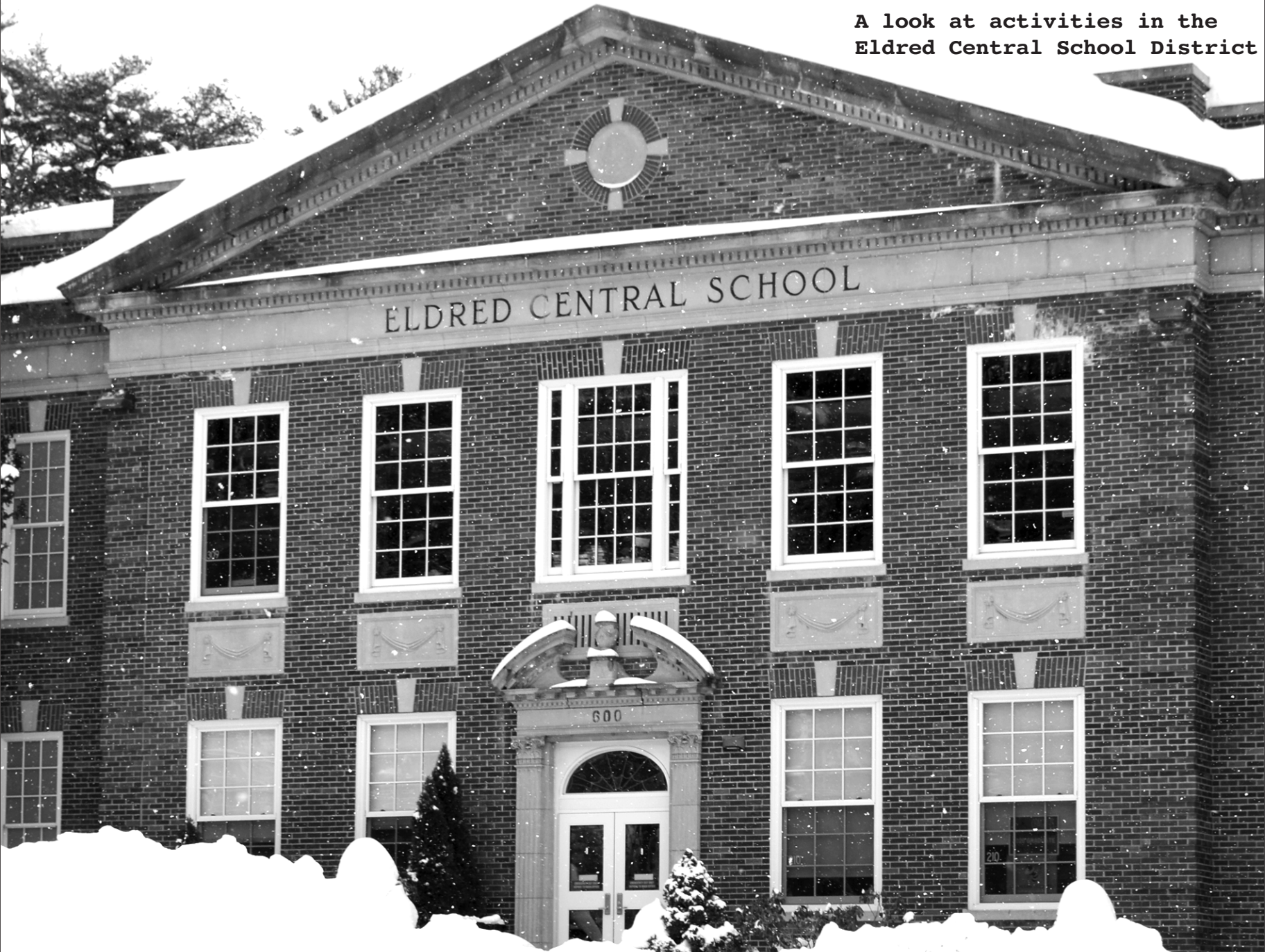


# SCHOOL SCENE

A look at activities in the  
Eldred Central School District



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# Adapting to a pandemic

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**D**uring the COVID-19 pandemic, the Eldred Central School District has learned to adapt to the changing times.

