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The Greenville PIONEER

Friday, June 18, 2021 • \$1.50

Will wolves be howling in the Catskills?

See page 5



Greenville opens skate park



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Town of Greenville opened a skate park on May 31, with the assistance of a private donation of equipment, funding from the Rotary Club of Greenville, and volunteers to clean up the old tennis court and help to install equipment.



CHRIS KARLE/GREENVILLE PIONEER

Sean Aloisi attempts the skateboard trick nicknamed "disaster" on a quarter pipe.

By Joanne E. McFadden
The Greenville Pioneer

Often, skateboarders find themselves at odds with municipalities when they take to the streets. That was the case in Greenville until the town teamed up with community members to create a skate park.

No longer will area youth who ride skateboards and BMX (bicycle motocross) bikes have to contend with the stares or even angry voices of blatantly annoyed residents. On May 31, the Town of Greenville opened a skate park in the old tennis courts behind the A.J. Cunningham Funeral Home where youth and adults can skate and ride.

"Originally, we just didn't really have a place in town to go and ride," said Mikey Euf, a 2020 Greenville High School graduate and BMX rider. "We were getting yelled at constantly."

The teens tried to solve the problem them-

See SKATE, page 14



CHRIS KARLE/GREENVILLE PIONEER

Adler Karle of Westerlo does a "board slide" on a rail at the new skate park.



CHRIS KARLE/GREENVILLE PIONEER

Liam McMillan does an "ollie" over a box at Greenville's new skate park.

SURVEY CRITICAL TO IMPROVING BROADBAND SERVICE

County asking all residents and businesses to complete survey

By Joanne E. McFadden
The Greenville Pioneer

The message from Greene County is clear: In order to improve broadband service, the county needs residents to help by filling out a questionnaire about their internet service or lack thereof. The county legislature has launched the joint Broadband Availability & Adoption (BAAT) Campaign with Penfield, New York-based ECC Technologies Inc. which includes a short survey for residents and businesses to complete.

Participation by individuals and businesses is critical. "It's a broadband adoption and availability survey," said Deputy County Administrator Warren Hart. "It's not just if you have internet or don't."

"We want everyone to fill out the survey, whether they now have or use broadband so that a complete picture of the need can be seen," said District 8 legislator William Lawrence.

The survey addresses issues of Internet speed, accessibility, and affordability. For example, the survey has questions about internet availability, how the internet would be used, how much residents and businesses would be willing to pay,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Greene County Government is asking all residents and businesses to answer its broadband survey, a critical piece in bringing improved broadband service at affordable prices to the county.

current download speeds for those who do have internet, and the importance of internet access.

The survey is available at GreeneBroadband.com and accessible from desktop or mobile devices.

Those who do not have access to the Internet can request a paper copy by calling 518-719-3270.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of adequate broadband service and the

need to improve it as quickly as possible. Just two examples of the need for better service are the remote learning that schools are using during the pandemic as well as medical care that is provided via

telemedicine.

"Pretty much everything that a person or a business does today requires getting information, and that is largely done by being able to access the internet," Hart said.

In July 2020, the New York State legislature passed the Comprehensive Broadband Connectivity Act that orders a study of the affordability and availability of broadband throughout the state, deeming access to high-speed internet "a fundamental right." The bill states that the lack of access to adequate internet services "has had substantial negative economic and social impact particularly in rural and other underserved and underserved communities."

Greene County government has set out to address the issue for county residents. The first phase of the campaign is mapping out which households and businesses do not have access to fiber or coaxial broadband service and assessing the quality and affordability of broadband service for those who do have access.

"This project is important because there are areas such as in Cairo that do not have access to even

See SURVEY, page 15

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Community Calendar

To have your organization's events added to our calendar, please enter them online at www.greenvillepioneer.com

JUNE 2021

18 – No school, Cairo-Durham CSD, returned unused snow day
 21 – Court, Town of Durham, 3:30 p.m.
 22 – Poetry Group Online, 6:30–8 p.m., Rensselaerville Library, meets the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. For more information about the group and invitations to the online meetings, visit <https://www.rensselaervillelibrary.org/poetry-group.html>
 22 – Living Environment Regents Exam, Greenville Central School District
 23 – Algebra I Regents Exam, Greenville Central School District
 23 – 5th Grade Advancement, 9-10 a.m., Greenville Central School District, Ellis Auditorium
 24 – Physical Setting/Earth Science Regents Exam, Greenville Central School District

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24 -- Drawing Using Live Model, from 4:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Cairo Public Library, with Ruth Leonard. For teens/adults. Register at 518-622-9864.
 24 – 8th Grade Moving Up Ceremony, 9-10 a.m., Greenville Central School District, HS/MS Auditorium
 25 -- No school, Cairo-Durham CSD, returned unused snow day
 25 – HS Graduation, 6-7 p.m., Greenville Central School District
 25 – Graduation, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Cairo-Durham CSD
 26 – HS Graduation, Rain date, 9-10 a.m., Greenville Central School District, HS/MS Auditorium
 28 – Court, Town of Durham, 3:30 p.m.
 28 – Board of Education Business Meeting, Greenville Central School District, MS/HS Library

Woman pleads not guilty to murder charge

By **Melanie Lekocevic**
 Courtesy of Columbia-Greene Media

CATSKILL — A Saugerties woman pleaded not guilty Friday to second-degree murder following the stabbing death of a Cairo woman.

Amber C. Akins, 40, of Saugerties, was arraigned Friday in Greene County Court be-

fore Judge Terry J. Wilhelm and pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder, a class A-1 felony, Greene County District Attorney Joseph Stanzione said in a statement.

Akins was arrested May 14 by state police in connection with the stabbing death of Crystal L. Borne, 39, of Cairo.

State police responded to the Lake Mills Apartments, 53 Lake Mills Road, Cairo, af-

ter receiving a report that a woman had been stabbed, Troop F Public Information Officer Trooper Steven Nevel said May 14.

Akins and Borne knew each other, Nevel said following the arrest.

Bail was set Friday at \$500,000 cash or \$1 million bond or \$1.5 million with a partially secured bond at 10 percent, Stanzione said Friday.

“This crime amounts to a senseless, brutal and violent act which took the life of another individual,” Stanzione said.

Akins faces a maximum sentence of 15 years to life in prison if convicted. The case has been rescheduled for a conference June 21, Stanzione said.

GREENE COUNTY RESIDENTS LOSE OVER 1600LBS DESPITE COVID'S CHALLENGES Over 150 Greene County Residents complete the 2021 Biggest Loser Contest

This week, winners from the Greene County Rural Health Network's 9th Annual Biggest Loser contest were announced. The FREE contest began 16 weeks ago with participants weighing in at different locations throughout Greene County. Over the course of the contest participants were provided with healthy tips on nutrition, exercise, stress reduction and

much more. Virtual clinics, ZOOM exercise classes and a Facebook community provided participants with the support they needed to reach their goals. Despite the additional challenges COVID presented, the contest concluded with over 150 finishers losing a cumulative total of over 1600lbs.

As a registered dietician working at Hannaford super-

markets and promoting it's Healthy Living Program, Patricia Wukitsch is one of the experts involved with Biggest Loser “I educate shoppers that weight loss is a journey, not a destination and it's never too late to get on track. We have been pleased to partner with Biggest Loser and congratulate all of this year's participants!” Jeremy Newkirk of Leeds was one of the contest's big winners. Of the contest he says, “When I started this in February, I was as heavy as I had ever been

and was losing the ability to do things that everyone takes for granted like tying your shoes... this competition has jumpstarted my drive and the results have made me want it more. The results work so I'm sticking with it...My goal is 170lbs. And I will achieve my goal.”

The contest awards cash prizes to the top three winners in two different categories, Total Pounds lost and Highest Percentage. Those winners were...

Total LBS Lost

Jeremy Newkirk of Leeds

Michael Riley of Coxsackie
 Makenzie Higgins of Leeds

Highest Percentage Lost

Jackie Reese of Catskill
 Chris Reiker of Catskill
 Stephen Mancuso of Cairo

The Biggest Loser contest is in line with the Greene County Rural Health Network's (GCRHN) Healthy Weight Initiative that aims to promote healthy weight among Greene County residents through exercise opportunities and healthier food options.

TREE SERVICES

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The Greenville Pioneer wants to hear from you. Send information about upcoming events and news to news@greenvillepioneer.com.

For information and questions, please call 518-366-9918.

GO BIG

Randy Dunham '19
 Social Science - Psychology Major
 Haines Falls, N.Y.

The Greenville PIONEER

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 POSTMASTER - The Greenville Pioneer is published every other Friday by Capital Region Independent Media, 164 Main Street, Ravena, NY 12143. Periodicals postage paid at Greenville, NY 12083. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Greenville Pioneer, 149 Main Street, Ravena, NY 12143. The cost for a subscription is \$36 annually. For Customer Service issues call 413-212-0130 or email Wdewsjr@gmail.com

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Let's Go Together, #CoGreene!

Police Blotter

Editor's Note: A charge is not a conviction. All persons listed are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Charges can be amended or dismissed.

STATE POLICE

■ Steven R. Gogger, 44, of Athens, was arrested at 3:02 p.m. May 26, in Coxsackie and charged with third-degree rape, a class E felony; first-degree rape, a class B felony; two counts of third-degree criminal sexual act, a class E felony; two counts of first-degree criminal sexual act, a class B felony; and first-degree sexual abuse, a class D felony. His arrestee status is unknown.

■ Melissa Saccoccie, 40, of Coxsackie, was arrested at 11:43 a.m. May 26 in Cairo and charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A misdemeanor; second-degree criminal use of drug paraphernalia, a class A misdemeanor; and driving while intoxicated, an unclassified misdemeanor. She was issued an appearance ticket.

■ John T. Nolty, 63, of Westkill, was arrested at 10:14 a.m. May 26, in Lexington, and charged with second-degree criminal tampering, a class A misdemeanor; third-degree grand larceny, a class D felony; and theft of services, a class A misdemeanor. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Robert G. Fortunato, 51, of Albany, was arrested at 8:26 p.m. May 26, in Coxsackie, and charged with two counts of seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A misdemeanor, and driving while ability impaired by drugs, an unclassified misdemeanor. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Deborah A. Cox, 52, of Maspeeth was arrested at 12:35 a.m. May 30 in Durham, and charged with driving while intoxicated and driving while intoxicated per se; both unclassified misdemeanors. She was issued an appearance ticket.

ance ticket.

■ David Graham, 36, of Albany, was arrested at 9:54 a.m. May 28 in Cairo and charged with, three counts of third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, and three counts of third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance, both are class B felonies. He was held.

■ Von E. Flierl, 31, of Hannacroix was arrested at 9 p.m. May 28 in New Baltimore and charged with driving while intoxicated, an unclassified misdemeanor. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Angel Ramos, 30, of Round Top was arrested at 4:15 p.m. May 29 in Catskill, and charged with second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, a class D felony. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Michael R. Harris, 33 of Catskill was arrested at 1:07 a.m. May 31 in Coxsackie, and charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A misdemeanor. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Joseph M. Sloyan, 30, of Catskill was arrested at 2:36 a.m. June 1 in Catskill, and charged with two counts of seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A misdemeanor, and third-degree criminal possession of

a weapon, a class D felony. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Alexandra R. Maben, 28, of Freehold, was arrested at 8:25 p.m. May 31 in Greenville and charged with first-degree aggravated unlicensed operation, a class E felony, operating vehicle while registration suspended or revoked an unclassified misdemeanor, driving while intoxicated, an unclassified misdemeanor, aggravated driving while intoxicated per se, and unclassified misdemeanor. She was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Shannon C. Elberth, 48, of Coxsackie, was arrested at 11:57 p.m. May 31 in Athens and charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A misdemeanor, and second-degree criminal use of drug paraphernalia, a class A misdemeanor. She was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Kimberly Lynn Ridell, 50, of Cairo, was arrested at 9:16 p.m. June 1 in Preston Hollow, and charged with the manufacturing of drug-related paraphernalia, a class A misdemeanor, two counts of seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A misdemeanor, first-degree aggravated unlicensed operation a class E felony, driving while ability impaired by drugs, a class E felony and using a vehicle without ignition interlock, a class A misdemeanor. She was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Frankly Lambe, 27, of Coxsackie was arrested at 1:32 p.m. June 2 in Coxsackie, and charged with first-degree promoting prison

contraband, a class D felony. He was held.

