



Ye Olde TOWNSMAN Valley

"The Best Journal Published by a Dam Site!"



VOL. 22 NO. 52 GRAHAMSVILLE, NY 12740 DECEMBER 25, 2025

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Knarf's Classic Movie & Trivia - Page 65

Monticello Kiwanis Spreads Holiday Cheer



*Display of games and toys to United Way. From Left - United Way Chief Professional Officer Julian Dawson and Admin. Asst. Valerie Simone
On Right - Kiwanians Linda Barriger, Marvin Rappaport (Pres) and Sheila Lashinsky.
(Story on Page 4)*

YE OLDE TRI-VALLEY TOWNSMAN

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER FOR
THE TOWN OF DENNING AND
THE TOWN OF NEVERSINK

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of Frank Comando

COMMUNITY NEWS - Sheila Lashinsky

Email: tvtownsman@yahoo.com

Website: thetownsman.com

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More than ever, thank you for your continued support.

On the Front Burner: While they were there, the time came for her to have her child and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn.

Luke 2: 6-7

**DAYS OF
YOKE....
Today's History**

December 6, 1950

Fire of undetermined origin completely destroyed the home and furniture of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Crum on Lackawack Hill Sunday. They learned of the fire when they stopped at a gas station in Napanoch. When they returned home the fire had destroyed the building and its contents.

The Oscar Banta farm above Sundown has been sold to Mr. and Mrs. W.D. Cayton of Larchmont, New York. The Banta place is the old Norman DuBois homestead.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Miller of Woodbourne have bought the Harrison DuBois place on the Woodbourne Road. Mr. Miller is a guard at the Woodbourne Institution.

Miss Eleanor Dulaff, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Dulaff of Claryville, was married Sunday evening at the Grahamsville Methodist Church to Mr. Fred Ahrens, son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Ahrens of Alabama. The Rev. Howard West officiated.

Mr. William Denman died Sunday at Hurley at the age of eighty-one. Among the ten surviving children are Mr. Bruce Denman, Neversink Town Supervisor and Paul Denman, both of Grahamsville, Mr. Hugh Denman of Woodbourne.

Mr. Sumner Krum reports that 4.38 inches of rain fell in 24 hours a week ago.

With about 70 feet to go on Monday morning, it was expected that the Grahamsville-Neversink Tunnel would connect with the Benton Hollow shaft this week. Frazier-Davis Co., contractors for the tunnel, will probably be another two years before completing the entire job.

December 7, 1960

Anthony Cypert and Myrtle Kratch were united in marriage November 24, 1910 at St. Andrews

Catholic Church, Ellenville fifty years ago on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 24. Rt. Rev. Msgr. William J. Guinan of The Immaculate Conception Church, Woodbourne, celebrated a Nuptial Mass during which Mr. and Mrs. Cypert renewed their vows. The Cyperts are parents of six children, Mary Cypert Mentnech of Woodbourne, Paul Cypert of Grahamsville, Rita Cypert Hotchkin of Parksville, Walter Cypert, David Cypert and Thelma Cypert Botsford of Woodbourne. They now have 23 grandchildren and one great-grandchild, Bonnie Jean Mentnech, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Mentnech.

Nial Van Wagner, a retired Correction Officer of the Eastern Correctional Institution, Napanoch died Monday, November 28, 1960 in Kingston. He was born August 16, 1895 at Grahamsville to Calvin and Eva Tompkins Van Wagner. He was married to Dorothy Dotson.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Dymond of Sundown are the parents of a daughter, Cindy Sue, born at Veterans Memorial Hospital on November 27.

"If children didn't ask questions, how could they find out that we know so little?" (Herbert V. Prochnow)

December 16, 1970

Two Tri-Valley Seniors were awarded Regents Scholarships as a result of the competitive examination held this fall. Winners in the local district were Stephen Currey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Horace Currey and Glenn Eltz, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Eltz. Gary Robinson, son of Mr. Vincent Robinson and Mrs. Blanche Hitchcock has been named an alternate.

Services were held Tuesday for Mr. Daniel Keogan, 78, of Wawarsing who died Friday at home after a long illness. Born in Montela, Dec. 19, 1891, he was the son of Cornelius and Victoria Gorton Keogan. He married the former Elizabeth Huson in Grahamsville, June 2, 1914.

Anniversary wishes to Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Fuller, 23 yrs., Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Gridley, Jr., 13 yrs., and Dr. and Mrs. George Maybury, 18 years, all on the 21st. (Contd. Pg 3)

DAYS OF YORE....

Today's History (From Pg. 2)

Happy birthday to Mrs. Ray (Elise) Hornbeck on the 17th. A dinner birthday party will be held at the home of her parents in Sundown on Thursday.

Mrs. Eugene Fuller and daughter, Eileen, were hostesses at their home on Monday evening for a stork shower for Mrs. Archie Ackerley, Jr.

December 4, 1980

Martin V. LaPol, 71, of Benton Hollow Rd., Hasbrouck, died Thursday at the Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital, Cooperstown. A lifelong resident of the area, he was born November 9, 1909 in Woodbourne to James and Katherine Erts LaPol.

Sincere sympathy of the community is extended to the family of Edna Shields who passed away last week. Mrs. Shields is a sister of Mrs. Ralph Hornbeck.

The highlight of Thanksgiving Day for the George Smith family was talking to their daughter, Linda, in Florence, Italy. Linda is studying art there and is enjoying visiting some of the surrounding countries.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Poley of Neversink are the parents of an 8 lb. 1 oz. girl, Deanna Marie, born October 7, 1980 at Horton Memorial Hospital, Middletown. The maternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Archie Dean, Jr. of Neversink. The paternal grandmother is Mrs. Martha Lee Poley of Cold Spring Rd. Liberty, N.Y.

LOOKING BACK

Beatrice Akerley

Published December 4, 1997

December may be one of the coldest months of the year but it's also the season that holds more than its share of warm and wonderful memories.

Looking back to the early 1900's, in December, Orchard Lake usually froze solid and it was a favorite place for us school kids to slide during our noon hour lunch break and we often met there after supper. We could be found gliding together on the ice under the starry skies, memories never to be forgotten.

What fun it was to gather greenery to decorate our schoolhouse for our Christmas programs that were held every year. Our schoolhouse looked especially beautiful on the night of our program. Lights from our kerosene lamps shone through the windows, making shadows on the white ground. The maple trees, weighted down with snow, always seemed to say "shake me" and there was a limb on one of the trees low enough for me to reach and shake. I always ended up with a shower of snow and I loved it. (Contd Pg 4)

Household Hint:

Frozen Sink Drain?

To thaw a frozen sink drain using common household items, the most effective methods involve applying gentle heat and using a hot saltwater solution. Salt helps to lower the freezing point of water, making it effective at melting ice.

Boil water: Heat a pot of water on the stove. Add salt: Stir in about 1 cup of table or kosher salt until dissolved.

Pour slowly: Carefully and slowly pour the hot saltwater solution directly down the frozen drain. Repeat the process as needed.

Nature Column - L. Comando

A tribute to the memory of all of the Townsman Ladies that we have loved so much and lost... Peggy DeWire, Avril Pappa, Joan Hall, Polly Hill, Joyce Lockhart, Jean Helthaler, Karen Curry, Barbara Slater, Shirley Davis, Hulda Vernooy, Carolyn Coombe, Martha Ahrens and Barbara Barkley

Christmas Cardinals

Since the snowy white background has covered the yard the past few weeks, it is a lot easier to see the beautiful pair of cardinals at the bird-feeder and flying around the backyard. Not only do they create a beautiful Christmas card scene, the pair of songbirds also offers a medley of songs.

Our faithful winter friends, Cardinals don't migrate nor do they molt. Their plumage remains vibrant and full, especially during winter.

With the snow Cardinals are easily spotted however they may not always be as obvious. You may have to listen for their loud, metallic chirping note and follow their call. Cardinals tend to sit low in shrubs and trees or forage on or near the ground. They are often found in pairs and they typically remain together the whole year. It is not unusual for the couple to stay together until one dies at which time the surviving mate will look for another partner.

Males can be aggressive when defending their territory, and they frequently attack other males who intrude. This tendency sometimes leads cardinals to fly into glass windows, when they charge an "intruding bird" that is really their own reflection.

Their breeding season runs from March to as late as September. The female will lay 2-5 eggs that are buff-white with dark marks. The female is the only one to incubate the eggs. The male's duty during this time is to feed her on the nest and protect their territory from intruders.

The female will incubate the eggs for about 12 days. When the eggs hatch, both will feed the young. The young leave the nest in 9-11 days after hatching. Each season the pair will attempt to raise two broods. A new nest will be constructed for a second brood by the female. The male continues to feed the first set of young for up to two weeks after leaving the nest. During this time the female usually will be incubating her second clutch keeping the male busy by continuing to feed the female, the new babies, the first brood, and still protecting their territory.

Any males born this coming spring season will initially look like the female but by next winter they will have the more pronounced black mask, crest, and red feathers of adult males.

Cardinals will usually be the first birds to your feeders greeting you in the morning and the last birds to eat bidding you a good evening.

2025 has certainly been a year of uncertainty. With the warmer weather that is expected this Friday, I wonder if we will have a white Christmas? Some may welcome the warmer weather and a snow melt, while others like myself love the idea of a white Christmas. No matter, nothing will stop Christmas from happening, or a beautiful pair of Cardinals cheerfully singing, reminding us of all the gifts that we may have overlooked this past year.

May the blessings of this Christmas season bring you a New Year filled with hope, peace, love, joy and good health!



LOOKING BACK

(From Pg. 3)

December brought snow and that brought the young and the young at heart to Koon's Hill after supper with their sleighs. At the word "go", we would all run and belly flop on our Flexible Flyers and King of the Hill sleds. Those who didn't bring sleds hopped on the pair of Bobs which were always ready and waiting for a wild ride down the hill. Cumbersome clothing cushioned the flop and our wool scarves, wet with snow, iced our faces all the way to the finish line.

December was the month that "Jack Frost" made his first appearance on our windows and traced beautiful scenes for our enjoyment. (cont'd. next column)

Then look at what Santa brought. Was there ever a morning 'more exciting than Christmas? Not for us kids and not for the "kid" in all of us who still get a kick out of that magical day which is right around the corner. The month of December is seasonably cold but the thrill of the holiday and the fun of getting together with family and friends certainly chased away the chill.

Then they would head for the kitchen to see "what's cookin'." As they all arrive one after the other, you just feel that glow of one more Thanksgiving, together.

Looking back to an old fashioned Thanksgiving when I was a child, I can see my Grandma Davis sitting in the place of honor at the table, smiling fondly as the family shares memories of other Thanksgivings. After the feast, while the wood fire still crackles in the stove, the women gather in the kitchen and the men go out to the porch to smoke their pipes. The kids pair off to play or get into mischief.

When the family ail gets together, time seems to fly like it is on wings and all to soon it's time to enjoy leftovers. I recall waiting for the adults to file through the food line, wishing they would move faster and talk a little less, fearing that there wouldn't be anything left. What anxiety is was when cold turkey and pumpkin pie were my chief concern.

Modern Thanksgivings are fine but cold telephones just can't take the place of a kiss or a hug. I hope everyone had a nice Thanksgiving day.



Monticello Kiwanis Spreads Holiday Cheer

(From Pg. 1)

The Kiwanis Club of Monticello is continuing their tradition of spreading the holiday spirit by assisting local community programs in enhancing the well-being of those in need.

In support of the club mission of improving the world, one child and one community at a time, the club donated \$200 to PRASAD Children's Dental Health Program, which has been improving the oral health of children by having its mobile clinic partnering with Sullivan County School Districts to provide needed dental services to many youths in our community.

The club contributed \$200 to United Way for Thanksgiving goodies and followed through in December with games and toys to help United Way make the holiday season more enjoyable for children and families in the community through their Project Care Program. In addition, \$200 was presented to Federation for the Homeless to the delight and appreciation of Program Administrator Kathy Kreiter.

The club also donated \$200 to a Single Bite whose mission is to fight food insecurity by providing nutritious prepared meals to children and families in the County. They also are supporting Alzheimer families and programs by contributing \$100 to the Orange/Sullivan Walk to End Alzheimer's.

Monticello Kiwanis President Marvin Rappaport stated that the club can continually support the needs of the community thanks to the members and the local residents supporting its major fundraisers - both which are in honor and in memory of exceptional Kiwanis members - the Bob Huebner Memorial Rose Sale and Bernie Shore/Rose Raimond Fundraising Dinner at Yanni's Restaurant.

The club meets the first Monday of the Month at Albella's Restaurant at 6:00 PM. For further information, visit Monticello NY Kiwanis Club Facebook Page.

New Hope Community Spreads Holiday Cheer by Giving Back to Those in Need

The nonprofit reached hundreds of families through a series of charitable holiday initiatives.

Loch Sheldrake, NY - New Hope Community has devoted the month of December to giving back to members of the community in need, helping to ensure the spirit of the holiday season reaches families throughout Sullivan County. The nonprofit, which provides person-centered support and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), coordinated a series of festive events to spread holiday cheer and happiness in the form of meaningful resources, including hot meals, gifts, and monetary donations.



Hope Community teamed up with the Sullivan County Child Advocacy Center in Liberty, NY, to facilitate this year's Adopt a Child campaign. Over the course of the campaign, New Hope staff fulfilled

CEO Karen Russell said, "We are so proud to partner with local businesses and organizations again this year to give back to our community in such important ways. This investment of time and resources is one we gladly make in order to help our neighbors feel supported during the holiday season."

After forming a new partnership in 2024, New Hope staff fulfilled the wish lists of 70 children ranging



in age from newborn to 17 years old. Gifts, including toys, winter clothes, creativity supplies, and more, were then wrapped with care and delivered by enthusiastic New Hope staff to the Child Advocacy Center.

Following a one-day postponement due to the season's first snowfall, New Hope Community held its 8th Annual Community Outreach Dinner on Wednesday, December 3rd, bringing together volunteers, staff, and local partners in a heartfelt celebration of generosity, connection, and community. Operating again as a campus-wide drive-thru, the event provided 560 complete meals to community members in need and featured festive displays for families to enjoy, including Santa and his elves, a Letters to Santa mailbox (which received a number of submissions!), and a magical glimpse at Santa's reindeer.

Pasta dinners and fixings were made possible thanks to generous donations from restaurants and grocers in our region,

including Chili's, Red Lobster, Texas Roadhouse, Buffalo Wild Wings, Sam's Club, Hannaford, Adams Fairacre Farms, and ShopRite. Clementines from Sam's Club and gift cards from ShopRite were purchased through the generosity of New Hope Community.

One mother, Rose, mentioned, "This event is something we look forward to every year. Not only saving money around the holidays, but just seeing the holiday spirit here at New Hope. It means a lot to us." "It's very beautiful that the community is so giving. I'm very grateful for this dinner," said Brittany, another local Sullivan County resident.

The seasonal giving continued throughout the month of December with New Hope Community providing a handful of monetary donations to local organizations doing meaningful work throughout the region. Given annually, these donations represent New Hope Community's admiration for these organizations and their commitment to supporting the Sullivan County community. This year, checks were presented to the Fallsburg PBA, Cornell Cooperative Extension - Sullivan Fresh Community Cupboard, SUNY Sullivan Foundation - Student Food Pantry, Sullivan County Federation for the Homeless, and the Sullivan County SPCA.





Legacy Mysterious Book Report No. 159

The Stolen Hours

Mysterious Book Report No. 470

by John Dwaine McKenna

Published December 17, 2020

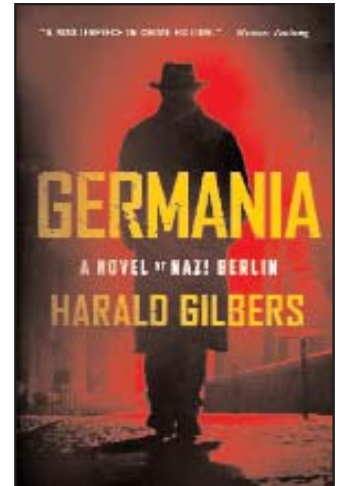
The Stolen Hours, (Mulholland Books, \$28.00, 311 pages, ISBN 978-0-316-70349-9), by Allen Eskens, is a riveting and twisted law and order thriller featuring three determined, strong women that's a tour de force of psychology- as well as an intense look into the mind of a cunning rapist and stone cold serial killer. His name

is Gavin Spencer, and the cops believe he's the one who dumped the bodies of three women in the Mississippi River in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area . . . but the hell of it is . . . they can't prove it. That's when a woman named Lila Nash-who's about to land the job she's always dreamt about: working for the Hennepin County Minnesota District Attorney's Office as a prosecutor-is given the case of Sadie Vault. Sadie's a woman who was drugged with GHB, gamma hydroxybutyrate, or "liquid ecstasy" also known as the date rape drug because the victim has no memory of the event, then abused and thrown in the river to drown. But she doesn't. She somehow manages to swim to shore and live. Her case is investigated by a Minneapolis police detective named Nikki Vang, who knows she has the right suspect . . . but as any good cop will admit . . . knowing who is one thing but proving how is another . . . because Spencer has been careful, crafting, and calculating with his kills, leaving no clues. The third and last woman is Andi Fitch, Lila's tough as nails boss prosecutor who shows the younger woman what it really takes to convict criminals. But there's a problem.


