



Week of July 23, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

Thank you all for your patience with getting out this newsletter this week. I took my first week out of the office last week in a few years. I am so glad to be back in the office with my team and catching up with district events and with community members. My thoughts are with all those who were affected by the tornado that touched down in Virgil on July 15. A huge thank you to the Virgil Highway Department and Town Supervisor who went above and beyond with storm response. As the effects of climate change continue to worsen and we see more of these extreme weather events, I wanted to remind all that our local highway departments are available for assistance for issues like fallen trees and downed dangerous electrical wires (you can also call 911), and the resource 211 is also available to help with non-emergency situations. My thoughts are also with farmers affected by the storms. The US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers various disaster assistance programs. For a comprehensive overview of what's offered, [click here](#). As always, please feel free to reach out to my office for assistance.

Around the District



From left: Tompkins County Public Library (TCPL) Youth Services Manager Kat Savage, Administrative Manager Mary McKeon, TCPL Foundation Executive Director Kerry Barnes, Assemblymember Anna Kelles, TCPL Board of Trustees President Melisa Sidle, Business Manager Tonya VanCamp, Library Director Leslie Tabor, during a tour of the library on July 22.

Tompkins County Public Library Tour

Earlier this week I visited the Tompkins County Public Library to learn about their current and future plans. My staff and I toured the facilities with the Executive Director Leslie Tabor and members of her team, Board chair Melisa Sidle, and the Library Foundation Executive Director Kerry Barnes. I learned about the transition TCPL is undergoing to update the collection to meet library policies, efforts

to make all books accessible to people with disabilities and to make the space user-friendly for those who are neurodivergent, and to balance its print and digital collections. I shared questions with Library leadership from constituents concerning the library print collection and look forward to seeing steps to replenish and update the collection and replace shelving systems for accessibility. I got to try out the new Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology TCPL has recently adopted, which allows for self check-out by means of machine-readable stickers in each book. There are now accessible kiosks in multiple languages throughout the building that scan the codes to facilitate the self-checkout process. I was pleased to see that TCPL is offering different types of individual and collaborative work spaces and providing certain free resources to the public, such as toiletries, feminine hygiene products, drug testing strips and the use of its fax machine, particularly useful for sending documents to government entities. We walked through both the childrens and teens sections of the libraries and learned about the efforts to rearrange the children's space for visibility and safety for parents and to make the teen area an attractive space for teens to gather and both play and learn. We ended the tour at the front lobby with a discussion of current and potential future uses of the space to both ensure continued assisted checkout in the library and to ensure access to resources that facilitate learning and meet basic needs for the entire public.

It is said the home is the “first place” and work is the “second place”, while other shared spaces are the “third place”. A public library is a key third place in a community for families to play and learn, for friends to connect and share, for people to find a quiet

space to explore new intellectual outlets, and for community members to access the internet and find a safe space designed for all. I look forward to continuing to support TCPL through their journey to meet modern demands, provide access to all, and diversify their resources.



Pictured at the microphone, Jeff Bessmer, General Manager of GreenStar Food Coop speaks at GreenStar's Double Up Bucks launch event July 17. In the background are Joshua McGuire, Double Up Food Bucks Program Director and Ithaca Mayor Rob Cantelmo and Senator Lea Webb.

Field & Fork Network Announces Double Up Food Bucks NY Program Launch

[GreenStar Coop](#) is helping to address food insecurity locally, with last week's announcement that the [Double Up Food Bucks NY](#) Program is being launched at all three Ithaca locations. Double Up Food Bucks NY is a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) matching nutrition incentive program that provides a dollar-for-dollar match on SNAP purchases, up to \$20/day, currently operating in 36 counties at grocery stores, mobile

markets and farmers markets. Field & Fork Network has been operating and administering the program since 2014. I am thrilled to have this program expand into Tompkins County, where, according to the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH), the food insecurity rate is 14.3 % and there are estimated to be 4,771 households on SNAP. While below the state average food insecurity rate of 24.9 %, (as cited in this [report](#)) - given the rising costs of daily living, families here continue to struggle to feed their households quality meals. This State Comptroller [report](#) provides an analysis of statewide food insecurity. This program will allow thousands of low-income SNAP users to better access and afford fresh, healthy foods at local GreenStar stores. I am grateful to the Field & Fork Network for their tireless work to make healthy, nutritional foods more accessible to all in the district.

