



Assemblymember

**Anna Kelles**

Assembly District 125



Week of Aug. 26, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

All summer, my team has been hard at work planning, researching, and drafting my legislative agenda for the next term. Our goals remain ambitious, from combating the climate crisis and protecting our environment, to reforming our criminal justice system, expanding housing, and pushing for increased investment in childcare, health care and mental health care. I am excited to keep fighting for our district's priorities. I have also had the opportunity to connect with so many of you, through attending events, taking part in community conversations and celebrating funding I've helped secure for local agencies, nonprofits and service providers. All of these connections and conversations are the foundation for many of the policy and budget priorities I create for the coming session so a big thank you to you all!

In good health,

Anna

**Around the District**



**AM Kelles Gives Remarks at 1st Annual Caroline Farm Festival.**

### **Caroline Farm Festival Showcases Local Goods**

On August 11th, I attended the Town of Caroline's Farm Festival celebrating the town's diversity of farm enterprises and recognizing the completion and launch of an [Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan](#) by the Town Agricultural Advisory Committee. In 2021, a group of local farmers, encouraged the Town Board to form this committee that applied for and received a \$25,000 award from the New York State Department of Agriculture Farmland Protection Planning Grants Program in 2022. The plan was written with input from farmers, community members and environmental advocates alike. The plan outlines strategies to promote the well-being of a broad range of farmers in the community, from residents who garden, keep chickens or make jelly, to small hobby farmers and large commercial farmers and includes a roadmap to make Caroline a desirable place for new farms to flourish. The plan lays out a vision for the future of agriculture, through five key actions: create informal networking opportunities among the Caroline farm

community, organize education campaigns for town officials and the public about agriculture in Caroline, create educational opportunities for farmers about options for land conservation, provide opportunities for farmers to improve the viability of their operation, and create a Buy Local campaign to raise awareness of farm products that can be purchased directly from farmers in the town. Given the loss of markets for large scale cash crops from the local farming community, the plan highlights the need to promote the opportunities for farmers to connect directly to local consumers, selling to restaurants and providing Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares to individuals, families, businesses and organizations. The event was full of life, buzzing with people, products, music and joy. A huge thank you to the community of Caroline for coming out to celebrate our local small and midsize farms that provide our communities with abundant fresh produce, unique goods and steward our environment. I can't wait to return next year!



AM Kelles pauses for Photos with (left to right): Stacia Zabusky Associate Provost for Academic Programs, Stanley Bazile, VP Student Affairs & Campus Life, President La Jerne Terry Cornish & Tim Downs, VP Finance & Administration & CFO.

## Ithaca College Tour Highlights Possibilities, Challenges, and Collaboration

I visited [Ithaca College](#) (IC) on Aug. 12 and received a tour of the campus, to learn about its exciting academic programs. The tour started at the [Dillingham Center](#) led by Interim Deans of the [School of Music, Theatre and Dance](#) (MTD) [Dr. Steve TenEyck](#) and [Dr. Luis Loubriel](#). The school represents a recent merge of the separate schools of Music and Theatre and provides conservatory-style training in combination with a liberal arts education. MTD aims to equip students to thrive in their professional pursuits and as agents of positive change by cultivating a vibrant and inclusive performing arts community. The tour continued on to the [School of Health Sciences and Human Performance](#) (HSHP) led by HSHP Dean Christina Moylan. I had the exciting opportunity to view the [Anatomage Lab](#), where students can virtually explore a full-sized human body in 3-D and study the anatomical features of the body with precision. I was also given a comprehensive look at the rest of the [Human Anatomy Laboratory](#), which IC hopes to expand and build on the success of, led by Professor and Director of the Lab, Jim Yaggie. The lab offers students hands-on dissection experience with an emphasis on clinical pathologies, applicable to various disciplines and allied health professions. We concluded the tour with a walk through the [Center for Natural Sciences](#) (CNS) led by Claire Gleitman, Dean of the [School of Humanities and Sciences](#) and Matthew C. Sullivan, Professor and Chair of Physics and Humanities. The facility sets the standard for science education and promotes cutting-edge scientific research. The four departments based in CNS are often awarded major private and government research grants. The building features over 60 labs and a greenhouse filled with plants indigenous to upstate New York, as well as tropical species. All students work in labs equipped with instruments normally found only at large research institutions. Physics students enjoy an interactive classroom filled with technology-rich workstations that allow lecture, laboratory, and discussion activities to happen simultaneously. IC leadership also highlighted the [Roy H. Park School of Communications](#), which offers more unique majors than any other undergraduate communications school in the country and coursework that spans the gamut of skill sets in media production. The tour ended with a robust conversation with President Cornish and her senior leadership team. They shared the details of a year-long rigorous self-study the school is just beginning as part of a multi-year re-accreditation review process. It is an exciting time when the college is considering implementing new programs such as leaning into a collaboration with Cayuga Health to establish a nursing program or expanding on existing programs such as the HSHP Human Anatomy Laboratory. We delved into ways IC can become more sustainable and energy efficient, continue to collaborate closely with the greater Ithaca Community and provide hands-on learning experiences for their

