

### *Indoor aquaponic farm in Sherrill produces organic seafood, produce*

**SHERRILL, N.Y.** – Today, **U.S. Representative Richard Hanna** (NY-24) and **Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr.**

welcomed a new business to the Mohawk Valley: Aqua Vita Farms in Sherrill.

Aqua Vita Farms grows safe, fresh, organic produce and seafood indoors through a method called aquaponics. Aquaponics is the combination of aquaculture and hydroponics. It involves growing fish and plants together in one integrated, soilless system. The fish provide a food source for the plants and the plants naturally filter the water in which the fish live.

**Mark Doherty**, founder and owner of Aqua Vita Farms, is a Whitesboro resident who came up with the business plan during his MBA studies at SUNYIT. Doherty said he's proud to join the rich tradition of farming in Upstate New York.

**"I'm glad that Aqua Vita Farms can join the wonderfully diverse agricultural community in Central New York, while also being an example of the micro-enterprise solution that must exist if we are to create jobs and solve our current economic problems," Doherty said.**

Congressman Hanna said he's pleased to see Aqua Vita Farms, which is located in the former Oneida Silver polishing plant, repurpose an old building. Hanna assisted Aqua Vita with its loan application through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**"Helping new businesses grow in the Mohawk Valley is a top priority for me in Congress. I met with Mark Doherty very soon after I was sworn into office and – today – here we are at Aqua Vita Farms' grand opening," Hanna said. "I wish Mark much continued success and it is a privilege to welcome Aqua Vita Farms to the business community."**

County Executive Picente, Jr. said he looks forward to working with Aqua Vita Farms as it grows and expands in the county. **"The future of our region rests upon new businesses and entrepreneurs who see opportunities and pursue them," Picente said. "Aqua Vita is an outstanding example of a new business that is suited to the changing nature of our society and has outstanding growth prospects."**

**Mohawk Valley EDGE President Steve DiMeo** said the county development agency was able to provide Aqua Vita Farms with a grant to assist with its startup.

**“Aqua Vita Farms’ combination of aquaculture and hydroponic technologies (aquaponics) to efficiently produce year-round quality produce is the type of entrepreneurial projects we wish to encourage,” DiMeo said. “The \$20,000 working capital grant Aqua Vita Farms received from the Oneida County Microenterprise Grant program was a significant component of the startup capital needed to begin their operation in Oneida County.”**

Officials with **USDA Rural Development** said the organization is proud to provide an 80 percent loan guarantee to Oneida Savings Bank to assist Aqua Vita Farms

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**“Having organic, locally grown fish and herbs is good for Central New York, and helps support Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack’s “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” initiative,” State Director Jill Harvey said. “Rural Development is proud to support the production of locally-produced food in Central New York. Congratulations to Mark Doherty of Aqua Vita, as well as Thomas Lewin from Oneida Savings Bank. I’d also like to congratulate Oneida Savings Bank on the first of what we hope are many guaranteed business loans with Rural Development through the Business and Industry Loan Guarantee program.”**□

Aqua Vita Farms currently sells its lettuce and basil through wholesale distribution to the following local restaurants: **Nola's** in Clinton; **The Willows** in Utica; **Nail Creek Pub & Brewery** ; **The Yahnundasis Golf Club** ; and **Aqua Vino Restaurant** in Utica

. Its products can also be found at local farmers markets and fruit stands, including Arnie’s Produce in Sherrill and Oneida County Public Market.