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PRESS & SUN-BULLETIN

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2015

WATCHDOG REPORT: NO PLANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

A disorderly transition for disabled

No apparent plan exists for future care of the disabled after the closing of Broome Developmental Center

JEFF PLATSKY JPLATSKY@PRESSCONNECTS.COM

Faced with the closing of Broome Developmental Center, the state has failed to develop a strategy to shift the future burden of care to the private sector.

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities has a general timetable for the transfer of clients. But the nonprofit organizations facing heavier caseloads say they lack a

clear picture of how the state will attend to future clients coming into the system. "Programs and supports have been discontinued before alternative options have been developed," said Steven Kroll, the Albany-based executive director of NYSARC Inc., the nation's largest nonprofit provider of services to people with developmental disabilities.

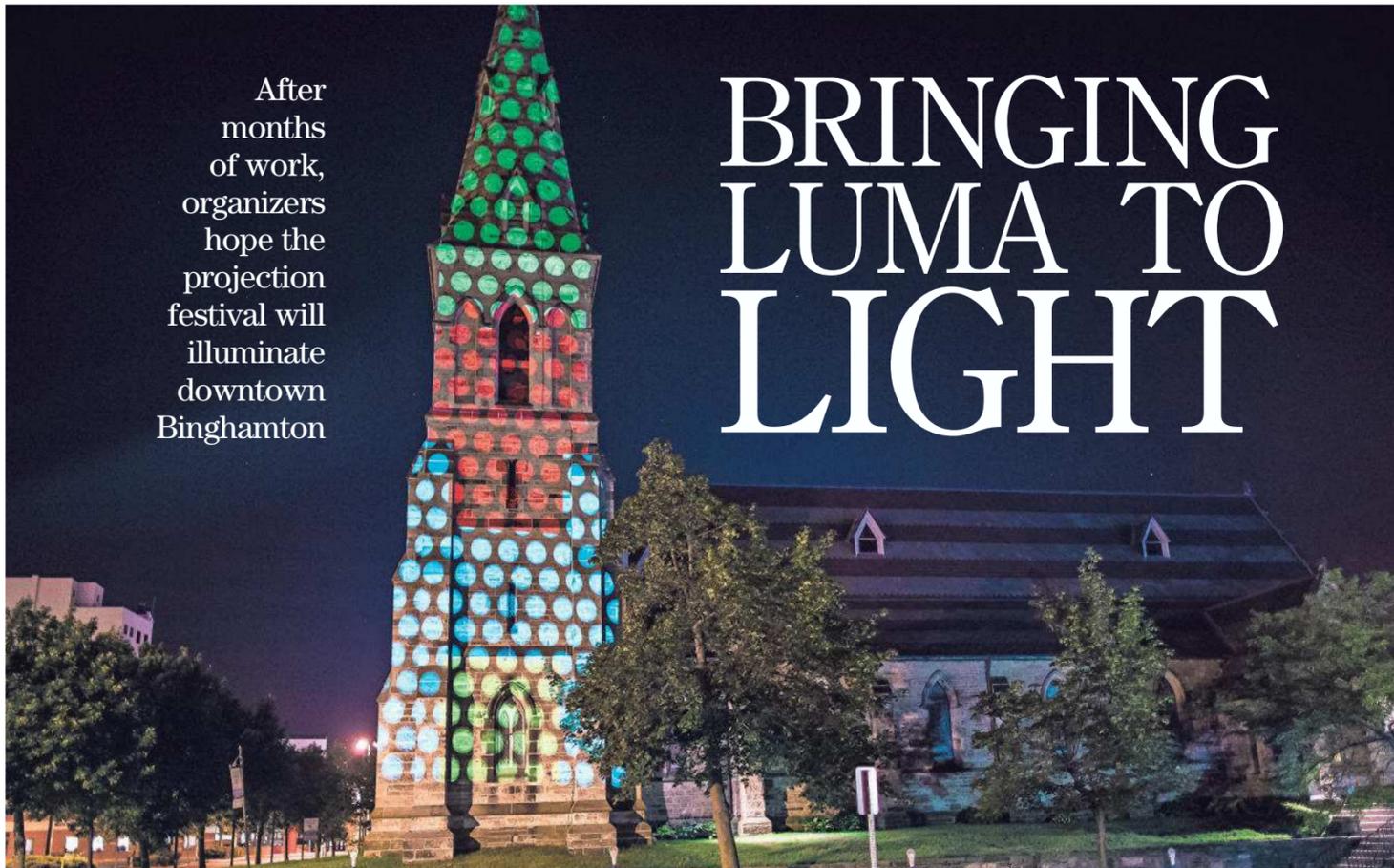
See **DISABLED**, Page 9A



The Broome Developmental Center is scheduled to close by March 31.

