



Week of Nov. 18, 2024

Dear Neighbors

Happy Monday dear community. Now that the Assembly's 60 day moratorium for mass communications prior to a general election is behind us, I look forward to reengaging with you all through my regular newsletters. Starting this week I will be sharing information that I hope will help you feel both civically informed and more connected to all the important activities and initiatives in our community. I wanted to take the opportunity with this newsletter to share some of the highlights of the work my office staff and I have been doing around the district over the last two months. Since there is so much to share and I really don't want to overwhelm the community with information I'm splitting this newsletter into two parts. I'll be sending out part 2 of this newsletter later this week!

Although different from the 6 months of session that takes place from January to June, the second half of each year is equally dynamic and full. This is the time when the team reviews all remaining legislation that did not pass both houses in the first half of the year for rewrite, coalition building, community engagement and meetings with the executive to review and incorporate feedback. We also meet with departments on budget initiatives for the following year. The second half of every year is also the time to more deeply engage with the community - learning from local governments, school districts, community organizations, and constituents about the challenges you face and identified opportunities for collaboration. These meetings and events are integral to inspire ideas for legislation we craft and introduce in the following session. This is also the time when we host community events, speak at conferences to educate interest groups and coalitions about my legislative initiatives, and hold meetings to expand our team's knowledge in areas that matter to our constituents. We keep the community informed with funding announcements secured for the district and occasionally, we have the honor of hosting the NYS Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie here in the 125th District to showcase the brilliant work of organizations like the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC). All too quickly we find ourselves once again in the final days of the year gearing up to head back to Albany.

As this tumultuous year draws to a close and we head into the holiday season, I hope you all are able to find some peace and comfort in time spent with loved ones. Now more than ever, building community with our neighbors around the values we

share large and small is deeply imperative. In that spirit, I invite you all to join me on December 20th from 4 - 7pm at my Ithaca District Office (130 E State Street - on the commons) for my Annual Holiday Open House and Community Gift Wrapping Reuse Event. Come enjoy some holiday treats and cheer, wrap some holiday gifts with donated wrapping paper, take home some unused and donated or pre-used holiday wrapping paper and meet some of your neighbors you might not already know.

How to participate in the Holiday ReUse Wrapping Paper Extravaganza - 3.5 million tons of wrapping paper go into landfills every December during the holiday season! Let's do our part to build the wrapping paper circular economy!

STEP 1: Wednesday, December 4th, 11th and 18th from 12pm - 4pm (call 607-277-8030 to make alternative arrangements) feel free to come by the office at 130 E. State Street to drop off any wrapping paper you have lying around not being used, wrap your presents, or just come to pick up wrapping paper, gift bags, ribbon and more to take home and wrap until your heart's content.

STEP 2: Join the holiday party and wrapping fest on December 20th at 130 E. State Street and enjoy treats and good cheer.

STEP 3: Unwrap presents carefully with loved ones during the holidays, save any undamaged paper and save it for next year's presents or bring it back to our office for next year's Holiday Reuse Wrapping Paper Extravaganza!



Around the District

Spruce Haven Farm Pyrolysis Unit Tour



AM Kelles pictured here with the owner of Spruce Haven Farm Doug Young, NYSERDA staff, Cornell Professor Johannes Lehmann, NYS Senator Rachel May and representatives from the Cornell College of Agriculture & Life Sciences and the Lehmann Lab.

On Sept. 10th, I visited Spruce Haven Farm, a dairy farm where the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) have collaborated to fund the first pilot biodivester and pyrolysis combination unit in the state. The system they have created is ingenious and not only produces significant energy on site for the farm and for the farmer to sell back to the grid but converts nutrient rich manure to molecularly stable biochar that can be tilled back into the soil as a soil amendment significantly reducing the need for expensive synthetic fertilizers and reducing manure storage costs, increasing carbon sequestration, decreasing odors in the surrounding area, and significantly reducing the volume of nitrogen and phosphorus runoff from farmland into ground and surface water. Unlike gasification like incinerators that burn waste

material in the presence of oxygen producing significant amounts of CO₂ greenhouse gasses, pyrolysis is a process of heating organic matter to significant temperatures (think 500-700 degrees Fahrenheit) and breaking carbon molecules into smaller more stable molecules that can be tilled into soil to replace synthetics, while producing heat that is then used to maintain the temperature of the process and electricity as a byproduct. Because pure manure is used as the feed for the process on site, there is no transport to the site of chemical waste or municipal solid waste. This project represents one of the many innovative ways farmers in our area are collaborating with our research institutions on sustainable agriculture practices.