■ Dominick C. Forezzi, 26, of Valatie was arrested at 3:21 p.m. June 2 in Coxsackie and charged with, two counts of seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A misdemeanor. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ David K. Laux, 43, of West Coxsackie was arrested at 9:42 p.m. June 3 in Coxsackie, and charged with driving while intoxicated and driving while intoxicated per se, both unclassified misdemeanors. He was issued an appearance ticket.

■ Joshua N. Lambert, 22, of West Coxsackie was arrested at 12:43 a.m. June 4 in New Baltimore and charged with driving while intoxicated and driving while intoxicated per se, both unclassified misdemeanors. He was issued an appearance ticket.

CATSKILL POLICE

■ Eliexer Sanchez, 47, of Catskill was arrested at 9:15 p.m. May 31 in Catskill and charged with third-degree aggravated unlicensed operation, an unclassified misdemeanor.

■ Trevor R. Sisson, 19, of East Berne, was arrested at 1:45 p.m. May 29 in Greenville and charged with resisting arrest, a class A misdemeanor, second-degree obstructing governmental administration, a class A misdemeanor, and third-degree aggravated unlicensed operation unclassified misdemeanor.

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State Route 145, Preston Hollow
518-239-6544

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
County Route 41, Greenville Center
518-966-4043

Greenville Center Baptist Church
County Route 41, Greenville

Durham-Oak Hill United Methodist Church
Route 22, Durham
518-239-6377

Medway Congregational Christian Church
Route 26, Climax
518-731-2106 & 518-731-8867

Christ Episcopal Church
State Route 32, Greenville
518-966-5713

Our Lady of Knock Shrine
State Route 145, East Durham
518-622-3319

Cornerstone Baptist Church
State Route 145, East Durham
518-634-7095

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
State Route 81, Oak Hill
518-239-6727

Asbury United Methodist Church
State Route 81, Norton Hill
518-966-4181

South Westerlo Congregational Christian Church
County Routes 403 & 405, South Westerlo
518-966-5094

Greenville Christian Church
State Route 32, Greenville
518-966-4519

St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church
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518-966-8317

Grapeville Baptist Church
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518-966-4265

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State Route 81, Greenville
518-966-9941

Dormansville United Methodist Church
Route 312, Dormansville
518-756-2812

Trinity Episcopal Church
Albany Hill Road, Rensselaerville
518-797-5295

Westerlo Reformed Church
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518-797-3742

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church
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518-622-3319

Medusa United Church of Christ
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Obituaries

Margaret Johannesen

GREENVILLE - Margaret Johannesen, 94, passed away May 21st, 2021, peacefully at home, surrounded by her family. She was the daughter of the late Arne and Gerda (Haneberg) Brambo.

Margaret was born in Brooklyn, New York, June 3, 1926. During the Great Depression she returned to Norway with her mother and sister, re-joining her father in Brooklyn several years later, speaking only Norwegian.

She married Morten Johannesen on January 17, 1947, raising their three sons and eventually settled in Greenville, New York. There they joined Morten's father and extended family, enjoying many years of parties, picnics, and trips. Family was central to Margaret. She was deeply involved in her children's and grandchildren's lives, never missing an opportunity to babysit or to lend a helping hand.

She had a deep appreciation of her Norwegian heritage, and was a founding member of the Greenville chapter of the Sons of Norway, the Fram Lodge.

Margaret's outgoing nature, her smile, and infectious laugh were greatly appreciated by many and will be sorely missed.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her brother, Conrad, and her husband Morten. She is survived by her sister, Dorothy Green of Simi Valley CA, her three sons Steven (the late Rose), Robert



Margaret Johannesen



(Marianne), David (Jane); grandchildren Eric (Courtney), Christopher (partner Nicole), Andrew (Jessica), Alissa (partner Lucas), and many nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to Community Hospice of Columbia/Greene, 47 Liberty Street, Catskill, NY 12414 or at communityhospice.org, or to Resurrection Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 563, Cairo, NY, 12413 or at rlc.life, with great appreciation.

There will be a private service at a later date. Condolence page is available at ajcunninghamfh.com.



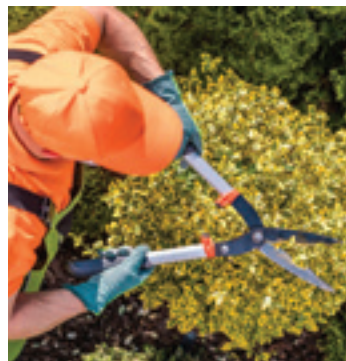
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presents



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CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Contrary to popular belief, wolves do not trick or ambush their prey.

Will wolves be howling in the Catskills?

By David Lee Drotar
The Greenville Pioneer

In his 1859 book “On the Origin of Species,” Charles Darwin wrote, “There are two varieties of the wolf inhabiting the Catskill Mountains, in the United States, one with a light greyhound-like form, which pursues deer, and the other more bulky, with shorter legs, which more frequently attacks the shepherd’s flocks.”

Based on modern genetic studies, it now appears that Darwin may have been describing two subspecies of wolves, rather than different species. But wolves have not been seen or heard in the wild in New York for over one hundred years. If the trend of wildlife reintroduction carried out in other parts of the United States continues however, the animals may eventually roam through Northeastern forests.

Some New York lawmakers want to set the stage for that to happen. On January 5, 2021, one day after the wolf was delisted as an endangered species at the federal level, Long Island Senators Todd Kaminsky and Steve Englebright wrote a letter to state Environmental Commissioner Basil Seggos asking that wolves remain on the state’s endangered list in order to protect future habitat.

Wolves once lived throughout the U.S., reigning as the top predator in forest ecosystems. They preyed upon deer and moose in the Northeast and primarily elk in the Rockies. Fearing wolves and not realizing the important role they played in nature, early European settlers hunted, trapped and poisoned the animal to near extinction. Bounty records show that the last Northeast wolf was killed in New York in 1897. By the 1930s, they were gone from all the lower 48 states with small breeding populations surviving only in Canada and Alaska.

In 1995, a plan to return the gray wolf to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming was undertaken. It was so successful that it has become a model for other programs. Surprising even the biologists who never envisioned packs forming and breeding so early, the animals produced offspring the first year, and have since spread. Currently, there are hundreds of wolves divided into different packs, each with a distinct territory in the greater Yellowstone area.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD HAD NOTHING TO FEAR

Contrary to popular belief, wolves do not trick or ambush their prey. They walk right alongside it.

“Wolves are sifters and sorters,” according to Nathan Varley, a wildlife biologist who grew up in the Yellowstone area. “They will sift through and identify vulnerable targets before attacking them.” Unlike coyotes who are very adaptable to civilization, wolves avoid contact with humans.

On a frosty January morning in 2001, I had the opportunity to see several members of the Druid Peak pack (named for the geographic territory they inhabit) clustered around a fresh kill about 3/4 mile from the road. Through a scope and binoculars, our party watched the majestic animals devour their breakfast while ravens cruised overhead waiting for their turn to pick at the leftovers. However, the birds received little opportunity on this day. While most of the pack moved further up the valley, I watched two remaining wolves playfully chew and tug on each end



If wolves come back to the Catskills, scenes like this might be common.



Wolves have not been seen or heard in the wild in New York for over one hundred years.



Wolves preyed primarily upon deer in the Northeast and elk in the Rockies.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WOLVES...

The Wolf Conservation Center aims to promote better understanding of wolves through education and encounters with live animals and advocates the reintroduction of wolves to wilderness areas. There are currently several wolves in captivity. Contact Wolf Conservation Center, 7 Buck Run, South Salem, NY 10590 or visit www.nywolf.org.

FAST FACTS ABOUT WOLVES...

- The gray wolf, *canis lupus*, is the largest member of the canine family.
- Adult wolves weigh from 85 to 135 pounds.
- The gray wolf can actually be gray, tan, brown, black, white, or a mixture.
- Wolves live in social units called packs. There are two pack leaders, the alpha male and the alpha female.
- Within a pack, only the alpha female has pups. All adult pack members take care of the pups.
- Wolves communicate through body postures, facial expressions, scent markings and vocalizations.



Wolves were once the top predator in forest ecosystems in the U.S. The last Northeast wolf was killed in New York in 1897.

of a bone.

Will such scenes soon be available to “wolf groupies” parked along Greene County highways? Ecologists believe that there is plenty of appropriate habitat and prey. In fact, a study from the 1990s calculated the number of wolves that the Northeast could support to be as many as 1,800. A 1978 U.S. government plan for restoration of the gray wolf identified the Adirondack region as a potential reintroduction point.

Ironically, the Defenders of Wildlife, a nonprofit environmental group with an active carnivore conservation agenda, was not the first to call for a reintroduction program for New York due to taxonomy uncertainties.

Meanwhile, it’s extremely dicey as to whether the gray wolf could ever return to New York, let alone the Catskills, on its own. Although

some evidence of gray wolves has been reported in Maine and New Hampshire, the natural recolonization into New York from existing populations in Canada has serious obstacles. The St. Lawrence River is kept open in winter for shipping, presenting a barricade to migration. Also, there is already a high mortality rate in Canada. The current population has little pressure to expand into new territories.

But the wolf is a very adaptable and highly intelligent animal. Whether it makes its way into New York and eventually into the Catskills on its own, or with assistance from wildlife programs, seems to be only a matter of when and not if.

David Lee Drotar’s journalism and photography focuses on nature, environmental and cultural issues and his work has appeared in USA Today, New York Daily News, New

WOLF MEETS WORLD...

How is the reintroduction process actually carried out, and what could one expect if such a program were undertaken in New York? The wolves that introduced to Yellowstone came from a donor population in Canada. The goal was to obtain an entire pack so that a functioning social unit could be transplanted.

First, a single wolf was captured and radio tagged. Then it was released back to the same area. his “Judas wolf” soon led the reintroduction team to its fellow pack members and ultimately to their capture as well.

Next, the team brought the wolves to Yellowstone and placed them in a holding pen where they remained captive for approximately two months. With a guide from the Yellowstone Association Institute, I made the one-mile snowshoe hike up a hillside to see where it all began.

Ice crystals shimmered in the morning sun, while howls of coyotes drifted across the valley. A herd of buffalo moved across the open meadow. By noon, we reached the deserted Rose Creek pen, a one-acre plot enclosed by chain-link fencing. We unhooked the latch and stepped in.

Standing inside the pen, I could easily imagine the wolves pacing back and forth, gazing through the fence at the world beyond. There was a feeling of desolation, yet also one of joy, knowing that the animals left to claim their rightful place in nature.

“It’s steel and wire, but at the same time blood and sweat and a hell of a lot of passion,” the Institute’s Nancy Procter commented. “There’s a spirit that just hasn’t faded.”



Might idyllic Catskill landscapes be punctuated by wolf howls in the future?

York Post, Toronto Globe & Mail, New Orleans Times-Picayune and many other daily newspapers, magazines and online venues. He is also the author of seven published books including Steep Passages: A World-wide Eco-adventurer Un-

locks Nature’s Spiritual Truths. His Mideast story “Nomadic Voices” appearing in Perceptive Travel was awarded the 2016 Excellence in Journalism Award from the International Food, Wine & Travel Writers Association.

FROM FARM TO EVENT VENUE

Treasured property transformed by hardworking siblings

By K. Fleig
The Greenville Pioneer

On what can only be described as a perfect day at the end of May, three of the four Sikule siblings stand together in their beautifully reconstructed barn in Medusa. They reminisce about bringing hay bales into what is now an open and pristine space and stacking them high when they were children. It's evident that they share a happy past, filled with work and play, and still enjoy each other's company.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLUEBIRD FARM

In 1945, their father Michael Sikule Sr. moved from Brooklyn with his mother to an old farmhouse in Medusa. They converted it to a boarding house, as many did during that period of time, and they named the property Bluebird Farm. Michael met the love of his life, Julie, in 1953. They married and had four children: Carolyn, Michael, Susan, and Kathryn. Bluebird Farm then became a working farm.

In addition to working on the farm and as a plumber, Michael Sr. was a Rensselaerville Town Justice throughout the 1960s and 1970s. He performed marriage ceremonies, often in front of the wishing well that still sits close to the family's farmhouse. Mr. Sikule died over 38 years ago, and Julie remained on the farm until she passed away on Thanksgiving Day 2017.

In separate phone conversations with each of the Sikule siblings, prior to our in-person meeting, one thing was clear: They are a family that values both hard work and their relationships with each other. They credit growing up on the farm with instilling in them both of those values. They also acknowledge that taking care of their mother throughout her last years brought them together. "We worked unselfishly for mom's benefit," said Carolyn, the eldest.

