



Dear Neighbors,

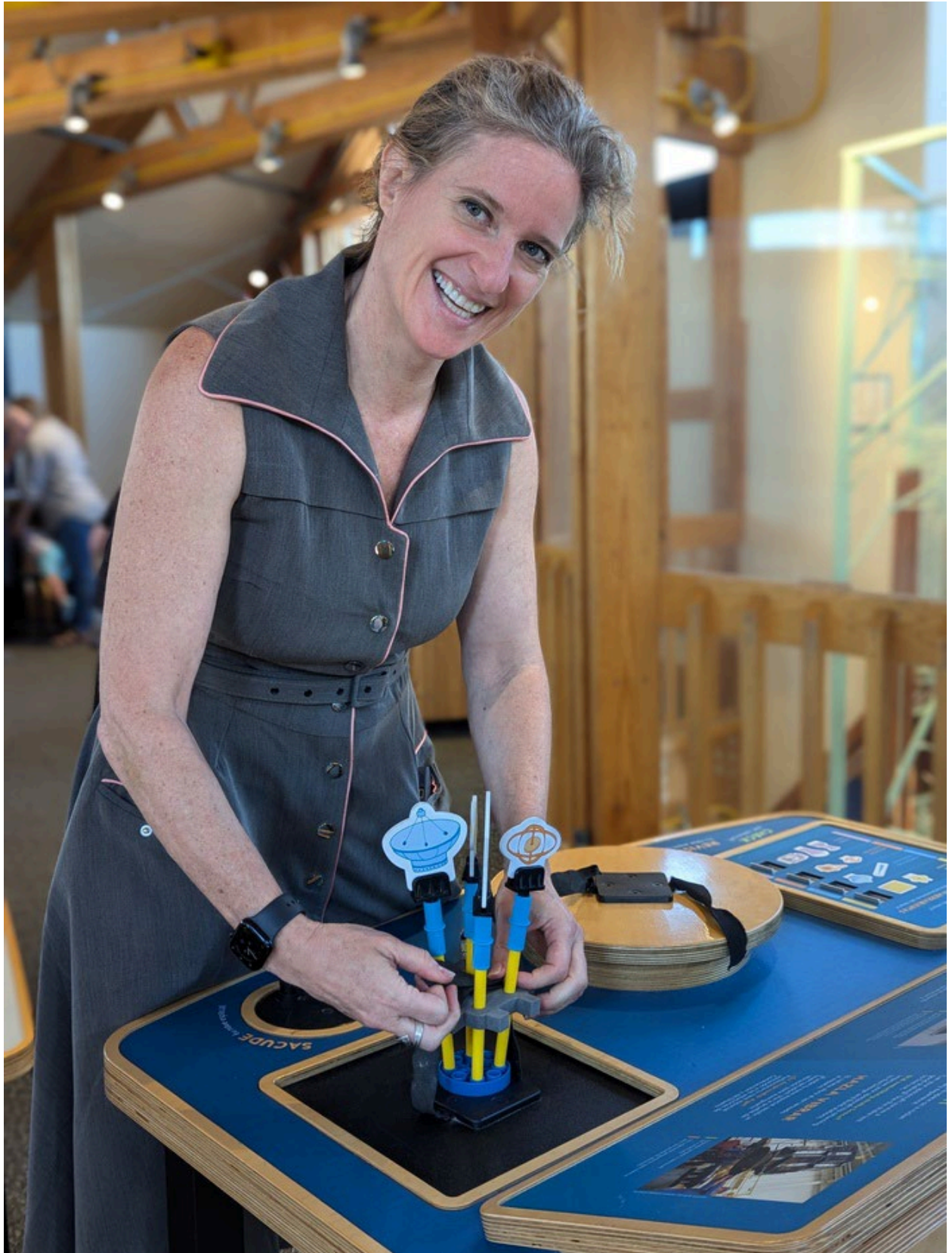
It's been another week of severe weather conditions - everything from oppressive heat to tornado touchdowns in our district. I am thinking of everyone who was impacted by the tornado that touched down in Cortland and Tompkins counties Wednesday night. The [National Weather Service](#) confirmed the tornado landed on Route 38 in Tompkins, just west of Harford, traveling 11 miles at speeds of up to 90 mph before ending in McGraw in Cortland County. I sincerely hope anyone who was in this path of destruction has the help and support they need to recover. Please refer to our community resources section below to find more useful links related to storm recovery or community needs. I know that as of the time this newsletter comes out, over 1,000 National Grid customers remain without power in Cortland, circumstances that can be dangerous for our most vulnerable populations. For a map of current outages or to report an outage, click [here](#).