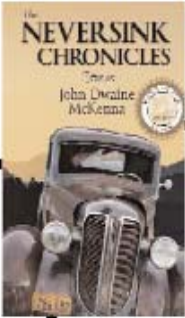



It's a big and dirty secret that Lila Nash has been carrying around for eight years . . . and something about Gavin Spencer is nagging at the back of her mind, but she can't quite remember . . . *The Stolen Hours* is an edge-of-your-seat thriller from a master word-smith who will leave you hungry for Lila's next case.

Like the review? Let your friends know, You saw it in the Mysterious Book Report, because the greatest compliment you can give is to share our work with others.

Check out our combined website that's simple to use and easy as pie to leave your comments! We're looking forward to hearing from all of you.



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The Olive Jar

by Carol Olsen LaMonda

Resort Fashion

I know it is the Winter Solstice and FaceBook is awash with Ugly Sweater Days at school and work, but I feel I must comment on resort wear since I have just returned from Aruba where the weather fluctuates from 80 to 86 with a balmy breeze. We were able to pack a week's worth of clothing into carry-on bags since all one needs is a variety of bathing suits, sandals, and shorts/dress ensembles.

The weather calls for scanty wear, and I have seen my share of tattoos, cleavages, and plumber crevices. Most women packed fashionable "cover-ups", but men walked around with their bellies arriving a foot or so before their chests. Bathing suits for men need some redesign for middle and aging men. They seem to ride around the hips with the waist protruding like a pregnant woman. Also, they are made with fabric that could also be flags of emerging nations.

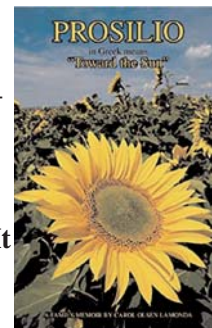


The FamilyMemoir, PROSILIO...

... in Greek means "Toward the Sun," was written by Carol Olsen LaMonda. Carol writes the column "The Olive Jar" for *Ye Olde Tri-Valley Townsman*. This local author has been busy guesting at book clubs who have chosen this local memoir as their book choice.

Feel the warmth of "Prosilio" as you read Carol's memoirs cuddled up in your favorite chair. It also makes a great gift!

Prosilio is available at Amazon or Barnes and Noble on-line as a soft or hard cover or as a downloadable e-book for Nook or Kindle. Go to: <http://amazon.com> or <http://barnesandnoble.com> and type in *Prosilio* in the search to order your copy of *Prosilio*



Women tended to dress up for dinner, but men seem to think that a shirt with sleeves approached formal wear. I think the unwritten rule is that formal dinner wear is a shirt that does not have a blatant logo, billboard letters, or sport's team design. There was not a tie to be seen. Most women look like they are ready for the limo to take them to the Emerald Ball while men look like they are hurrying out to bring out the trash. In fact, I doubt Aruba has seen a pair of socks in a decade. Call me old fashioned, but I remember going to Thompson's Clam House on Cape Cod and having the men required to wear a jacket and tie.

What a shock to arrive at Newark Airport with snow and ice and freezing temperatures to greet our tanned and warmed skin. I have sadly traded my tankini for a scarf and mittens. It is time to dig out my ugly Christmas sweater and knee socks and let Aruba fade into a delightful memory.

To Read or Not to Read... a Graphic Novel?...

By Lisa Carroll

GRAHAMSVILLE-To be or not to be...reading a graphic novel? While certainly-or probably-not what Shakespeare had in mind when he penned that particular question, it's one that we at the DPL encounter all the time, especially on the children's floor.

So, to fully understand the question, we have to look at what a graphic novel is. By definition, a graphic novel is a book-length narrative that tells a complete story through sequential art, using a combination of illustration and text. In layman's terms, it's very much like a traditional comic book, in the sense of story line, plot, characters and beautiful art work; however, most comic books are like magazines in that there are issues published in a timely fashion to continue the story while a graphic novel is more like a traditional book, in that it follows a complete storyline, from start to end.

And, if we wanted to literarily geek out further, the term graphic novel is a publishing format, not a genre, so it includes all the typically genres-or categories-of literary works; such as: fiction, non-fiction, biography, etc.

Here's the sticky bit...there are a lot of naysayers who claim that a child (or anyone really) reading a graphic novel isn't really reading, and continues their argument, adding that graphic novels, because of their very nature, limit vocabulary and exposure to complex sentence structure and stifle imagination because an artist has already depicted the imagery. There is also a perception that graphic novels are the junk food equivalent in the literary world. Throw in a healthy historical stigma, and people get nervous.

But, as we all know, any good argument has counter claims. In a beautifully written article titled, "The Benefits of Graphic Novels: Why They Count as Reading," published in July 2024 by United Through Reading, the myriads of benefits of reading graphic novels are outstanding...and include: enhancing comprehension and vocabulary, engaging reluctant readers, exposure to diverse cultures and emotional engagement, develops critical thinking and increases visual literacy, supports ESL learners, and showcases artistic styles for budding artists and writers.

Now, as far as I think most people are concerned, a book is a book and a child reading something is better than nothing. I'd also like to venture that just like a complete healthy diet pulls from all the food groups, graphic novels should be but one facet of a person's overall reading repertoire.

And all of this is to say...we have a growing, glowing collection of teen and children's graphic novels. We have even moved things around in both the teen room and upstairs to accommodate the incoming books. They are beautifully illustrated, full of color and spark, and sure to grab the attention of a child (maybe even one that has to get an English assignment done over winter break). We just got in classics, like *Anne of Green Gables* and a really cool one on how to fix cars. In the teen room, we just received a bunch of brand-

new contemporary fiction novels with diverse characters and storylines, perfect reading for some down time during break. So, come in and check them out!

In other news,

Our Sounds of the Season holiday program featuring Shane Rennison was spectacular. Thank you to all who came out to share in the magic of the evening and a huge thank you to Shane for bringing his amazing musical talents to the library. It was the perfect wrap up to our holiday festivities.



Shane Rennison, for
Sounds of the Season



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 "If it grows by day, have it cut & split by Knight"

Latkes & Applesauce went great as well. The children learned so much about Hanukkah and enjoyed eating the delicious latkes and the combined scent of frying potatoes and onions



drifting through the library conjured up something very nostalgic and heart-warming.

While another busy time for us has come and gone, keep an eye on our website. We'll have a lot more programming and special events come up in the new year!

Happy Holidays!



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Daniel Pierce Library Holiday Calendar

Tuesday, December 23, 2025

09:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Tech Tuesday

Type: Adults

Location: Main Level

Stop by for help with basic tech issues on your devices. Get more information.(opens in a new tab)

Wednesday, December 24, 2025

9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Studio Artists Group

Type: Adults

Location: Lower Level -
Community Room

Come paint with us!

Join this collaborative group as we create and inspire each other.

Please bring any art supplies that you plan to work with to create your piece. Adults only.

Tuesday, December 30, 2025

09:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Tech Tuesday

Type: Adults

Location: Main Level

Stop by for help with basic tech issues on your devices. Get more information.(opens in a new tab)

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Friday, January 02, 2026

01:00 PM

1st Friday Book Club

Type: Adults

Location: Upper Level - Conference Room

Join our book club each month and enjoy new reading and discussions.

Friday, February 06, 2026

01:00 PM

1st Friday Book Club

Type: Adults

Location: Upper Level - Conference Room

Join our book club each month and enjoy new reading and discussions.

The Caregiver Resource Center will continue the Caregiver Café Series into 2026

LIBERTY, NY - Who can say no to breakfast? We can't! For 2026, the Caregiver Resource Center and Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County (CCESC) are excited to announce that the Caregiver Café, geared to support seniors and caregivers throughout the year, will continue to serve free breakfast and useful resources through June 2026 on the first Monday of every month from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

The series will take place at the Extension Education Center at 64 Ferndale-Loomis Road in Liberty. Breakfast will be provided at no cost to attendees who take the opportunity to share their concerns and tips on managing stress, learn about dementia and Alzheimer's, and be provided with community resources. Additionally, speakers will be invited on occasion to share their expertise. These sessions will be facilitated by Team Leader & Caregiver Resource Center Educator, Nancy McGraw.

Participation in this series is free to all attendees! If interested in any of these opportunities, please visit <https://sullivanccce.org/events> to learn more and to register. Those with related questions can contact the CCESC office at (845) 292-6180 or sullivan@cornell.edu as well as the Caregiver Resource Center at (845) 292-6180 ext. 122 or sullivancrc@cornell.edu. Many more caregiver programs and events are to come, so stay tuned! Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County provides equal program and employment opportunities. The public can contact the office to request accommodations.



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*Caregiver
Café Support Group
Jan-June 2026*

Jan. 5th Feb. 2nd March 2nd April 6th May 4th June 1st

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION
Cornell Cooperative Extension | Sullivan County

64 Ferndale-Loomis Rd. Liberty, NY 12754
(845) 292-6180 x 122 | sullivancrc@cornell.edu



1st Monday of each month
10 am-11 am

Registration Required:
Use the QR code below or go to
<https://tinyurl.com/5n6mtpy4>



Take a break while you:

- Learn about tips for self-care
- Share caregiving strategies
- Connect with others
- Enjoy a light snack on us!

The Caregiver Resource Center is a co-partnered program between Cornell Cooperative Extension and Office for the Aging of Sullivan County and is supported by grants from the NYS Office for the Aging's Caregiver Program and the Alzheimer's Association.

<https://www.cornell.edu/sullivanccce/>

Legislature Adopts 2026 County Budget

Monticello, NY - Via a 5-3 vote today, legislators approved the 2026 Sullivan County Budget. In favor were Nadia Rajsz, Matthew McPhillips, Brian McPhillips, Catherine Scott and Luis Alvarez. Opposed were Joe Perrello, Nicholas Salomone and Terry Blosser-Bernardo. Amanda Ward was unable to attend.

The \$305,738,103 million budget comes with a 2% tax levy increase, under the State-mandated tax cap.

“This was the hardest budget I’ve ever had to work on as a legislator,” said Legislature Chair Nadia Rajsz. “In the short term, I am very pleased we were able to figure out a way to stay beneath the tax cap, but in the long term, it will be challenging.”

“This budget reflects what a responsible, collaborative government can accomplish. By working closely with my colleagues and County staff, we were able to reduce a proposed 9% tax increase to about 2%, coming in below the state tax cap and keeping affordability front and center for Sullivan County residents,” remarked District 1 Legislator Matt McPhillips. “At the same time, this budget supports living wages for County employees, strengthens public safety through our EMS fly car program and continues critical investments in roads, emergency response, and essential services. We are also delivering real value for taxpayers by bringing home a \$30 million grant to expand fiber optic broadband access across the County, with construction already underway, and by funding a Countywide aquifer study that will help our municipalities plan for future growth in a smart, data-driven way. I’m grateful to my colleagues and our County workforce for their dedication throughout this process, and I’m proud to support a budget that balances affordability today with a responsible vision for Sullivan County’s future.”

“I believe everyone involved worked very hard to provide a budget that keeps the County moving forward. We were able to stay below the tax cap; however, I believe long term, based on conditions Federally and Statewide, this is going to make things harder and will not be in the best interests of the County,” stated District 3 Legislator Brian McPhillips, who chairs the Legislature’s Management & Budget Committee.

“Our Division of Management and Budget did some top-notch work on the original proposed budget, and I believe the higher increase was necessary to run the County appropriately. That said, coming in at 2%, the remaining balance to the tax cap can be utilized in the 2027 budget, which gives us a year to project where the County will stand. In the meantime, the Legislators should remain very focused on any requests in 2026 that are not budgeted for, and I will be very reluctant to fill any additional positions or approve any non-budgeted items unless absolutely necessary.”

“My priority for this budget was to preserve vital services for the citizens of this County while also considering the concerns and feedback provided by the public,” said District 5 Legislator Cat Scott. “Still, we are facing a tough year ahead, and I will be closely guarding against spending beyond what was budgeted.”

“We worked really hard to get to this point,” remarked District 6 Legislator Luis Alvarez. “It’s a good budget, and I believe taxpayers will agree. We listened to what they were telling us.”

Highlights of the Tentative 2026 County Budget include:

- o \$15 million for road and bridgework throughout the County, approximately half of which will come from State and Federal sources
- o \$1.3 million for capital projects at SUNY Sullivan, including the installation of long-needed elevators in the Paul Gerry Fieldhouse
- o \$683,000 to create a state-of-the-art records sharing system amongst the District Attorney’s Office, the Division of Public Safety, the Sullivan County Sheriff’s Office and local police agencies
- o \$500,000 to continue the highly successful and life-changing Sullivan Promise scholarship program, paying two years of tuition at SUNY Sullivan for local high school graduates
- o \$150,000 to design a revenue-generating composting facility near the Monticello Transfer Station
- o \$100,000 for the Sullivan County Land Bank to continue rehabbing dilapidated properties
- o \$50,000 to renovate the Department of Motor Vehicles office in Monticello, including a second camera to take license pictures
- o \$50,000 to rehab sections of the growing and popular O&W Rail Trail network
- o \$30,000 for a community water testing initiative

Full details of the adopted budget will be made available at www.sullivanyny.gov (look for “Sullivan County 2026 Adopted Budget” tab in the lefthand margin).

Open Mic

Every Sunday:

DeFilippis Bakery in Monticello at 506 Broadway presents "Every Sunday - Open Mic 11AM-1PM. Dusty David Rosenberg and Lively Laura Garone have acted as Co-Masters of Ceremonies for the past nine (9) years.

Frequently, Steve Schwartz, proprietor of Steve's Music Center, located at 248 Rock Hill Drive, Rock Hill, NY shows up with his band, with Steve on lead guitar, Kenny Windheim on bass and Eric Nies on the keyboard. The group often accompanies and encourages other singers and music students. Young performers receive a cookie. Owner Angelo Foglia is the baker, and owner Camela is the cook. On the menu is oven-baked Italian bread, bagels, cannoli's, cakes and cookies with breakfast. Free Admission. Call (845) 791-4103 for further information.

Money in Your Pockets: Governor Hochul Reminds New Yorkers of Minimum Wage Increase on January 1

New York State's Minimum Wage Set To Increase to \$17.00 Per Hour in New York City, Westchester, and Long Island, and \$16.00 Per Hour for the Rest of the State

Governor Kathy Hochul has announced the state's minimum wage is set to go up again on January 1, 2026, marking the third straight year of increases. The minimum wage will rise to \$17.00 per hour in New York City, Westchester, and Long Island, while the rest of the state will see an increase to \$16.00 per hour. This adjustment of \$0.50 per hour is part of a planned series of increases, which will then be indexed to inflation starting in 2027.

"From the tip of Montauk to Niagara Falls, this increase reflects our promise to put money back in New Yorkers pockets and uplift our hard workers," Governor Hochul said. "By continuing these investments and indexing wages to inflation, we're making sure New Yorkers can keep up with rising costs by taking home more money."

As part of New York's historic agreement in 2023 between Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature, the minimum wage was also boosted by \$0.50 per hour in 2024 and 2025. Starting in 2027, the minimum wage will increase annually at a rate determined by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for the Northeast Region - the most accurate regional measure of inflation.

The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) is working to educate employers and employees about these changes. NYSDOL offers free educational seminars to help employers better understand labor laws and ensure compliance.

Employees can visit NYSDOL's Minimum Wage webpage for more information, including an interactive Minimum Wage Lookup Tool to verify their correct pay rate. <https://ux.labor.ny.gov/minimum-wage-lookup/>

If you earn the minimum wage and do not see the increase reflected in your paycheck after January 1, 2026, you can file a wage complaint online or by calling 833-910-4378. For more information about wage theft, visit the Wage Theft Hub. <https://dol.ny.gov/wage-theft-hub>

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Daniel Pierce Library

1st Friday
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The first
Friday of
every month.

All adults welcome!



HEAP's Heating Equipment Repair Program to Again Take Applications

Liberty, NY - The 2025-2026 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) will begin accepting applications for the Heating Equipment Repair & Replacement (HERR) benefit on December 11.

HERR benefits are available to assist HEAP-eligible households with the cost to repair or replace the applicant's primary heating equipment. Applicants must:

- o Be 60 years of age or older (or at least one of the documented homeowners be 60+)
- o Own and live in their home as their primary residence
- o Have their home's primary heating equipment inoperable and/or unsafe, as documented by a participating HEAP vendor
- o Apply via www.mybenefits.ny.gov or by contacting the County offices listed below

Sullivan County's HEAP Office continues to be available to answer questions and help applicants (845-807-0142, heap@sullivanny.gov). Sullivan County's Office for the Aging stands ready to assist, as well: 845-807-0241.

Applications can also be obtained from the County's community partners: Action Toward Independence, 845-794-4228, or Independent Living, 845-794-3322.

Fallsburg CSD Invites Community to Capital Project Presentation

FALLSBURG - The Fallsburg Central School District will be holding a public meeting in regards to their upcoming Capital Project Vote on Wednesday, January 7, 2026 at 6pm. The meeting will take place in the board room at the Fallsburg Junior-Senior High School.