PRESERVING A LEGACY

The 2011 film "The Descendants" tells the story of an extended family who jointly owns a large parcel of land in Hawaii, but has differing values. Their varying opinions as to what to do with the land set up the conflict in the film—money versus legacy, and expediency versus preservation. Their dilemma is not something anyone would consider unchallenging.

The difference between the characters in the film and the Sikule family is that the latter share the same underlying values. "It was a struggle at times, but we all want to keep the barn and the farm as a legacy," Michael said.

All four of the siblings agree that after their mother's death, it never occurred to any of them to sell the house, barn, and the more than 100 acres. Though each of them had moved away from Medusa to pursue careers, they all knew that somehow the farm would be kept in the family and passed down from generation to future generations.

"So many properties get chopped up," said Kathryn, the youngest of the siblings. "It's our dream that the fields will remain intact. Part of the property is designated wetlands, and there are lots of beautiful birds."

Though the Sikules all share an emotional attachment to Bluebird Farm, as with any property there is a monetary cost. The question arose as to how to pay for the upkeep and the taxes. For the better part of a year after their mother passed away, the siblings met periodically to discuss the financial future of the property.

Enter David Sikule, Michael's son. David and his fiancé Jessica had looked at several wedding venues and felt that not only were they unaffordable, but none had as magnificent a view as the view from the barn up on the hill on Bluebird Farm. In late February of 2019, David and Jessica made a pitch to have their wedding there.

"We made a short presentation [in front of David's father and three aunts during one of their meetings] about what we thought the barn could look like, what we wanted to do for our wedding as well as the timeframe we'd want it done in," David said. "Luckily, this was over a year in advance so it wasn't like we couldn't find a place if they said no, but it was still stressful waiting to figure out where we would get married."

Little did the elder Sikules know at that time that the couple's request would set in motion a meaningful adventure. "We sought professional



The barn at Bluebird Farm before renovation.



The wishing well that sits near the farmhouse on the Medusa property.



NATASHA SHAPIRO

BF 6: David Sikule and his fiancée Jessica wanted to be married at Bluebird Farm. They asked David's father, Michael Sikule and his siblings if this could happen. The siblings restored the barn and the couple married there on August 1, 2020.

opinions and got estimates to determine what repairs would need to be done to the barn," Susan, a veterinarian, said. "Our biggest concerns were cost and being able to have the barn completed in time for David and Jessica's wedding," she added.

Six weeks after their presentation, David and Jessica received a "yes" to their proposal. They would have their wedding at their ideal location.

THE PROJECT: RECONSTRUCTING THE BARN

Though all four siblings were very involved in the reconstruction project, Michael took the initial lead, acting as general contractor. "I got help [from professionals] when I needed it," he said, crediting several friends of the family for their work. "Having grown up with a father who had to be handy, taught me a lot," he remarked.

The original English style barn was built in 1885 by Lorenzo Hewitt and, not uncommonly, an addition had been added years later in what Micheal estimates to have been the 1920s or 1930s. The barn had been neglected for some time, and the section that had been added was in serious disrepair. It was pushing against the original section, impacting its stability.

The first step, however, was to clean out the space. Everyone participated in that effort. "We have similar values, having grown up on a working farm where we worked and played together. That gave us a good work ethic," Carolyn said.

The second step was to take down the newer section of the barn due to its condition. The siblings decided to preserve the original section, though it had beams that needed to be replaced.

Michael was able to buy old hand-hewn beams, and they were

integrated into the old structure. At this point, the siblings enlisted the help of friends and an excavator.

"I enjoyed the work," said Michael, a retired accountant. "I think I was a closeted builder," he quipped.

MAKING DECISIONS TOGETHER

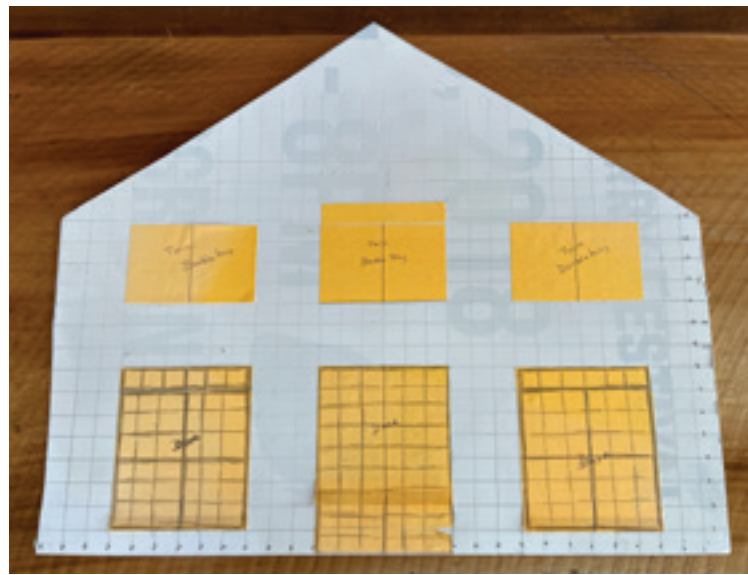
Very early on in the reconstruction process, all four siblings realized that the project would be more extensive and more costly than originally thought. Creating a space for David's wedding was the original goal, but it soon became apparent that the barn and beautiful property could serve as a venue for others to enjoy. Thus, Bluebird Farm as a wedding venue/event space business was born.

"If you'd ask anyone, they'd tell us we were crazy to pursue a family business because you always hear about the difficulties," said Susan. "Yes, there are challenges for sure, but we have learned to communicate and keep the family a priority," she emphasized.

The siblings established regular meetings to allow for joint decision making about the redesign of the barn. "It was a group effort," Kathryn said. "Working together, we've learned a lot about each other and ourselves. I've learned to let go of what's not important."

The Sikules continued to meet and talk frequently about how to proceed with the project. They decided to add a large addition to the original structure. After exploring several options, they hired a group of builders from an Amish community in the small town of Fultonville, New York. The six builders worked in January 2020, completing the exterior of the addition in just nine days.

Before the builders arrived, however, the Sikules needed to de-



The siblings used a diagram with removable sticky notes to figure out the window configuration they wanted in the restored barn.



Siblings (from left to right) Kathryn, Carolyn, Susan, and Michael Sikule renovated the barn at Bluebird Farm in Medusa, turning it into an event venue and keeping the property in the family.



The renovated barn at Bluebird Farm.

cide on the barn's design. Each had their own vision. A big hurdle was to determine what kind of windows to use and how they would look. All four siblings agree that this was the most challenging juncture in their building journey.

To help envision the windows, Michael made a model of the barn in poster board. They used removable "sticky notes" as an easy way to play with different window placements and sizes. At last, they settled on a design with which they could all be happy.

Challenging though it was, "[That process] allowed us to bring different things to the table," Susan said. "Carolyn always centered us back around," added Susan of the sometimes contentious discussions. All agree that their parents would be proud of how they worked and still work together.

DAVID AND JESSICA'S WEDDING

The day before the big day, the inside of the barn was not yet completed. Instead of panicking, the Sikules naturally called in friends and more family members to put the finishing touches on the space. The army of people finished just in time, and the wedding was held on August 1, 2020.

"We were glad we got married at Bluebird, as it holds such a special place in our hearts and our relationship," David remarked. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the wedding was downsized but, by all accounts, it was a lovely day of celebration of both the couple's union and the family's endeavor that spanned well

over a year.

Standing in the new section of the barn, with its vaulted ceiling and airy atmosphere, Kathryn points out where the couple sat that day, where the D.J. was placed, and where people danced. It's clear that the memory of that day brings back warm feelings.

Walking outside from the barn to the lush lawn, there is a unique white birch structure where David and Jessica stood during their wedding ceremony. The true showstopper, however, is the magnificent view of the Catskill Mountains—the breathtaking view David and Jessica knew would make Bluebird Farm a perfect place to be married.

THE FUTURE

Since the wedding last summer, the Sikules have rented the property for weddings, a baby shower, and various celebrations. Their desire that others enjoy the beautiful open barn, the view, and the land continues to be realized. They regularly gather for family dinners in the barn, too. "Now that people are being vaccinated against COVID, even more of us will be together," said Susan.

"We are so blessed. So blessed to be a family and to have each other," Carolyn said. "If COVID showed us anything, it's that people are what is important."

The Sikule siblings still have a weekly meeting to discuss business. They have had challenges, but each feels the hard work and occasional conflict have been more than worth it.


"If people get anything from this [article] I hope they are encouraged to work together," Susan said. "The common goal of making a business work drives us to improve our family dynamics. It's not easy, but the rewards are so much."

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Chasin' Racin'

By Mark Kane

Capital Region Independent Media

It had been since 2019 that the 2017 Albany Saratoga Speedway Modified Champion Peter Britten had won a feature event and things so far in 2021 have not been going much better.

Well, that all changed with an early race charge to the front, working through lap traffic, taking the lead, and holding on for the long overdue win, his 12th at the "Great Race Place".

There was another fine field of cars in all divisions in the pits along with fans in the stands enjoying a beautiful night for racing.

Along with the regular weekly card, the Mohawk Valley Vintage Dirt Modifieds made their way to the speedway so fans both new and veterans of racing got to see the race cars of the past come alive on the track with some spirited racing.

Once again, the fans were treated to some great racing on the ever-changing surface, and teams needed to keep up as the night went on. The action-packed heats had plenty of wheel-to-wheel action in all divisions with plenty of two- and three-wide racing using the entire racing surface and more in some cases.

Come feature time, the track had seen many laps on a racing surface that has seen little rain and plenty of sun, great for flowers; racing surface not so much. As the track changed through the night, it remained fast and smooth.

With the aid of a very fast race car that went wherever he pointed it, Britten was on the move early from the 13th starting position in a very tough Modified field that went green to checker.

At the drop of the green, it was Rich Ronca taking the early lead with Todd Stone on his rear bumper until making the move to the lead as the Ravena Rocket Keith Flach was racing third. Once out front, Stone pulled away from the field until he started to get into lap traffic. In the middle of the pack, it was nerf bar to nerf bar racing as many of the top runners found themselves starting mid pack and finding it hard to move forward, as well as other than "Batman" Peter Britten who was quickly in the top five and still looking for more.

It was Stone having a great race and remained out front, but now in heavy traffic Ronca and Flach worked their way back to the rear deck of Stone as Britten was coming and coming fast. Finding the high side to his liking, Anthony Perrago started to work his way into the top ten, tiptoeing the outside and continuing the charge to finish sixth.

Using the low groove, Britten worked his way past Flach and set his sights on Ronca as the Stone was dealing with lap traffic, and his lead was going away quick. Using a great move and a lapped car, Britten would be the new second place car and reeled in the leader Stone. As the two raced hard for the win, Britten made the power move for the lead down the back stretch and would hold on for the win with the impressive drive.

Having a great ride was Todd Stone who held on for second with Keith Flach with another solid run at third. Also with strong runs were Jeremy Pitts and Neil Stratton who rounding out the top five.

In other action, Josh Coonradt is hooked up as he cruised to his second straight win in the Pro Stocks over a strong contingent of Jason Meltz, Chad Jeseo, Jay Casey and Rob Yetmeltz rounded out the top five.

The Sportsman found a first-time winner, Drew Cormie, who grabbed the early lead and never looked back with a strong performance in the action-packed feature. Once out front, Cormie was the class of the field, hitting his marks lap after lap.

There is one thing for sure: there is no lack of young talent in the tough Sportsman division who are giving the veterans a run for their money. Following Cormie, to the line was Michael Wagner-Fitz-



Mike Mahaney picks up first win at Fonda Speedway in 2021.



Jessica Friesen grabs first ever history-making Modified win of her career at Utica Rome.



"Batman" Peter Britten picked up his first win since 2019 at Albany Saratoga Speedway.

gerald, Nick Lussier, Dan Grignon, and Andrew Buff holding down the top five.

One of our local young guns, Garret Poland, had a solid night with a top 10 in the feature finishing ninth that started off an up-and-down weekend for the team.

On Saturday night, the New Day Motors 17G made the trip to Lebanon Valley where things did not turn out as well after a hard crash in the feature that found Garret in the wrong place at the wrong time that has the former Marc Johnson Troyer a write off.

You know how kids are, come Sunday and where is Garret? Right back in the seat at Glen Ridge Motorsports Park in the backup car, finishing seventh. This team will bounce back as a new Bicknell is in the works for Garret, who has proven he has the talent behind the wheel along with a strong experienced team and great Sponsors making for a bright future for this well-spoken young man.