At the beginning of the academic year, their schools were entirely virtual. They slowly started using the hybrid model to keep everyone safe.

Their schools have adapted to a hybrid model, where some students are there in-person, and some are at home learning virtually.

The district created “pods” of students. In one group there were about 100 students, while in another pod there were about 88 students.

The pod groups would alternate days and would be spread out throughout the school to minimize exposure.

One of the big things that started this year at the Eldred Junior-Senior High School is a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) class.

Eldred JR/SR High School Principal Traci Ferreira said the class is an elective, and it is held with a math teacher and two science teachers.

She said it’s held every other day and builds on what the students learn in elementary school and expands those tools. The students are meeting with Erin Tucholski, Jason Jennings, and Tom Vorstadt.

Furthermore, the school has started a Writer’s Workshop with Dr. Eileen Weinberg, who has adapted her methods to the hybrid model. “It aligns with the New York standard, but it also allows that creativity that sometimes gets stilted in English class,” said Ferreira.

Ferreira says the teachers have adapted well to the new hybrid model.

“[They have] shifted their classroom around formation wise so that the virtual kids can see the smartboard and be part of the classroom,” added Ferreira.

“I can’t say enough about how amazing they [teachers] have been taking on this new technology. They were amazing,” she added. However, she said that the students do miss the socialization that comes with being in school.

Most students want to come in every day to school and see their friends and learn in-person, but unfortunately, that isn’t always the safest thing. She also notes that many students can be fatigued from staring at a computer all day.

George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School Principal Scott Krebs has been utilizing the school psychology teacher Vanessa McWilliams with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities every Monday.

The lessons are age-appropriate and change with the student’s



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers of the Eldred Central School District had to adapt. Mr. Tom Vorstadt is seen here teaching his 7th-grade science class.

## School Scene

*A Look Inside the Eldred Central School District*

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grade level.

Krebs said, "In kindergarten, it can be getting along with others; when you get up to fifth and sixth grade, it might be social interactions with peers and peer pressure. It's not a set curriculum, but she's starting to develop a curriculum that will go along with the kids as they go up each grade. And that's really important."

Like Ferreira, Krebs also praised his teachers. "The teachers really have come a long way in understanding what it means to be a teacher in a virtual learning environment," he said. "Before, they would have done a lot of handouts, but technology has really taken over. And teachers are embracing those things."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Jillian Smith, 7th grade, during science class with Mr. Vorstadt.

## A scene from the Eldred School District



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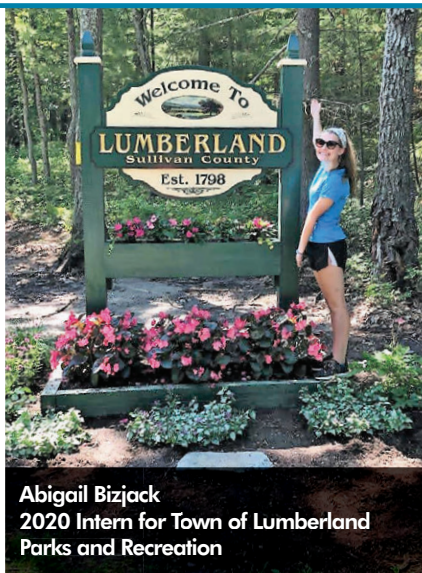
During the COVID-19 pandemic, Eldred students are helping their community. 9th graders, Lindsay Zgroddek (left) and Angelina Kehrley, accepted a donation of masks from the Liberty, Monticello, and Livingston Manor Rotary Clubs.

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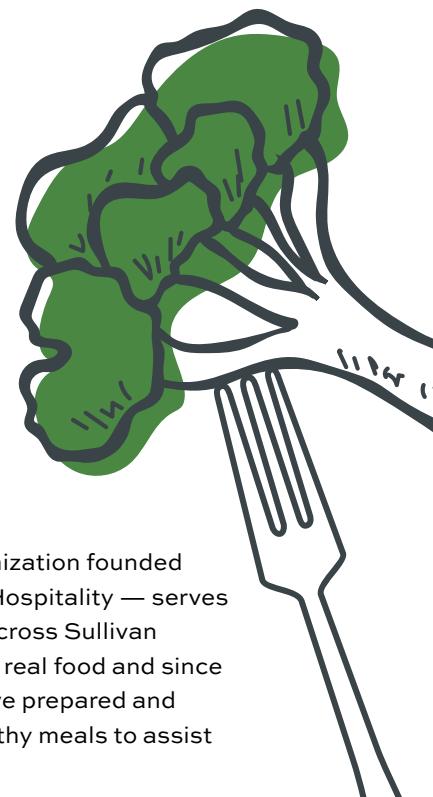
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# New Programs being utilized

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**A**t the Eldred Central School District, two new programs — Amplify Science and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) Math — are helping students learn during the pandemic.