Community members will have the opportunity to learn extensively about the proposed Capital Project plan that will be put to a vote on Tuesday, February 3, 2026 from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM. There will be a presentation and a Q&A to follow. For additional questions prior to the meeting, contact Superintendent Dr. Ivan Katz at ikatz@fallsburgcsd.net or (845) 434-6800 ext. 1215.

Statement from Governor Kathy Hochul

"The reporting coming out of the Salmon River Central School District is highly disturbing and raises serious questions regarding the safety of children at this school. As a mom, I know firsthand the trust parents place in our schools, and the teachers and administrators who work with our children. School should be a place where every child is safe, respected and supported. These allegations are alarming and entirely unacceptable and the State's independent education department must take swift action to investigate and rectify this situation."

Educators in the Salmon River Central School District have been placed on administrative leave, and the superintendent has been reassigned amid allegations that special needs students were restrained in wooden boxes at school.

In addition, the district has shifted to remote learning for Friday. "The Salmon River Central School District Board of Education has launched an investigation into the conduct of school administrators following allegations of student mistreatment in the district," the board stated.

The board said it's in response to allegations that students were restrained and secluded inside wooden boxes used as "calming stations."

Officials said a law firm is conducting the investigation. The board said it's also cooperating with the state Department of Education's probe.

After learning about the allegations, the board said it "reassigned Superintendent of Schools Dr. Stanley Harper to home duties pending the full investigation. Salmon River Director of Special Education Allen Gravell, St. Regis Mohawk School Principal Alison Benedict and elementary school teacher Karrie Haverstock were placed on administrative leave by the district until further notice."

It concluded: "Out of an abundance of caution for student and staff safety, classes at Salmon River schools shifted to remote learning for Dec. 18 and 19 to allow time for the investigation to begin."

December SLAC Meeting Cancelled

We have decided to cancel the December SLAC meeting due to it being on the day after Christmas.

Please enjoy the holiday season and we will see you next year!
Stay safe and warm!



Town of Neversink

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TRANSFER
STATION**

Holiday Hours

*Weds. *12/24**

11 am to 3 pm

*Tues. *12/31**

11 am to 3 pm

Happy Holidays!

Benjamin Cosor Elementary School Announces First Marking Period Honors

FALLSBURG - Benjamin Cosor Elementary School is excited to announce their elementary Honor Roll and Superintendent's Honor Roll recipients for the first marking period of the 2025-2026 school year. Students who made the Honor Roll list earned an overall grade-point average of 3.0-3.5, and students who made the

Superintendent's Honor Roll list earned an overall grade-point average of 3.6-4.0.

Grade 4

Honor Roll: Hannah Arroyo, Fatima Baig, Emerson Choc Choc, John Darcy, Robert Decker, Breelynn Frunzi, Ryan Frunzi, Alexis Gold, Bubacarr Kassama, Jamarkis Mack, Xavier Martinez, Livia Munger, Vincent Nipitella, Jayden Nunez Mejia, Savannah Ocasio, Ryan Patnode, Autumn Pinelli, Logan Purcell, Leonardo Sabovic, Savannah Saravia, Tida Sawo, Emerson Vallejo Lezama, Aubree Van Wolde, Vincent Velez, Sebastian Whitaker, and Madelyn Wiltsie.

Superintendent's Honor Roll: Aven Mendoza Garcia.

Grade 5

Honor Roll: Jalen Anthony, Abigail Bensimon, Abigail Call, Owen Castillo, Ancel Chavez, Aubrey Curtin, Giuliana DiCostanzo, James Geagley, Jaime Giron Paredes, Erick Hernandez Orantes, Emanuel Hilerio Calderon, Alessio Hugo Alvarez, Maydelin Jacobo Lopez, Elias Lopez, Giavanna Mack, Ashton Mahodil, Eliana Montenegro Sandoval, Zoe Murry, Gabriel Ortiz, Zoe Otero Deras, Dove Picciotti, Kenneth Reyes Sierra, Ruano Lopez Ashley, and Jacob Rubio Romero.

Superintendent's Honor Roll: Mila Anthony.

Grade 6

Honor Roll: Johan Blandon Salinas, Santiago Brito Garcia, Elijah Cruz, Samantha Darcy, Kadence Duncan, Katherine Giron Cabrera, Jacob Graham, Esther Grande Lagos, Gianna Guerrero, Hudson Healy, Ivan Hernandez Cortes, Eliza Lagos Guardado, Mason Li, Steven Loja Tenezaca, Enina Lulanaj, Bryan Maldonado Alvarado, Zoya Meer, Anthony Mora Ceron, Levi Nicanor Perez, Lincoln Oneal,

Leslie Peralta Rosa, Alayna Phitts, Jax Pillius, Jean Carlos Pineda Reyes, Mason Pomales, Ez'ra Ricketts, Daniela Rios Nunez, Taylor Simms, Sydney Johnson, and Queenie Wang.

Superintendent's Honor Roll: Mila Arroyo, Jacob Boynton Torres, Amore Brown, Giada Evangelista, Jax Frunzi, Ravyn Henry, Jase Hermann, Josiah Hinton, Jackson Hockenberry, Brianna Johnson, Muhammed Kassama, Braylee Maitland, Elizabeth McManus, Skyla Restrepo, Madax Simpson, Mirey'ah Steele, and Elijah Torres.

Child Care Providers Needed

If you have considered working with or teaching young children, there is no better time to start! Sullivan County needs childcare throughout the county!

According to The U.S. Census Bureau, the population estimate as of July 1, 2023, is 79,920 people in Sullivan County. 6.1% of the county's population are children under the age of 5 (US Census Bureau, 2010). Making the under 5 population in Sullivan County, 4795 children. The current number of infant / toddler childcare spots available in Sullivan County is 1129. The bottom line is Sullivan County children and current providers NEED your assistance as childcare is filled with waiting lists.

Consider working from home and teaching children. You can run your own small business from home while contributing to and supporting the working families in Sullivan County!

If you're worried about start-up cost, we may be able to assist in supply costs through our Infant/Toddler program. Most training courses through our agency are FREE for Sullivan County providers!!! Please contact the Sullivan County Child Care Council for step-by-step assistance with the application process, business aspect of your program, as well as the programs and resources available when your program is established.

The Sullivan County Child Care Council, Inc. has determined an immediate need for Infant and Toddler childcare based on our referral services:

- o County wide - of 44 inquiries 31 were for Infant and Toddler care
- o Requests for Infant and Toddler care through our agency have been made mainly for Fallsburg, Liberty and Monticello
- o Most of our providers have no infant or toddler spots available

For more information please visit our website: [scchildcare.com](https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/becomeaprovider.asp), The Office of Children and Family Services at

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/becomeaprovider.asp>

or give our office a call at (845) 292-7166.



Happy Holidays!

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December 24 - 27

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on December 31

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Mass Times

SUNDAY EUCHARIST

5:00 PM Saturday Evening
7:30 AM Sunday Morning
10:00 AM Sunday Morning
(Latin) 11:30 AM Sunday Morning*
(Spanish) 1:00 PM Sunday Afternoon
*Sung Mass 2nd and 4th Sundays

WEEKDAY EUCHARIST

8:00 AM Monday through Friday
9:00 AM Saturday

HOLY DAY EUCHARIST

Schedule will be listed in the bulletin
<https://smsaparish.org/bulletins>

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Pastor Harriet Wilkin
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Claryville Road
Claryville, NY 12725
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Holy Days 5:30 pm

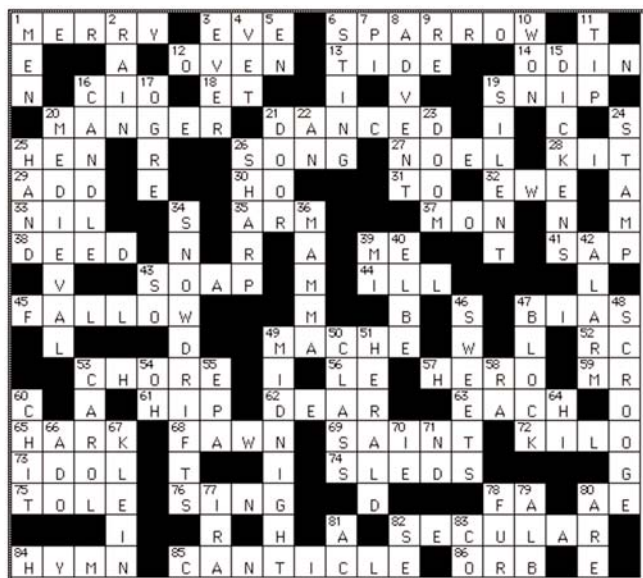
Penance 9:00 am, 2nd Sunday of the month
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Ans to last week's Crossword

SUUJI WA TANSU NI KAGIRU
answer

2	1	5	6	9	7	4	8	3
8	7	4	3	2	5	6	1	9
3	9	6	8	1	4	2	7	5
4	2	9	5	3	8	7	6	1
1	5	8	9	7	6	3	4	2
7	6	3	1	4	2	9	5	8
6	8	7	2	5	3	1	9	4
9	4	2	7	8	1	5	3	6
5	3	1	4	6	9	8	2	7

To learn more about
Neurofibromatosis Type 1 (NF1)
or to make a donation
please go to:

<https://www.nfxdetroit.org/>

NFX drives bold, high-impact research to discover and develop targeted treatments for **neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1)**. NFX advances groundbreaking research that will bring us closer to ending neurofibromatosis.

Thank you



Sundown
United Methodist Church
Covered Dish Supper
will resume in the Spring.
Date of next Supper
will be announced.

Wishing you all a very
Joyous Christmas
and a
Happy & Healthy New Year!

\$17.5 BILLION in Lost Money

Every day New York State returns \$1.5 million to those who file claims here. Is any yours? To find out, go to:

<https://osc.state.ny.us/ouf> or <https://ouf.osc.state.ny.us/ouf>

Many have checked, and sure enough after following the directions and filing a claim, have received a check from the NYS Comptroller's Office. It only takes a few minutes to find

Temple Sholom Fundraiser Cruise to Nassau

Leave January 11 and return to Miami on January 18, 2026. Single cabin -\$2155; Couples-pay between \$3275 and \$4463 for a double balcony cabin with drinks and WiFi included. The higher price includes a dedicated restaurant and a cruise long pass to the spa for two. A \$500 deposit is refundable. Each cabin will receive \$100 in on-board credit.

For further information, contact Barry Gleen at
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VETERANS always **Free** search of the Archives for family or history of Sullivan County
at the **Sullivan County Museum**, 265 Main St., Hurleyville, NY.
For information call 845-434-8044.

LOCAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 12/24/2025 - **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** Claryville Reformed Church-
946 Claryville Rd, Claryville NY- 5 PM
- 12/24/2025 - **Christmas Eve Mass** - Immaculate Conception Church - 4:30 pm
St. Rt. 42, Woodbourne, NY 12788
- 12/25/2025 - **Christmas Day Mass** - Immaculate Conception Church - 10:00 am
St. Rt. 42, Woodbourne, NY 12788
- 1/1/2026 - **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God-** Immaculate Conception Church - 10:00 am
St. Rt. 42, Woodbourne, NY 12788

TOWN OF OLIVE MEETINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Unless otherwise noted, all **Town Board meetings** are held at the Town Meeting Hall, Bostock Road, Shokan at **7:00 pm.** Town Board Meetings are the **second Tuesday of each month** with the **audit/workshop meetings** being held the **Monday preceding the second Tuesday.**

Town of Olive Planning Board meets the **first and third Tuesdays of each month.** Meetings start at 7:30 PM at the Town Hall on Bostock Road, Shokan, NY. You can contact the Town Building & Zoning Department to confirm a meeting date if you would like to attend at 657-2015. If there is nothing on their agenda, they will cancel meetings.

Town of Denning - <http://www.denningny.gov>
Town of Neversink - <https://townofneversink.org>

Ulster County Legislature Weekly Update for the Week Of December 22 - December 26, 2025

Legislative Committee Meetings are Livestreamed at
<https://www.youtube.com/@UlsterCountyLegislature/streams>

Monday, December 22

- o 6:30 PM - Climate Smart Committee, in the Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor, County Office Building, Kingston & Via Zoom, Meeting ID: 812 5415 3072

Tuesday, December 23

- o No Meetings

Wednesday, December 24

- o No Meetings

Thursday, December 25

- o Christmas Day - County Offices Closed

Friday, December 26

- o No Meetings

Happy Holidays Everyone !

Lizvett Noriega,
Legislative Administrative Assistant
Ulster County Legislature

To all Local
Municipalities, Civic
Organizations,
Churches, etc. -
Please send us your
**Events Calendar
for 2026**

so that we may continue to
post your meetings and events
throughout the coming year.

You may email them to:

tvtownsman@yahoo.com

or Mail them to:

The Townsman

PO Box 232,

Grahamsville, NY 12740

**Have a
Merry Christmas!**



Happy Belly is popping up at the market for a one-time-only winter appearance, and you won't want to miss it! Their baked goods are seriously delicious-all gluten-free and vegan-with favorites like hearty seed bread, crave-worthy donuts, and irresistible bars and cookies. This is your only chance to grab these treats this winter, so come early and stock up!

VanRoy's Caribbean Grill joins us every market this winter so bring your appetite and the whole family! What could be better than a hot lunch or dinner from VanRoy's on a cold winter day?! (Vegan & Vegetarian options available)

We're proud to participate in SNAP, and the free FreshConnect Emergency Program to support shoppers

experiencing food insecurity. (Distributed at the front desk on market days.)

You'll also find all of our other wonderful vendors-both familiar favorites and exciting new faces-filling the market with great food and local goods. There's something for everyone, so be sure to explore it all.

Woodstock Farm Festival is located at:

Woodstock Community Center

56 Rock City Road

For a full Vendor List for the Winter Season go to:

<https://www.woodstockfarmfestival.org/vendors>



Tri-Valley and Nearby Neighbors

Your Facebook hub for local news, history, environmental & development trends, and current events. No politics. No malarkey. Just good people, and good ideas. Join us to share, learn, and grow together!

DiNapoli: New York Can Do More to Enhance Strategies to Lower Suicide Rate

Counties across New York aren't getting the timely data they need to help them prevent suicides, according to an audit released today by State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli. While the Office of Mental Health (OMH) has implemented or partially implemented most of the recommendations from the state's Suicide Prevention Task Force, auditors found that gaps in oversight and data-sharing have left the state unable to measure whether these efforts are reducing suicide deaths, which have not declined in recent years.

"Every life lost to suicide is a devastating tragedy for families and communities," DiNapoli said. "The Office of Mental Health could improve efforts to implement the recommendations made by the New York State Suicide Prevention Task Force to ensure timely and accurate data is shared with counties. With stronger monitoring and coordination, New York can save lives and better protect people in crisis."

The audit was requested by New York City Council Member Erik Bottcher, who has advocated for LGBTQ+ mental health and suicide prevention and championed legislation to expand mental health resources.

DiNapoli went on to state, "I thank Council Member Erik Bottcher for requesting that my office examines this serious issue. Erik Bottcher has been a leader in advocating for strategies to prevent suicides, especially among vulnerable communities. The Council Member's sponsorship of Local Law 35, which requires mental health professionals in Department of Homeless Services' shelters, serving families with children, has made a positive impact for people in New York City."

"Suicide prevention depends on timely, accurate data and strong coordination across every level of government," Bottcher said. "As a survivor myself, I know how much it matters when systems work and how devastating it is when they fail. Comptroller Tom DiNapoli has shown extraordinary leadership by bringing rigor, transparency, and moral urgency to this issue year after year. His audits have not only identified gaps in our systems, they have forced government at every level to confront hard truths and do better. Once again, the Comptroller is performing a vital public service by ensuring that mental health and suicide prevention remain matters of accountability, not abstraction. This report makes clear that

while progress has been made, too many counties and communities are still operating without the information they need to save lives. We owe it to New Yorkers, especially those most vulnerable, to act decisively on the Comptroller's findings, close these gaps, and ensure our prevention strategies are guided by real, usable data."

The task force was created in 2017 and brings together experts, state agencies and community partners to recommend strategies for reducing suicide. OMH was charged with guiding the implementation of its recommendations and ensuring counties had access to up-to-date data. The audit was conducted from July 2023 to July 2025 to review OMH's progress.

Progress Made, But Gaps Remain

Auditors found OMH had implemented or partially implemented 46 of 51 recommendations reviewed. However, shortcomings remain in how progress is tracked, data is shared and results are documented. OMH has also not set clear goals or measurements to determine if the task force's recommendations are reducing suicides. As a result, OMH and counties don't know if programs like school-based trainings or hospital initiatives to improve suicide care are working or need to be changed.

Important Data Delayed

Most counties (80%) reported they did not have access to timely data on suicide-related hospitalizations, and 66% reported they did not have access to timely crisis hotline call data. While the Department of Health (DOH) collects this information, auditors found OMH did not establish data sharing agreements to provide direction for statewide, regional and local efforts. Local officials often said they waited months or years for critical data, preventing them from identifying important trends that could help save lives.