The limited Sportsman were not going to be outdone by any Modified class as they, too, went green to checker with Taylor Wason, picking up the win as Matt Mosher was the Street Stock winner.

Picking up wins in the MVVDM classes were Jim Fugal- Vintage, Steve Denton- Sportsman, and Randy Delaney Modified.

The fans were treated to how racing was in the past. Old fans sit back and remember how it was, the drivers, the battles, friends we have made at the track and those same friends we have lost over the years.

Clubs like this are needed to preserve the history of the sport and the stories

they have and are willing to share. You can you imagine some of the stories these old cars could tell if they could talk. This type of racing is growing, with many retired drivers now making their way back to the seat and having fun doing what they love to do.

It was back to Fonda Speedway for another night of racing at the "Track of Champions" that found another great night of racing. Mike Mahaney has taken a liking to Fonda over the years and it seems has made the decision to call the Mohawk Valley half-mile home in 2021. No matter if it is the Short Track Super Series, or DIRTcar Series, Mahaney has been a force to deal with, and Saturday night at Fonda Mahaney found the right combination to pick up the win. No stranger to picking up wins as an invader, Mahaney has proven in the past that he can win at Fonda with his first win coming in the Spring of 2012 during the Ice Jam Season opener. He would come back the same year and win the 112th lap Jack Johnson Tribute race for a cool \$12,000 to win in the family-owned ride with his crew chief and former driver Jim Mahaney who ran in the Southern Tier as well as Central and Western NY throughout his career. By his side, Mike honed his skills behind the wheel turning left to become the highly competitive and professional dirt Modified driver he is today aboard the potent George Huttig owned Adirondack Auto #35.

At the drop of the SUNOCO Modified feature, it was JaMike Sowle who has struggled in the Alton and Carole Palmer ride with the early lead with George Foley who has become a regular for the season and is getting faster each week. Out front, Sowle started to pull away as the Palmer 76 was fast using the high side as Brian Pessolano and Foley battled for second with Pessolano getting the spot.

Behind the leader, the racing was heating up as Mahaney was showing his power working his way through the pack and into the top five as was Ronnie Johnson who was in a battle

mid pack along with Josh Hohenforst and Craig Hanson who came into the night tied for the lead in points.

The field was brought back to the Sowle rear bumper as the caution was out for the first and last time and Dave Constantino. Once back to green, Sowle was out front, but it was Mahaney with a great move to be the new second place car and set his sights on Sowle who had nothing but green flag laps ahead of him. As Mahaney, who seemed to be able to run anywhere, found bite on the bottom to close in on Sowle who was still pounding the top and all it took was one slip by Sowle in turn 4 and Mahaney was right there to pounce to be the new leader, and would cruise to the win as Sowle held on for a strong second showing the Palmer team is heading in the direction battling for the win. Having another solid run was 2020 Fonda Track Champion Mike Maresca who suffered early in the year with mechanical issues and now in the 247 ride was third followed by Ronnie Johnson with a good run from his sixth row starting spot, as George Foley held on for his best finish rounding out the top five.

Well, the Modifieds only had one caution, but the 602 Sportsman could not say the same. In all fairness, between the cautions there was some great racing action and some charges from the back of the pack as everyone was looking to work his way to the front. At the drop of the green, it was Nick Scavia taking the early lead, but behind the leader, they were quickly trading positions with Mark Mortensen and Chad Edwards moving quickly to the front and into the top three when the first of six cautions would fly.

On the restart, we would have a new leader as Chad Edwards powered his John Kollar 10 percent to the front, a lead he would hold over the series of cautions. With Edwards out front, there was some great racing and drives behind the leader as Brian Calabrese and Payton Talbot both worked their way into the top five after starting outside the top twenty, and Addison Bowman could see the whole field at the green starting on the last row and working his way to sixth at the checkers. Also in the top five was Scavia, holding on for second with Tim Hartman Jr. in for third.

It did not take Luke Horning and Nick Stone long to make their way to the front of the Pro Stock feature after starting 10th and 12th. Once out front, these two drivers put on a wheel to wheel battle swapping the lead back and forth. With all eyes up front all time win leader Kenny Gates was working his way into the top five after starting 8th and hot off his Friday night win Josh Coonradt was on the move from his 15th starting spot. The racing behind the leaders was good, but nothing like the battle that was still going on up front. With the white flag out, they still raced side by side through turn two and down the backstretch. It was now a side by side drag race, going through turns three and four, they were fender to fender as they came to the line with Luke Horning picking up the popular win by 0.043 seconds over Stone with Gates, Coonradt and Jason Morrison rounded out the top five. That is what dirt racing is all about my friends, good hard racing from the drop of the green until the checker flags fly.

Limited Sportsman action found Jeremy Tyrrell go green to checker to pick up the win. In 4 Cyl action Ken Hollenback and Slappy White picked up the wins.

Other racing action had Andy Bachetti picking up the win at Lebanon Valley over J.R. Heffner, L.J. Lombardo, Kolby Schroder, and Eddie Marshal rounded out the top five. The Sportsman feature had John Virgilio picking up the win as Jay Fitzgerald was the Pro Stock Winner.

Out at Utica Rome, Jessica Friesen picked up her first ever Modified feature win holding off Matt Sheppard. No stranger to Utica Rome, Jessica is a past Sportsman Champion. Following Friesen and Sheppard to the line was Andy Bachetti, Alan Johnson, and David Schilling rounding out the top five.



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Animal abuse registry could be in county's future

By **Melanie Lekocevic**
Courtesy of Columbia-Greene Media

CATSKILL — Greene County is considering creating an animal abuse registry aimed at reducing the number of crimes against animals.

Jamie Mitchell, founder of Hyer Ground Rescue in Catskill, presented a proposal for a registry at Wednesday's meeting of the Public Safety Committee of the Greene County Legislature. Greene County is considering an animal abuse registry that would identify individuals convicted of crimes against animals.

The registry would identify county residents who have been convicted of crimes against animals.

"As leaders, as parents, as adults, we have an obligation to set the standard in our community to our youth to protect the innocent, whether it is animals, elders, children or the infirm," Mitchell told the committee. "That is our obligation."

There are animal abuse registries in 19 counties in New York state: Albany, Bronx, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Kings, Nassau, New York City, Niagara, Onondaga, Orange, Putnam, Queens, Richmond, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester.

Most animal abuse registries include the name, address, photo and conviction date of the individual. "It would be a registry of those who have been convicted of some type of violence against animals and it would be available to the public so if someone who was convicted wanted to adopt or buy an animal, the group can check the registry," Greene County Legislature Chairman Patrick Linger, R-New Baltimore, said.

The goal is to assist in reducing the number of animal cruelty cases, he said. "Maybe it will prevent a future abuse case," said Linger.

The registry would also include information and resources for pet owners who may need help with feeding and caring for their animals. "If you feel you are having a problem or you know someone who is, there would be contact information on the registry so people could seek help," Linger said. "In the worst case, if someone is convicted you can help stop it from happening again."

Holding people accountable for animal cruelty could have more far-reaching effects on public safety as a whole, Mitchell said. There have been links between cruelty to animals, par-

ticularly among children, and future crimes against people, she said. "Cruelty against animals and violence towards people have something in common — both types of victims are living, sentient being that feel pain and distress and can die from their injuries," Mitchell said, citing reports from the Animal Legal and Historical Center. Studies have shown links between animal abuse and other crimes, including murders by convicted serial killers Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer and "Son of Sam" killer David Berkowitz, according to the FBI website. "People who abuse animals as children are more likely to commit murder or violent crimes as adults,"

Mitchell said. "It's not just a sign of a personality flaw, but a deep mental disturbance that needs intervention before it gets to the point where someone in our community gets hurt."

There is also a link between animal abuse and domestic violence and child abuse, according to the FBI. By posting a registry of convicted animal abusers, the county could potentially prevent those individuals from adopting or purchasing animals in the future, Mitchell said. "It's about identifying who in our community is possibly a predator who we wouldn't be able to identify if we didn't have a registry in place," Mitchell said.

Recommendations for an animal

abuse registry in Greene County are not new — Mitchell began lobbying for a registry more than a year ago, but efforts were sidetracked by the COVID-19 pandemic, Linger said.

A statewide registry would provide the most effective method of identifying animal abusers, Linger said. "My suggestion was to link our registry to other registries in the state. We are kind of hoping this morphs into a statewide initiative because it would make it easier for people to do a comprehensive search," Linger said. "Right now, counties are doing this on our own."

The concept of an animal abuse registry has been

broached with the Greene County District Attorney's Office and the Greene County Sheriff's Office, and both are on board, Linger said. The next step would be for the proposal to make its way through the legislative process. "At this point we do have the local law and the resolution written up," Linger said. "The district attorney has looked it over so I would imagine during this month's meeting cycles [of the Legislature] we would set up a public hearing and do a local law for next month. Once that passes, we will establish an animal abuse registry in Greene County."



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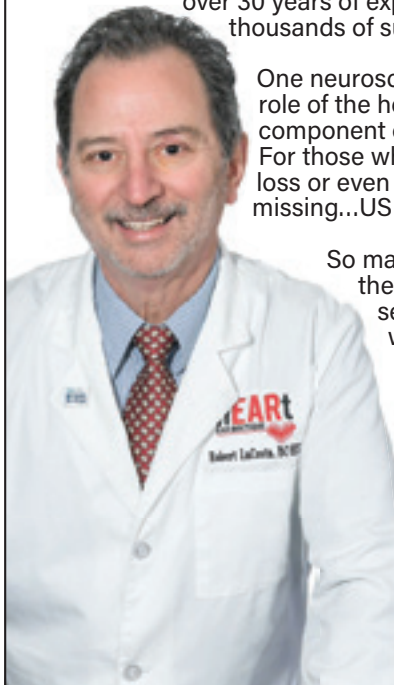
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Grandma Mackey's Diary

1950 life in Medusa

Transcribed from her diary by
Kathy Sauer Osborne



Grandma and Grandpa (Harry) Mackey.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sun, June 18 — Fair. Chuck & Joyce went to Church. He was here to dinner. They went to the Races in the P.M. Kids & Don went to see Gertrude. Adrienne Adele & I went to Children's Day at 8 P.M. Philip Lite & Joann here in P.M. Jr Losee got hurt at the Ball Game.

Mon, June 19 — Cloudy & cold. I took Joyce to Greenville with Don's car. Couldn't hang out clothes cold & damp. Jr Losee is getting along O.K. I made strawberry shortcake for supper.

Tues, June 20 — Cloudy. A little warmer. Hung out clothes & brought them in. Did every day work. Adrienne & Adele at Greenville. Don planted the rest of the garden. Didn't go to the Flower Show at Greenville.

Wed, June 21 — Fair. Did the ironing this A.M. Girls got up & did theirs. Addie asked me to go to Albany & I got my "shoes" & a few little things. Talked to Joyce. Home 4.30 P.M. Adrienne mowed lawn & Don finished. They went to see Gertrude.

Thurs, June 22 — Fair & cool.

Cleaned bed rooms dusted & fixed Joyce's new blue dress (hem). Adrienne at school this P.M. Pearl Abrams stopped & took me for a ride nearly to Middleburg this P.M. Nice time.

Fri, June 23 — Fair & warm. Cleaned living rooms etc. Chuck got Joyce & brought her home later. She's home till next Wed (July 5). Tiny asked me to go to the Eastern Star Bazaar. Had a nice time.

Sat, June 24 — Fair. Showered in P.M. Did necessary work. Went to Cairo with the Radios with Don. Chuck here in the evening. Had cream & Pepsi.

Sun, June 25 — Fair. I went to Church. Adrienne, Joyce & Don went to the races. Chuck took us to the Baccalaureate Sermon. Very warm. They went swimming at Lake Mysotis after.

Mon, June 26 — Fair. Hung out washing. It dried fine. Chuck & Joyce at school in A.M. & Albany in P.M. Don took us to Class nite & Chuck & Joyce brought us home. It was very good. Had a nice time.

Tues, June 27 — Shower this A.M. Fair this P.M. Ironed & mended. Crocheted etc. Don & Adrienne & Julia

Baitsholts to see Gertrude. Girls washed & ironed. Chuck phoned but didn't come over.

Wed, June 28 — Fair. Did every day work. Ironed for Joyce. Chuck came & Joyce went there till 5 P.M. He brought her back. Lite Philip & JoAnn took us to Graduation & brought us back. And I am going there till tomorrow nite. Chuck & Joyce out for the nite.

