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## **Sterling strives to retain its quaint atmosphere while moving progressively forward**

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As the town's first selectman, Russell Gray, has stated, "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 stone walls built with Sterling stone and depicting the country atmosphere we strive to retain, to this area. 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 that offer good home-grown foods, restaurants, and even 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 thanks to a family within Sterling's borders; all these events happen in Sterling's downtown area. Sterling is a small town with a big heart!"

The economic downturn has affected this small town in the way of slowing down the housing market, both building and the sales of, but it has not stopped the forward progress of commercial and manufacturing development.

In the past few years, the town has undergone many changes, including but not limited to the building of a new school which encompasses the town's children from kindergarten through grade 8. Our next largest undertaking, benefiting our children, was to join in with a neighboring town to construct a regional high school. This assures our students a local place to attend high school - grades 9 through 12. The town has made use of the original location of our previous Memorial School, by relocating the town's public library, municipal offices, Recreation Authority Dept., and even additional offices, such as homeland security, fire marshal and resident trooper, to this location.

The timing for all of these changes happening was perfect, in that the town hall was too small for the services needed, the town's public library was too small to handle the demand for it, and the Recreation Authority was secondary to all school events, so there was little to offer in the way of recreation. Both the relocation and expansion of 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 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."

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 commercial/manufacturing side of things in town, Sterling's industrial park has much activity happening right now. One of our newest business is LKQ Tire & Recycling, LLC. Its CEO, 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."

Another of Sterling's growing commercial entities is a day care facility called PJ's Playground. It 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.

Another commercial business, still in its growing stages, is Salon 41. It is a unisex hair salon that is owned by Kristy and Brandon Barth.

More proposals in Sterling's future are: 3 lots within the industrial park 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 continues to develop, 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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