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55 YEARS

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Sterling strives to retain its quaint country atmosphere while moving progressively forward

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Sterling.....A statement by the town's first selectman, Russell Gray, clearly shares an overall picture of this town: "Visitors to Sterling are struck by the pastoral beauty of scenic Rte. 49, the history of Rte. 14A, and the 47 miles of country roads that span the town, many with carefully artisan stone walls. Sterling is a diverse town encompassing not only an industrial park, but dairy, chicken, alpaca, turkey, goat and horse farms as well as farm stands, restaurants and a farm that makes and sells homemade ice cream. Each September the community unites for a Family Day, and after Thanksgiving, the holidays are brought to life through a unique memorial display, all events happening in Sterling's downtown area. Sterling is a small town with a big heart!

This small town has felt its share of the downturn in the nation's economy, but it has not stopped the forward progress of development.

In the past few years, the town has undertaken many leaps, including but not limited to, building a new school that encompasses kindergarten through grade 8 town students. Sterling joined in with a neighboring town to construct a regional high school, then made use of the now-available original school building, by relocating the town's public library, municipal offices, the Recreation Authority Dept., and additional offices, such as homeland security, fire marshal and resident trooper to this location.

Relocating and expanding the town's services has received a very positive reaction from the public and from the employees of these entities. Sterling's librarian, Rachel Vincent, is quoted as saying "The residents of Sterling made the right choice in converting the old Sterling Memorial School into the town's municipal facility. Since the relocation, circulation for the library is up nearly 50%. We have been able to triple the amount of computers available to patrons, due to more space, and have increased our services overall to the town. We also now have a separate Children's Story Hour room, private offices for staff, and expansion options as more room is needed. This is all positive."

Sterling's Recreation Authority chairperson, Judy Gooslin, said, "Implementing my office and programs into the municipal building created, for the first time in this town, a true recreation program. We are now able to expand programs and incorporate more adult activities, due to having the gym just for recreation. The recreation programs previously conflicted with school programs and schedules."

Sterling school's principal, Vince Agostine, said, "The newly constructed 85,000 s/f facility offers its 515 students the latest in educational technology. The school grounds offer ample sport fields and activities for the younger and older students, respectively. The Sterling community values and supports education as evidenced by its active Parent Teacher Organization and parent volunteers."

Moving to the present, the town's industrial park has much activity happening right now. One of our newest business owners, Guy Mozzicato, has said, "My company LKQ/Keystone has nearly 300

facilities across the U.S., Canada and Mexico. I personally have 22+ years of experience operating a business, and locating in Sterling, in my opinion, ranks in the top ten places I would choose to locate. The town's leaders have been and continue to be receptive to the needs of the businesses while protective of the small community environment for which together we strive."

One of Sterling's day care facilities, PJ's Playground, is owned and operated by Natalie LaRoche. It is ideally located in close proximity to the school, and at the base of the town's industrial park. She said, "There is truly a need in this town for child care, and we are happy to provide this service. The business has grown steadily since locating here. I am very happy I chose to locate my business in Sterling."

Another business relatively new to Sterling is Salon 41. It is a unisex hair salon that offers many other services such as nail services, massages, tanning, and more. Kristy and Brandon Barth, salon owners, have said "We are thrilled with the results of opening our business here. We developed and occupied one-half of the building, initially, and grew quickly, into occupying the entire building. We are proud of our business and our customers love coming here. They appreciate the convenience of having us in their town, and we are happy to be here."

More proposals in Sterling's future are: two lots within the industrial park are being considered for development, and an investor is taking a serious look at developing a 7.4-acre parcel located in the heart of our town.

Sterling is developing, regardless of the economy's uncertainty. The town strives to retain its quaint, country atmosphere, while moving slowly but progressively forward.

Sharon Chviek is economic development coordinator for the Town of Sterling.

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