Thurs, June 29 — Mended cleaned eggs ironed etc for Delite. JoAnn at a party this P.M. Had a nice time (I did). Joyce & Chuck made a nite of it. Had a grand time. He's back here tonite & they are out. Don to see Gertrude tonite.

Fri, June 30 — Fair. Cleaned bedrooms & living-rooms & made 2 apple pies for the Conference kids. Joyce went to Albany to get her check today with Chuck & Ma Femia. Adrienne goes to work tomorrow for the weekend. Addie called.

Sat, July 1 — Fair. Did necessary work. Adrienne went to Greenville to work. I helped Mrs Howard Waldron get dinner for the Conference. Joyce & Gene riding to Livingstonville.

GARDENING TIPS

BY BOB BEYFUSS



Edelweiss and Epsom Salt

I was pleased to be able to purchase an Edelweiss plant at Story's nursery last Friday. I have planted it in a sunny, well drained location and it is nicely budded up! The garden center was packed when I was there despite it being a weekday. I picked up my "Big Beef" tomato transplants, although they will be very overgrown by the time I can safely transplant them into my garden. The soil in my raised beds remains at 50 degrees and that is too cold for good growth. Still, I worry that there will be none left to buy in a few weeks, so I am committed to taking good care of the transplants now, which means daily, if not twice a day, watering and fertilizing.

I did plant my onion transplants and right now I am "curing" the seed potatoes that I cut up. Seed potatoes are whole potatoes that are cut into smaller pieces, with each cut piece having at least one sprout on it. It helps to "cure" these pieces by allowing them to sit out in the sun a few days, which forms

callous tissue over the cut sides and helps prevent them from rotting once planted.

As has been the case the past week, no rain was predicted today except for some "spotty" showers. I guess I am in the unfortunate location where these showers appear every single day! This is particularly annoying today since I just sprayed my tomato cages and stakes with full strength household bleach to kill overwintering spores of the early blight disease. I consider this the most important step to combat blight that you can take. Just about everyone who grows tomatoes will have early blight and some seasons it can defoliate the entire plant before the fruit ripens. I will also spray a fungicide at the time of transplanting to delay the onset of disease. By the time the fruit begin to ripen, I don't want to have to spray anything at all!

I have been reading several "first person testimonials" about how wonderful Epsom salts, aka magne-

sium sulfate, is for enhancing plant growth, flowering and fruiting. It is true that both magnesium and Sulphur are important micronutrients for good plant growth, but remember they are MICRONUTRIENTS and not MACRONUTRIENTS, as are Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium. Indeed, adding Epsom salts to soils that are deficient in these elements can make a remarkable difference, but the fact is that very, very few local soils are deficient in either of these.

Any garden soil that has had any organic fertilizer or organic mulch applied is unlikely to have such a deficiency. In the 30+ years I worked for Cornell Cooperative Extension, I looked at hundreds of soil test analysis and I don't recall ever seeing either nutrient listed as "deficient". Where they can be deficient is in potting soils, or other artificial soils that are commonly used for growing bedding plants, perennials or other plants that will be transplanted. In those cases it is

probably more effective to spray a very dilute solution on the leaves to allow direct absorption into the plant.

Magnesium deficiency is also seen when transplants are put in cold soil, as evidenced by stunted, yellow or purple new growth. This has nothing to do with a soil deficiency, just as blossom end rot is not caused by a lack of calcium in the soil, per say. It just indicates that the root system is not yet developed well enough to allow absorption of these micronutrients, due to cold soil and oversized transplants. The problem cures itself quite nicely when the soil warms up and the roots grow, whether Epsom salts are added or not. I think some of these claims reflect the observation that "I have this issue, I added Epsom salts and it went away, therefore Epsom salts cured my problem". That is a first person testimonial and not a scientific conclusion. The other source of this claim is when someone does something almost exactly

the same each year, but this time, after adding the Epsom salts, the results were much, much better. I can understand this if one is dealing with hanging baskets or other container grown plants in artificial soil mixes, but in gardens growing in outdoor soil it is unlikely.

Scientifically, in order to have a meaningful cause and effect, it is imperative to design an experiment that allows for untreated "controls" as well as test subjects. All other possible causes of the phenomena must be carefully controlled to see if the one change that has been made is perhaps the cause for different results. The good news is that adding Epsom salts to your soil, or watering your plants with it, is pretty harmless and if you think it is beneficial, keep on doing it!

Reach Bob at rlb14@cornell.edu.

Positively Speaking

Two wooden sticks formed my world.

By Gary W. Moore
For The Greenville Pioneer

I've been a percussionist since I was eight years old. For those who are unfamiliar with the term ... I'm a drummer.

A man named Levi Rock handed me a pair of Ludwig 3S laminated drumsticks. Although I didn't know it at the time, the trajectory of my life was set. He then said, "Hey Bill ... strap a drum on this kid and take him outside and teach him to play Paradiddles, Triplets and Shave and a Hair Cut." Bill Buck, still a dearest friend to this day, nodded and I followed him into "the cage," the equipment room for the Kankakee Challengers Drum

& Bugle Corps.

It was love at first grip as I held those sticks in hand and looked at that red, silver, and blue sparkle drum strapped to my right shoulder and resting on my left thigh. It felt natural ... as if I were born to wear it.

Time passed, but every step of my life was guided or influenced by this pair of wooden sticks. My junior high and high school years were all dominated by concert band, jazz band, marching band, and drum & bugle corps at the American Legion.

The sticks then took me to VanderCook College of Music for a degree in music education. I won a state NBTA Rudimental Drumming Solo Championship



Gary W. Moore

and two months later placed third in the nation. I performed and toured for a season with the Na-

tional/World Champion Chicago Cavaliers. Music never became my vocation but led, guided, and influenced my professional and personal life in profoundly positive ways.

Those sticks took me on a five-week tour as a drummer for Country Star Ray Price. All along the way, I couldn't have ever imagined where my sticks would take me next.

Through the years, I've performed off and on in my church with our praise and worship team, but life, health and professional travel brought me to the point where performing ended.

A few weeks ago, Pastor Matt Smith, arranged an opportunity for me to take those wooden sticks and make music one more time, and maybe for the last time. I was so rusty ... but the band pulled me along and allowed me the privilege to sit at those drums and play. I'm grateful.

What's the point of this column? One point is to emphasize the importance of music education, which I believe is tragically undervalued within our educational system. More importantly, the point is to highlight the impact of doing what you love and finding your passion. The joy of taking those two pieces of wood into my hands and making a joyful noise, for me, is priceless. It has enriched my life in indescribable ways.

You just never know the profound impact moments in time can have. Lightning may strike at any time. You must always be open to new experiences, as you never know where they will lead.

For my dad, I'm guessing it might be the first time someone

handed him a baseball. For my daughter, a Pastor, the first time she was handed a Bible. For my wife, it's gardening. Drumsticks, a baseball, a Bible, a few flowers magically arranged to create beauty ... all unexpected but profound moments that led to a life-long passion.

We can't choose those moments that lead to our passions. They just happen. We don't plan them and usually are not even aware that they've happened at all until years later. A parent can't choose for a child ... and I don't think we choose at all. Maybe the passion chooses us ... seizing our emotions, creating a life-long love.

I think the best we can do is give ourselves and our children a wide variety of experiences until they find what they love. And unfortunately, for some, maybe they never find that passion. It's never too late. I know people who in the latter years of their life were struck by something they learned that they loved.

Be open. Let your mind and heart explore the possibilities.

Did you have that moment in your life? If not, are you open to having it?

Gary W. Moore is a freelance columnist, speaker, and author of three books including the award-winning, critically acclaimed, "Playing with the Enemy." Follow Gary on Twitter @GaryW Moore721 and at www.garywmoore.com



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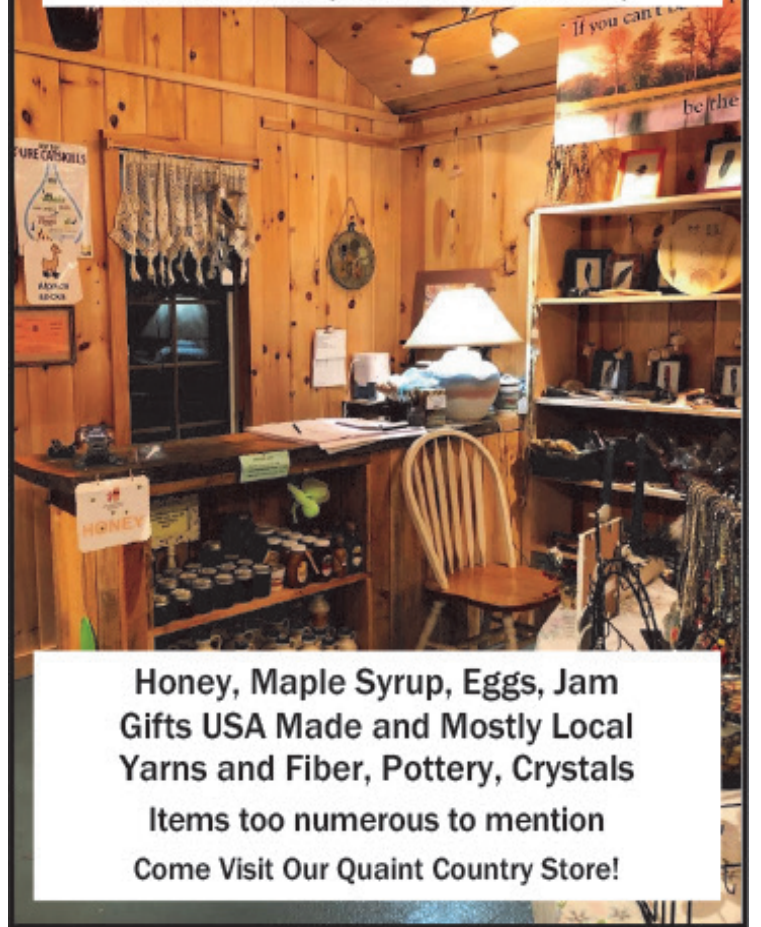
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Oak Hill & Vicinity...

By Mary Lou Nahas



Could this cottage have been part of Flower's operation and moved down the creek to its present location? Several people have said it was a dye house for the cloth making process. Possibly.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

There is no indication of the early mills today. But George, who would have lived approximately where the picture is taken from, could have looked out at his establishment down the hill along the creek. Today teasel can be found growing in that area. I have no idea if it could have been planted back in Flower's day, and used in the fulling process, but maybe.

Fulling Mills: once a thriving business in upstate New York

I have long been intrigued by JG Borthwick's comments on the Mills of Old Durham, p36, "History of Greene County." It states, "The next want of settlers was clothing: they could go barefoot, but clothing was a necessity. They raised flax and kept sheep; and their good wives spun and wove linen and flannel, and linsey-woolsey; but they became a little proud, and wanted fulled cloth. To meet this felt want, George Flowers, Esq., built a large carding and fulling-mill with dye-works, attached near his sawmill at Oak Hill." Borthwick had earlier written, "Lucas DeWitt built a sawmill quite near the upper bridge in Oak Hill; and George Flower also built one on the same stream, one-half mile north of Oak Hill."

Why was I intrigued by the comments about a large carding and fulling mill with dye works? I believe that today I own the property where it was located. I look out at it every day. There is no sign of any large building or group of buildings along the creek today. There is some remnant of a dam, but that's all. Legend has it that the cottage behind the Tripp barn was a dye house and the building was later moved to its present location. There are no early photos (to my knowledge) and no real proof that the story is true. I can verify that the cottage was once a chicken house and later an artist's studio and today a garden cottage which has been pictured in several magazines, but a large carding and fulling mill with dye-work? In fact, for a long time, I didn't even know what a fulling mill was.

Borthwick went on to write: "Joseph and John Wright had a similar establishment near Schenek's Bridge, north side of the stream. This bridge fell down with a drove of cattle on it, causing the death of three of them. The bridge and the road connected with it were then abandoned. Simeon and Asa Jones, and John Jerome, also built full-

ing-mills on Thorp Creek. There was also a fulling-mill on Saybrook Creek. But the last carding and fulling machine was the one which was built and occupied by Israel Brown, near Brown's Mill. He, at one time carried on a large business there, but since his death in 1881, it has not been used."

