

“Help Our Hospital”

On Thursday, February 12th, 2004, approximately 50 Ellenville-area citizens went to the Ulster County Legislature meeting in Kingston in support of those asking the County to help the financially-strapped **Ellenville Regional Hospital**. The following community leaders spoke for the group:

Reverend Julius Collins, Pastor, Shiloh Baptist Church:

“I want to talk to you about the history there, but I want to talk to you about now, and I want to talk to you about tomorrow. Now you see a hospital that’s starting to do all that it can for all of the people in the community of Ellenville, the town of Wawarsing, and those towns surrounding it. They provide services that save lives. The time that it takes for some people to get to any other hospital can mean life or death to any one of them. I stand here tonight as one of those whose life is still here, I believe, because of the presence of Ellenville Hospital. I know of others who stand for the same reason.



I stand here tonight, not to beleaguer you, because it is not something that you created, but it is certainly something that, as you look into lower Ulster County where we are, where Ellenville is, is an important part of this community. For it represents one of the most beautiful sections in all of this county, and all of this state. When you drive past the mountain and look at Ellenville you see a place that you should be proud to raise your children in. You see a place that you should be proud to represent.

And we urge you that as you as you look at things and ways that you might be able to help our hospital to grow, realize that you’re not doing it just for Ellenville but you’re doing it for Ulster County. You’re doing it because we are going to be one of the most beautiful places in this country. We are going to be one of the most valuable places in this country. Why? Because we have a community that is concerned about fixing its problems and growing to be a beautiful place to where people want to come. That’s why I urge you tonight, when the opportunity comes, to look and see what you can do to aid our hospital.

We are here tonight because the rumors go around that we don’t care about what’s going on in Ellenville, that we don’t care about our hospital. Whoever said it, they made a mistake. Whoever said it was telling an out-and-out lie. We care about what’s going on in our community. It may take a little bit to get us to rise, but when the time comes, we shall rise along with whatever it takes to make Ellenville all that it should be. And at this point Ellenville’s hospital is that rally point. We shall rally.

We shall talk to you anytime you want to talk about it; call any one of us. We’ll tell you how important it is to our children. We’ll tell you how important it is to our seniors. We’ll tell you how important it is to the tourists that come to Ulster County in the summertime.

We’ll tell you how important it is. We urge you to just listen, and do all that you can to make it work, not only for us, but for you, too.”



Mary Sheeley, President, Chamber of Commerce:

“My name is Mary Sheeley, and I am the President of the **Ellenville-Wawarsing Chamber of Commerce** and a resident of the village of Ellenville and former Village trustee. I have with me, which I’ve just presented to the chairman, the signatures of more than 2,418 residents of the towns of Wawarsing and Rochester who are concerned over the potential loss of their hospital. They are frightened; they are upset. We are all upset. I sat here wondering how I would impress upon you people the severity of the situation, and how desperate we are. And God works in mysterious ways; I followed Reverend Collins, who said it all. I can’t add a word to it except maybe one thing that Reverend Collins left out.

I am not that proud that I can’t stand here before you and say, ‘Please help our hospital. You’re our last resort. If you don’t do something, our hospital will close.’ And if the hospital closes, those beautiful people Reverend Collins spoke about, some of them will die. It’s just that simple. So if I can leave you with one word, that word is ‘Please.’ Please, help our hospital.”



Maggie Heath, President, Ellenville Hospital Auxiliary:

“I, too, share the feelings that have been expressed so deeply here tonight, but I also want to thank the members of the community. Each and every one of you for coming and sitting there. A little over 2½ weeks ago, we formed a committee to save our hospital, and this community, together, worked together to obtain 2,418

letters. And that’s thanks to all of you tonight, and that’s out of a residency of 12,000 people in the community.

I cannot follow Reverend Collins or Mrs. Sheeley with their words, but I do want you to know that we are a wonderful community and we are hard working and we will do anything and everything to help to try to preserve our hospital. Thank you very much for listening to us.”

TJ Briggs, President, First Aid & Rescue Squad in Ellenville, former Mayor:



My name is Tom Briggs. I’m the President of the **First Aid Squad** in Ellenville. We run approximately 1,300 calls a year. That’s 3½ a day, so, if you do the math real quick, if we’re running to Kingston, Middletown, ➔