Findings

- » Closing the state-operated BDC was forced by federal regulations covering the disabled, but the New York Office for People with Developmental Disabilities says it has no plan for the shutdown or handling developmentally disabled people into the future.
- » Few plans have been made for the developmentally disabled now and in the future, say nonprofit leaders, who will bear the burden of providing care.
- » Discussion on the future of the 325,000-square-foot facility has not taken place, meaning it will soon join other abandoned, former government buildings in the region.



After months of work, organizers hope the projection festival will illuminate downtown Binghamton

BRINGING LUMA TO LIGHT

TICE LERNER, BINGPOP PHOTO

The Christ Church tower on Henry Street in Binghamton is lit up during a test run for LUMA. The tower is one of five buildings to be used in the projection arts festival.



ANDREW THAYER / STAFF PHOTO
Nick Rubenstein, co-producer and organizer of LUMA, inspects a 20,000-lumen projector.

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A tangle of electrical cords spills down State Street's sidewalk on a cool night early last week. ♦ At one end of the snarl, near the last of the brick storefronts before the block collides with Lewis Street, a handful of people cluster around a large, black projector resting on a wooden stand. ♦ A young man at the side of the projector presses a button. The machine begins to hum. ♦ Then, across the street on the side of a brick building, a brilliant white-blue square of light flickers into being. See **LUMA**, Page 10A

If you go

- What:** LUMA Festival.
- When:** 8 p.m. to midnight Friday.
- Cost:** Free to the public.
- Where:** State Street in Binghamton between Henry Street and Lewis Street.
- Buildings:**
 - » Atomic Tom's, 196 State St.
 - » Anthony Brunelli Fine Arts, 186 State St.
 - » The Forum, 236 Washington St. (on the State Street side)
 - » The Christ Church tower, 10 Henry St.
 - » Townsquare Media, 59 Court St.

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LUMA

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For about 10 minutes, the machine operator and two of his colleagues tinker with the projector and the two iPads connected to it. The white-blue square is replaced by a bright pink one bearing the words “Internet Connection Failed.” Carl Schrecongost, the young man beside the projector, groans.

Finally, the images from the iPads — floating neon squares — take over the side of the building.

“There we go!” Schrecongost, 24, of Binghamton, murmurs.

Nearby, Joshua Ludzki watches, snaps photos and doles out praise as the projection turns into a striking interactive display, images drawn on the iPads brilliantly overlaid atop the bricks.

Tuesday’s nighttime display was a test run of the Binghamton University cinema department’s contribution to LUMA, a free projection arts festival that Ludzki’s company, BingPop, has planned for downtown Binghamton on Friday night.

More than a dozen high-powered projectors will light up the sides and faces of five buildings on and near State Street with animated visual displays through a technology called 3D projection mapping, organizers say.

The technology, more common in Europe but a growing trend here — it was recently used on the Empire State Building — uses the shape and architectural features of a building to make the projected animations more realistic.

“There’s something really magical and mystical about it,” said Ludzki, 35, of Binghamton. “This familiar structure that you’ve seen downtown a hundred times before, that sort of blends into the background, suddenly ... sort of explodes in this way that (makes) you go, ‘my God.’”

It makes you see the world that has long existed around you in new ways, Ludzki said, and that generates excitement.

In many ways, that’s the goal of LUMA.

When the sun begins to set on Friday and the darkness settles in, LUMA organizers will be hoping that the festival, which began as a modest idea backed by a small team of ardent Binghamton enthusiasts, will shine a light on the city they love.

They hope that the festival draws on-lookers from across the region and opens people’s eyes to a downtown that is in the middle of a resurgence — and that that realization fuels further revitalization.

They hope that as the projector lights flicker on, the spotlight on Binghamton will grow.

On Tuesday, members of the Binghamton University cinema department continued to hone their display on the side of the Kelley Building. It would be a smaller, “bonus” project on top of the festival’s five primary projections, which have been in the works for months.

Tuesday night’s test run carried on. LUMA was 10 days away.

The idea’s roots

Like many BingPop productions, LUMA started as a relatively simple idea — then exploded.