Seems every town had fulling mills at one time. Hiram Bogardus, in Beers History of Greene County, wrote about Greenville "The first grist-mill in the town was built by Augustine Prevost. It stood on a small stream known as Prevost Creek, a short distance above where it empties into the Basic, and on the farm afterward owned by Josiah Rundle. This mill was standing, within the memory of many now living, although it did not continue in use many years. Several saw-mills and fulling-mills were built at an early day on the upper Basic, although but little can be said of them at present, except that the Hicock family had a saw-mill above the Scripture Bridge, and also a share in a fulling-mill nearby. Interestingly enough, two Hicock brothers owned the brick house in Oak Hill in the 1830s.

There were also a number of fulling mills in the town of Rensselaerville. The book People Made It Happen Here, has a section on carding-fuling: It tells us that in Medusa in 1814 Daniel Doolitell and Elihu Wetmore had a Fulling and Carding Mill.

Porter Wright recounted that before Squire Tanner owned the mill, the present Leslie Moore house was a fulling mill. The fulling mill processed cloth from hand-spun materials. The purpose of this process was to give body to the cloth, raise the nap, remove the oil from the wool and shrink the material, Wright explained.

Listed in Rensselaerville in 1801: Wm and Urial King erected a mill (for fulling, dressing and dyeing cloths) a little below the grist-mill on about the site that was later



The Miner Walden Carding and Fulling Mill in nearby Berne was built shortly after 1797. It was also used to produce wooden shoe pegs before becoming part of Simmons Axe Factory in 1825.



This 1867 map is much later than the early fulling mill. But Flowers lived where H.O. Graham is shown on the map and his mill would have been on Kelsey Creek. Since water was necessary for the fulling process it would have been a good location.

occupied by a sawmill first owned by Jon Shultes and then Burt Warner: Hollister and Miner erected carding machinery in this mill.

Listed in the 1850 Industrial Census is Lewis Dietz—cloth manufacturing; 1813 in Town of Rensselaerville —3 fulling mills; 1824 6 fulling mills in town; 1820 J H Nowell & Tenney record that there were 3 carding machines in Rensselaerville.

Further away the Haskell & Smith's Gazetteer recorded that in 1840 Schenectady County had 7 fulling mills, 2 woollen factories, 1 cotton factory. Schoharie County had 30 fulling mills and 1 woollen factory.

I've also learned about fulling. Seems it is an ancient craft, mentioned in Greek literature and the Bible. Old Sturbridge Village has published material on the process:

A fulling mill generally consisted of heavy wooden mallets which were mechanically made to continually rise and fall on the cloth in a water-filled trough. The device was run by a waterwheel. The loosely woven cloth was placed in the fulling trough, together with hot water and some form of detergent.

In Dobson's Dictionary of Art, Science and Miscellaneous Literature in 1798, we learn that cloth was "laid in urine, then in fuller's earth, and water and lastly in soap dissolved in hot water. Soap alone would do very well, but this is expensive. After being fulled and dyed, the cloth was suspended in open fields for stretching, so that it would dry evenly and square. Fulling mills were located in open country with plenty of field space upon which the tenter frames could be set up and fabric dried in the sun and



I wish I had a photo of George Flower but the only family photo I currently have is that of his grandson Roswell.

air. The cloth then passed through a furler who removed knots, rough spots and loose threads. The cloth was napped by teasels, or fuller's thistles, which raised a fine nap and resulted in a material that felt softer. Teasels, a tall herbaceous biennial plant, were not planted in this country until 1833, before which they were imported from Europe. The fulling operation took from 48 to 65 hours. The practice died out with the modernization of the industrial revolution.

But back to Oak Hill and Vicinity: George Flower who owned the property and the mills in Oak Hill referenced in Beers was a Revolutionary War veteran who came to Oak Hill from Connecticut with his wife. They had a number of children. He farmed and was enterprising, being a member of the church and serving in positions of leadership in town. I don't know how he would have learned about the process, but he is often referred to as a clothier. I also do not know when he closed the mills here.

One son, Nathan Monroe Flower, who was born at Oak Hill in 1796, learned the wool-carding and cloth-dressing trade in his father's mill here. As an adult Nathan moved to Cherry Valley where he married Mary Ann Boyle. In 1822, he and his wife moved to the remote settlement of Theresa, where he established a wool-carding and cloth-making business which were later destroyed by fire. Roswell Pettibone Flower, who became the 30th Governor of New York from 1892 to 1894, was their fourth son and sixth child.

Columnist Mary Lou Nahas is the Town of Durham Historian. She lives in Oak Hill, thus the name of her column.

C-D kindergarten teacher faces drug charges

By Melanie Lekocevic
Courtesy of Columbia-Greene Media

CAIRO-DURHAM — A Cairo-Durham School District kinder-

garten teacher was arrested on drug charges during her lunch break this week in connection with an ongoing police investigation into the distribution of narcotic drugs in the

county, Greene County District Attorney Joseph Stanzione said in a statement Friday afternoon.

Melissa Eising Saccoccie, 40, of Coxsackie, was charged with

seventh-degree criminal possession of controlled substances and driving while ability impaired by drugs, Stanzione said.

"It is alleged that the arrest occurred while Ms. Saccoccie was on her work lunch break," Stanzione said.

The Cairo-Durham school district released a statement stating a faculty member was arrested by state police in connection with an incident that allegedly took place off school property, but did not identify the faculty member. "We do not believe that student or staff safety was jeopardized by this faculty member," according to the statement. "As always, the district is committed to cooperating with law enforcement and will be conducting its own investigation to determine if the faculty member's conduct was school related."

Saccoccie was arrested as a result of a continuing investigation by New York State Police and the Greene County District Attorney's Office into five people arrested Monday in connection with the dis-

tribution of narcotics in the county, Stanzione said. Stanzione did not identify the link between Saccoccie and the five individuals.

Timothy Reese, 33, of Earlton, was charged with third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class B felony, and second-degree criminal possession of a weapon, a class C felony. Jarrod Reese, 31, of Selkirk, was charged with first-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A felony, and second-degree criminal possession of a weapon, a class C felony. Dwayne Brown, 38, of Ballston Spa, was charged with first-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A felony. Cassandra Garza, 30, of Catskill, was charged with first-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class A felony. Cheryl Medert, 55, of Earlton, was charged with third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a class B felony. Saccoccie was issued an appearance ticket and is scheduled to appear in Cairo Town Court at a future date.

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I wanted to thank everyone within the Ravena / Coeymans / Selkirk communities for their continued support over the last year. It has been difficult at times but we have managed to get through it and provide a helpful community service. We are back to regular business hours Mon - Fri 10am - 5pm / Sat 10am - 3pm / Closed on Sundays

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SKATE, from page 1

selves. One day, on their way to the Cumberland Farms a few years ago, Euf and his friends spotted the empty tennis court no longer in use. They found a bunch of discarded filing cabinets in a dumpster, and after cleaning off the tennis court, they brought in the filing cabinets to create ledges for doing grind tricks on their bikes.

Their makeshift skate park did not last long. Soon, they found the gate locked and improvised equipment gone.

Area youth persisted in the effort to have a place to do their sport. At Vanderbilt Town Park, some youth brought in rails and ramps to use. The Town of Greenville, noting a lack of insurance, banned the activity in May 2019.

At the June 17, 2019 town board meeting, members discussed building a skate park in town, having obtained estimates for insurance coverage. A local resident donated ramps and other equipment for this purpose.

When Freehold resident Tracy Young found out about the effort, she volunteered to help, organizing a group of about 30 people to clean off tennis court with the assistance of the town's building and grounds employees. "We cleaned all the stuff out, and people were excited," she said. The plan was to open the park in the spring of 2020.

Rotarian John Ingalls invited Greenville town councilman Travis Richards to a Rotary meeting to explain the project and enlist the club's support. The Rotary decided to donate \$1,800 for the purchase of quarter pipes, ramps, and other equipment from Camp Pinnacle, a religious retreat center in Voorheesville, to augment the donated equipment.

When COVID-19 hit, the



CHRIS KARLE/GREENVILLE PIONEER
Sean Aloisi attempts the skateboard trick nicknamed "disaster" on a quarter pipe.

project, as so many others during the pandemic, was put on hold, but the plans to build a skate park began moving forward this spring. The town installed the equipment and on May 31, opened the park for use from dawn to dusk.

Adler Karle, who has been skateboarding for about six months, and a group of friends had an opportunity to try out the park after it opened, skating up and down the ramp and doing tricks on the rails. "It was pretty good—fun," Karle said. "It brought all my friends together again," he said.

For Karle and others in the skating community, the sport is largely about community and connection, something that was

a challenge during the pandemic. "It's a community you're a part of—it's not just you getting on your skateboard and doing tricks—but you have friends that motivate you to keep going," he said.

Karle has learned how to ride from his friends as well as watching YouTube videos. "A big part of skating is what tricks I can do and how I can build off of those and do those same tricks and make them look cooler, or put them all together," he said. Making "lines" is when skateboarders link a series of tricks together in a sequence.

Euf said that the park is more geared towards skateboarding than BMX, because the equipment is too close together. Now



CHRIS KARLE/GREENVILLE PIONEER
Liam McMillan does a "truck grind" on a quarter pipe.



CHRIS KARLE/GREENVILLE PIONEER
Simon Uht of Greenville does a "K grind" on a quarter pipe.



CHRIS KARLE/GREENVILLE PIONEER
Simon Uht of Greenville does a "stall" on a ramp

that he drives and works in Colonie, he heads to Albany's Washington Skate Park after work. "I pretty much go to work in the morning with my bike in the car and then stay until the lights go out," he said.

In Greenville, Karle plans to spend a great deal of his free time using the park. "I definitely will be spending the majority of my days after school there or weekends and during the summertime," he said. "I would never have thought that Greenville would have a skate park or build one. It shows that Greenville cares about their community. Kids who skateboard usually get a bad rap. Greenville gave kids a chance to redeem themselves and show that they care about everybody in the community."

Greenville's timing is appropriate given what is happening in the Olympic sporting community. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) added BMX to the Olympic Games in 2008, and skateboarding debuts as an Olympic sport in Tokyo this summer, with provisional approval for inclusion in the 2024 Paris games.

"It has really been wonderful to see how the entire community has come together," said Young of the skate park's creation. Both parents and their kids are enthusiastic.

I think it's going to be a great thing for the kids in town," Richards said. "It gives them something to do, and it's a good focal point for kids to be involved in outside of school and outside of school sporting events."



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Farmers market comes to Cairo

By Joanne E. McFadden
The Greenville Pioneer

This summer there will be yet another opportunity for people to get back to “normal life,” with the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic behind us. The Cairo Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring a bimonthly farmers market on the first and third Fridays of the month beginning July 2.

The market will provide an opportunity to purchase locally grown produce and support local small business owners, as well as a chance to chat with other people and enjoy some free entertainment.

“The market was a thought about trying to catch people who are traveling through the area and providing people locally with some healthy options,” said Cairo Chamber Director Mike Esslie. He hopes to capitalize on the town’s central location by attracting those traveling through as well as area residents. “Realistically, all the major roads come through Cairo,” Essie said. “They can stop and grab stuff as they’re passing through the town and heading up to a resort in Round Top or whatever their travel plans are.”

The chamber approached the Cairo Town Board about the project and met with unanimous approval. The market will take place on the lawn of the Town Hall Building at 512 Main Street from 5 to 7:30 p.m.

This market is a boon for potential vendors, as there is no charge to participate. Vendors will be provided a 12’X12’ space, but they have to provide their own tables or pop-up tents.

In addition to produce, there will be other vendors selling crafts and other products. “We’re trying to keep it away from anything too commercialized,” Esslie said.

Jo Ann Rodriguez launched her home-based business, Jo’s Jewels in February. She sells Paparazzi jewelry via Facebook and also at local markets and fairs, so she was excited to have the opportunity to be at the new market in Cairo. “I wanted to make myself a part of any market that I was able to,” Rodriguez said.

She will have a booth with necklaces, several styles of bracelets, rings, and earrings, with products for women, men, and children. All jewelry for adults is \$5 and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Aiden Pagan, Kyle Thompson, and Carmela Buccu will be performing at the Cairo Farmers Market this summer.

children’s items are \$1.

Rodriguez plans to make a donation to the chamber, as there is no fee for her to set up shop at the farmers market.

In addition to vendors, the chamber is bringing in live musicians to perform during the market.

Kyle Thompson and his band, made up of singer Carmela Buccu and Aiden Pagan, who plays the guitar and cajón, a box-shaped percussion instrument originally from Peru, are on the schedule. The trio has been performing street music out in front of Horizon Christian Fellowship and is now excited to be a part of the new farmers market. “We want to create a nice atmosphere,” Thompson said.

The band set a goal of writing a song a week, and the group plans to perform some of their original music as well as pop music.