Consumer Fraud Expert Offers Educational Sessions



NYS Department of State expert on consumer fraud prevention, Kim Maercklein, visited the district Sept. 13. AM Kelles is pictured here addressing the afternoon session at CAPCO, in Cortland.

NYS [Department of State](#) consumer fraud expert Kim Maercklein from the Department of Consumer Protections visited the district and shared valuable information about how to strengthen online security settings and protect yourself from common scams, during two sessions on September 13th. Maercklein shared tips about how to recognize common scams, how to protect yourself, in particular, from targeted use of emotional manipulation and fear tactics (e.g. your identity has been stolen or your bank account has been hacked and they need to verify your information to rescue your account) as well as the warning signs of identity theft, for example, a credit report being inaccurate (which you can check through the [free annual credit report](#) we each have access to) or unsolicited contact by creditors, debt collection agencies, or law enforcement. Participants also learned the specifics of how they leave a digital footprint when visiting websites that, more and more often, collect information through the use of “cookies” that they can sell for a profit. Websites will state if they use cookies (think digital breadcrumbs) and you can select to only authorize the use of cookies for basic site functionality. You can explicitly prevent the sale of your activity on their website to other companies that might want to sell you something or market to you. She recommended using strong passwords (at least 12 characters long) and activating a 2-factor authentication when offered, and to install software updates when prompted. If you feel you’ve been a victim of fraud, call the [Division of Consumer Protection](#) for help at 1-800-697-1220 or file a complaint at www.dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection. Given the enthusiasm from attendees and interest from community members for this training we will definitely host more of these informative sessions in the future so stay tuned!

Cortland Reuse Grand Reopening



Speaking at the Cortland ReUse celebration Sept. 14

I participated in the Cortland ReUse grand reopening celebration Saturday, Sept 14, speaking to the importance of a [circular economy](#) and how organizations like Cortland ReUse serve this mission. According to the most recent [Department of Environmental Conservation \(DEC\) Solid Waste Management Plan](#) we have between 16-25 years left of all N.Y. landfills after which time we will have to use taxpayers' dollars to pay premium prices to ship our waste outside of the state. Yet much of the material we send to landfills still has significant inherent value. If we are willing to take the time and care to repurpose these materials it can generate billions of dollars in state revenue, many thousands of jobs, reduced water and air pollution, and produce significantly less greenhouse gas emissions. Cortland ReUse is one of the many organizations across the state promoting the importance of refurbishing and reusing items, rather than throwing them away into our already rapidly-filling landfills. In its third year at its new location at 186 Homer Ave, Cortland ReUse accepts everything except clothing. They partner with community organizations like Catholic Charities and [Cortland County Department of Social Services](#) (DSS) to help people

who are just starting out in new housing arrangements by providing them with vouchers for household items. Located next to the Grace Brown House and in the same complex as Seven Valleys Food Rescue Warehouse, Cortland ReUse is ideally situated to help the community members who need it most. Cortland ReUse also promotes the arts, through upcycling, needleworking gatherings and a weekly creative writing class called "Second Hand Stories," offered Sundays at noon. An example of one such story is included below. Thank you Cortland ReUse for all you do for the community, the economy and the environment!

THE COOKIE CUTTER

I'm just an ordinary cookie cutter. I must have been new at one time, but I don't remember that anymore. My earliest memory is of being dropped on the floor and picked up later and tossed in a sink of warm water. Then I was tossed in a drainer with my new friends, an angel, a tree, a deer and a fat guy.