students. We also discussed the support services for students both in their academics and health as well as the school's philosophy to support robust open dialogue while fostering empathy and understanding of differences. A huge thank you to President Cornish and her team!



**AM Kelles Participates in the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center on Aug. 13.**

### **Celebrating the Ribbon Cutting for the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center and Asteri Ithaca Apartments**

On August 13, I attended the ribbon cutting for the state-of-the-art mixed-use development project, the [Ithaca Downtown Conference Center](#) and [Asteri Ithaca Apartments](#). This project has been nearly 10 years in the making and represents a robust collaboration between Asteri, the City of Ithaca, Tompkins County, the state (through grants from the [State Department of Homes & Community Renewal](#), as well as the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and the [Downtown Ithaca Alliance](#). The conference center is fully electric powered and includes the first fully

electric commercial kitchen in the country, demonstrating the project's commitment to energy efficiency. The center fills a critically needed gap in community convening space and will significantly increase midweek tourism to boost our local daytime and nighttime downtown economies providing much needed stability for workers in the hospitality industry. Additionally, the Asteri Ithaca apartments provide 181 new affordable housing units and 40 units designated specifically for individuals in need of supportive services. There is an onsite office for TC Action to provide services 7 days per week. The building also includes multiple beautiful community lounges, a roof patio, and an exercise room. Most importantly, the Asteri project brings a bit of balance to the existing housing stock in the downtown core of Ithaca that, for the most part, is cost prohibitive to wage workers working in the city. I was delighted to celebrate the completion of this project and I look forward to seeing the engagement from residents and visitors that it brings to our downtown. To watch my full speech at the event, click [here](#).



**AM Kelles Presents \$650,000 Grant Award to Khuba International Founder & Director Christa Núñez.**

## **Celebrating \$650,000 in State Funding for Khuba International**

Last week I celebrated with community members a joint award that I secured in collaboration with NYS Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, of \$650,000 to Khuba International, a nonprofit organization that uplifts BIPOC farmers and farming families who have been historically and systematically disadvantaged in both accessing and cultivating farmland. The funds will support the construction of a commercial kitchen and expand farmstay infrastructure at The Learning Farm. The Learning Farm is a former dairy farm turned agritourism and educational center that focuses on uplifting socio-economically disadvantaged populations through immersive farm experiences, offering culturally relevant food and fostering sustainable agricultural practices. Of the \$650,000, my office awarded \$450,000 that will finance construction of the commercial teaching kitchen to expand the offerings of Khuba International's Community Hub for Culinary Education to local farmers and families. Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie generously awarded \$200,000 to expand the organization's farmstay infrastructure, including cabins and permanent tents. These funds will allow Khuba to begin offering sleep-away camp programs for BIPOC youth interested in learning more about nature and farming. With the kitchen, cabin, and tent builds, Khuba will be able to offer free camping, immersive farm experiences, and cooking education for BIPOC youth and families. This is so crucial given the declining number of BIPOC-owned farms, which fell from 32,910 farms in 2017 to 28,723 in 2022 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture [Census](#), a 14% decline compared to the 7% decline among white farmers during the same time period. To watch Co-founder Pete Nunez's speech from the event, click [here](#). To watch Stephen Henhawk with the Gayogohó:nq? Learning Project talk, click [here](#).



AM Kelles Presents Grant Award to Lifelong Executive Director Liza Burger and members of the Lifelong Board.