“Amplify Science is the digital program we’ve adopted. It blends hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools,” said Ann Marie Grzywaczewski, a teacher at Eldred.

She adds that it empowers students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers. It does this by asking students to go beyond their intuition. Students are generally assigned a role to play as scientists or engineers, and they work to solve specific problems.

They have to make recommendations based on findings as well as analyze data and information gathered in simulations. In doing so, they get to explore different conceptions while having fun, says Grzywaczewski.

She added that this implements instructional materials and services that support remote and hybrid learning while providing

continuous learning resources.

Amplify Science aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which were developed by states to improve science education for all students.

Grzywaczewski says the program is interactive, as there are science readers/articles for the given grade level. The text also has a read-along feature that supports struggling readers.

Grzywaczewski says this new HMH Math program emphasizes establishing conceptual understanding and reinforcing that understanding with procedural practice.

This new learning model asks students to first develop their reasoning before connecting their understanding to concepts and skills.

The program focuses on understanding the “why” behind the “how,” and it is challenging and requires higher-level problem-solving skills by using real-world problems.

Moreover, the program adapts well to online learning as the textbook is digital and can be provided in a hardcopy version.

Grzywaczewski says the pro-

*‘The program focuses on understanding the “why” behind the “how,” and it is challenging and requires higher-level problem-solving skills by using real-world problems.’*



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Teacher, Ann Marie Grzywaczewski, and Kate, one of her former students, working together last year on a math/science unit involving plant study and measurement.



During a unit of study on thermal heat, students built a snowman to learn a lesson about the absence of heat.

gram provides concrete and hands-on materials that reinforce topics presented in class. Waggle, a support aspect program that connects with HMH, is rich in priority skills.

She says that every lesson begins with rigor right from the start and offers independent learning tasks that encourage students to practice.

It also offers perseverance by

jumping into a new challenge or working collaboratively to solve problems regularly.

Grzywaczewski said, “The students and the staff are enthusiastic to be part of these new programs. Both programs are focused on presenting real-world situations and scenarios that encourage student engagement and bring about lively discussions.”

# District takes steps to keep students safe

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**B**efore the pandemic, the Eldred Central School District had been in the process of updating their Chromebooks so each student had a laptop to use either at home or at school.

While the physical building was closed to students, the district knew that students would eventually return for in-person instruction.

According to Treasurer Caleb Russell, the schools in the district had staff-wide meetings before reopening.

Throughout the buildings, COVID-19 signage had to be installed. For example, stickers were put on the floor that reminded students to remain distant.

It also helped control the student flow in the hallways. Russell

said the schools installed directional stickers on the floors and staircases, which only allowed for one way traffic when the students are in the hallway. This is all done in an effort to minimize exposure to COVID-19.

The school medical team was also heavily involved, coordinating the discussion of what would happen if a student or faculty member was infected.

Also, according to Junior/Senior High School Principal Traci Ferreria, there are also signs throughout the schools reminding students about the importance of washing their hands.

Additionally, signs are placed throughout the schools reminding students and adults that masks have to be worn.

Furthermore, the schools

upgraded their air filtration system and reprogrammed all the air vents to let more outside air throughout the buildings to reduce the number of microbes in the air.

Russell said that for the air quality, it cost about \$47,000 for one school and about \$30,000 for the other buildings.

“What that does is it dilutes the air; when you’re pulling in 100 percent outside air, it sucks out any germs,” said Russell.

And on top of all that, the district says that all the schools are often deep cleaned by the custodial staff.

