



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Seneca Army Depot: Once Again An Economic Engine For Finger Lakes Region

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO

We have come a long way in re-building the Depot since the dark days of the early 1990's when our region received a devastating one-two punch with the closure of the Seneca Army Depot and the Willard Psychiatric Center.

For generations these facilities drove the local economy, employing thousands of area residents who enjoyed the steady, secure employment these two government facilities offered. Once they closed, these facilities became an economic anchor around the necks of local residents as we struggled with the loss of more than 1,000 good-paying jobs.

Today, the economic recovery of the Seneca Army Depot is grander than even the most nostalgic memory of the glory days of the Army Depot and Willard Psychiatric Center era.

Now, the former Seneca Army Depot is once again an economic engine with the Five Points Correctional Facility, the Willard Drug Treatment Center, Hillside Children's Center, Finger Lakes Law Enforcement Center, The Advantage Group and the Finger Lakes Technologies Group.

Through years of hard work and perseverance, I am proud to say that there are now more than 1,500 jobs at the former Seneca Army Depot. That's right.....more jobs than there were in the 1990's at the height of its use and we are still working aggressively to create new opportunities and development.

Some of our successful efforts to create new jobs include:

- Five Points Correctional facility.....645 jobs
- Willard Drug Treatment Center.....429 jobs
- Hillside Children's Center.....350 jobs
- The Advantage Group.....60 jobs
- Finger Lakes Technology Group.....25 jobs

Total Jobs Created --1,509

Taken together, the job producing enterprises that I have worked to bring to the area in and around the former Seneca Army Depot employ over 1,500 residents with an annual payroll of nearly \$60 million. In addition, over \$7.5 million in economic activity is generated for local businesses annually by these companies and facilities.

The challenges that we faced when the Seneca Army Depot and Willard Psychiatric Center closed were substantial, but I was committed to meeting the challenge of rebuilding the Depot and to create a new future for our region.

There were many long hours working with previous Governors Cuomo and Pataki, members of the Seneca County Industrial Development Agency and the Seneca County Board of

Supervisors to develop alternative uses for these facilities. The closures of Willard and the Army Depot created a nearly 12,000 acre economic black-hole in the heart of Seneca County. In 1995, we achieved our first major victory when the Willard facility was re-opened as a drug treatment center run by the New York State Department of Corrections.

In 1994, when I was appointed to serve as Chairman of the Senate Crime Victims, Crime & Corrections Committee, I immediately held hearings across the State to take testimony on how dangerous our overcrowded prisons were to the nearly 26,000 brave men and women serving as Correction Officers. These hearings set the stage for the largest expansion of the state prison system in many years and ultimately led to the construction of a new maximum security facility in Seneca County - the Five Points Correctional Facility located at the Seneca Army Depot.

Building the \$180 million Five Points Correctional Facility was the largest construction project in Western New York in a generation. More than 500 construction workers in the building trades were employed for nearly two years building the state-of-the-art prison. The new prison presented tremendous opportunities for the Army Depot as the new facility required all new infrastructures at the Depot--new water lines and new electrical lines which could be utilized by new businesses at the Depot.

While the Willard Drug Treatment Center, with 429 full-time jobs and an annual payroll of \$14 million, and the Five Points Correctional Facility, with 645 full-time jobs and an annual payroll of \$27 million, helped to re-energize the economy, there was much more potential to be tapped. I was very pleased that we were able to recruit a nationally recognized children's organization that would ultimately become the Hillside Children's Center where nearly 350 jobs have been created in the treatment of at-risk youth.

The Seneca Army Depot property, once empty and deteriorating, is now filled with energy and optimism. The economic foundation we have built at the Army Depot will allow for further economic growth as we continue to work on exciting projects and job growth opportunities at the Army depot. Look for more exciting news in the future.

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