Missing Details to Identify At-Risk Populations

Key demographic data, such as race, ethnicity, veteran status and sexual orientation or gender identity, were incomplete. Without this data, counties may miss disparities and fail to target resources where they are needed most. Between 2018 and 2021, the national suicide rate increased by 26% among Native Americans, 19% among Blacks, and 7% among Hispanics, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In New York, this data is not consistently tracked. Auditors determined the state needs to prioritize collecting and reporting key demographic data to better inform prevention strategies for those most at risk. OMH acknowledged the gaps identified in the audit and said it will use this data once DOH makes it more readily available. Recordkeeping (Contd. PG. 27)

DiNapoli: New York Can Do More to Enhance Strategies to Lower Suicide Rate

(From Pg. 26) OMH has not kept full records of task force meetings. These records are meant for task force members, OMH leadership and partner agencies to track what was decided, what actions were assigned and what progress was made. Without minutes or documentation, there is no accountability or institutional memory, making it harder for agencies to follow through, adjust strategies or learn from past decisions, especially during emergencies like the pandemic when quick, coordinated action was needed. Recommendations

Auditors recommended OMH develop and implement practices to monitor, evaluate and document efforts to implement task force and/or other specified recommendations for suicide prevention activities, and develop practices to improve accuracy and completeness of core suicide surveillance data and information sharing.

In its response, OMH generally agreed with the findings and said it will issue a new State Suicide Prevention Strategy this fall. A full list of the recommendations reviewed by auditors is available in the exhibit at the end of the audit.

Audit

Implementation of Suicide Prevention Task Force Recommendations

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sga-2026-23s37.pdf>

Gillibrand Introduces Legislation to Better Protect Consumers and Crack Down on Abusive Practices in the Buy Now, Pay Later Industry

Legislation follows record Buy Now, Pay Later spending during this year's Black Friday-to-Cyber Monday shopping period, which surpassed \$1 billion

Washington, D.C. - This holiday season, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) is leading the charge to protect consumers from abusive practices in the Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) industry.

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25 Darbee Lane, Liberty



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Senators Gillibrand, Jack Reed (D-RI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) introduced commonsense legislation that would make key updates to the Truth in Lending Act (TILA) and extend many key consumer protections for traditional credit cards to “pay-in-four” BNPL loans. Representative Deborah Ross (D-NC-02) introduced companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

As shopping gets more convenient for consumers online and on their phones, BNPL loans have continued on a path of explosive growth. While BNPL allows consumers wary of credit cards to split up their purchases over time, it is crucial to ensure that the rulebook for BNPL products keeps pace with how they have become embedded in the shopping experience for many consumers-especially younger borrowers.

The Buy Now, Pay Later Protection Act would update TILA so that when BNPL functions like a credit card, it carries the same core protections: commonsense parity for consumers and a level playing field for responsible providers.

BNPL products have surged in popularity as an easy, convenient way to split purchases into interest-free installments at the click of a button. If they are well-designed, transparent, accountable, and supervised, BNPL products can legitimately serve an important role in meeting the needs of consumers who may be wary of credit cards. (Contd. Pg. 28)

Gillibrand Introduces Legislation to Better Protect Consumers and Crack Down on Abusive Practices in the Buy Now, Pay Later Industry

(From Pg. 27) As costs rise and usage of BNPL products increases across the nation, basic protections are needed to prevent predatory practices like hidden fees, failure to provide timely refunds, and pushing consumers to rack up unsustainable debt. These protections—which currently exist for credit cards—include standardized periodic statements, clear dispute and refund rights, and consistent billing-error procedures. Existing laws were not drafted with BNPL products in mind, resulting in gaps and uncertainty for BNPL users.

“As prices continue to skyrocket, Buy Now, Pay Later options can be a helpful tool for families, especially during the holiday season. But as these loans have become more popular, we’ve seen predatory companies exploit a lack of regulation by charging hidden fees and trapping families into paying more than they bargained for,” said Senator Gillibrand. “Our legislation will protect consumers, establish clear rules of the road, shine a light on the true cost of these products, and strengthen the rights of New Yorkers and families across the country.”

“Responsible Buy Now, Pay Later options can be helpful to consumers. As they grow in popularity, we must take proactive steps to prevent unsuspecting risks to consumers,” said Senator Reed. “The Buy Now, Pay Later Protection Act will set up real guardrails to better protect consumers and ensure that fees and terms are transparent and easy to understand.”

“At a time when prices are rising, Buy Now, Pay Later is a useful tool for many households, especially around the holidays. Unfortunately, these services are increasingly engaging in predatory practices, charging hidden fees and locking working Americans into inescapable cycles of debt,” said Congresswoman Deborah Ross. “Congress needs to put consumers first. That’s why we’re introducing the Buy Now, Pay Later Protection Act, which will ensure consumers have the options and information they need to make informed decisions.”

Key provisions of the bill include:

- o Disclosures: Clear information on due dates, fees, and information on how consumers can dispute charges.
- o Right to Periodic Statements: BNPL providers must issue periodic billing statements, similar to credit cards, so consumers can track their spending and balances.
- o Chargeback Rights: When customers are the victims of payment fraud or deceptive practices, they have the right to seek a chargeback.
- o Billing Error Resolution: Provides timelines and procedures for investigating billing disputes and restricts adverse credit reporting or collection on transactions under active dispute.
- o No Surprise Fees: Providers can’t jack up interest, fees, or other charges on an existing BNPL balance midway through repayment and can only apply fees that were disclosed up front.
- o Supervision: Provides the CFPB with authority to super-

vise BNPL lenders to spot violations before they spiral out of control.

This legislation is endorsed by the National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients), Americans for Financial Reform, and the Consumer Federation of America.

The full text of the legislation can be found here.

https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/buy_now_pay_later_protection_act-2.pdf

Governor Hochul Signs Legislation to Improve NY’s Sexual Offense Evidence Tracking System

Governor Kathy Hochul today signed legislation to include hospitals in the sexual offense evidence kit tracking process and prescribe a timeframe within which police departments and sheriffs’ offices must retrieve sexual offense evidence collection kits from hospitals and deliver them to a forensic laboratory for testing. Incorporating these protocols into the law establishes clear responsibilities for all parties involved and reduces the chances that kits are mishandled or misplaced. Governor Hochul signed the bill after an agreement with the Legislature to make additional amendments to the law in the upcoming legislative session. The additional amendments will ensure that law enforcement officials have sufficient time to collect the kits from hospitals and make other technical corrections to the law.

“Survivors of sexual assault who make the decision to report the crime should do so with the knowledge that hospitals and law enforcement agencies are working together to ensure timely processing of evidence that could hold their attacker accountable,” Governor Hochul said. “This new law is yet another example of the significant progress we are making in New York to advance survivor-centered and trauma-informed policies and practices.”

Governor Hochul signed legislation in 2023 establishing a Statewide Rape Kit Tracking System to give survivors of sexual assault the ability to track the location and status of their kits. Once amendments are approved in the upcoming legislative session, the law will:

- o Require law enforcement within 10 days to retrieve sexual offense evidence collection kits and other items collected by hospital personnel as long as the survivor has consented to release the evidence to law enforcement.
- o Require hospital personnel collecting evidence to record in the electronic tracking system and notify the appropriate law enforcement agency within 48 hours of such collection.

The State Division of Criminal Justice Services is overseeing the development and implementation of the tracking system, which is slated to be operational next spring. Survivors make the decision whether to consent to evidence collection, report the crime and release evidence to law enforcement for investigation. If survivors choose not to submit kits to law enforcement, the kits are stored at a facility operated by the state Office of Victims Services for 20 years, as required by state law, so survivors have time to decide whether to report the crime.

Class Act Clinic at Sullivan BOCES Welcomes the Public for Salon Services

Liberty: The Class Act Clinic at the Sullivan BOCES Career & Tech Center is now open to the public, offering high-quality salon services provided by talented Cosmetology II students.

Open during the week from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., the clinic also offers select evening hours for added convenience. Community members are invited to enjoy professional services at a minimal cost while supporting students as they refine their skills in a real-world setting. Appointments can be scheduled by calling (845) 295-4171.

The Class Act Clinic is located at Sullivan BOCES' Rubin Pollack Education Center on Ferndale-Loomis Road in Liberty. The clinic provides a full range of salon services allowing students to gain hands-on experience while delivering a welcoming and pampering experience for clients.

Some of the services offered, at a minimal cost include:

Haircuts	Paraffin Treatments
Hair Straightening	Temporary Color Rinses
Deep Conditioning Treatment	Eyebrow Tweezing
Highlights	Shampoo, set & comb
Manicures	Facial Waxing
Make-up Applications	Shampoo & Blowouts
Change of Polish	Semi-Permanent Hair color
Permanent Waves	Highlights (cap or foils)

For more information on the Cosmetology Program or the other programs available through the Career & Tech Center visit us at www.scboces.org/CTE or call (845) 295-4152.

Sullivan BOCES Recognize Students of the Month

LIBERTY - Each month, students are chosen from the Alternative and Special Education programs at Sullivan BOCES to celebrate their accomplishments. As part of the recognition, their names are placed on a bulletin board in the main hallway of the Rubin Pollack Education Center for their classmates, teachers, and visitors to see. The students also attended a Principal's lunch to celebrate and honor their achievements. The following students were selected based on their academic achievements, character, attitude, respect for others, and attendance.

September

Elementary students:

Mateo Escorcias Vasquez (LCS)
Alaric Uhl (MCS)
William Ford ((PJCS))
Chelsee VanAken (FCS)
Adonis Washington (MCS)
Zabdiel Reyes Dubon (FCS)
Grayson Jones (MCS)
Oliver Aguilera Castillo (FCS)
Karissa Dinger (MCS)
Pearl Scantlebury (MCS)
Treyshaun Reynolds (MCS)

Piero Hugo Alvarez (FCS)
Daequan Robinson (MCS)
Yosef Almog (FCS)
Maddux Drafts (FCS)
Niklaus Lane (MCS)
Nyah Sehulster (PJCS)
Jaden Rodriguez-Cortes (FCS)
Digna Rodriguez-Reyes (FCS)

Secondary Students:

Emily Sheldon (RCS)
Alec Irwin (RCS)
Joshua Slater (MCS)
Zeke Oney (MCS)

Eric Simmons (RCS)
Bailey Callender (FCS)
Zaniyah McKanay-Roberts (RCS)
Hunter Matthews (TVCS)
Parker Durant Dudek (TVCS)
Makai Cruz (MCS)
Kelbin Morales (MCS)
Lucas Cox-Odell (PJCS)
Sapphire Olsen (SWCS)
Xavier Figueroa (LCS)
Albert Brown (LCS)
Carter Feeney (RCS)
Riley Schreiber (ECS)
Lester Cuttler (ECS) (Contd. Pg. 30)

Sullivan BOCES Recognize Students of the Month

(From Pg. 29)

Nilahna Pena (SWCS)
Quincy Alexander (MCS)
Aiden Anticev (ECS)
Zachary Narozny (RCS)
Travis Burk (SWCS)
Shamiek Fletcher (FCS)
Madison Sullivan (SWCS)
Skye Reyes (SWCS)
Arik Sauer (FCS)
Elysabeth Doolittle (FCS)
Caragh Koskey (LCS)
Chloe McCombs (FCS)
Finnegan Wall (FCS)
Edward Damms (FCS)

October

Elementary students:

Blake Vogel (RCS)
Kaylee VanSickle (SWCS)
Evelyn Goodin (MCS)
Kaylee Tremper (FCS)
Zabdiel Reyes Dubon (FCS)
Parker Mershon (RCS)
Markus-Yasir Methany (MCS)
Wilmer Gonzales Garcia (FCS)
Penelope Wells Webber (MCS)
Ermas Santana (FCS)
Serenity Lawrence (TVCS)
Austin Shulman (LCS)
Gary Rodriguez Cortes (FCS)
Alexander Aumick (LCS)
Taylor Gaegley (FCS)
Zachary Davis (MCS)
Anthony Kaminsky (LCS)

Secondary students:

Galahad Carroll (FCS)
Paul Beluli (TVCS)
Toni Phillips (RCS)

Carlito Santiago Colon (LCS)
Malik Bush (FCS)
Schuyler Fein (ECS)
Nathan Canales (FCS)
Joshua Slater (MCS)
Shane Lopez (LCS)
Audrina Molina (LCS)
Nathan Board (MCS)
Aiden Betz Correa (TVCS)
Matilda Morcelo (MCS)
Lucas Cox ODell (PJCS)
Sapphire Olsen (SWCS)
Xavier Figueroa (LCS)
Jayda Alcantara (FCS)
Madison Soto (ECS)
Dominic Caston (FCS)
Elysabeth Doolittle (FCS)
Carol Gugliotta (RCS)
Elijah Meletiche (LCS)
Nick Rivenburg (RCS)
Nevaeh Touhey (RCS)
Aiden Lopez (MCS)
Charles Keffer (PJCS)
Quincy Alexander (MCS)
Dorian Keillor (SWCS)
Aiden Anticev (ECS)
Yadiel Toribio Torres (MCS)
Riley Shreibel (ECS)
Aiden Kirchner (RCS)
Albert Brown (LCS)
Jeremy Jackson (LCS)

November

Elementary students:

Adonis Washington (MCS)
Giovanni Oliveras (SWCS)
Peter Mele (ELLCS)
Kaylee VanSickle (SWCS)
Javier Jimenez (TVCS)

Aryan Ala (LCS)
Nathaniel Rodriguez (MCS)
Thorin Chandler (SWCS)
Gianna Huscha (SWCS)
Messiah Liles (MCS)
Nyah Sehulster (PJCS)
Ryan Vaugeois (FCS)
Omari Mitchell (MCS)
Justin Worden (SWCS)

Secondary Students:

Evan Miller (FCS)
Tiffany Mourao (FCS)
Emily Sheldon (RCS)
Hunter Matthews (TVCS)
Zaniyah McKaney-Roberts (RCS)
James Anderson (SWCS)
Schuyler Fein (ECS)
Erick Aliers-Amparo (LCS)
Castle Figueroa (LCS)
Kelbin Morales (MCS)
Makai Cruz (MCS)
Aiden Betz Correa (TVCS)
Aiden Anticev (ECS)
Malyah Merchant (MCS)
Havanah Henry (SWCS)
Aviauna Diaz Brown (MCS)
Nathaniel Buschmann (LCS)
Joshua Jackson (LCS)
Albert Brown (LCS)
Riley Schreibel (ECS)
Elizabeth Billet (LCS)
Tristyn Watson (MCS)
Travis Burk (FCS)
Madison Soto (ECS)
Bryce McElroy (ECS)
EJ Damms (FCS)
Elysabeth Doolittle (FCS)
Jayda Alcantara (FCS)
Sonale Soto (SWCS)

Sullivan BOCES Career & Technical Education Students Earn Honor Roll and High Honor Roll Recognition

LIBERTY: Sullivan BOCES proudly recognizes the outstanding academic achievements of students enrolled at the Career & Technical Education (CTE) Center who earned placement on the Honor Roll and High Honor Roll for the recent marking period.

These students demonstrated exceptional dedication, strong work ethic, and a commitment to excellence while balancing rigorous academic expectations with hands-on technical training. Sullivan BOCES CTE programs prepare students for college and careers by blending real-world skills with academic achievement, and this recognition highlights the determination and focus of these learners.

Executive Principal Jeffrey Molusky praised the students for their accomplishments, stating, "Congratulations to our Honor Roll and High Honor Roll students on this well-earned recognition. Their success reflects not only their hard work and perseverance, but also the strength of our Career & Technical Education programs and the support of our dedicated teachers and families. We are incredibly proud of their achievements."