The story begins on New Year’s Eve, just after a masquerade party at the Roberson mansion co-hosted by BingPop, the Binghamton-specific events planning and promotion company run by Ludzki.

An after-party at Social on State featured a surprise projection show of looping videos, all with a Binghamton theme. Instead of projecting the videos inside the bar, Ludzki’s group decided to show them on the front of the State Street building with the hopes of attracting attention — Ludzki called it the modern, more interesting equivalent of spotlights outside an opening or a premier.

The next morning, Ludzki got a call from local artist Tice Lerner, who wanted to know what Ludzki knew about projection mapping.

The answer at the time: Not much. So Ludzki searched YouTube. Up came videos of powerful visual art displays on buildings in places like Dubai and Las Vegas.

Lerner, 29, of Binghamton, asked Ludzki if he had ever thought about doing anything similar in their city, where the downtown architecture would offer a striking backdrop.

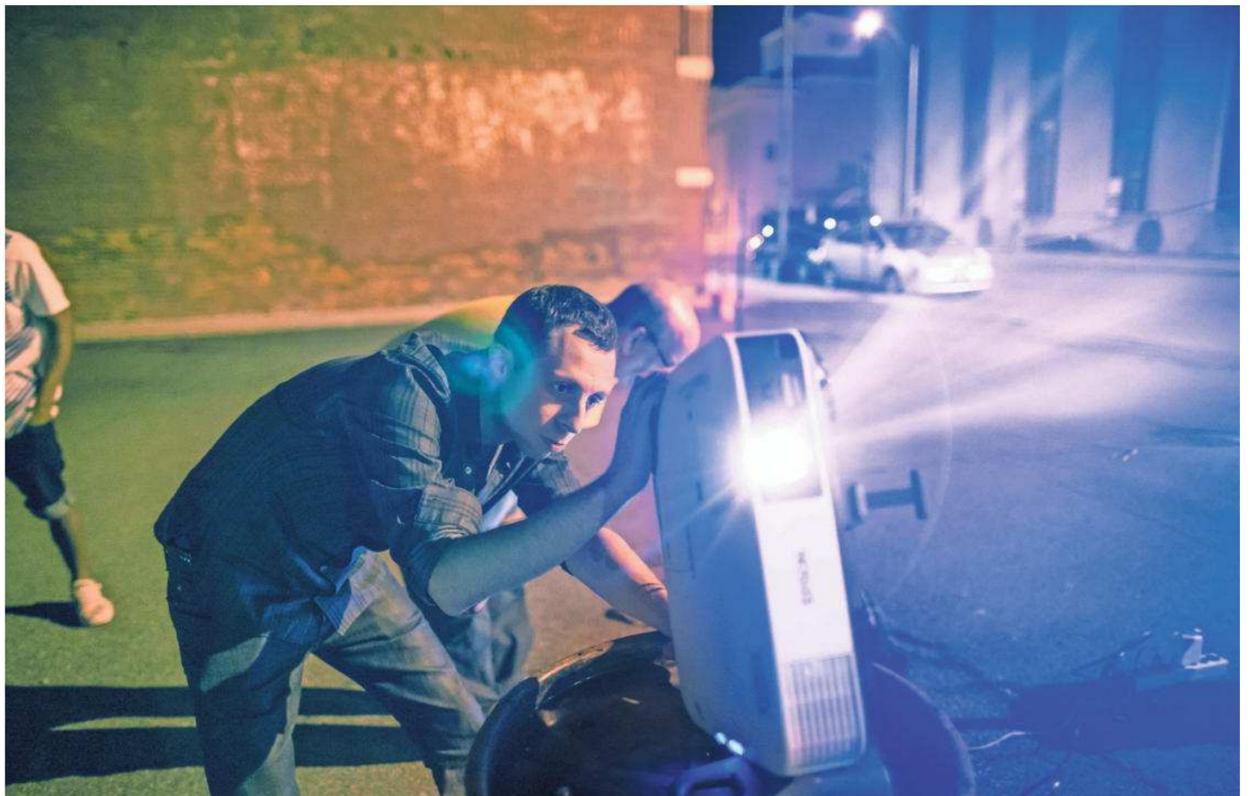
Soon, the two were working late into the night on small-scale test runs fashioned from a white cardboard box and a borrowed projector.

As those early tests unfolded in Ludzki’s apartment, the event that would come to be called LUMA was still about seven months away.