Most of the year we live in a plastic bowl on a shelf. Then once in a while, someone takes us out and rinses us off. We dry off in a drainer, and then we're pressed into soft stuff they call dough. I'm not sure what happens after that because off we go to the sink and drainer again. It's an easy life. No complaints.

Lynn Olcott
Homer, NY



Governor Hochul Signs Kelles/Hinchey EMS Medicaid Reimbursement Legislation



AM Kelles joins Sen. Michelle Hinchey, EMS Service Providers and EMS & Firefighter Statewide Unions to call on Gov. Hochul to sign TIP & TAD legislation on Sept. 6.

On Sept. 17, Gov. Kathy Hochul signed into law an EMS Treatment in Place and Transfer to Alternative Destination (TIP & TAD) [A9102](#) bill that I championed in the Assembly in partnership with my colleague Senator Michelle Hinchey. This bill, for the first time in state history, enables emergency medical service providers to get reimbursed for services provided on site that do not result in transport to a hospital emergency room. These currently constitute 30% of all calls that up to now have been unfunded. The legislation also expands the list of medically approved destinations for transport beyond a hospital emergency room. These include sites such as a substance use disorder detox facility, an urgent care center, or a mental health facility. This discretion is particularly critical in rural areas where access to

hospitals may be hours away. Providing them with the ability to determine the emergency location that will best serve their patients' needs is not only common sense, but it also provides a more efficient delivery of emergency services. I am grateful to Governor Hochul for signing this bill and ensuring the state supports our brave, dedicated EMS providers.

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Tour





AM Kelles visits the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge with fellow lawmakers, DEC & DU staff.

On September 18th, I had the unique opportunity to visit the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge near Seneca Falls alongside fellow NYS Assemblymembers Sarah Clark and Jeff Gallahan, the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Ducks Unlimited (DU). At Montezuma, DEC works together with DU and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify, purchase, restore, and manage wetlands and associated habitats for the benefit of NY's populations of waterfowl, migratory birds, and other wetland dependent species. This work has proven highly successful at ensuring habitat protection critical for many threatened and endangered species. Montezuma spans over 18,500 acres of protected state and federal lands at the northern tip of Cayuga Lake, most of which are open to the public. Each year, the habitat supports more than 1 million migrating waterfowl and hundreds of thousands of other bird species identified as being in need of protection.

This collaborative effort focuses on restoring unique habitat types, including grasslands, forested wetlands, emergent marshes, rare inland salt marshes, and upland forests. The [North American Wetlands Conservation Act \(NAWCA\)](#) is a key funding source for Montezuma's success. Along with matching partner funds, NAWCA has protected over 102,000 acres in New York. In July, DU secured its fifth round of NAWCA funding for Montezuma, aiming to protect and restore an additional 1,800 acres. Proposed state legislation, expected to be introduced in 2025, will enable DU to work more with private landowners to expand wetlands restoration in the state. By easing the process, DU will be able to secure even more federal funding for New York in the most environmentally sensitive corners of the state.

DU employs licensed professional engineers with technical backgrounds and expertise in conservation and related engineering design, but it is limited in some of the services it can provide in New York. The proposed legislation would ensure DU can perform even more of this critically important wetland restoration design work. I look forward to supporting this legislation in the upcoming legislative session, so stay tuned! I encourage you all to make the trip to visit Montezuma and see these incredible restored wetlands for yourself!

Finger Lakes Library System Funding Announcement



AM Kelles presents Finger Lakes Library System Staff with \$66,900 in state funding allocation.

It was an absolute honor to celebrate an allocation of \$66,900 to the [Finger Lakes Library System](#) during a ceremony at the Groton Public Library on Sept. 19th. The

funding directly benefits eight local libraries: Groton Public Library, Cortland Free Library, Ulyssis Philomathic Library in Trumansburg, Southworth Library in Dryden , Lamont Memorial Free Library in McGraw, Lansing Community Library, Tompkins County Public Library and Newfield Public Library. The money will help the libraries improve and expand upon both outward facing community programs and internal professional development opportunities for staff. Some examples of how the funds will be used include Cortland Free Library enhancing its digital collections, Lansing Community Library expanding its teen programming, and Ulysses Philomathic Library buying more accessible tables for its community room. In Groton, the library is using the funds to address food insecurity through intergenerational community cooking classes taught by a professional chef. Thank you to all who participated in this moving and joyful event! To read the full press release from the event follow this [link](#).