Around the District

Sciencenter visit

I really enjoyed my tour of the Sciencenter last week, where I got an update on the many ways this incredible museum serves the public, including partnerships with community organizations for free admission passes and visitorships that extend beyond Tompkins County. I even got to participate in some educational and hands-on learning that the center offers. I felt like a little kid again, experiencing the wonder and joy of discovery. Here I am testing a rocket I designed to see if it would pass the spinning test without falling apart - which it did (only to fall apart on the flying test)! We are so fortunate to have the Sciencenter in our community, with its onsite museum and host of programs that foster in young people a curiosity in and love for science, technology, engineering and math (or STEM). During my tour I also learned about the adaptations the Sciencenter has made, particularly ones brought about by the pandemic - such as the addition of animal exhibits that allowed people to learn about small animals with the safety barrier of glass to

protect both humans and animals. I also learned of exciting new plans that are in the works for the Sciencenter, including plans to offer interactive features on-site that will be available even after hours for area youth to enjoy if they visit at a time when the museum is closed. These will be interactive stations outside the museum - but still on the Sciencenter grounds - and will compound its accessibility and availability to the community. Not only does the Sciencenter offer educational programming but it is also committed to the state's climate goals of reducing fossil fuel emissions, as it is proposing to transform into a state-of-the-art carbon-neutral facility. With the investment of an anticipated capital improvement grant and a generous private donation, the Sciencenter will upgrade to an underground water-sourced geothermal heat pump system, with even fewer emissions and less load on the grid than air-source heat pumps. Thank you Sciencenter for the many, dynamic ways you engage with the community!



Touring the Ithaca Sciencenter 7/3/24.

Splash pad ribbon cutting at Stewart Park

I was honored to attend the ribbon cutting for the updated and newly accessible splash pad at Stewart Park last week. Having grown up playing on the older, smaller splash pad, this project was deeply personal to me. The newly designed splash pad is larger, with fully accessible and more dynamic spraying features to ensure anyone coming can stay cool this summer, regardless of ability. I was thrilled to secure a total of \$500,000 in capital funds for both the upgraded splash pad and an addition to the park's large pavilion. I am so thankful to the City of Ithaca, Friends of Stewart Park, the Wharton Studio Museum and all the community members who joined together to bring this vision to life. I especially want to thank Rick Manning and Linda Reisman for the astounding work they put forth to make this possible. Without the tireless efforts of all involved to see this project to fruition, none of this would have happened. The capital grant will fund the 6,000 square-foot pavilion addition, so summer campers have all their equipment in one spot and don't have to trudge across the parking lot to get the equipment they need. This will also free part of the Wharton Studio for a future cafe highlighting the important history of the Wharton Studio Museum to the world of film in the early 1900s. This whole project will recognize the history of the park and also make it a place

that is truly accessible to everyone so all can reap the rich mental and physical health benefits of being outside in nature. Thank you to everyone who helped make this project at our beautiful, historic park a reality! If you want to watch my speech at this event, click [here](#).



With Friends of Stewart Park Executive Director Rick Manning at the Stewart Park splash pad ribbon cutting 7/3/24.

Welcome interns!

So much of what our district offices do includes the behind-the-scenes important work of our interns. Whether it's researching special projects, providing technical expertise, providing support at events, answering phones or helping to sort through and direct the thousands of messages we get weekly - we owe so much to our hard-working interns! These interns are high school, college and graduate school students who are gaining an experience of public service in government they will carry with them into the world. Barbara Batycka is pursuing a Master's in Public Administration at Cornell University, with a concentration in Economic and Finance Policy, and has experience in policy and data analysis, sustainable management and conference organization. Her research interest lies in leveraging technology and sustainability in local policymaking. Annie Austin is a rising junior at SUNY Cortland, studying international studies with a concentration in Culture and Global Development and a minor in Communications. She wants to learn more about the complex legislative process and possibly work with an international organization that provides humanitarian aid someday. Cassidy Snyder is an 1870 Scholar and rising Senior at Syracuse University studying History and Political Philosophy through the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and the Renee Crown Honors Program. She wants to join the

policy sphere one day, directly impacting people's lives through education, environmental policy and beyond. Leo Levy comes to us as a rising senior at Ithaca High School and he hopes to learn more about local government and be part of positive change for the district. His special interest areas include affordable housing and wealth inequality. Please join me in welcoming these amazing, gifted interns to the team and thanking them for their hard work!! If interested in applying to be an intern, click [here](#).



With summer 2024 interns Barbara Batycka, Cassidy Snyder, Annie Austin & Leo Levy in our Ithaca office.

Public Hearing

Constituent feedback sought on NYS School Aid study

The 2024-25 enacted New York State Budget includes a provision directing the Rockefeller Institute of Government to conduct a study and offer recommendations informed by public input to modify the State's Foundation Aid formula. Foundation aid was established as part of school aid in response to a court decision in 2006, which held the state had failed to ensure every student was receiving a “sound basic education” due to the large discrepancy between the lowest and the highest income school districts. It provides funding based on a formula that includes, for example, district-specific cost of living, cost to educate a student, funding capacity, and differing levels of student need. The current formula is also based on 2000 census data. This year’s enacted budget included funding for a study to inform recommendations for updating the formula, to be completed by December. As part of this study, the

Institute is conducting hearings and collecting feedback from the public, including but not limited to education stakeholders, including school families, teachers, staff, administrators, school boards, appointed and elected officials, education researchers and experts and education-focused support and advocacy organizations, inviting all to share input on the Foundation Aid formula either through verbal or written comments. The sites closest to our district where hearings will be held include one in Buffalo, NY at the North Park Community School on July 25th and one in Laurens, NY at the Laurens Central School on August 8th. Please visit the Rockefeller Institute of Government Web site for more information on the Foundation Aid study. To provide written comments click [here](#).