For more information about Sullivan BOCES Career & Technical Education programs, visit www.scboces.org/CTE

High Honor Roll

Allied Health

Maliea Agapito (LCS)
Elionna Bell (Ell CSD)
Michael Carman (MCS)
Jayden Edwards (FCS)
Alivia Garcia (RCS)
Aaliyah Hyman (MCS)
Abigele Lawrence (TVCS)
Izabella Loiacono (MCS)
Sarai Miranda (LCS)
Peyton Murran (MCS)
Leah Sherwood (TVCS)

Animal Science

Alexis Boone (MCS)
Kylee Curry (LCS)
Jayden Johnson (FCS)
Audrey Krum (LCS)
Elecssia Kruszka (MCS)
William Pennell (LCS)
Emma Rausch (MCS)
KloudSophi Walsh (MCS)

Auto Technology

Mario Cadena Romero (FCS)
Holden Gillespie (ECS)
Chase Graham (TVCS)
Broden Ibarra (MCS)
Dalbert Lalane Paredes (MCS)
Stephan LaTouche (MCS)
Leon Martinez (MCS)
Jacob Tucker (RCS)

Broadcasting/Music Production

Aliya Anderson (RCS)
William Blume (TVCS)
Raedyn Boatright (MCS)
Maiya Davis (FCS)
Brody Day (RCS)
David Flores da Silva (MCS)
Dexter Hannold (TVCS)

Roy Leach (TVCS)
Molli Leibowitz (MCS)
Zachary Narozny (RCS)
Onyx Richards (TVCS)
Jose Ybanez (SWCS)

Cosmetology

Naiara Alvarado Piedy (LCS)
Amber Andrews (SWCS)
Isobel Baez (MCS)
Zanasia Banks (MCS)
Isabella Carpinone (MCS)
Jordyn Cerone (FCS)
Kylee Clark (FCS)
Nicky Cole (MCS)
Giada Donato (ECS)
Blanca Flores (FCS)
LeonJahnaeSkye Fountain (FCS)
Madelin Gonzaga Moreno (FCS)
Christina Kritikos (MCS)
Laylah Negrón (MCS)
Aniyah Ridley (MCS)
Isabella Rossi (MCS)
Tessa Tedesco (MCS)

Culinary Arts

Serenity Conklin (SWCS)
Jvaughn Dawson (MCS)
Olivia DeGraw (FCS)
Cameron Degroat (LCS)
Allisson Diaz Lopez (LCS)
Avi Friedberg (FCS)
Belen Leon Martinez (LCS)
Aiden Lopez (MCS)
Serenity Moore (LCS)
Kariana Reyes (LCS)
Kaylee Taubl (TVCS)
Mallory Tesseyman (LCS)

Early Childhood

Taliah Aguayo (RCS)
Gabriella Alger (RCS)
Kyleigh Avery (FCS)

Mackenzie Cole (RCS)
Nicole Phillips (RCS)
Skylar Wright (FCS)

Health Occupations

Katherine Alvarado Castro (FCS)
Kerice Barrett (MCS)
Jimmy Benjamin (MCS)
Alycia Besson (TVCS)
Giada DeFrank (LCS)
Ashley Diehl (SWCS)
Bella Gomez Lopez (FCS)
Dayami Hernandez Santiago (LCS)
Machi Hines (FCS)
Ava Hovis (MCS)
Arianna Kautz (SWCS)
Nayelis Martinez (FCS)
Julia Mathews (SWCS)
Raven Morin (MCS)
Kaelyn Perry (RCS)
Maria Quintanilla Bonilla (LCS)
Sara Quiroz Gomez (LCS)
Isabela Rosario (ECS)
Jennifer Rosas Dominguez (MCS)
Marbella Santiago Guzman (TVCS)
Isis Santos Berrios (FCS)
Charm Smith (MCS)
Kaylan Welton-Erdman (SWCS)
Carlos Zavala Garcia (FCS)

Innovative Design

Paul Amoroso (ECS)
Dylan Newell (SWCS)

Natural Resources

Aarik Sauer (FCS)

New Vision Health

Sheyla Anguisaca-Llanos (LCS)
Aminah Nassor (MCS)
Sydney Robinson (MCS)
Gavin Shupe (MCS)
(Contd. Pg. 32)

(From Pg. 31)

Public Safety Services

Brae Goodell (ECS)
 Eric Li (FCS)
 Johnarris Lopez-Landaverde (FCS)
 Bryanna McCann (ECS)
 Jayleen Molina (MCS)
 Carmen Montes Velasco (FCS)
 Ariona Zeininger (TVCS)

Welding

Ronald Brigman (MCS)
 Jesus Correa (MCS)
 Hudson Danzilo (LCS)
 Titus Donmoyer (TVCS)
 Coleton Faulkner (RCS)
 Trai Kaufmann (ECS)
 Lucio Ponce Vazquez (LCS)
 Joshua Ross (LCS)
 Landen Ryder (RCS)
 Gavin Storms (FCS)

Honor Roll**Allied Health**

Olivia Donmoyer (TVCS)
 Tyiese Mack (FCS)
 Jhoana Mercado (MCS)
 Tyrese Shaw (MCS)
 Jessica Stanton (MCS)

Animal Science

Jafet Aguilera Hernandez (MCS)
 Bethany Carvajal (FCS)
 Allyson Houser (LCS)
 Isabella Loucks (MCS)
 Skyla Millan (MCS)
 Uniquee Oquendo (LCS)
 Maria Patton (TVCS)
 Piper Purdy (MCS)
 Reiley Schloicka (MCS)
 Michelle Van Lowe (MCS)
 Sarah Whipple (TVCS)

Auto Technology

Alvaro Aca Hernandez (TVCS)
 Jayson Angamarca (MCS)
 Sergio Bravo-Acevedo (MCS)
 Jayden Burke (MCS)
 Oscar Carranza Pineda Jr (FCS)
 Harrison Cruz Marin (LCS)
 Christian Curry (LCS)
 Colin Dasraj (LCS)
 Frandy De La Cruz Solano (LCS)
 Miguel Esquivias (SWCS)
 David Hermann (TVCS)
 Jacob King (MCS)
 James Letohic III (LCS)
 Dannys Maradiaga Diaz (FCS)

RJ Marchesin (ECS)
 Josias Marte Bonnet (MCS)
 Timothy Martinez (TVCS)
 Gia Matullo (LCS)
 Zaid Ramirez Garcia (LCS)
 Kenji Rodriguez Santillan (MCS)
 Inner Santos Morales (FCS)
 Jaycob Torres Barreto (MCS)
 Senecere Wall-Thomas (MCS)

Broadcasting / Music Production

Lige Young (LCS)
 Lillian Betancourt (MCS)
 Robert Blake Jr (FCS)
 Eligah Brown (ELLCS)
 Travis Burk (SWCS)
 Joshua Chaney Jr (TVCS)
 Nicholas Furman (TVCS)
 Macy Miros (MCS)
 John Palacios Medrano (LCS)
 German Romero Madrid (FCS)
 Emma Sullivan (RCS)
 Jacob Van Etten (TVCS)

Construction Technology

Tyler Damms (ELLCS)
 Radek Evans Machacek (MCS)
 Thomas Macias Olarte (MCS)
 Rodrigo Zacapexpan Reyes (FCS)

Cosmetology

Ahtia Anderson (FCS)
 Irys Arias (ELLCS)
 Asia Brooks (RCS)
 Jalissa Bush (ECS)
 Dallas Curry (RCS)
 Hunnie Diaz (MCS)
 Eriany Diaz Morales (MCS)
 Sydania Foster (LCS)
 Yatareni Gutierrez Guevara (LCS)
 Jenifer Jadan Panama (LCS)
 Dynasty Jordan (MCS)
 Ayhonor Keels (MCS)
 Autum Lahoda (ECS)
 Jayla Lewis (ELLCS)
 Nydia Lopez (ELLCS)
 Yahaerah Lopez-Gonzalez (LCS)
 Vida Luna Jeronimo (LCS)
 Madilynn Maldonado (ELLCS)
 Yuritzy Martinez Ramirez (LCS)
 Chloe McCombs (FCS)
 Heysel Mejia Corcio (FCS)
 Glenda Mendoza Dominguez (FCS)
 Quelin Molina Gavilan (LCS)
 Angelia Raykoff (TVCS)
 Emily Rivera Nunez (MCS)
 Angelina Rodriguez (ELLCS)
 Mia Rodriguez (MCS)
 Adisen Santini (ECS)
 Elissa Santini (ECS)
 Esther Santos Lomeu Leite (LCS)

Kara Schloicka (MCS)
 Briana Wagner (ECS)
 Sophia Weyandt (SWCS)
 Yaritza Zaragoza Martinez (LCS)

Culinary Arts

Derick Aliers Amparo (LCS)
 Joseph Arias Jr (LCS)
 Sophia Avellino (LCS)
 Juliana Barreto (FCS)
 Cameron Ferguson Leek (ECS)
 Angelika Foley (ECS)
 Lana Gardner (RCS)
 Miranda Howard (ECS)
 Guiseppe King (FCS)
 Gustavo Leon (LCS)
 Tristin Miller (FCS)
 Savannah Pagan Van Wagner (LCS)
 Kenya Palandra (ELLCS)
 Veronica Parrilla Beach (MCS)
 Danilo Paz (LCS)
 Leonard Ramirez Guzman (SWCS)
 Jensen Rivera (LCS)
 Randy Romero-Bello (LCS)
 Christopher Samuel Jr (LCS)
 Riley Santiago (LCS)
 Santo Sarita (LCS)
 Chloe Weston (SWCS)
 Pheobe Wilson (LCS)

Early Childhood

Brooklyn Brown-Johnson (MCS)
 Naima Canady Byam (LCS)
 Melissa Coley (RCS)
 Jose Moreno Reyes (LCS)
 Amelia Morton-Curry (TVCS)
 Angele Osorio Ramirez (LCS)
 Gracie Rose (ELLCS)

Electrical Trades

Justin Abreu (ECS)
 Steven Acevedo Huerta (MCS)
 Bryan Avelar Martinez (FCS)
 Michael Avelar Martinez (FCS)
 Liam Brasington (MCS)
 Lucas Campos (TVCS)
 Jack Carman (SWCS)
 Marlow Cedillos Saravia (LCS)
 Cesar Chavarria Palacios (LCS)
 Luis Colon (ELLCS)
 Jake Cross (LCS)
 Alan Cruz (LCS)
 Marcus Curry (LCS)
 Jonathan Dias Paredes (FCS)
 Jason Dubovici (MCS)
 Adrian Estrada Ruiz (LCS)
 Anthony Hicks (RCS)
 Andre Hill (MCS)
 Phoenix Johnson (LCS)
 Benjamin Johnston (RCS)
 (Contd. Pg 33)

James Kachelriess (TVCS)
 Leo McCann (TVCS)
 Tyler Mirque (RCS)
 Austin Olmsted (FCS)
 Kollin Raymond (MCS)
 Joseph Reimer (SWCS)
 Bryan Rogerson (TVCS)
 Jansel Rosa Gonzalez (FCS)
 Kerian Sanders (TVCS)
 Logan Schmeiser (RCS)
 Tayler Schwartz (LCS)
 Mark Smith (ECS)
 Ethan Spagnoli (SWCS)
 Logan Thomas (RCS)
 Justin Yautentzi Reyes (FCS)

Health Occupations

Amberleigh Benitez (MCS)
 Shawn Bickham Jr (LCS)
 Isabella Caycho (LCS)
 Liliana Crespo (LCS)
 Anayah Falu (MCS)
 Angel Figueroa (LCS)
 Allison Frunzi (FCS)
 Yamilet Garcia Gonzalez (LCS)
 Alicia Graham (MCS)
 Hennis Gutierrez-Padilla (FCS)
 Mykala Hines (FCS)
 Cherish Jackson (MCS)
 Adryana Kozachuk (FCS)
 Cessy Lezama Rodriguez (FCS)
 Vicente Maldonado Cortes (MCS)
 Kimberlin Mejia Alvarado (LCS)
 Melanie Moreno Velasquez (LCS)
 Novalee Morton (TVCS)
 Genesis Munoz Valladares (LCS)
 Katterin Reyes Guardado (LCS)
 Nataly Reyes Pabon (FCS)
 Jimena Rodriguez (MCS)
 Isaiah Sanchez (MCS)
 Shastelyn Sandoval Melara (FCS)
 Ryleigh Schoonmaker (MCS)
 Aimee Sherwood (LCS)
 Arriana Torres Ayala (MCS)
 Sierra Velazquez (FCS)
 Ava Williams (MCS)
 Jada Young (MCS)

Innovative Design

Amari Blanchette (MCS)
 Xavier Francis (ELLCS)
 Nikolai Franco (MCS)
 Araceli Gonzalez (MCS)
 Alison Granados-Fuentes (FCS)
 Muhammad Hassan (MCS)
 Treyvon Hayden (FCS)
 Seth Jackson (MCS)

Anastacia Ladd (FCS)
 Raphael Ladd (FCS)
 Fabio Narkaj (FCS)
 Jaidon Simmons (LCS)
 Mehakdeep Singh (FCS)
 Jordan Smith (LCS)
 Lucas Wingert (SWCS)

Natural Resources

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 Jesse Bradford (ELLCS)
 Hayden Budd (ELLCS)
 Cristopher Collado (MCS)
 Ryan Conklin (ELLCS)
 Karley Davidson (TVCS)
 Brayden Davis (ELLCS)
 Joshua Diaz Rodriguez (ECS)
 Benjamin Fenescsey (RCS)
 Bryson Kinne (SWCS)
 Aiden Kirchner (RCS)
 Phillip Kolarik III (LCS)
 Dyron Laurel (ELLCS)
 Gregson McKenna (TVCS)
 Cayden McQuillan (ELLCS)
 Evan Nichols (RCS)
 Ryan Payne (TVCS)
 Anselmo Pinzon (FCS)
 Cody Randazzo (ELLCS)
 Jayden Rivers (ELLCS)
 Johnathan Rose (Moore) (TVCS)
 Aiden Scardino (SWCS)
 William Siegler (TVCS)
 Sebastian Towne (LCS)
 Juan Velez (MCS)
 Cayden Wardynski (ELLCS)
 Aiden Wherrey (LCS)

Plumbing /HVAC Technician

Jeffery Cobbs Jr (LCS)
 Marvin Lucero Ramirez (LCS)

Public Safety Services

Dakota Berlinski (TVCS)
 Anthony Boice (SWCS)
 Brooke Bull (LCS)
 Kaddyjatou Darboe (FCS)
 Colin Dole (LCS)
 Emily Garcia-Canteros (FCS)
 Angel Gonzales (FCS)
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 Jesse Gonzalez Santos (MCS)
 Jackson Hillriegel I (TVCS)
 Aaden Houck (ECS)
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 Zane Kip (LCS)
 Juan Paez Nieto (MCS)
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Chase Persten (MCS)
 Salvador Rivera (TVCS)
 Andres Rose (MCS)
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 Kierstyn Surerus (FCS)
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Welding

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 Joshua Decker Jr (LCS)
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 Braeden Fairfield (MCS)
 Carter Feeney (RCS)
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 Jack Groom (MCS)
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Governor Hochul's Op-Ed in the *Times Union*: Why I'm Supporting Medical Aid in Dying

Today, the Times Union published an op-ed by Governor Kathy Hochul outlining her support for medical aid in dying. Text of the op-ed can be viewed below:

Two and a half centuries ago, our founding fathers established a vision of a country based on limited government and broad individual rights that together protect rights of speech, worship, privacy and bodily autonomy. Proudly, New York has long led the fights championing the rights of individuals, from civil rights to labor rights, LGBTQ rights, women's rights, and reproductive rights. In the true spirit of this country, government has a responsibility to protect, not interfere, with an individual's deeply personal decisions.

This is the context in which I have considered the Medical Aid in Dying Act, a bill to allow suffering terminally ill individuals with less than six months left to live the right to medical aid to speed up the inevitable.

During this journey I listened to New Yorkers who are in the throes of pain and suffering. I heard from their children, who are watching a parent endure a slow, devastating decline. I heard stories of a parent or spouse pleading for an end to the suffering and how difficult it was to reply, "We can't in New York."

This was heartbreaking, and it hit close to home. I watched my own mom die from ALS. I watched that vicious disease steal away the strong woman who raised me as it took her ability to walk, to eat, to speak and, ultimately, to live. I am all too familiar with the pain of seeing someone you love suffer and feeling powerless to stop it.

At the same time, there are individuals of many faiths who believe that deliberately shortening one's life violates the sanctity of life. I understand and respect those views. But as I have spoken with people tormented by pain, I have come to see this as a matter of individual choice that does not have to be about shortening life but rather about shortening dying. And I do not believe that in every instance condemning someone to excruciating pain and suffering preserves the dignity and sanctity of life.

I reflected on this during a Catholic funeral Mass for a family friend where the priest spoke of the welcome home to eternal life. I was taught that God is merciful and compassionate, and so must we be. This includes permitting a merciful option to those facing the unimaginable and searching for comfort in their final months in this life.

So after careful deliberation, I decided to support legalizing medical aid in dying in very specific circumstances and with significant protections included in the

law to ensure it is not misused or broadly applied.

The bill passed by the Legislature already allowed individual doctors and religiously affiliated health facilities to decline to offer medical aid in dying. In my view, those protections were essential but not sufficient. I proposed additional guardrails that also protect family members, caregivers and doctors, and I am pleased that the bill's sponsors and legislative leaders agreed to include them in the bill I will ultimately sign once the Legislature returns to Albany and approves the amended language.

These guardrails address the concerns of some who fear that vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities or the elderly, will be pressured into a decision they would not have made on their own. Confirmation from a medical doctor that the individual truly had less than six months to live, and from a psychologist or psychiatrist that the patient is capable of making the decision and not under duress, will now be required.

There will be a mandatory five-day waiting period to provide the patient the chance to change their mind, and both a written and recorded oral request to confirm free will is present, with anyone who may benefit financially disqualified from being a witness or interpreter.

Outpatient facilities associated with religious hospitals may elect not to offer medical aid in dying, and the effective date of the bill has been extended to ensure time for regulations and training.

Finally, this is a right afforded to New Yorkers only.

These are fundamental protections to ensure vulnerable people aren't pressured, misled or left without alternatives.

The Medical Aid in Dying Act will afford terminally ill New Yorkers the right to spend their final days not under sterile hospital lights but with sunlight streaming through their bedroom window. The right to spend their final days not hearing the droning hum of hospital machines but instead the laughter of their grandkids echoing in the next room. The right to tell their family they love them and be able to hear those precious words in return.