### **Celebrating \$150,000 in State Funding for Lifelong**

On Aug. 20, I was thrilled to announce a \$150,000 grant from my office to Lifelong, a vibrant community center for adults 50 and over, serving Tompkins County since 1952. These funds will allow Lifelong to continue its support of older adults in aging with dignity, whether by fostering connection, encouraging health and wellness and creative arts, offering semester-based classes or providing assistance with Medicare, taxes, technology, and access to adaptive equipment. The grant will allow Lifelong to renovate and enhance its community center by improving energy efficiency with new windows and LED lighting. Additionally, an outdoor pavilion will be constructed for events and programs. The grant funding will also enable Lifelong to update its phone server, enhance accessibility at the front entrance, replace outdated computers, and significantly upgrade the audio-visual system to better support programming needs. These upgrades will ensure that Lifelong can continue providing an extensive range of services that the community relies on, services that improve the overall mental, physical, emotional



and financial well-being of older adults in the community. We all hope to age with dignity and in good health, these funds will enable Lifelong to continue aiding older adults in Tompkins County in doing just that. To view my talk from the event click [here](#).



**AM Kelles stands with Unity House CEO Liz Smith on a recent visit.**

## **Visiting Unity House**

I had a productive and illuminating visit last week at one of the eight group homes here in Tompkins County run by **Unity House**, where CEO Liz Smith kindly offered a tour and introduced me to some of the residents of the home. Unity House provides care that allows their clients to stay in small home residences rather than face long-term hospitalization. Unity House also operates the tremendous Day Habilitation program for people with developmental disabilities, in addition to providing supportive housing to 15 residents. It also provides six respite beds for individuals struggling with mental illness in Tompkins County. Unity House does vital work in the community caring for residents that need 24-hour supervision and care, but unfortunately is facing staffing shortages as Medicaid-dictated wages fail to keep up with the cost of living. Across all of their homes they are currently experiencing a 30% vacancy rate in staffing. As a result of these staffing shortages, two of their group homes are temporarily closed. I had a lengthy conversation with Liz and her team concerning the flat wages over the last 20 years and the cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) that have either been zero or far below the rate of inflation. In our discussion we explored ways to educate the public about this crisis and demand the state acknowledge and address the wage crisis. Senator Lea Webb and I are working in collaboration to assess the organization's needs and in the short term provide capital funding for building improvements. These modifications are critical to ensure residents continue to enjoy the peace and continuity of staying in group housing. Thank you to Liz and her team for the time, compassion, and information to help my staff and I effectively champion for people with severe developmental disabilities, their families, and care providers in our communities.



AM Kelles Presents Senior of the Year Awardee, Anne Baird, with a Citation of Recognition from the Assembly on Aug. 23.

## Attending the Cortland County Senior Picnic

I was happy to attend the [Cortland County Office for Aging's](#) Second Annual Cortland County Senior Picnic in Dwyer Park last Friday, presenting an Assembly Citation to Senior of the Year, Anne Baird. Anne, a 75-year resident of Cortland County, has lived a life of exemplary service to others. As a mentor and coach at 281 Bowling in Dryden for 35 years, and as a volunteer with both the Age Well Center and Hospicare, she is a true testament of what a lifetime of service to others looks like. Events like this serve as an important reminder of the rich contributions that older people make to our communities. As I shared with the seniors gathered on Friday, the 50 + population in New York, comprises 36 percent of the state population, contributes \$719 billion of GDP, supports 5.9 million jobs, and generates \$482 billion in wages and salary- estimated to be \$1.46 trillion by 2050. This is according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2021, highlighted in this [report](#). I was also happy to highlight some important wins for older New Yorkers within the enacted FY2025 [State Budget](#). For example, a \$30 million increase was allocated for operational expenses to Offices for the Aging throughout the state. All staff working in programs across the state funded by Community Services for the Elderly (CSE), the Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP) program and Wellness in Nutrition (WIN) program received a 1.5 percent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and all direct care service providers received an additional 1.7 percent. Thank you to the Cortland County Office for Aging for including me in this fabulous celebration recognizing the contributions older people make to our community! To watch the video of Anne receiving the citation, click [here](#).

A dark blue rectangular box containing the text "Community Resources" in a large, yellow, serif font. The text is centered and occupies most of the box's area.

Community  
Resources

## CONSUMER PROTECTION IS IMPORTANT!



ASSEMBLYMEMBER ANNA KELLES IS PARTNERING WITH CONSUMER FRAUD EXPERT KIM MAERCKLEIN TO HOST A COMMUNITY FORUM ON CONSUMER PROTECTION. OPEN TO CONSTITUENTS OF ALL AGES IN TOMPKINS AND CORTLAND COUNTY!