“It’s a great opportunity that Mr. Esslie has given us,” said Thompson, the band’s lead singer and guitarist.

Also performing this summer will be the Dani Dae Duo, made up of singer and songwriter Dani McIntosh of East Durham and guitarist Reggie Normandin of Johnstown. The duo performs in a wide range of musical styles, both their own original songs and popular music, all over the state.

The market will operate through mid-September.

“There’s a lot of towns in the area that are doing farmers markets as well,” Esslie said. “We’re working towards establishing a long-term annual market.”



Jo Ann Rodriguez brings her business, Jo’s Jewels, to the Cairo Farmers Market this summer.

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UP,

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AND
AWAY!

SURVEY, from page 1

the internet. We hope to ultimately improve this starting with this survey,” said Harry Lennon, legislator for District 8.

District 4’s legislator Greg Davis agrees. “It’s very important, and approximately 25 percent of the citizens of Greenville do not have good access to broadband,” he said.

The campaign will address accessibility as well as affordability. “I have had constituents wanting to have broadband available to their house for a business use, who would have to pay for the installation of the lines which can amount to thousands of dollars per mile from the existing connections,” Lawrence said. The county has plans to change that, beginning with this survey.

The survey results will help the county to identify areas with no or slow internet service and determine the barriers to providing that service. With this information, the county can move onto Phase 2 of the effort, which is completing grant applications to receive state and federal funds for improving broadband access.

Funding is a major challenge in improving the county’s Internet service. “We need to have the data down to the street level to be able to communicate to state and federal grant sources,” Hart said. “You have to do a deep dive into assessing the gaps in order to put together a competitive application.”

This is why completion of the survey by residents and business

owners is a critical piece of the process, and the county is asking all residents to participate. “I encourage residents to complete the online survey or the paper survey if they don’t have access to online and return it to the county office of planning and economic development,” Lennon said. “The more residents that complete the survey, the better opportunity we will have for additional funds to eventually go into the project.”

Internet providers are also working with the county to map out the current network of Internet access.

One goal of the campaign to improve broadband service is to increase competitiveness in the market, Hart said, noting that in rural counties, including Greene County, there are not currently multiple Internet service providers. Having competition will help to address Internet affordability.

Improving broadband service will also fuel economic development in the county. “In the end, it will provide a vehicle that will expand our local economy in Greene County,” Lennon said.

Improving Internet access requires a collaborative effort. “It takes a lot of commitment by businesses and municipalities and our local providers and our residents to really put together a solution to the problem,” Hart said. “It is a continued priority of the county legislature.”

To access the survey online, visit www.GreeneBroadband.com.

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John Barr, Operations Manager (standing by the dedication plaque to Gaby Newmark, TCI's co-founder)
"We can teach skills, but if you come with the work ethic that is the key. At TCI we are not only teaching work skills but life skills."



Brett Margiasso, Truck Unloading Supervisor, Class of 2019
"My senior year, BOCES brought me down for a tour. I was fascinated and started my internship. It was the best decision ever. I moved into a full-time job and have been lovin' it ever since. I learn something new every day."



Megan Keir, Administrative Assistant Intern, Class of 2021
"I'm training in the transportation and oil departments. I like the variety, multiple responsibilities, learning new tasks and just like the environment. I will be working here full time after graduation."



Caleb Foronda, Truck Unloading Specialist, Class of 2021, Started January 2020
"I like the people. Everyone is nice and friendly. The hours are flexible. Sometimes I come in at 5 am and sometimes at 7 am. What they care about is getting the job done."



Hunter Pike, Production line intern, Class of 2021, Started October last year
"I started as an Intern working half the day. Learned a lot. Responsibility. Showing up on time. Now I'm full time. There are a lot of things you can do here. Hours are good and I'm making good pay."



Kameron Gonzalez, Production line intern, Class of 2021
"My paid internship couldn't be better. I'm deconstructing transformers. It's fun because of the variety of things I'm doing. I put the money into my savings account. Pay for gas. Occasionally go out to eat."



Roberto Gonzalez, Jr., Production line intern, Class of 2022
"I started 3 months ago and do a little bit of everything. I got certified and can drive the forklift. I will work at TCI full time this summer, but I want to join the union for electrical through the BOCES program to be an electrician."



Nate Cary, Paid intern in phase 3 (pad mount section), Class of 2021
"I'm taking the transformers apart and I like what I'm doing now. There are also opportunities to grow. I hope to get certified in forklift. After graduation I'm looking to go to work full time here."

RCS STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE STRONG WORK ETHIC

TCI's paid internships lead to promising careers

"We believe people are our most important asset. We are a family-owned business committed to our employees and our community. We provide a positive work environment, good jobs with benefits, worked based learning opportunities for students, and the opportunity for people to advance."

Brian Hemlock, President, TCI of NY

When you talk with the graduates and current students from RCS who are working at TCI there is a common theme that runs through them. These young men and women get it. It's a strong work ethic. They understand hard work and discipline. The importance of family. The value of money. They are intelligent and respectful.

"I just bought an engine for my car from the money saved by working at TCI," said Megan Keir. "In July, I'm taking my mom to Florida for a week. She has done so much for me. This definitely is a place to be if you want to get far. When I came here, I really didn't have much and now I'm working towards a lot so if that's something someone wants to achieve, I'd definitely apply here."

Brett Margiasso started three years ago at TCI. He was TCI's first paid intern. "This place gives you the option to have benefits at a young age. I learned about the 401k plan. At first, I was like 'what you want to take my money from me' but I researched it and talked to people. Saw what they're matching. I started saving for retirement."

Brett now supervises the off-loading of trucks.

"When I started, I was taking apart the transformers and working inside the big green pad mounts you see at places like the mall. It was very physical," said Brett. "My section now is offloading the trucks. We need to write up every piece of equipment that comes in,



The TCI - RCS Team: Becky O'Neil, Kameron Gonzalez, Nate Cary, Megan Keir, Roberto Gonzalez, Jr., Brett Margiasso, Hunter Pike, Caleb Foronda, Sam Kostue, John Barr, Brian Hemlock

record the gallons of oil and weight. Note the manufacturer. My writing has improved. It requires good judgement. What needs to be instantly scrapped or put aside to be refurbished and put up for sale. It's a lot. It's more mental now than physical."

John Barr says, "It is a lot of responsibility. Making decisions where this equipment goes. He runs the section at 20 years old. One thing we preach here is we promote from within. I see great things for Brett."

TCI employs a reverse manufacturing process that prepares mill ready materials that are refined according to stringent specifications from the mills. The materials need to be at the same high standards as other manufacturing suppliers to the mills that are producing materials.

Caleb Foronda started out as an intern on the assembly line showing up for work at 5 am until head-

ing off to school. Then Covid hit and he was unable to continue his internship. Then around July 2020 he came back and was able to take his online courses at TCI. He now works full time in surplus operating a 5-ton crane that takes the transformers off trucks and puts them on the assembly line.

"I'm proud that this material is either re-purposed or recycled," he says. "I'm not planning to go to college and see opportunities for advancement here. Brett already runs his own section at 20 years old. The pay and benefits are great. I'm working on getting a new car. Going on vacation. Before I had a cell phone and couldn't pay the bill. Now I can."

John Barr, "Caleb was the first intern to take his online classes at TCI. He would come in at 5 am to work and then do his classes. He graduated 6 months early."

TCI goes to the utilities with specialized trailers to pick up transformers and then off loads them at the plant where they go onto the highly modernized production line to separate the materials and prepare them to be mill ready.

Brett goes on to say, "If you genuinely pay attention and want to grow and build with this company, there is no reason you can't. It is truly a great place to work. I wake up every day and enjoy coming to work. I've learned a lot with engines and maintenance. It's cool there are opportunities for growth and advancement here. I was one of the youngest to be certified on the forklift. Sometimes, I'll stick around and hang out with the truck drivers. I learn a lot from them. Who knows maybe I'll get my CDL license some day and drive a

truck."

Kameron Gonzalez adds, "I enjoy working with the people here. It is a fun environment. Every job here is important. Constantly learning how to problem solve. The transformers are all different. I would like to drive the bigger machines someday and believe there is the opportunity to grow. I plan on coming here full time."

All materials from the transformers are separated according to different categories based on what is reusable or scrap. The reusable parts are prepared according to specifications for sale to the mills. Materials are transported throughout the plant on forklifts operated by trained and certified employees. Truck operators are certified commercial.

Roberto Gonzalez, Jr. says, "We take apart the transformer starting with the top. Then drain all the oil out of it. Dry it up and bring it out to disassemble and crush. I am super glad to be able to have this paid internship that has allowed me to help my mom and help pay for my truck that always has problems."

Lisa Patierne, Principal at RCS, said, "Not every student will go onto college. TCI provides students with paid worked based learning opportunities that can lead to a promising career. I'm comfortable with sending students to TCI because they really are a family organization with a positive culture. The students that work there love it."

Brett says, "I definitely would recommend this place for people with a good work ethic. It is hard work and you really do need to work. But every year we are working to make it safer and more effi-

cient. Finding ways to protect the guys. I've seen the investment into making it safer."

"I'm studying welding at BOCES," says Nate Cary. "I go to the Albany campus every other day. TCI is a good place to start. They offer flexible hours to work around my schedule. I'm happy with the pay. Everybody is cool. Work keeps me busy. I like it. I'm putting some money away to buy a new car."

Megan says, "You have to know what you are doing. Weighing trucks in, doing paperwork, sending paperwork to buyers, running paperwork out to drivers. It's a busy department. I like bigger responsibilities and can take on a lot."

Not all the interns will go to work at TCI after graduation. Hunter Pike says, "Overall, it's just fun, but I do want to go to college and looking at Hudson Valley, but for now, I'm happy working here. I'm going on vacation in two weeks with my family and the money I make here is going to pay for it."

"This private-public partnership between TCI and RCS is a perfect example of career exploration and readiness that is paramount to developing a skilled workforce" states Brian Williams, Executive Director of the Capital Region Workforce Development Board. "Exposing youth to different careers allows them to develop the workforce skills they need to be successful."

Brian Hemlock says, "This is a great group of young folks who are doing a great job. The partnership with RCS has been outstanding. We couldn't be happier with the work they are doing."

TCI's first plant in Coeyman's was built in 2014. Last August TCI opened their new expansion facility a 35,000 square foot, state of the art addition that added new capability to the existing plant. This expanded services to their customers the power companies and utilities throughout the Northeast. New jobs were created. Jobs that used to go out of state were brought to Coeymans.

TCI of NY is one of eight members of the G&S Family of Companies with 600 employees across America, all devoted to the environmentally safe processing, recycling and repair of transformers and other oil-filled electrical equipment, and the safe processing and re-use of electrical oils. The company recycles and repurposes 99 percent of the material in the transformers received, providing a great environmental benefit as just a few decades ago, this material was put into landfills.

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Harvesting H2O

By Thomas Christopher

I'm investing in a new water system for my garden in the Berkshires this spring. Our well, although it furnishes a perfectly adequate supply for our household needs, does not produce enough flow to support garden irrigation. With the increasing frequency of droughts – a feature of our changing climate in the Northeast – I'm finding that just depending on the rain that falls on the garden is no longer enough. Instead, I'm installing a 500-gallon cistern that will be fed by run-off from the roof of our house. Coupled with a gravity-fed drip irrigation system, this should be enough to substantially help our complex of raised bed vegetable gardens through at least the shorter spells of rainless weather.

Such a "water-harvesting" system is still a novelty in the Northeast. It shouldn't be. Water is an irreplaceable resource, and clean water is in limited supply even in areas such as ours that are blessed with ample amounts of precipitation. We should not be using precious potable water on landscape irrigation, especially while squandering the moisture that falls naturally on our site. It makes no sense to arrange our landscaping so that we pump thousands of gallons of the former to satisfy our lawns and gardens, while we allow the latter to escape as run-off that then overloads our water treatment systems or pollutes the local waterways.

I first encountered water harvesting during trips to the southwestern states thirty years ago, when I was researching a book about water-wise gardening. Re-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The building that once housed Mountain T-Shirts has been razed to make way for a new Stewart's.

cently, I reconnected to that region when I consulted with Greg Peterson, founder of The Urban Farm in Phoenix, Arizona.

Greg is a passionate gardener, the creator of "The Urban Farm", a 1/3-acre permaculture food forest that he has created around his home in a residential neighborhood of the city. He believes that current aspirations for sustainability don't go far enough, that we need to re-invigorate and restore nature rather than just perpetuating it in its current damaged state. Living in a desert locale, a key part of re-invigorating his yard has been to manage water wisely. He told me about how he has done this, while suggesting how I might apply his experience to my very different situation.