Moreover, the schools heavily invested in upgrading their connectivity to help strengthen their internet speeds, and allow more students to access it. Plus, all the classes are streaming their les-

sons live to the students who are home learning virtually.

Elementary School Principal Scott Krebs said one of the most important parts of the process was making sure the fears and concerns of students and parents were addressed. They were made aware of all the changes that took place in the school.

Krebs said that he noticed for those students who were on remote learning, the parents were able to see for themselves how the school was operating with the in-person students. He said some of those students made the switch to in-person instruction once they saw the safety measures the school was taking.

“They actually can see how they’re [students] spaced apart,” said Krebs, “and how [teachers] are interacting with them.”



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# Keeping busy

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**W**hile these are challenging times, nothing is slowing down the Eldred Central School District.

Three Eldred students, Jada Reed, Owen Anderson and Kaitlyn McGarry, participated in the Hartwick University Virtual Honor Band on October 24, 2020, and had the opportunity to interact with two composers, one in particular, John Mackey, is internationally-known.

Junior/Senior High School Principal Traci Ferreria said the overall experience was well worth it for the students. They spent several weeks preparing with lessons, and the students gave up an entire Saturday along with students from dozens of schools upstate.

The National Honor Society held a blood drive on October 28, and 30 donors showed up.

Ferreria said the average over the past few years had been 16-18 per drive.

“We always set a goal for 20 pints/donors and blew it out of the water that night,” said Ferreria.

She said if they reach 35 pints or more, which they think they will, the Red Cross issues a \$250 scholarship to one of their National Honor Society members. The following student donors were: Mariel O’Connor, Gavin McAfee, Ty Smith, Owen Anderson, and Emilia Faber.

Moreover, JSHS Faculty members also got involved and donated blood, and they were Vicky Casey, Roxanne Kehrley, Zita Kurtzman, Tom Vorstadt, and Amanda Ross. There were also some staff and faculty from George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School that donated.

The student volunteers that ran



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Traci Ferreria, Junior/Senior High School Principal, speaking at last summer’s commencement ceremony.

the blood donation tables were: Mackenzie Simonsen, Chase Hook, Owen Anderson, Gavin McAfee, Ty Smith, Mudra Patel, Abigail Bizjak, Avery Moscatiello, Kaitlyn Potter, Dakota Finck, and Mariel O’Connor. The next blood drive will be on Friday, February 5, from 2:15-6:15 pm.

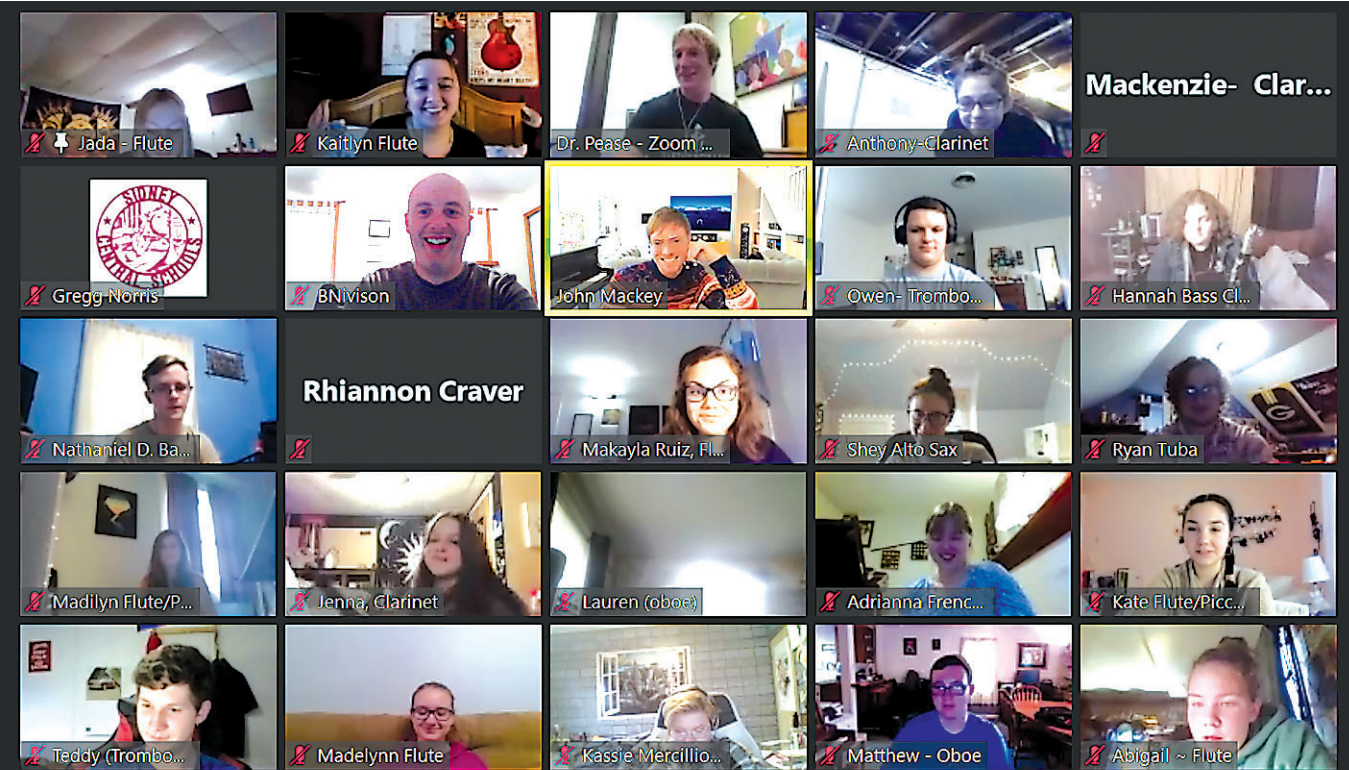
In other news, the Math Honor Society [MuTheta Alpha] members offered virtual Peer Math Tutoring two days a week after school for any student grades 7-12. They averaged six students a week.