### MORNING SESSION

**CINEMAPOLIS**  
120 E GREEN ST  
ITHACA, NY 14850  
(9-12)

### WHEN? WHERE?

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13**

**JOIN  
US!**



### AFTERNOON SESSION

**CAPCO**  
32 N. MAIN STREET  
CORTLAND, NY 13045  
(1-4)

### EDUCATE YOURSELF ON...



**IDENTITY THEFT**



**FRAUD**



**COMMON SCAMS**



**ONLINE SAFETY**

### ABOUT KIM

Kim Maercklein is the Consumer Education Community Liaison with the NYS Division of Consumer Protection through the Department of State. Kim travels all over New York State to educate the public on how to protect themselves from identity theft, fraud, and how to practice online safety as well as protect yourself from common scams.

**REGISTRATION IS  
ENCOURAGED: PLEASE CALL  
(607) 208-2024 OR EMAIL  
WILDEC@NYASSEMBLY.GOV  
TO REGISTER.**

### Consumer Fraud Protection Public Information Session

I'm excited to host Consumer Fraud Expert Kimberly Maercklein in the district Sept 13th- with two sessions offered including one in the city of Ithaca and one in the City of Cortland. The morning session will be at Cinemapolis in Ithaca, 120 E. Green Street, from 9 am to 12 noon, and the afternoon session will be in Cortland at CAPCO at 32. N. Main Street from 1 to 4 p.m. Maercklein, a Consumer Education Community Liaison with the NYS Division of Consumer Protection

through the Department of State, will offer tips on how to protect against consumer fraud, identity theft, and more. Half of each session will be devoted to her presentation, while the second half for a Q&A session with the audience. To register, fill out this [form](#) or call my office at 607-208-2024.

### **Blood Donors Needed**

The American Red Cross is spreading the word that there is a need for people to donate blood. In July the national inventory plummeted more than 25 percent with the summer's record setting heat being a significant contributor to the blood collection challenges, according to the Red Cross. That compounded other typical seasonal obstacles to blood donation, such as vacation travel and summer activities. Meanwhile, strong hospital demand continued. Visit their Web site and enter the zip code of the area you would like to donate in the search box to scroll through date and location options.

### **Take part in nature hikes**

The Paleontological Research Institute (PRI) hosts Tree Phenology Walks on Mondays at the Cayuga Nature Center. Rain or shine, participants can monitor when buds break, leaves emerge, flowers bloom, fruits ripen and leaves change color. Data is sent to the USA National Phenology Network for researchers studying how seasonal changes are influenced by a changing climate. The events are free and meet in front of the Cayuga Nature Center from 3- 4 p.m. Monday afternoons until Oct. 28, 2024.

### **Register for Cancer Resource Center's Walkathon & 5k**

The Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes is holding its annual Walkathon and 5K Saturday Oct. 5 at Cass Park. Register at their Web site for the event – either the 5k run or 2-mile walk. Other ways to be involved include: signing up to volunteer at the event, starting a fundraising team to raise money, spreading the word about the event, or making a donation. For more information, contact the Cancer Resource Center at 607-277-0960.

### **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.



# INTERNSHIPS AVAILABLE

We are looking for motivated students to join  
our Cortland and Ithaca District Offices  
beginning in September.

APPLY TODAY!

ANNA  
KELLES  
Assemblymember for the 125th 

## **Internship Opportunity**

The Office of Assemblymember Anna Kelles is seeking dynamic and motivated interns to join our Cortland and Ithaca District Offices. Interns can be tasked with a variety of duties, everything from special projects and research assignments, to social media tasks or support with constituent issues. To learn more and view the job description click [here](#). To apply using the internship application form, click [here](#).

## **State Grant Opportunities**

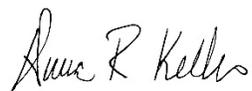
Click here to view Speaker Heastie's August [Grants Action News](#) which contains a list of upcoming funding opportunities available. The list includes a wide and varied list of state and federal grants each relevant to different eligible groups from nonprofits, local governments, and centers of higher education.

## **Planned Parenthood Seeking Youth Leaders**

Planned Parenthood is seeking young people for its Youth Health Promoter (YHP) program which supports young people in becoming leaders in communities, training them to connect with and educate peers on topics like relationships, sexual and reproductive health and consent. The group meets once a week and also participates in community events throughout the year. The youth are also given a stipend and must be entering 9th - 11th grades. For more information about the opportunity and application process click on their Web site.

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In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.



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