother-in-law Jerome Spitz "come every day. She works in the senior center, delivering meals."

Open House Sept. 4th

Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in North Creek hosts a community open house celebration today, Thursday, Sept. 4, at 2 p.m.

"The fire department and EMS from Johnsbury and North Creek will be honored for their 40 years of coverage, and we will have former employees back, including some that were here the day the building opened," said administrator/CEO Hal Payne.

40th 'Sail-a-bration' gala Sunday, Oct. 19

Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center celebrates its 40th anniversary with a "Sail-a-bration" gala on Sunday, Oct. 19, at 4 p.m., aboard the *Adirondac* on Lake George.

Tickets, \$100, include dinner, a silent auction, a talk by attending physician and author Dr. Daniel Way, and music by Frank Conti and his band.

ATC administrator and CEO Hal Payne said auction items will include an Adirondack quilt made and donated by employee Charlotte Bessey, weekend getaways and a decorated, wood-burned Westport chair. Info: 251-2447.

Charlotte Bessey, 33-yr. employee & a quiltmaker

Charlotte Bessey has worked at Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center for 33 years.

"I'm a unit clerk, filing and doing paperwork," she said. "My boss, Lisa LaFountain, calls me 'Radar.'"

"I have also been a nurse's aide, a certified nurse assistant, a personal care assistant, a dental assistant, I've worked in adult day care, and I've been a physical therapy technician."



Charlotte also made a quilt celebrating the facility's 40th anniversary. It hangs inside the front door. She's made another quilt, with a throw pillow, that will be raffled off at the 40th Anniversary Gala on Sunday, Oct. 19.

"This is family," she said. "The jobs are very important to the community, but more importantly, seniors can stay in their home area with family and friends close by, and everyone knows everyone."

"We all look out for each other. This is a special place."

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Images for Life

40th anniversary of Adirondack Tri-County Nursing & Rehabilitation Center

Mary Jean Rathbun, in 32nd year: 'It's just interesting to help people'

Registered nurse Mary Jean Rathbun of Indian Lake came to work at Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in 1982, left for a year and then came back. She's been here ever since.

"I like helping older people," she said. "There's a lot of history here, and it's just interesting to help people."

"It's very family oriented, and very homey. And people from the community can come and visit residents. That is very important."

"It's not fancy, but it is clean. You walk in the door and you get a good feeling."

She said administrator and CEO Hal Payne "understands what people go through and how families feel. He's a great fit for this place."



Busy beauty parlor

Christina Lamoureux works on the hair of resident Charlotte Wood in the beauty parlor at Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Mrs. Wood is 101 years old.

Chronicle photo/Gordon Woodworth

in need, but there are.

"It's small here, and everyone knows everyone. We look out for each other. Folks come in for rehab and then go home, and people are constantly asking how they are doing. And family members of former residents come back to visit or volunteer because they see some residents don't have as many visitors or family close by."

"I have trouble leaving the place here when I go home. Some people kid that I should have a cot in my office. If I didn't care, I wouldn't work here."

Woodworth at work...

Chronicle News Editor Gordon Woodworth wrote all the articles and took most of the photos in this special section.

Board prez Karen Smith: People are cared for 'like one of their own'

Karen Smith of North Creek is the Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center's board president. She is also a Glens Falls National Bank vice-president and Chestertown branch manager.

Mrs. Smith said she was "raised in the house I live in now, about 1.5 miles outside of town going toward Indian Lake" and that her aunt Mikie Reilly was one of the first registered nurses to work there.

"It was the new place in town, and I remember we were all so grateful that it had come to be. It was a big deal."

Then, her mother, Pat Ringer, was a resident for five years. "And Mom was a volunteer before she became a resident, and all of us kids got roped into volunteering, too," Mrs. Smith said.

"Adirondack Tri-County Nursing Home has always been there for me."

See calls its importance multi-faceted.

"One, it provides employment for 120 people," she said, "but more importantly, it provides a service to our elderly population up here. Without it, there would be 82 people needing someplace to live."

Mrs. Smith said almost every resident has a relative or friend who works there, "and if not, they are treated as if they were family. They took care of my Mom as if she was one of their own."

"When I talk to people about their experiences there, many tell me that very



Board president Kathy Smith with Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center resident **Leroy Abrams**. *Photo provided*

same thing, that they took care of their loved one like they were one of their own. So it's not just how we feel, it's how families feel about us."

She says ATCN "creates a home environment for loved ones. It's clean, it's compassionate. When you walk in the door, you don't know it's a nursing home. It's smells nice, it's friendly...it's just a nice place. And the good folks who work there are there to take care of patients. It's not just a job." — **Gordon Woodworth**

Lisa LaFountain, RN & nurse manager: 'We're filling a need up here'

Lisa LaFountain of North Creek is a registered nurse and nurse manager in her 18th year at Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

"Places like this are definitely needed," she said. "People don't think up in the back woods, as those of us who live here call it, there are people



employees."

She said having employment opportunities in North Creek is important to the employees.

"I was able to stay close to home while I was raising my kids," she said.

"We make a difference here."



Diana Conte: 'We become family here'

Diana Conte of Johnsburg is completing her 24th year as a licensed practical nurse at Adirondack Tri-County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

"It's like my second home," she said. "We become family to some of the residents, and become close to the staff."

"Three-quarters of the residents are from Minerva, Indian Lake or North Creek, and we retain a lot of long-term em-

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