Also, Kelly Pratschler, the JSHS health teacher, conducted CPR Training for the students via the hybrid model.

Those students at home learning virtually were able to demonstrate their CPR skills using pillows or stuffed animals. Ferreria said those students who demonstrated specific skills for Mrs. Pratschler would become certified.

While many students have adapted to virtual learning during the pandemic, the school year has been anything but normal. Guidance Counselor Kim Gueren has created a few support groups for the students to meet to discuss the stress, anxiety, and loneliness, among other things.

Gueren frequently met with students individually on Google Meets to check-in and see how they are doing, socially and emotionally, throughout the school year. With the students who are learning remotely, Ferreria said, “It has helped several [with] social and emotional learning.”



Three students who participated in the Hartwick University Virtual Honor Band on October 24, attended virtually. The students were Jada Reed, Owen Anderson, and Kaitlyn McGarry. The students had the opportunity to interact with internationally-known composer John Mackey.



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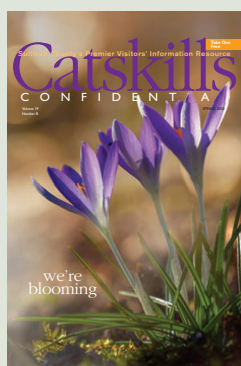
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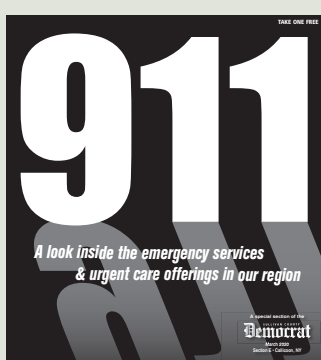
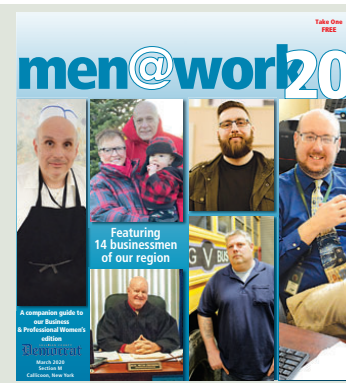
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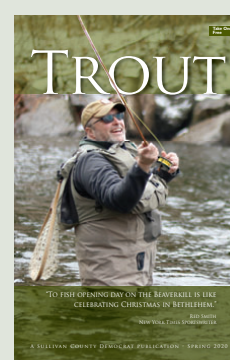
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