“(One) thing that we found — and this is both a good and a bad thing — is that when you look (projection mapping) up online, there’s not a whole lot of information on it,” Lerner said. “This is not something that you can just look up and do.”

But it was for that reason, and not in spite of it, that the two were drawn to the idea, Lerner said.

“With that type of thing, if you can figure out how to do it, you’ve got something unique,” he said.



BINGPOP PHOTO

Tice Lerner, co-founder of LUMA, plays with a projector as it splashes light onto the side of a building on State Street downtown.

THE FACES BEHIND LUMA

Joshua Ludzki, co-founder of LUMA

Age: 35.
Home: Binghamton.
Hometown: Fair Lawn, New Jersey.
Occupation: Founder of BingPop.

Tice Lerner, co-founder of LUMA

Age: 29.
Home: Binghamton.
Hometown: Binghamton.
Occupation: Photographer

Nick Rubenstein, co-producer of LUMA

Age: 45.
Home: Binghamton.
Hometown: New Haven, Connecticut.
Occupation: Owner of JungleScience Gallery and Art Laboratories.

DIGITAL

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On the map

As Ludzki and Lerner tinkered with their idea and drew in more people to help, their plans for a projection arts event downtown grew.

Their goal evolved from using the courthouse for a projection mapping display to throwing a major, first-of-its-kind festival that could grow into a regional, national, even international attraction in years to come.

“Rather than us going down to New York City to see a Broadway show, they’re coming up to see our projection festival,” Ludzki said of the idea.

To accomplish that, they knew they had to think not just big, but bigger.

In the places where projection mapping had already been done, the display was typically kept to a single structure.

“It’s very common to do one building,” Ludzki said. “So we said, ‘Well, how do we blow that out of the water?’”

The answer: The Binghamton event would feature five buildings of projection mapping displays, all in one night.

The festival took on the name LUMA, borrowed from a video term that refers to the brightness in an image.

Making LUMA a reality

Zach Mulligan was in the middle of the post-college job hunt with his sights set on Los Angeles when Ludzki approached him about using his computer animation background to help bring a major festival to Binghamton.

Mulligan was busy, but Ludzki, who had been “blown away” by his talent during their time together at a local radio station, wanted him for the team.

“I (told him), ‘You have to do this,’” Ludzki said. “‘This is our community, and (the event is) gonna grow, and you’re gonna wanna be involved in it a year from now or two years from now.’”

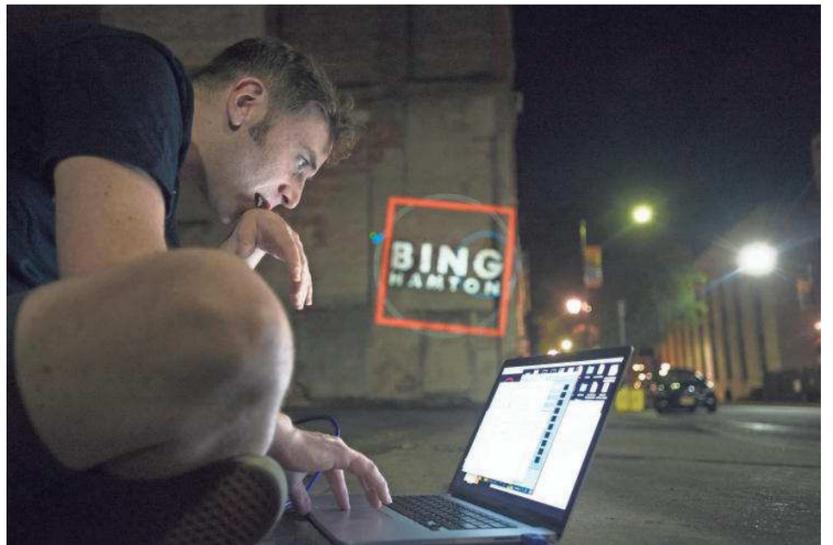
As an added incentive, Ludzki told Mulligan he wanted him to work with Mason Mastroianni and the rest of the team behind the nationally syndicated “B.C.” comic strip, which Mastroianni’s grandfather, Johnny Hart, a Broome County native, created in the 1950s.

Mulligan could help bring the famous cavemen to life as a 3-D animation for the first time, Ludzki told him.

And so Mulligan, a 22-year-old Apalachin resident who had recently finished an internship with DreamWorks, agreed. Mastroianni and the “B.C.” team agreed, too.