Ithaca Farmers Market Capital Campaign



In mid-September I attended the Friends of the Ithaca Farmers Market Capital Campaign at Steamboat Landing. Friends of the Ithaca Farmers Market (a non-profit sister organization supporting the Ithaca Farmers Market) has launched the public phase of its Capital Campaign. Funds will go towards significant upgrades to the parking area including improved capacity, accessibility, and navigability. The final project will include accessible parking and sidewalks, safe pedestrian pathways, electric vehicle charging stations, bike and bus access and a permeable surface to allow for drainage. Construction is slated for November into the summer of 2025. In 2022, the Friends of the Ithaca Farmers Market was awarded a state grant of \$3.2 million (85%) for the project. The Market must raise an additional \$600,000 (15%). Friends of the Ithaca Farmers Market is just under the halfway point of their campaign with \$350,000 remaining still to raise. This is a big undertaking for our beloved Farmers Market, which has now been operating for 50 years, and it is the first time it is reaching out to the public for support. The Farmers Market supports 160 small businesses - farmers, food entrepreneurs and artisans...all from within a 30 mile radius of Ithaca. It draws 5,000 customers on many weekends during the summer season and per year the total customers number around 100,000, with over half (55 percent) being visitors to the area. I look forward to seeing this project come to fruition and enhance the multi-modal accessibility and boost the environmental impact of this local treasure!

Community Resources

SouthSide Community Center Offers Mentorship Program

The Mentor-Student Program at SouthSide Community Center seeks volunteer mentors to work one on one with students ages 9 through 13 in grades 4 to 7 who benefit from having a positive adult role model in their lives. This opportunity involves training, support, and meeting with your student twice a week. The program begins in the Fall at SouthSide Community Center. This is intended for both the student and

the mentor to learn and grow with each other. Please contact Susie Kossack, Program Coordinator: 607-275-6250; mskossack@yahoo.com for more information.

Tompkins/Cortland Transit Connections Improved

[Cortland County Transit](#) and [Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit](#) have coordinated schedules so riders of public transit can transfer more easily between the two transit systems. The schedule changes are meant to accommodate Cortland County residents commuting to Tompkins County in the morning and returning in the afternoon.

- **FROM CORTLAND COUNTY:** For passengers traveling from Cortland County to Tompkins County, riders should board the Cortland Transit Route 6 bus and transfer onto the TCAT Route 43 bus at the Dryden Village bus stop.
- **FROM TOMPKINS COUNTY:** For passengers traveling from Tompkins County to Cortland County, riders should board the TCAT Route 43 bus and transfer onto the Cortland Transit at the Dryden Village bus stop.

For the schedule and more, visit movetogetherny.org/projects/

TC3-CNF-Penn State Microelectronics and Nanomanufacturing Recruits for Spring Program

TC3's [Microelectronics and Nanomanufacturing Certificate Program](#) launched this fall with the support of a NSF grant in conjunction with Penn State's College of Engineering and Cornell University. Military-connected individuals have the opportunity to receive free training to meet the needs of the region's growing microelectronics and semiconductor workforce. This program combines live-streamed lectures on the TC3 campus with hands-on site training in Cornell's Nanoscale facility. Those interested should refer to the [Suggested Knowledge Base](#) for desired skills prior to committing to the program. Please encourage folks to apply regardless of their experience and background. The live-streamed lectures are M-F from 11:30am-1:30pm at TC3, followed by labs at Cornell 1 or 2 afternoons per week, plus about 10 hours of homework per week. The first program will run from January 21 – April 11, 2025. Enrollment is limited. Anyone interested should apply here: <https://bit.ly/MNCPApply>

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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