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## A Workforce Repurposes

April 22, 2020 was MACNY's 107th birthday. On that same day, Central New Yorkers awoke to snow on the ground. With a collective shrug, we got on with our lives, just like the hardy daffodils who shook off the flakes and remained on the job, straight and tall, unfazed.

Governor Cuomo often refers to #NYTOUGH. We know he is talking about us, our native flowers, our resourceful citizens, and our manufacturers, with whom MACNY has worked alongside for over a century. Perhaps our six-month-long winters have prepared us with ingenuity and courage to face all challenges.

We have had plenty of practice. Our manufacturing community has spent the past 50 years adapting and reinventing itself in light of the exodus of some of the largest employers in the world. MACNY has been there as advocate and innovator for legacy (and new) businesses and organizations, numbering over 300, employing over 50,000 people, and competing on a global scale.

Throughout its 107-year existence, MACNY has voiced the challenges of CNY manufacturing to legislators in Albany and Washington, and has designed energy and purchasing solutions, networking, leadership training, human resource services, and workforce development for its members. As a founding member of the Manufacturers Alliance of New York, MACNY strengthens its impact for over 5,400 manufacturers and businesses and more than 181,300 manufacturing jobs across the state.

The arrival of COVID-19 has presented us with new threats – to our survival, to our resilience, to the Old Normal. Central New Yorkers, including MACNY, have mobilized. Within one week of mandated shutdown, MACNY emerged as a remote work location and became the repository of

crisis information and its relevance for MACNY members. President & CEO, Randy Wolken, has embraced new technologies to bring webinar events featuring legislators to virtual town halls with Central New York business leaders. He has hosted must-see COVID-19 updates, initially live events, now recorded and archived on YouTube. MACNY has joined other leading CNY organizations and companies to facilitate a consortium, "[Keeping People Safe and Factories Running](#)," that will focus on best workplace safety practices and more.

As MACNY has transformed over 107 years, indeed over the past several months, so have our members. The story of Skaneateles' Tessy Plastics revamping operations to make five-minute coronavirus test kits, creating 200 jobs in the process, was big news for Central New York. The contract to make the kits is the largest in Tessy's history and will play a vital role in returning the nation to work. Hill-Rom, also of Skaneateles, has not stopped producing ventilators and ICU beds. We have all become minor experts in the necessity of these items to our hospitals.

Sturges Manufacturing, in operation for over 100 years in Utica, NY, makes safety straps with webbing that they attach to hardware. Many of their end-users are first responders, workers essential to the fight against coronavirus. In response to this crisis, Sturges developed fire-resistant elastic for use in a new product: face masks for fire fighters, first responders who don't typically don face masks because they wear full gas masks. This innovation promises our fire fighters additional protection.

Others, like Cascade Lacrosse, of Liverpool, NY, have repurposed their production lines to make medical-use face shields, as the demand for its helmets and face masks for lacrosse players has waned until sports activity is resumed.

Central New Yorkers innovate; we will continue to do so long after COVID-19 has been arrested. It is in our #NYTOUGH blood. We salute the inventors, the adapters, the "repurposers" as they rise to meet this challenge and plan to work alongside you for the next 107 years. Our workforce development team is at work now, reimagining our apprenticeship programs for the new normal, post-COVID, to ensure that the talent pipeline is secure, and our manufacturers can depend on skilled workers to continue to compete across the globe.

It takes a lot more than a little snow in April to stop a Central New Yorker.