When Mulligan and Mastroianni met, LUMA was about two months away, and slowly, the pieces of the puzzle that Ludzki and the others had gathered were starting to fall together.

Other artists and animators had climbed on board, and clearer pictures



ANDREW THAYER / STAFF PHOTO

Joshua B. Ludzki, co-founder of LUMA, projects an image Tuesday along State Street in downtown Binghamton.

of the five primary LUMA projects began to emerge.

A giant tin robot will battle “pepperoni PizzAliens” in a display on the back of the Forum. A community-sourced art gallery will be on display on the side of the Anthony Brunelli Fine Arts building. The “B.C.” comic characters will come to life on the State Street side of the Townsquare Media building.

LUMA animators, in some cases, used 3-D animation software to recreate the buildings upon which their projections will play. This lets them manipulate the real buildings in ways that will make it appear as though, for instance, the windows are moving or swinging open.

In other cases, the animators use motion graphics programs like Adobe After Effects to create their displays.

The finished animation projects are stored on computers that will be hooked up to high-powered projectors the night of the festival. Special projection mapping software called VPT will allow the videos to be warped slightly to better fit the buildings.

Projectors 12 times the strength of common classroom projectors will splay the animations across the walls of the buildings, and sound will complement the displays.

To watch these projections transform a downtown architectural relic is to know this: LUMA takes brick and mortar, adds light, and makes magic.

Light at the end

Back at Tuesday’s test run on the side of the Kelley Building, Nick Rubenstein looks on and chats with people gathered on the sidewalk.

Rubenstein, a former colorist and motion graphics artist in Los Angeles, is helping put on LUMA with Ludzki and Lerner.

In the months since the idea’s inception, Rubenstein, now of Binghamton, worked with the featured artists to make sure their projects matched what LUMA organizers were envisioning, and created his own projection artwork to showcase at the festival.

Standing on State Street less than two weeks before the big night, Rubenstein talks excitedly about the “amazing” things that are taking place, but admits there’s still a lot of work to be done.

“It’s exciting, but it’s also a little scary,” he says, and laughs. “I won’t lie — I’m having trouble sleeping.”

A Kickstarter campaign offering donor incentives such as wristbands and T-shirts bearing the LUMA logo set an initial goal of \$3,000 and brought in \$15,212 for the festival in about four weeks, according to a post on the LUMA Kickstarter page.

Ludzki earlier this month declined to comment on the festival’s estimated

cost. While BingPop is a for-profit company, Ludzki said he was not looking to make money off LUMA.

Ludzki, who is originally from New Jersey, is a charismatic and passionate spokesman for Binghamton. Through BingPop and its predecessor, BingSpot, he has had a key role in events such as Binghamton Restaurant Week, the Wine & Tapas Tour, Martini Walk and Masquerade in the Mansion.

Those events, while popular, have kindred spirits in vibrant downtowns across the country, he says.

But something like LUMA? Totally different. Something, he believes, that could really put Binghamton on the map.

Time for transformation

LUMA’s particular Friday is also First Friday, the city’s monthly event that draws visitors downtown to take in Binghamton’s latest artistic offerings.

This Friday will also feature a State Street Block Party, promising to bring music, food, artisans and entertainment to the street from 5 to 11 p.m.

But as the dark settles, the city’s lights will go out, and LUMA’s will come on.

Spectators will gather along a stretch of State Street from Henry Street to Lewis Street — closed to traffic for the night’s festivities.

Five primary projection projects will illuminate their chosen buildings one by one. The crowd will watch, then a countdown will lead them to the next building and the next display.

Displays will run in loops for the duration of LUMA, scheduled to last from 8 p.m. to midnight.

Festival organizers are hoping people will turn out in the thousands to see the buildings transform.

They also want LUMA to build on what they see as a transformation of downtown Binghamton, to help highlight its appeal — and its promise.

“If you’ve lived here for a long time, you’ve seen some things you really liked, some institutions that you really liked, (go) away,” Ludzki said. “It’s hard to value the awesome things that we have, and it’s hard to recognize the importance of the new things that are growing.”

Ludzki and LUMA’s organizers believe there is hope in this city, and potential. Not “pie in the sky potential,” he said, but potential already being realized.

The growth of downtown is no longer a “politician’s promise,” he said, but something that’s being executed — and LUMA is a part of that.

“We’re headed towards a really, really remarkable transformation,” he said.

Follow Megan Brockett on Twitter @PSBMegan.