Community
Resources



Accessible Recreation Destinations

Everybody, regardless of physical ability, should be able to safely navigate the outdoors during nice weather. To assist in this, the New York State DEC offers a [map](#) of accessible recreation destinations and a list of accessible features that are consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) [here](#). In our district, [Lime Hollow Nature Center](#) in Cortland has an accessible trail with a crushed stone substrate and an all terrain TrackChair which can be used on many of the trails to make them accessible for individuals with disabilities. In Tompkins County, Fall Creek Forest Falls, the East Ithaca Recreation Way and the Black Diamond Trail on the west side of Cayuga Lake are accessible to wheelchairs.

Public Schools Providing Free Meals this Summer

Youth 18 and under have options when it comes to getting free meals during the summer. Without matriculation requirements, the general public can get meals for their youth at various locations. Dryden Central School District sponsors free meals for kids at five locations from now until Aug. 9, Monday-Friday. Breakfast will be served 8-9:30 a.m. and lunch 11 a.m. to noon at the Dryden Middle School. Also Dryden Central School District will provide free meals from now until Aug. 15 at Montgomery Park from 11 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Also Tuesdays and Thursdays between 11:40 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. lunch will be served at Poet's Landing Apartments. Congers Trailer Park in Dryden will also have meals from 12:30 to 1 p.m. and lunch is served from 1:15 to 1:45 p.m. at Country Acres Mobile Home park in Freeville on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Ithaca City School District is sponsoring meals at Southside Community Center Monday - Friday from July 8 - Aug. 16. Breakfast is served 8 - 9 a.m. and lunch 11:30 -12:30 p.m. Enfield Community Council also will serve breakfast and lunch Monday - Friday. Enrollment in the Enfield Day Camp is not required to partake in the meals.

Cortland School District offers free breakfast from 7:30 to 9 a.m. at the Barry Primary School from now until Aug. 23 Monday - Friday. Catholic Charities of Cortland also organizes free lunches throughout summer. Monday - Friday at Barry School from 10:45-11:45, at Beaudry Park from 11 a.m. to 12 noon and Suggett Park from 12 noon to 1 p.m. That program runs to Aug. 23 and is open to anyone 18

and younger. For the complete listing visit this [article](#) or click [here](#).

For additional information on how anyone can find free food or volunteer to help provide food to people who may need it, you can visit one of our district's two regional food banks. For Tompkins County, go to [the Food Bank of the Southern Tier](#) and for Cortland, go to [the Food Bank of Central New York](#).



On the Lookout for the Spotted Lanternfly

The [New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets](#) announced recently that the Spotted Lanternfly ([SLF](#)) was found in Romulus, following reports it received from the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program at Cornell University. The Department is urging residents and grape growers to report any sightings [here](#). If spotted, you should also take a photo, collect a sample and place

it in a freezer or jar with rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer.

ADU Plus One Program Explained

INHS is offering financial assistance to low-and moderate-income homeowners who wish to develop an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) or bring an existing ADU up to code. Funds are available to homeowners in Tompkins County who wish to renovate their existing ADU or who wish to divide a single-family home to create a small rental unit. If interested in getting on the waitlist for the INHS assistance, fill out the pre-application and addendum [here](#). Call 607-277-4500 x 511 to request paperwork.

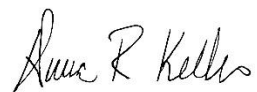
Voting Resources

The next US General Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024. If you're not registered to vote yet, you can do so online [here](#). Starting Oct. 26, registered voters can vote early. For early mail ballot requests click [here](#). For absentee ballot requests click [here](#). For accessible ballot requests click [here](#).

In Cortland. For more early voting information for Cortland County click [here](#). For a list of polling sites in Cortland County click [here](#). Eligible registered voters living in the City of Cortland have been sent information about changes to poll sites. Call the Cortland County Board of Elections at 607-753-5032 with questions.

In Tompkins. For early voting information for Tompkins County click [here](#). For a list of polling sites in Tompkins County click [here](#). For questions about registering to vote in Tompkins County click [here](#). For more questions for the Tompkins County Board of Elections call 607-274-5521.

In good health,



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