Greg says that to control the cost of his gardening, he likes

to keep the water harvesting as simple as possible. That is, most of the water that falls on his site he collects in channels that feed a series of shallow basins which he has filled with wood chips. Around each of these basins he has planted fruit trees, some 70 in all. The water from the occasional rainstorm fills the basins and sinks into the soil at their bottoms, moistening it deeply. The roots of the trees (and potentially other plants) can then tap this subterranean moisture, substantially reducing their need for irrigation. Of course, had he chosen to landscape with native desert plants instead of edibles, as Greg points out, he wouldn't need to supplement the harvested water at all.

A key to making such a passive rain harvesting system work,

Greg explains, is improving the permeability of the soil by adding organic matter. He regularly top-dresses garden areas with a couple of inches of compost and mulches around trees and shrubs 6-inches-deep with wood chips.

Greg has also installed a 750-gallon cistern that he feeds with rain that falls on the roof of his house. He has re-plumbed a bathroom so that the so-called "gray water," everything except the water from the toilet, is delivered to ornamental landscaping outdoors. He even collects the water discharged from the system that cools his house in summertime to send it to the garden as well. In short, no water is wasted.

I very much doubt that I'll reach that degree of water conservation, but I do intend to regard the various producers of

water in my landscape as potential resources and not just wastes in the future. Thrift, after all, is supposed to be a Yankee virtue. Likewise, my observation when I was researching that book about water-wise gardening is that bringing the landscape into balance with the natural level of the water resources tends to produce much more interesting as well as more efficient display.

For more information about Greg Peterson's water harvesting techniques, listen to our conversation on the Berkshire Botanical Garden's Growing Greener podcast at [thomaschristophergardens.com/podcast](https://www.thomaschristophergardens.com/podcast).

Be-a-Better-Gardener is a community service of Berkshire Botanical Garden, located in Stockbridge, MA. Its mission, to provide knowledge of gardening and the environment through a diverse range of classes and programs, informs and inspires thousands of students and visitors each year. Thomas Christopher is a volunteer at Berkshire Botanical Garden and is the author or co-author of more than a dozen books, including Nature into Art and The Gardens of Wave Hill (Timber Press, 2019). He is the 2021 Garden Club of America's National Medalist for Literature, a distinction reserved to recognize those who have left a profound and lasting impact on issues that are most important to the GCA. Tom's companion broadcast to this column, Growing Greener, streams on WESUFM.org, Pacifica Radio and NPR and is available at his website, <https://www.thomaschristophergardens.com/podcast>.

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Social Security Matters

Will Applying for SS Disability Hurt SS Retirement Benefit?

By Russell Gloor
For Capital Region Independent Media

Dear Rusty: My husband turns 65 later this month. He has started having health issues - so much so that we are thinking about talking to his doctor about Social Security Disability. How would this affect him in applying for his Social Security benefits? Should we exhaust disability efforts before applying for his retirement benefits?

Signed: Concerned Wife

Dear Concerned Wife: In order to qualify for SS Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, your husband's disability must be considered total and must be expected to last for at least one year. And that will need to be substantiated by medical evidence from his doctor. So, having a discussion with his doctor is the

right first step.

Since SSDI benefits are based upon your husband's full retirement age (FRA) benefit amount, if he is awarded SS disability it would have no effect on his FRA benefit amount. In fact, if he is awarded SSDI benefits, they will automatically convert to his regular SS retirement benefit (at the same amount) when he reaches his FRA. SSDI benefits are replaced by SS retirement benefits once FRA is attained.

So, should your husband exhaust disability efforts before applying for his SS retirement benefit? Provided that his doctor will support that he is totally disabled and expected to remain so for at least a year, your husband should apply for SSDI online at www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability. This will establish a base date which will be used to establish a

disability onset date, which is what his SSDI benefit will be based upon if later awarded. You should be aware that it takes several months to receive an initial SSDI determination, and that about 2/3rds of all SSDI applications are denied. But there is an appeals process in place which can be used in the event of an initial denial and if he believes that is an unfair decision.

It is also possible for your husband to claim his personal early SS retirement benefit at the same time he applies for SSDI, so he can get some early SS income flowing while his SSDI application is being considered. Then, if his SSDI is later awarded, his smaller SS retirement benefit (reduced for claiming before his FRA) will be replaced by his higher SSDI benefit, and his higher SSDI amount will automatically become his SS retire-

ment amount when he reaches his FRA. However, if your husband's SSDI is not awarded, his reduced SS retirement benefit will be his permanent benefit amount (except, of course, for annual Cost of Living Adjustments).

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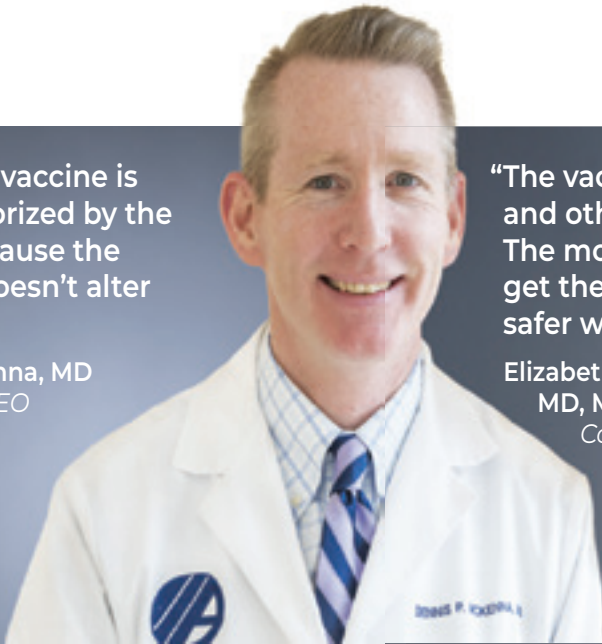
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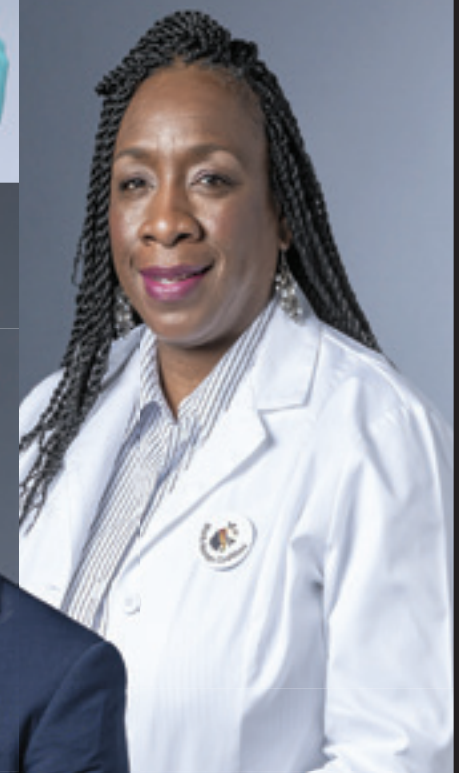
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Department
of Health



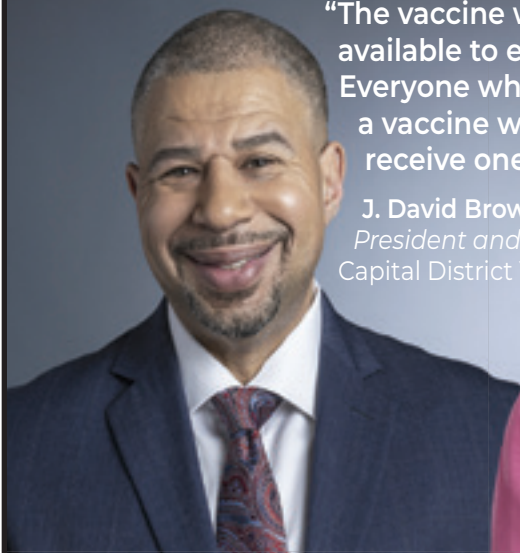
"The vaccine is free; it doesn't cost anything. Please, don't hesitate, vaccinate."

Brenda Robinson,
DNP, MSN, RN
CEO and Founder
Black Nurses Coalition



"The vaccine will be available to everyone. Everyone who wants a vaccine will receive one."

J. David Brown
President and CEO
Capital District YMCA



"No one will be left behind. Please, let's join together and do it right."

Ruth Mahoney
Market President
and Regional
Retail Leader
KeyBank



"We can recover from the pandemic if everyone is vaccinated."

Bill Hart
Vice President
of U.S.
Business
Operations
Irving Tissue



"Until enough people are vaccinated, please continue social distancing, wearing your mask and washing your hands."

John D. Bennett, MD
President and CEO
CDPHP



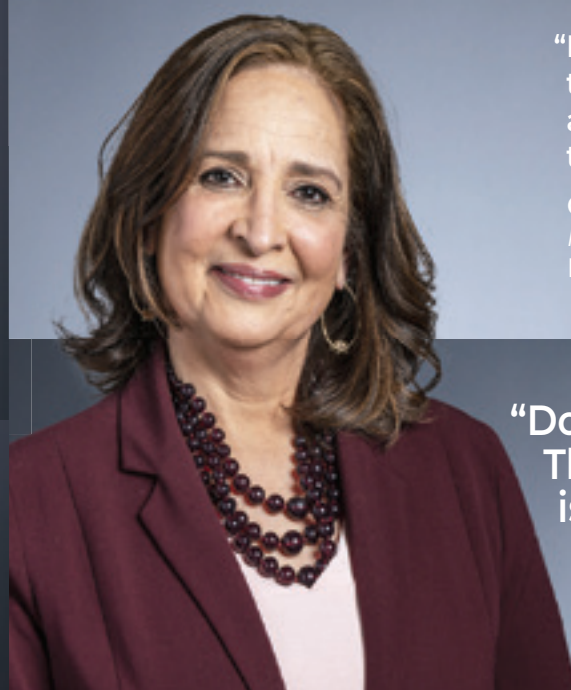
"When it is your turn, don't hesitate, vaccinate."

Odo Butler, DLP
Past President
Schenectady NAACP



"I encourage everyone to get the vaccine so we can feel safe again and start living our lives to the fullest."

Christopher Del Vecchio, RPH
President and CEO
MVP Health Care

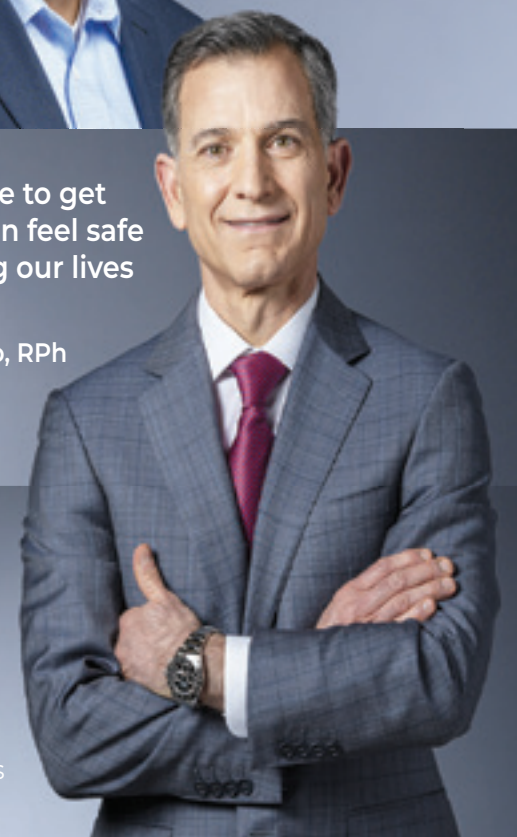


"Let's end the pandemic so we can once again open our arms to family and friends."

Ronald Pope, DO
Vice President of Medical Services
Columbia Memorial Health

"Don't be afraid. The vaccine is safe. I had it."

Micky Jimenez
Regional Director
Capital District Latinos



Capital Region
VACCINE NETWORK

Albany County
Columbia County
Greene County
Rensselaer County
Saratoga County
Schenectady County
Warren County
Washington County

Visit CapitalRegionVax.org to find out when and where you can get your free vaccination.

The Capital Region is pulling together to encourage everyone to receive the vaccine. Thank you especially to the following for underwriting a vaccine awareness campaign. They exemplify the region at its very best.

SIGNATURE PARTNERS



SUSTAINING PARTNERS



STEADFAST PARTNER



CapitalRegionVAX.org