I am grateful to the advocates, families and legislative supporters, especially bill sponsors Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Assemblymember Amy Paulin, who worked hard to make this happen in a thoughtful and responsible way. And I hope those who are disappointed by this outcome know this was a difficult decision for me personally. It was not made lightly. It was guided by a genuine and deeply held belief that government must respect the rights and will of the people it serves. I hope that those who oppose this legislation will be able to look with compassion on those who may make a choice they would not make for themselves. And isn't that, at heart, what the choice and freedom our young nation promised its people 250 years ago is all about?

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DEC Announces Summer Camp 2026 Registration Opens March 22, 2026

DEC's Camps, Centers, and Educators Engaged with More than 41,000 Youth in 2025

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Amanda Lefton today announced that online registration for DEC's 2026 Summer Camps program will open Sunday, March 22, 2026, at 1 p.m. The six weeks of environmental education-focused outdoor fun is just one of DEC's many environmental education offerings that in 2025 alone, engaged more than 41,000 youth from communities across the state.

"DEC's Summer Camp program provides a fun learning experience for kids to develop outdoor skills, identify wildlife, practice hunting and fishing, and so much more," DEC Commissioner Lefton said. "Highly trained camp staff and professionals organize inclusive camp activities and help the next generation of outdoor stewards build lifelong memories and skills. It is one of the many ways DEC's environmental education teams work each day to connect New Yorkers of all ages and abilities to our natural resources and help people take Governor Kathy Hochul's advice to Get Offline and Get Outside."

Now in its 79th year, the DEC Summer Camps program offers week-long adventures in conservation education for children ages 11-17. DEC operates four residential camps for kids: Camp Colby in Saranac Lake, Franklin County; Camp DeBruce in Livingston Manor, Sullivan County; Camp Pack Forest in Warrensburg, Warren County; and Camp Rushford in Caneadea, Allegany County.

DEC's Bureau of Environmental Education operated all four summer camps in 2025 for the first time since 2019. There were 1,108 campers and 93 campership youth (underserved children who receive camper scholarships), an increase of 29% and 342% over 2024, respectively.

For Summer 2026, Camp Rushford will offer five weeks of programing for campers aged 11 to 13, and two weeks for 14- to 17-year-olds. Camp Colby will operate four weeks of camp for 11- to 13-year-olds, and three weeks for campers aged 14 to 17. Camp DeBruce will offer five weeks for kids ages 11 to 13 and two weeks for 14- to 17-year-olds. Camp Pack Forest will host campers ages 11 to 13 for three weeks, and 14- to 17-year-olds for four weeks. Camps Colby and Pack Forest will each have one Outdoor Adventure Week. The complete schedule of camp weeks and ages is available on the Summer Camps webpage.

At camp, kids will have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of outdoor adventures and are encouraged to try new things. Activities that accommodate all may include fishing, birding, fly-tying, archery, canoeing, hiking, camping, orienteering, and hunter safety education. Each camp offers four or five weeks of Hunter Education Program courses covering riflery, bowhunter, or trapping safety and education. Class size is limited for hunter education programs and campers must sign-up during registration and complete required homework in advance. Registered campers will receive booklets prior to their session at camp.

DEC campers engage in fun, hands-on activities and outdoor exploration focused on local field, forest, and freshwater aquatic ecological principles. Campers might collect insects in a field, use nets in a stream, investigate soil composition, measure tree sizes, or practice taking field notes and writing in journals. Trips to nearby state lands might include kettle bogs, State parks, fish hatcheries, or nature museums.

Camp Pack Forest will offer an "Outdoor Adventure Week" during Week 4 (July 19 - 24) and Camp Colby will offer one during Week 6 (August 2 - 7). DEC encourages teens ages 14 to 17 who love being outdoors to sign up for this popular program that will help deepen their enjoyment and widen their horizons. During these weeks, campers will develop hands-on outdoor skills that go above and beyond the traditional camp week. In addition to our typical camp activities, campers

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may be engaged in team and trust-building activities, forestry, citizen science, conservation science, and more. Campers will be introduced to a variety of environmental fields and exciting activities including longer trips. These weeks are a great option for returning campers.

All four camps will offer seven one-week sessions (Sunday to Friday) beginning Sunday, June 28, 2026. One week of camp is \$350 per child for 2026, and includes meals, trips, and a camp t-shirt.

Parents and guardians can register youth for a week of camp, manage their account, and complete required forms and waivers through a link from the DEC Summer Camps webpage. Guardians are encouraged to register early since many weeks fill up quickly and are advised to monitor the webpage for upcoming announcements on 2026 camp forms.

In addition to inviting parents and guardians to register children to participate in the DEC environmental education Summer Camps program, sporting clubs, civic groups, and environmental organizations are encouraged to sponsor one or more children for a week at camp. Information about becoming a sponsor and managing sponsor accounts is available at Sponsoring Youth to Camp on DEC's website.

For more information, please visit the DEC's website, email EducationCamps@dec.ny.gov, visit "NYS DEC Summer Camps" on Facebook or write to DEC Camps, 3rd Floor, 625 Broadway, Albany, New York 12233-4501.

In addition to summer camps, through September 2025, DEC's environmental educators engaged over 41,000 children in youth, school, and afterschool programs from four environmental education centers and three regional offices. Activities include the upcoming "First Day Hikes" announced by Governor Kathy Hochul taking place January 1, 2026. Information about DEC's environmental education centers and programs is available on DEC's website.

DEC Encourages Anglers to Stay Vigilant This Ice Fishing Season

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Amanda Lefton today reminded ice anglers to put safety first when venturing out this season. Outdoor enthusiasts considering ice fishing should always be aware of essential safety guidelines and ensure ice is thick enough before heading out.

“Ice fishing is a great way to get outdoors, connect with nature, and make the most of the abundant winter fishing opportunities here in New York State,” said Commissioner Lefton. “As with any activity, practicing safety is key, especially when it comes to recreating on ice. With an earlier than usual start to ice fishing season, I urge anglers to practice extreme caution, especially when ice is only just forming.”

Before leaving shore, ice anglers are advised to check the thickness of ice. Four inches of solid, clear ice is usually safe for anglers accessing ice on foot. However, ice conditions can vary between waterbodies and even within the same waterbody, increasing the need to ensure adequate ice thickness. Anglers should be particularly cautious of areas with moving water and around boat docks and houses where bubblers may be installed to reduce ice from forming. Checking the ice can easily be done with an auger or “spud bar” (a long, metal tool with a chisel on one end) at various spots. Local bait and tackle shops are great resources for finding out where there is safe ice and what anglers are catching. Fishing with a group is also encouraged for added safety.

Those interested in trying ice fishing for the first time should mark the weekend of February 14-15, 2025, on their calendars. As a designated free freshwater fishing weekend, the freshwater fishing license requirement is waived during these days. Free Fishing Days are also a great opportunity for experienced anglers to introduce someone new to fishing.

For some fish species, ice fishing can be more productive than open-water fishing. Given good ice conditions, anglers normally limited to shore fishing can access an entire waterbody. Beginner ice anglers can download the Ice

Fishing Chapter (PDF) of DEC's I FISH NY Beginners Guide to Freshwater Fishing (PDF) for helpful information on how to get started.

For a more interactive option, DEC released a series of six ice fishing videos on the agency's YouTube channel. Visit the playlist to check out the brief instructional videos. Additional information, including a list of waters open to ice fishing, can be found on the DEC ice fishing webpage, and also through the Tackle Box feature in DEC's HuntFishNY app. With the app, fishing regulations, access information, fish species present, and more can be accessed from a map-based interface, all from the convenience of a smart phone.

The use of bait fish is popular when ice fishing and may be used in most, but not all, waters open to ice fishing. For more information on baitfish regulations visit DEC's website. To protect New York State's waters from invasive species and the spread of fish diseases, anglers are advised to take these critical steps when using baitfish while ice fishing:

- o Review and follow DEC baitfish regulations;
- o Ensure the use of baitfish is permitted in the waterbody by checking the special baitfish regulations by county section of the fishing regulations guide or by contacting your regional fisheries office;
- o Use only certified, disease-free bait fish purchased from a local tackle store. (Buyers must retain the receipt provided to them while in possession of the baitfish);
- o Personally collected bait fish may only be used in the same waterbody from which they were caught; and
- o Dump unused baitfish and water in an appropriate location on dry land.

DEC reminds anglers to make sure that they have a valid fishing license before heading out on the ice. Fishing licenses are valid for 365 days from the date of purchase.

An interview about ice safety with Forest Ranger Ashly Carabetta is available for download.

<https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/fs/programs/pres/s/ForestRangers/IceSafetyRangerInterview1080p.mp4>



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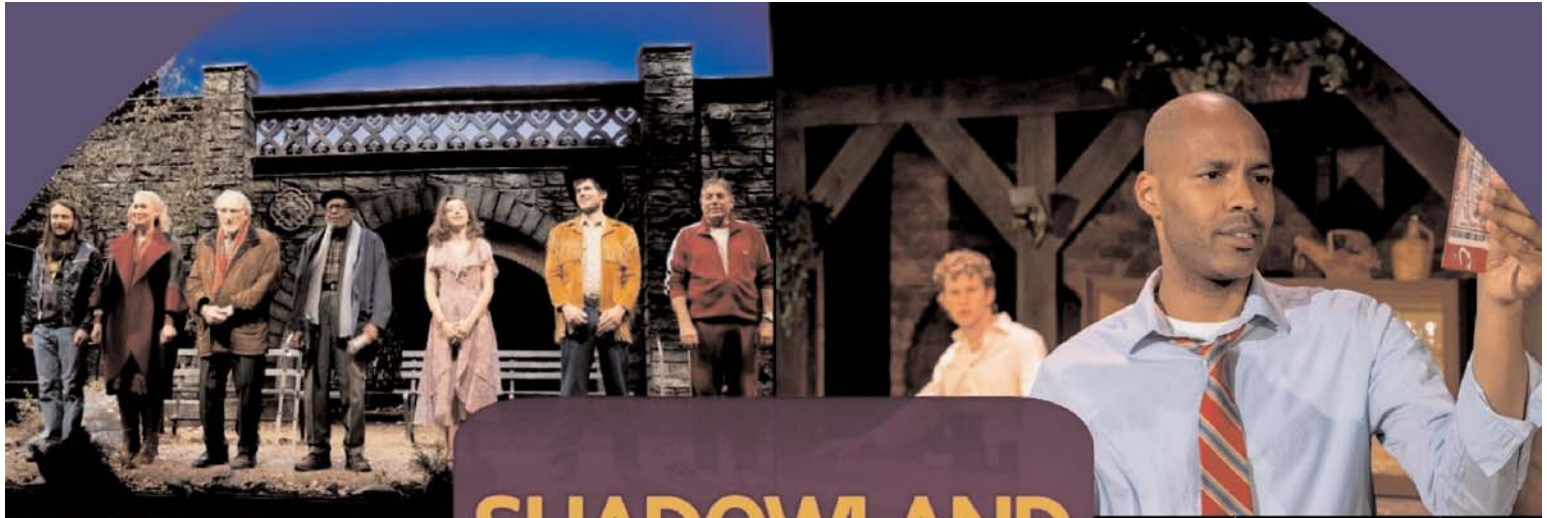
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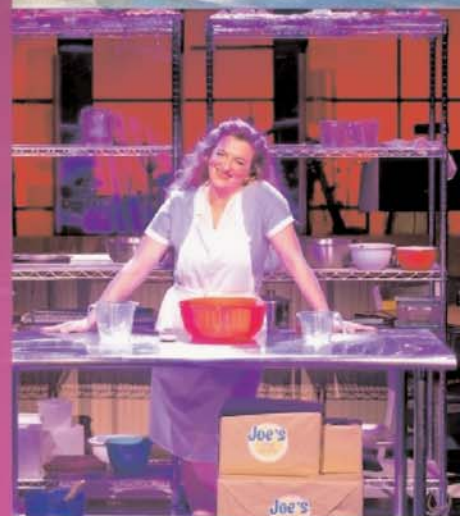
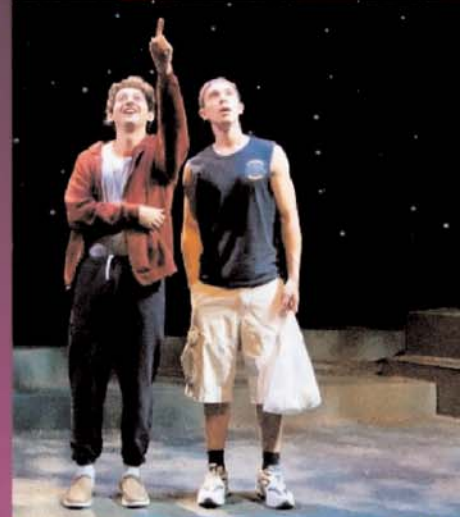
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Seats are limited*

Eligibility & Pre-Registration is required.



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Homeschooling

Calling All Homeschooling Families!
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September 23rd

4th Tuesday of each month
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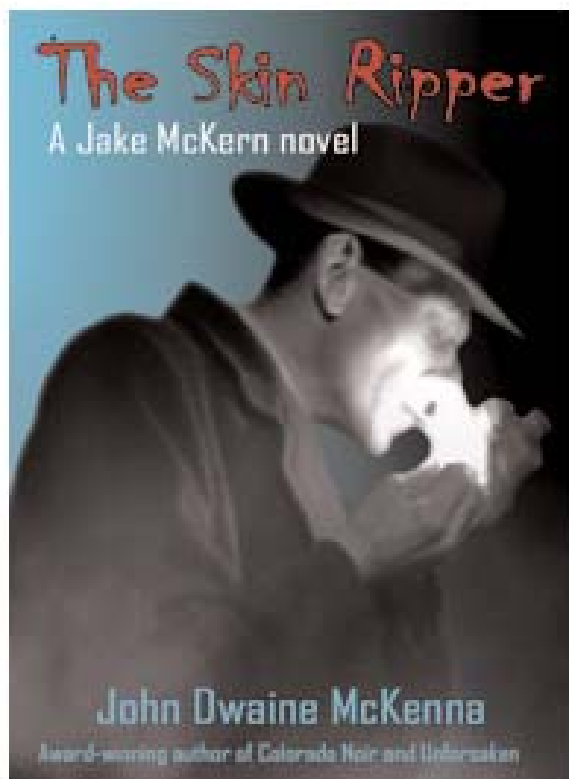
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A novel

John Dwaine McKenna

From the award-winning pen of John Dwaine McKenna comes a searing new novel five years in the making . . .



Recently promoted and just out of the hospital after a long recuperation from injuries he received while battling Lee Roy Morgan gang as they were trying to rob Colorado Commercial Bank, Colorado Springs homicide detective Jake McKern is on his first case . . . the double murder of an elderly couple who ran a small grocery on the 'Springs near west side . . . while at the same time, his personal life is crashing down around him.

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hour and his greatest adventure to date!

ISBN 978-0-9896763-7-3

325 pages

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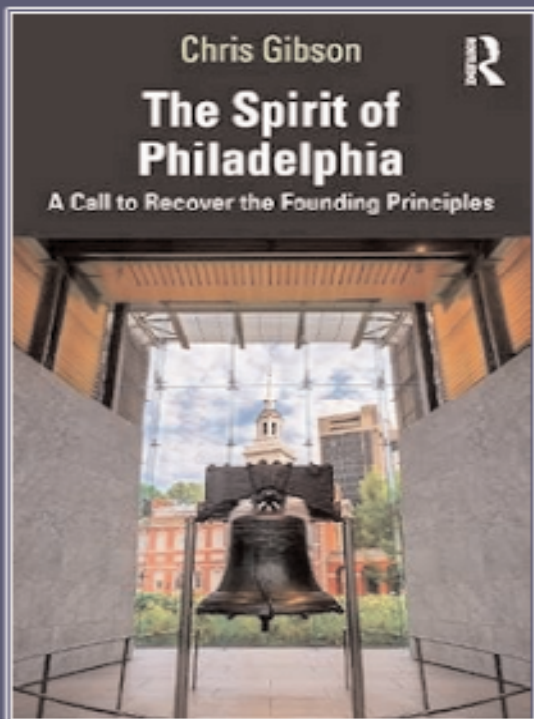
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The Spirit of Philadelphia

By Chris Gibson

Rediscover the common ground
of common sense through the
wisdom of our founding principles.

[TheSpiritofPhiladelphia.com](https://www.TheSpiritofPhiladelphia.com)

Greetings again from Kinderhook,

I hope your summer has gone well. I'm reaching back out to you to share the news that our website has been refreshed and updated. It now features four new essays on the Founding era recently published by the Hoover Institution of Stanford University as we look forward next year to celebrating our 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. One of those essays is on the significance of the Battle of Saratoga, which proved to be a turning point in the Revolutionary War. You can now read those essays for free on our website here.

<https://www.thespiritofphiladelphia.com/events>

We've also added links to some of our recent TV, radio and podcast appearances, relevant media coverage, and an updated listing of upcoming events (all of these can be found on the "media & events" page). All of the new items are marked with a green "NEW" banner. We've also updated the "what people are saying" section of the home page to include several new endorsements of the book by Americans from across the ideological spectrum.