Community Resources

Support is a call away

As severe weather rolls across the state, [211NY](#) and United Way of NYS are reminding everyone that 211NY is available 24/7 to assist. Local call centers collect

information on cooling centers, power outages and help in non-emergency situations. The three main numbers to know of in a crisis are: 911 (emergencies only) 988 (suicide crisis lifeline) and 211 (for everything else).



COVID-19 cases on the rise

As new variants are now circulating and extreme heat forces people indoors, there has been a recent increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, above the statewide hospitalization rates at this point last year, though still well below the rates for this period in 2022. On July 3, 2024, the seven-day average for newly reported COVID-19 hospital admissions statewide was

0.72 per 100,000 residents - as compared to the 0.31 per 100,000 rate of last year. Updated guidance reminds New Yorkers to get tested if they have symptoms, follow the usual precautions including [current CDC guidance](#), stay current with [COVID-19 vaccines](#) and seek [appropriate treatments](#) if necessary. For more on the latest COVID-19 guidance, visit the Governor's page [here](#).

Flood forecasted this week

Due to projected flash flooding in the forecast from Hurricane Beryl, [New York State Canal Corporation](#) is managing Cayuga and Oneida Lakes to provide additional storage capacity for run-off. Experts will continue to make additional adjustments as needed and advise everyone to monitor local forecasts for updates and to take all necessary precautions. Contact Joell Murney-Karsten at 315-423-2087 for any related inquiries.

Free swimming pool entry at state parks

As part of Governor Hochul's "[Get Offline, Get Outside](#)" campaign, swimming pool entry fees will be waived at all New York State Parks this summer. The [New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation](#) is looking forward to welcoming people to all locations

during the summer months. For a list of participating state park pools by region, visit the first link above.



Free summer events with YMCA

The Ithaca YMCA will travel across Tompkins County bringing fun to rural families throughout the summer. Every child will receive a free bag of active play toys and at-home arts to engage in. The program, Pop-Up and Play will be held at the following locations from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday - Friday: July 15 -19 @ Dotson Park, Danby

July 29 - August 2 @ Montgomery Park, Dryden

August 12 -16 @ Trumansburg Farmers Market, Trumansburg

You can contact Johnathen Rockwell with questions about the program at: jrockwell@ithacaymca.com

CFCU offers free Shred Days

Community Federal Credit Union ([CFCU](#)) offers the community days when they can drop off electronics or old documents. The dates are Saturday July 13 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Ithaca Mall and Saturday July 27 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Grand Union Plaza in Cortland. Here is a [list](#) of acceptable items.



CFCU'S FREE COMMUNITY SHRED DAYS! Shred your sensitive documents and electronics*

Ithaca - Saturday, July 13, 2024, from 9
am – 12 pm

Shops at Ithaca Mall, [40 Catherwood Rd](#)

Cortland - Saturday, July 27, 2024, from 9 am
– 12 pm

Grand Union Plaza, 3910 Route 281

Waterloo - Saturday, August 10, 2024, from 9
am – 12 pm

Tops Plaza, [1959 US-20](#).

*Limit two boxes of papers and two electronics per household. [Check this listing of acceptable and non-acceptable electronic items.](#)

Aging office offers caregiver class

The Tompkins County Office for the Aging is offering in-person classes for caregivers starting July 24 at 2 p.m. The Powerful Tools for Caregivers Class is offered at the 214 W. State Street office in Ithaca. It is an interactive, evidence-based course designed to provide the tools needed to balance caregiving and self-care. To register: Call 607-274-5484. For more caregiving resources offered by the office click [here](#).

Mural unveiling promotes vaccinations, community

Tompkins County Whole Health has unveiled a [mural](#) located along the Albany Street side of the Human Services Annex Building which houses the [Tompkins County Office for the Aging \(COFA\)](#) and [Department of Veterans Services \(TCDVS\)](#) at 214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State Street, Ithaca. The mural captures different visual elements of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Tompkins County community. It demonstrates how critical vaccinations are to prevent illness and keep one another healthy and safe. COFA was chosen as the site for the mural due to the pandemic's overwhelming impact on older adults. The murals were a collaborative effort between COFA, [Tompkins County Whole Health](#) and Ithaca Murals.



Photo credit: Shira Evergreen, [Uplifted Ithaca](#); Dominck Recckio, TC Director of Communications

In good health,

Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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