As always, I'd welcome your thoughts and feedback on any of these items and/or your reactions to my new book. You can reach me by sending an email message from the "contact us" page on the website.

Finally, I hope you are enjoying the beautiful color as our leaves change across the region and country - it's shaping up to be a beautiful fall!

Sincerely yours,
Chris Gibson

Chris Gibson

Soldier



Scholar



Statesman



Laura Aley's new book includes stories about people and places from long ago.



The book is available at the **Shandaken Historical Museum in Pine Hill** for \$10.00. Not only will you want your own copy, but *Laurels by Laura* will make a great gift -

The Shandaken Historical Museum is located at
26 Academy Street, Pine Hill, NY 12465.
The telephone number of the museum is 845 - 254 - 4460.



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Olive Free Library

SENIOR ART GROUP

Meets at the
American Legion Hall on
Mountain Road, Shokan,
Monday 10-noon

A chatty, friendly group of seniors meet each Monday. At least monthly, we have a guest artist come for a workshop. There is no cost. We have a limited supply of watercolors, oil pastels, water soluble oil paints, paper and canvas. Brushes, too. Our crafty folk might paint or sew or knit or crochet or just hang out with friends. Our guest instructors have been Mia Fink and Sue De Sanna. Linda Schultz and Linda Champanier have been added to our possible guest instructors. MaryAnn Shultis has led us in sewing workshops to make bags and runners, and Donna Kopf has taught us quilt square patterns. We also stuff dolls for a project called MY FRIEND RAGDOLL that sends sweet dolls to Children's hospitals.

Come join us!

JOIN US FOR STRENGTH, STRETCH & BALANCE: AN 8-WEEK SERIES at The Shokan Branch!

with Kathy Carey

Fridays: 11:30am - 12:30pm
December 5 and
January 9, 16, 23, 30

\$6/class

- Muscular Strength
- Endurance & Toning
- Flexibility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Cardiovascular Health
- Bone Density
- Joint Health

Conversations With Death

First Saturdays, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Starting Saturday, January 3

Join three death doulas for Conversations with Death, a monthly circle that invites open dialogue about dying, grief, and the cycles of life.

Together, we'll open space for story, reflection, and connection, inviting curiosity, courage, and compassion into our relationship with death and dying.

Facilitated by Cory Smith, Jennifer Muir-Braunstein and Kirby Lee

INTRO TO BEEKEEPING

with Rob Overton

Saturday, January 10
10:00 am - 4:00 pm
snow date: January 17

See if beekeeping is right for you—no pressure, no sales. We'll cover the essentials for starting well in the Hudson Valley and how to keep healthy bees over the long term. Whether you're brand new or want a solid refresher, you'll leave with clear next steps and local resources. **Registration required!**

Music Café

WINTER INTERMISSION

After seven months of memorable music, we're taking a break (December-February). See you in March 2026!





I want to start by wishing you and your family my best this holiday season - representing the Hudson Valley in Congress is truly the honor of my life.

Over these past weeks, I've heard from thousands of you about how you're being impacted by increasing health insurance premiums, rising grocery prices, and harmful tariffs. Your stories and experiences are what motivate me every day to deliver for our community.

As we approach a new year, I'm looking forward to continuing to hear from you so I can best fight for a more affordable, more free, and more safe Hudson Valley for us all. Here's some of how your experiences drove my work in Washington this past week:

FIGHTING TO LOWER HEALTH CARE PREMIUMS

Families have been hit by massive cost increases across the board from day one of this Administration - especially when it comes to health care. I asked to hear from YOU, to hear about YOUR experiences, because there is so much power in our community. I want to thank every one of you who contributed your voice to my survey. We need all-hands-on-deck to fight Trump's price hikes and extend these life-saving tax credits.

The results here don't lie - on top of the immense financial pressure hardworking families in our community are already feeling, 77% of people who responded to the survey are being hit with massive increases to their health insurance bills.

More than half of those who reported their specific increase will have their bill double - and of the folks who said their premiums weren't increasing, for many of them it's because they're losing coverage altogether. 17,000 of our neighbors - seniors, veterans, and single parents - have already lost coverage. Nearly half of them are kids. That's a burden that our community simply cannot afford - and they shouldn't have to.

I'm taking every single story with me to Washington, because I'll never stop fighting for the high quality health care you deserve at a price you can afford.

PROTECTING CRITICAL HOUSING FUNDING FOR HUDSON VALLEY FAMILIES AND VETERANS

Keeping Hudson Valley kids, families, seniors and veterans in their homes isn't a partisan issue - it's a fundamental question of who we are as a country. I know the country I risked my life to defend wouldn't kick kids and veterans out of their homes.

But the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is making changes to its Continuum of Care (CoC) program that could threaten critical funding for organizations that provide supportive housing for our neighbors most in need. Nobody in our community deserves to have the rug pulled out from under them.

That's why I'm leading a push with Congressman Mike Lawler to demand that HUD distribute these funds that were appropriated by Congress promptly and reliably to keep our

neighbors in their homes.

Together, we're rallying our communities and people on the frontlines of the housing crisis with a clear, strong message: do not leave Hudson Valley families out in the cold. Provide the funding that has already been allocated by Congress. Do not make program changes at the expense of children staying warm this winter. We need everyone in the community to raise their voices and join the fight. Our Hudson Valley community cannot and will not let this stand.

DELIVERING FOR OUR HUDSON VALLEY SERVICEMEMBERS, VETERANS, & MILITARY COMMUNITIES

I fought tooth and nail to deliver for Hudson Valley families and for our country in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

I'm especially proud of the new protections I secured for Keller Army Community Hospital at West Point, where I received care myself as a cadet, to ensure that our cadets, servicemembers, and the entire West Point community have access to the absolute best health care.

I pushed to secure major wins for our troops, including a pivotal 3.8% military pay raise to provide our servicemembers and their families the pay and peace of mind they deserve, as well as record-breaking investments in quality of life and barracks improvements for cadets and servicemembers, including at West Point.

Equally important are wins for Stewart Air National Guard Base that will bolster the effort to clean up harmful forever chemicals and expand our counter-drone capabilities following last year's concerning drone activity. Read more about the wins for the Hudson Valley in this year's NDAA [here](https://patryan.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-pat-ryan-secures-troop-pay-raise-quality-life-and-healthcare). <https://patryan.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-pat-ryan-secures-troop-pay-raise-quality-life-and-healthcare>

This bill is a major win for Hudson Valley families and the country as a whole and I'm proud to have gotten it passed.

FIGHTING FOR CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

If there's one thing we can all agree on it's making sure our drinking water is clean and that our Hudson River is safe and protected. The Hudson is more than a river - it's the lifeblood and the heartbeat of our community. For far too long, big corporations have polluted and put at risk our precious River in pursuit of profits. But not anymore.

I'm proud that my "Hudson River Protection Act" was finally signed into law this week - permanently banning harmful, polluting barges from anchoring in our River.

This marks the culmination of years of effort by every single member of our Hudson Valley community. I especially want to thank my partners at Riverkeeper and Scenic Hudson for their tireless work and commitment to protecting the Hudson.

Never again will big corporations be able to turn our River into a parking lot for dangerous barges, polluting the drinking water for 100,000 of our neighbors. This victory proves that when the Hudson Valley stands up with one voice to demand change, we can accomplish anything.

It was fitting that this week, we also celebrated 51 years of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Whether it's getting rid of every lead pipe from our water systems or cleaning up toxic PFAS exposures, I'll keep spearheading efforts to ensure that every Hudson Valley family never has to worry if the water coming out of their faucet is safe to drink. (Contd. Pt. 55)

Pat Ryan (From Pg. 54)**KEEPING HUDSON VALLEY KIDS HEALTHY**

The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act takes on America's growing food and nutrition-insecurity issues with school-aged children by expanding students' access to the most popular, nutrient-rich types of milk in their school lunches.

I've been a proud cosponsor ever since I got to Congress, and was excited to help it pass the House recently.

This bill is a win-win - it supports the Hudson Valley's hard-working dairy farmers and helps promote healthy, balanced meals for our kids. I'll keep pushing for the President to sign this landmark bill into law - for our kids, for our farmers, and for our future.

WISHING YOU A HAPPY HANUKKAH

I hope this Hanukkah was filled with light, peace, and joy gathered with family, friends, and community for everyone who celebrated across the Hudson Valley.

I want to thank Rabbi Borenstein of the Chabad Mid-Hudson Valley and Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino for bringing our community together for this past Monday's Menorah Lighting. I'm grateful my team could join.

Happy Hanukkah!

HONORING A FALLEN HERO

Phoenicia Fire Commissioner Michael Ryan dedicated his life to serving and protecting Ulster County families. He tragically died in the line of duty during a rescue operation this past week.

He was a hero in every sense, also serving in the Ulster County Police Department, the Ulster County Sheriff's Office, the Kingston Police Department, and the U.S. Air Force.

I am keeping his loved ones, colleagues, and our entire Ulster community in my thoughts during this time.

We will honor his legacy always.

HEARING FROM YOU: HOW ARE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BEING IMPACTED BY GROCERY PRICES?

This holiday season, the only thing you should be focused on is making memories with your loved ones - not the bills stacking up as you prepare for times spent around the table with family.

As I work to get my Lower Grocery Prices Act passed, please tell me how you're impacted by rising food costs by taking my quick survey [here](https://iqconnect.house.gov/iqextranet/EForm.aspx?__cid=NY19PR&__fid=100057). https://iqconnect.house.gov/iqextranet/EForm.aspx?__cid=NY19PR&__fid=100057

I'll keep working to lower costs for your family and your input is critical for me to do so!

ENSURING OUR VETERANS ARE NEVER FORGOTTEN

Our veterans are heroes and Wreaths Across America ensures their bravery and sacrifices are never forgotten.

I want to give a big thank you to Mark Cozzupoli and Cindy Dates for organizing a moving Wreaths Across America Day event in New Paltz. I'm grateful that my team could join in honoring the Hudson Valley veterans we've lost.

CONDEMNING ANTISEMITISM

I was horrified to hear of the terror attack against the Jewish community and heartbreaking loss of life that transpired in Australia last weekend.

No one should fear coming together to celebrate their faith.

My heart is with all those impacted during this impossibly difficult time. We must stand together against hatred in every form wherever and whenever we see it.

BRINGING MY OFFICE TO YOU

Have you been to a CARES Van event for one-on-one assistance with federal programs this year?

This past week we held the final CARES Van events of 2025. If you need help navigating a federal program like Medicare, Social Security, VA benefits and more, but couldn't make an event, please call my team at (845) 443-2930.

Where do you want the CARES Van to visit in 2026?

REMEMBERING THE LIVES LOST AT SANDY HOOK

Last weekend, our nation was again rocked by gun violence at a school. We also marked 13 years since 26 lives were senselessly stolen by a gunman at Sandy Hook.

How can so many politicians look at these faces, send only 'thoughts & prayers,' and refuse to take ACTION to save lives?

I'm fighting to end these tragedies. And I won't stop.

HELPING YOU WITH YOUR HOLIDAY TRAVEL

Are you traveling to spend the holidays with family abroad, but having last-minute issues with your passport?

Please reach out to my team by calling (845) 443-2930. We made sure Lisa could visit her family, we're looking forward to helping you, too!

GRANTS CORNER**APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR:**

Fiscal Year 2026 Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, and Cleanup (MARC) Grants: EPA's Brownfields Program provides grants and technical assistance to communities, states, tribes and others to assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse contaminated properties. Please visit the Types of Brownfields Grant Funding for an overview of the Multipurpose, Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup Grants. EPA has pre-recorded videos to provide an overview of the FY 2026 grant submission process, Application Information Sheet, and threshold requirements. The application submission deadline is January 28, 2026. (Contd. PG. 56)

OLIVE SENIORS

When: 2nd Thursday of the month, 1-3 p.m.

Where: American Legion Hall*

What: Guest speakers covering topics like CPR, wildlife, Ashokan Reservoir, etc. & visits from local vendors like the Catskill Visitor Center and Fruition Chocolate

Shuffleboard: meets January-May every Tuesday from 10 a.m.-noon**

* 26-28 Mountain Road, Shokan, NY; handicap accessible, bathrooms on site

** follows Ontario School District calendar and is cancelled when Ontario schools cancel due to a weather event

Pat Ryan (From PG. 55) New York State Child Care Capital Construction Funding Program: This new \$100 million Child Care Capital Construction Funding Program is designed to increase the availability of quality care and expand the capacity of child care, including school age programs, across New York State by funding the construction of new child care facilities or expanding existing ones. The initiative is expected to add between 6,000 and 10,000 new seats at child care programs for New York families. The program will provide funding for design, construction, reconstruction, renovation, equipment, and other capital assets for existing or proposed not-for-profit or municipal OCFS-licensed child day care centers and OCFS-registered school-age child care programs. The facility must be intended to be used as a child care program for at least eight years and should be located in an area with a current shortage of regulated child care services. Applications will be accepted from January 12, 2026, through February 13, 2026. Awards will be announced no earlier than April 15, 2026.

2025 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): \$97.4 million in new funding is available for active transportation-related projects and programs that support the advancement of healthy lifestyles across New York State. Projects selected under this solicitation will support the Department of Transportation's commitment to community-centered transportation by providing safe, reliable and resilient transportation systems. Selected projects, which include multi-use paths for pedestrians and bicyclists, will also connect communities, enhance the quality of life, protect the environment and support the economic well-being of New York State. TAP funding is made available to the State through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and administered by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). The application deadline is March 12, 2026. The application, program guidance and workshop schedules can be found here. <https://www.dot.ny.gov/tap-cmaq>

Rediscovering Our Revolutionary Tradition : The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Division of Preservation and Access is accepting applications for the Rediscovering Our Revolutionary Tradition program. The purpose of this program is to preserve and improve access to primary source materials that document the history of America's founding era and of American government in federal, state, and local contexts. Supported activities include conservation treatment and rehousing, digitization and description, transcription and translation, and updating existing digital resources to ensure long-term public availability. This program is offered in honor of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. The application deadline is January 15, 2026

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) FY26 Conservation Program Funding: NRCS in New York is announcing that the fiscal year FY26 sign-up deadline for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and EQIP Initiatives including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), Working Lands for Wildlife Golden-Winged Warbler (WLFW) and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) is Oct. 24, 2025

While applications are accepted on a continuous basis, NRCS utilizes application cutoff periods to assess and rank applications based on their potential conservation impact. All applications need to be received by Oct. 24, 2025, to be considered for this first round of funding for FY 2026. Applications received after this date will be held and considered for subsequent rounds.

New York State Council on the Arts FY2026 Capital Projects Fund: Up to \$80 million in capital funding is now available to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts Capital Projects Fund. The Fund has three grant categories: Small and Midsized Capital Improvement Grants, Large Capital

Improvement Grants, and Capital Design Grants for Arts and Culture. The deadline is January 13, 2026, at 5PM.

Brownfields 101 with the EPA: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 2 Office recorded its "Brownfields 101" briefing for New York communities to provide an overview of the EPA's Brownfield Program. To view the recording, please contact Natalie Lincoln at natalie.lincoln@mail.house.gov or (518) 465-0700. Sign up for the EPA's Technical Assistance and Funding Resource Guide here!

Each month Hudson Valley Regional Council publishes its Grants Guide focused on federal, state, and local funding opportunities related to economic development, water, clean energy, resilience, and sustainability. Each grant listing features the deadline, eligibility, and a short description including the amounts municipalities are eligible to apply for and any required match. To view past Grants Guides, click here. <https://hudsonvalleyregionalcouncil.org/newsletter-2/newsletter-archive/>

To subscribe to the grants guide, please email epeck@hudsonvalleyrc.org.

New York School Bus Incentive Program (NYSBIP): Governor Kathy Hochul announced \$200 million in new funding for zero-emission school buses through the Environmental Bond Act of 2022. Distributed via the NYSBIP, the funds support electric bus purchases, charging infrastructure, and fleet planning to improve air quality and reduce pollution in communities across the state. The funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis with incentive amounts covering up to 100 percent of the incremental cost of a new or repowered electric school bus. This helps offset some or all of the difference in purchase price between zero-emission buses and comparable diesel or gasoline buses. All school bus fleet operators in New York State can also qualify for funding for fleet electrification plans, which provide a customized roadmap for electric bus adoption.

Weatherization Assistance Program is the largest residential energy conservation program in the country. NYS WAP assists income-eligible homeowners and some renters* in our state by reducing heating and cooling costs through energy-conservation measures, while also addressing health and safety issues in their homes. Households with incomes at or below 60% of state median income are eligible for assistance. Program services are available to both homeowners and renters, with priority given to senior citizens, families with children, and people with disabilities. If a household contains a member who receives Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) benefits or certain other forms of public assistance, the household is automatically eligible for NYS WAP services. Applications are accepted from renters, homeowners, and rental property owners. Potential program participants apply by contacting the WAP provider that serves their area.

RESOURCES:

New York Small Business Development Center (NYSBDC) - NYS Multi-Agency Small Business Resource Presentation: Watch this free session as representatives from several NYS agencies share information about resources and services available to assist small businesses. Topics include licensing, regulations, taxes, insurance, grants, training, and more.

If you want to stay up-to-date on all of that my office is doing, I encourage you to follow along on our social media channels: Facebook and Twitter .

Please remember that my office is always here to help if you have a question or need assistance. You can reach us using the contact information above and below and we will do everything we can to connect you with the resources you need.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!



Every day when I go to work, I think about my roots in West Endicott, and that guides the decisions I make. It's been one hell of a first year in Washington, but through it all I've stayed laser focused on our shared priorities: lowering costs, fighting corruption, and delivering real results for Upstate New York. I hope you'll check out the full report on everything we've accomplished this year.

Here are a few highlights from this past year:

Taking on Utility Companies to Lower Your Bills: I'm leading the fight against NYSEG and Central Hudson by banning foreign corporations from owning our utilities, and outlawing utility executives from collecting massive payouts while they raise our rates.

Lowering Costs for Working Families: From pushing for a federal ban on price gouging to sponsoring legislation to eliminate taxes on Social Security, I'm focused on keeping more money in your pocket.

Fighting Corruption in Washington: I'm leading the push to ban Members of Congress from trading stocks, implement term limits, and get corporate PAC money out of our politics so that power stays with everyday people.

Standing Up for Farmers & Rural Communities: When Washington bureaucrats tried to pull contracts from Upstate farms, I pushed back and won: every single contract owed to our local producers was restored. I won't let Washington turn its back on communities like ours ever again.

VIEW MY FULL END-OF-YEAR REPORT

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2ef88a5ca26c48eaaf560c5a3d3d1abe>

Representing the community that's given me and my family so much is truly the honor of a lifetime—I don't take it lightly. If you need help with a federal agency, or just want to share your thoughts, please don't hesitate to reach out at (607) 242-0200 or riley.house.gov. My team and I are here to serve you.



Reintroducing the Essential Caregivers Act

This week, I reintroduced the Essential Caregivers Act to ensure seniors and vulnerable patients are never again cut off from the people who care for them most. The bipartisan, bicameral legislation protects the right of residents in nursing homes and long-term care facilities to have in-person access to a designated essential caregiver, even during a declared public health emergency. This commonsense bill was shaped by the painful lessons of COVID, when emergency policies led to devastating isolation, rapid health decline, and unnecessary suffering for families across Upstate New York and the country.

Loved ones are not just visitors. They are caregivers, advocates, and lifelines. The Essential Caregivers Act makes sure compassion and dignity remain at the center of our response during any future crisis by requiring clear, uniform safety guidelines so care can continue while protecting residents and staff. Seniors and individuals with disabilities deserve humane policies that respect their rights and recognize the critical role families play in their care. This legislation is about learning from the past and ensuring no family is ever again forced to watch a loved one suffer alone.

Leading Letter to Secretary Bessent Urging the Review of Spain's Israel Boycott Laws

I led a letter this week, urging Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to formally review Spain's recent anti-Israel boycott laws and ensure U.S. law is enforced as intended. Spain has enacted sweeping restrictions that block trade with Israel and ban advertising of products from Judea and Samaria, closely mirroring the global BDS movement and placing American businesses at risk of being pressured into discriminatory foreign policies. Under Section 999 of the Internal Revenue Code, the Treasury Department is required to review foreign governments that promote or participate in unsanctioned boycotts against Israel. This law exists to protect U.S. companies from coercion and to provide transparency when economic discrimination targets one of our closest allies. The United States cannot turn a blind eye as foreign governments attempt to economically isolate Israel or undermine American businesses abroad.

Joining Real America's Voice to Discuss Trump Tax Cuts
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJzbGEacYow>

During an appearance on Real America's Voice with John Solomon, the discussion centered on how the Trump Tax Cuts are setting the stage for a stronger economy in the new year while exposing the damage caused by years of Democrat mismanagement. Democrats have been attacking (Contd. Pg. 58)

This Week with Claudia (From Pg. 57)

Narco-terrorists operating throughout South America and the Caribbean threaten American lives every day by trafficking fentanyl and other dangerous and illicit substances. Whereas President Biden allowed these terrorists to operate with impunity, President Trump is taking the threat they pose seriously. This resolution would recklessly prohibit all military action against foreign terrorist organizations operating in the Western Hemisphere, which would completely hamstring the military's ability to conduct counterterrorism operations. Many legal scholars have also raised concerns about the constitutionality of the War Powers Act and argued it infringes on the President's role as Commander in Chief, and I agree with these concerns. As such, I voted against this resolution to keep our nation safe from narcoterrorism and due to the constitutional concerns. This resolution failed to pass the House by a vote of 210-216.

I voted "No" on H.Con.Res. 64, To direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities within or against Venezuela that have not been authorized by Congress. This resolution would require the President to remove U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities with Venezuela under the War Powers Resolution. Venezuela has long been a hub for illicit activity, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, and oil trafficking which all threaten our national security. President Trump has taken serious action against the illicit smuggling from Venezuela, and this War Powers Resolution would force the President to cease these efforts and allow Venezuela to continue threatening American national security. Many legal scholars argue that the War Powers Act is unconstitutional and infringes on the President's role as Commander in Chief, and I share that view. As such, I voted against this resolution to keep our nation safe and due to the constitutional concerns. This bill failed to pass the House by a vote of 211-213.

I voted "Yes" on H.R. 6703, the Lower Health Care Premiums for All Americans Act. This bill properly funds Cost-Sharing Reduction (CSR) payments to reduce premiums for ACA silver plans by 12%, saving enrollees roughly \$900 a year while cutting federal spending by over \$30 billion. It also expands affordable health insurance options for small businesses and the self-employed through Association Health Plans (AHPs), gives workers flexibility and options through CHOICE arrangements, and reins in pharmacy benefit managers to bring transparency and competition to prescription drug pricing. Crucially, it protects self-funded employer plans and stop-loss insurance from costly state mandates, preserving the tools employers use to keep health care costs down for more than 60% of covered workers. Hardworking families deserve lower premiums and more affordable coverage, not more bureaucratic waste that raises the cost of coverage. This bill passed the House by a vote of 216-211

I voted "Yes" on H.R. 3616, the Reliable Power Act. This bill requires federal agencies to evaluate how their regulations impact grid reliability before finalizing new rules, which will prevent reckless, one-size-fits-all mandates that have accelerated the shutdown of dependable baseload power. As electricity demand climbs more and

more each year, Americans should be able to rely on a stable grid to power their homes and businesses. We must ensure that federal rulemaking supports energy reliability instead of sabotaging it. The Reliable Power Act puts commonsense guardrails in place, so families aren't faced with skyrocketing energy bills due to bureaucratic overreach. This bill passed the House by a vote of 225-203.

I voted "Yes" on H.R. 3492, the Protecting Children's Innocence Act. This bill would make performing gender mutilation surgeries on minors a Class C felony. For too long, we have witnessed efforts to promote radical gender ideologies and gender affirming care on children, risking lifelong physical harm with no scientific evidence supporting its use. I cosponsored and voted for this important legislation because performing these genital mutilation surgeries on our children is unconscionable, and we must hold individuals performing these dangerous surgeries on our children accountable. This bill passed by a vote of 216-211.

Thursday, December 18

I voted "Yes" on H.R. 4776, the SPEED Act. This legislation narrows the scope of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and its review procedures for major federal actions to make the review process more efficient. NEPA is a procedural law that sets guidelines for assessing and disclosing the environmental impacts of large federal actions. Initially aimed at balancing environmental protection and economic growth, it has evolved into a complex, often burdensome regulatory framework, resulting in lengthy documents, delays, and stoppage of critical projects. The SPEED Act would modernize the authorization review process, increase certainty and predictability in the permitting process, cut red tape and regulatory burdens for project sponsors, and prevent NEPA from being weaponized against critical energy and infrastructure projects. This bill passed by a vote of 221-196.

I voted "Yes" on H.R. 1366, the Mining Regulatory Clarity Act. This bill would create a new category of mill sites to ensure that operators can use federal lands, whether mineral or non-mineral in character, for activities ancillary to mining. The bill would establish the Abandoned Hardrock Mine Fund within the Treasury, and this Fund would be comprised of money collected from claim-maintenance fees from new mill site claims created under the legislation. Additionally, this bill would direct the Treasury Secretary to use those funds to conduct reclamation of abandoned hardrock mines. As President Trump and Congress work to increase domestic mineral production, ensuring clarity in mining regulations is critical to both energy and national security. This bill passed by a vote of 219-198.

I voted "Yes" on H.R. 845, the Pet and Livestock Protection Act. This bill would require the Secretary of the Interior to reissue the November 2020 Final Rule delisting the gray wolf under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Although the gray wolf population is now thriving, the existing ESA listing constrains economic and land management activities under the guise of species preservation, which could be better managed by state, local, and private stakeholders. The gray wolf has a long history of being listed and delisted under the ESA. (Contd. Pg. 59)

This Week with Claudia (From Pg.58)

Since 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued several rules designating Distinct Population Segments (DPS) of gray wolves and downlisting or delisting the populations in certain areas. Furthermore, listing the gray wolf as an endangered species prevents farmers and ranchers from protecting their livestock and pets from attacks by grey wolves. This commonsense approach to wolf management returns decision-making to states and protects livestock, pets, and rural communities while maintaining healthy ecosystems. This bill passed by a vote of 211-204.

I voted "Yes" on H.R. 498, the Do No Harm in Medicaid Act. This bill ensures that Medicaid dollars go toward real health care, not experimental treatments pushed by activist agendas. Taxpayer dollars should never be used to fund irreversible gender-transition procedures on children. Minors deserve protection, not radical procedures that cause irreversible harm that can leave lasting physical and emotional scars before they're even old enough to vote. House Republicans are taking a clear stand that we will protect kids, safeguard parents' rights, and defend the integrity of the Medicaid program. The bill passed the House by a vote of 215-201.



Welcome to Kirsten's New York Minute!

Here's what she's been up to this week:

1. Fighting to lower costs this holiday season

Some of the most popular holiday gifts are 26% more expensive this year due to President Trump's tariffs, causing New York families to pinch pennies during the season of giving.

These tariffs are a lose-lose for New York families and small businesses, and Kirsten is fighting hard to get them repealed. This week, she called on President Trump and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick to end their reckless tariffs immediately in order to provide meaningful relief to American families and lower the cost of goods this holiday season.

Read more. <https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/local-businesses-adapt-to-tariff-impacts-aiming-to-keep-holiday-shopping-affordable>

2. Working to stop Social Security cuts

This week, Kirsten pressed the Trump administration on reports that the Social Security Administration (SSA) has a new plan to slash nearly 15 million in-person office visits in 2026.

This drastic plan will likely force beneficiaries to use SSA's bug-prone website or push them into never-ending customer service phone tree "doom loops"--almost certainly causing some Americans to suffer from delays in benefits or miss them all together. Seniors in New York and across the country deserve better, and Kirsten will continue leading the fight against these cuts to make sure Social Security offices remain available to the public. Read more

<https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/news/press/release/gillibrand-colleagues-press-social-security-head-on-plan-to-slash-field-office-visits/>

3. Protecting the environment and public health

Forever chemicals like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a dangerous threat to the environment and public health.

Kirsten introduced two bills to stop these chemicals from entering New York waterways and deliver justice to victims of PFAS contamination. These commonsense bills are a win for New Yorkers and the environment, and Kirsten is fighting to get them passed.

Read more. <https://www.newsday.com/long-island/politics/gillibrand-pfas-forever-chemicals-f4jszurl>

4. Securing a pay raise for American troops

This week, Congress passed the annual defense spending bill for Fiscal Year 2026.

This year's bill is a win for service members and New Yorkers. It includes many key provisions that Kirsten fought hard to pass, including a significant pay raise for troops and over \$240 million in authorizations for military installations and activities in New York.

Read more. <https://www.newsweek.com/senate-passes-901-billion-defense-bill-with-pay-raise-oversight-changes-11229557>

5. Supporting New York small businesses

Small businesses are a major economic driver in New York, employing almost half the state's workforce. However, President Trump's tariffs are hitting these businesses hard by raising costs and shrinking markets.

Kirsten visited a locally owned brewery in Syracuse to discuss the impact that price increases from tariffs are having on them and other small businesses. She is demanding that the Trump administration repeal its reckless tariffs to help New York small businesses during the holiday season.

Read more. <https://cnycentral.com/news/local/gillibrand-trump-tariffs-harm-breweries-like-talking-cursive-in-syracuse>

6. Protecting consumers

As prices continue to skyrocket, Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) options can be a helpful tool for families, especially during the holiday season. But as these loans have become more popular, predatory companies have exploited a lack of regulation by charging hidden fees and trapping families into paying more than they budgeted for.

This week, Kirsten introduced legislation to extend key consumer protections that exist for traditional credit cards to BNPL loans. This will help protect consumers, establish clear rules of the road, and shine a light on the true cost of products purchased using BNPL options.

Read more.

<https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/news/press/release/gillibrand-introduces-legislation-to-better-protect-consumers-and-crack-down-on-abusive-practices-in-the-buy-now-pay-later-industry/>

7. Helping trafficking survivors

Human trafficking is a heinous crime. Kirsten has been fighting for almost a decade to help human trafficking victims and crack down on criminals. On Thursday, Congress passed Kirsten's Trafficking Survivors Relief Act to protect these victims. The bill now heads to the president's desk, and Kirsten is encouraging President Trump to swiftly sign it into law.

Read more.

<https://www.fingerlakes1.com/2025/12/19/trafficking-survivors-bill-heads-to-white-house/>

8. Honoring Holocaust refugees

The Holocaust Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario was a place of safety and hope during one of the darkest moments in history.

This week, Kirsten led the bipartisan effort to get this site recognized in the National Park System. Her bill to establish the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park passed unanimously in the Senate and now heads to the House for consideration.

Read more. <https://www.wrvo.org/2025-12-17/oswego-museum-remembering-holocaust-refugees-takes-surprising-step-towards-becoming-a-national-park>

9. Helping New Yorkers get their green cards

A Westchester County constituent contacted Kirsten's office when he needed help with final adjudication of his employment-based green card application after over four years of compliant processing.

Kirsten's office contacted U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) on his behalf, and within one week, USCIS confirmed that the constituent's green card had been mailed to him.

Individual casework is Kirsten's top priority. If you need help with any federal agency, contact her here. <https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/help/help-for-new-yorkers/>



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JOIN US!




Join us for a peer led, mental health, lesson based virtual support group for teens ages 13-17. Together we learn about our mental health and do an activity together. This group is completely free to join, and all supplies for the activity will be sent to your home. Space is limited for each group!

Contact Rebekah at rumarbashar@asfl.org for more information.

EVERY 1ST & 3RD

WEDNESDAY

@ 6:30 PM

VOICESUNITED4CHANGE'S VIRTUAL

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

JOIN US!




Join us for a peer led virtual support group for parents of children with mental health challenges. Together we have time for conversation and an activity. This group is completely free to join, and all supplies for the activity will be sent to your home. Space is limited for each group!

Contact Anne-Marie at afreitas@asfl.org for more information.

EVERY 2ND & 4TH

WEDNESDAY

@ 6:30 PM

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Are you a parent struggling with your family?
Are you a teen having problems at home?

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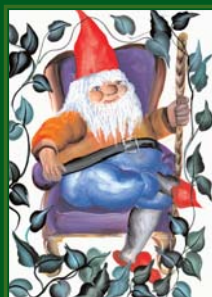


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THE BISHOP'S WIFE

(1946 / Rated - PG 13 / 2 hr. 10 min. / CC)

The Bishop's Wife is a 1947 Samuel Goldwyn romantic comedy feature film directed by Henry

Koster and starring Cary Grant, Loretta Young, and David Niven. The plot is about an angel who helps a bishop with his problems creating a hilarious romp through the pitfalls of religion, love, money, attraction, jealousy, and the need for opulence.

In response to Henry's prayer for guidance, the charming angel Dudley (Cary Grant) arrives to help, subtly rekindling love and joy in the Bishop's household creating a blend of humor, fantasy, and a keen sense of themes of faith and human connection make this holiday classic.

David Niven as the Bishop Henry Brougham delivers a wonderful sermon—one of my favorites—and quite possibly one of yours.

Merry Christmas!



This is the Story of an Empty Stocking

Once upon a midnight clear, there was a child's cry. A blazing star hung over a stable and wise men came with gifts. We haven't forgotten that night down through the centuries; we celebrate with stars on a Christmas trees, the sounds of bells and with gifts. But especially with gifts. You give me a book; I give you a tie. Aunt Martha always wanted an orange squeezer, and Uncle Henry could do with a new pipe. We forget nobody, adult or child. All the stockings are filled—all that is except one. And we have even forgotten to hang it up. The stocking for the child born in a manger. It's his Birthday we are celebrating. Don't ever let us forget that. Let us ask ourselves what he would wish for most, and then let us each put in his share—loving kindness, warm hearts, and the stretched out hand of tolerance—all the shining gifts that make *Peace on Earth*.

Merry Christmas!

***Knarf Odnamoc
Gnome***

Answer to last week's Trivia Question: **The U.S. Government**

This weeks' Trivia question:

Who plays the Professor in *The Bishop's Wife*?