



Week of July 17, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

Here we are in mid-July and both the political and literal air temperatures continue to rise. I hope everyone is finding ways to stay safe and cool despite the continuing hot and humid conditions in our area. At the bottom of this newsletter, you will find links to local resources and tips on how to stay safe on exceptionally hot days. For updates on the forecast, including a map of heat watches, warnings, and advisories, click [here](#). I'm aware that many people, particularly in Caroline and Brooktondale, have continued to suffer from power outages for many hours after the storm that prompted them. My office has been monitoring the situation and in close contact with NYSEG as efforts to restore power have continued. I want to thank NYSEG utility crews for working tirelessly in this heat. For a complete list of where outages are click [here](#) or to be enrolled in an automatic text from NYSEG to be informed of outages, click [here](#). And, given the frequent tornado warnings for the area, the Red Cross offers helpful tips and resources on handling that extreme weather event on their Web site. As for the rising political temperature nationally, I

know so many of you may feel dismayed and powerless to turn down the heat amidst divisive and polarizing rhetoric in the lead up to the 2024 election. As your State Assemblymember, I believe it is my duty to continue to work to make a tangible difference and deliver real results for each and every one of my constituents, regardless of party. There is so much more that unites us than divides us, and I am committed to finding that common ground so that all of our communities in District 125 can thrive.

## Around the District

**2nd Annual Cortland Pride Festival**



Chief of Staff Luke Davis shares a citation from Assemblymember Kelles honoring the Cortland LGBTQ Center and celebrating Cortland Pride Festival at the event July 13 in Courthouse Park.

My office staff enjoyed themselves immensely at the second annual Cortland Pride Fest in Courthouse Park Saturday, where activities included drag shows, fashion contests and local vendors showcasing their services. Events like this serve as an important reminder that even in rural communities, there is a strong LGBTQ+ community offering fellowship and support. As Cortland LGBTQ Center Director Mike Doughty said, “Pride reminds us that in a lot of ways being out and accepting and presenting yourself to the world the way you want to be seen is a radical act.” While the day was celebratory,

the event also served as a reflection on past achievements and acts of resistance by LGBTQ+ activists and communities striving for civil rights and legal recognition, such as the landmark Overgefell v. Hodges Supreme Court decision, giving same-sex couples equal rights to marriage and the 1969 Stonewall Inn Uprising. In the face of nationwide legislative attacks on LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those who identify as trans and non-binary, the event reminded us that we must recommit ourselves to the fight to rectify systemic inequality and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. Related to this, I await the Governor's action on my bill, [A1273](#), which would establish a New York State LGBTQ+ advisory board to gather data that is lacking and make policy recommendations towards true equity for LGBTQ+ individuals in our state. I am grateful to the Cortland LGBTQ Center for its work fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for all people!

## SouthWorks Tour



Photo Credit: Ithaca City Manager Deb Mohlenhoff. From left: Robert Lewis, Development Project Manager for Shift Capital LLC, Sarah Barden, Community Outreach & Leasing Coordinator for SouthWorks, Nnenna Lynch, CEO of Xylem Projects, and Melissa James-Geska, President of US Ceiling Corps.

Earlier this week, the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and Visit Ithaca offered a presentation and tour of the proposed reimagined industrial manufacturing site, SouthWorks, located on South Hill. This project serves as an example of the innovative ways spaces can be repurposed and reused to help meet the need for affordable housing, while simultaneously enhancing the local community, conducting thorough environmental remediation and reimagining a piece of history. Formerly

the Emerson Power Transmission Plant, the massive industrial site will be the location of a mixed use community that will include 915 housing units, an on-site workforce development and childcare facility, and a trail where people can access outdoor spaces. Construction is slated to begin next year when the decade-long environmental remediation process will be complete. The housing plans call for about 180 of the units to be affordable - a much needed addition to our community. The \$400 Million project will also feature a Gateway Trail, running the length of the 95-acre site, which will connect SouthWorks to the Black Diamond Trail and four different state parks including Buttermilk Falls State Park, Robert Treman State Park, and Taughannock Falls State Park. The SouthWorks project also emphasizes the importance of having designated spaces for congregating and community. The plans incorporate the use of open space – deliberately designing a place for people to gather for music or other attractions. Thank you SouthWorks, for your transformative vision of a destination neighborhood with combined purposes and significant economic benefits projected for the community at large! To learn more, visit the SouthWorks [website](#). For recent information on the SouthWorks project and its history as reported in the Ithaca Voice, read this [article](#).

# Community Resources



## Dealing with the heat

There are a host of local resources and supports offered to keep people cool and help them deal with the heat. For resources for older adults and caregivers, go [here](#) for a resource from the [New York State Office for the Aging](#) that offers everything from the symptoms of heat exhaustion (tiredness, weakness, muscle cramps) to tips

on staying cool and hydrated (drink at least 2-4 glasses of water an hour even if you don't feel thirsty.) The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services also has a link for [Safety. Click](#) on this list of available [cooling centers](#) and select your county to find places where people can get respite from the heat. There are also cooling assistance benefits for qualifying households offered through the [Home Energy Assistance Program \(HEAP\)](#). To find out if you qualify for HEAP, in Cortland County, call the [Department of Social Services](#) at 607-428-5400 or the [Cortland County Area Agency on Aging](#) at 607-753-5060. Tompkins County residents can call the [Tompkins County Department of Social Services](#) at 607-274-5264 or [The Tompkins County Office for the Aging](#) at 607-274-5482. You can also sign up for a list of emergency alerts through [New York Alert](#). You can sign up by phone, email, text or fax and choose what kind of alert you want to be notified about. For residents of Cortland County who don't have a landline and want to sign up for emergency alerts, click [here](#). For Tompkins County residents who want to receive alert notifications through SIREN, click [here](#).

## **Free webinar on navigating student loans**

LawNY staff will offer a free webinar and Q&A session on student loan issues including debt forgiveness, strategies for tackling federal and private student debt, income-



based repayment programs and more, on July 25 at 12 noon. This program is open to the public and advance registration is required. Click [here](#) to register.

## **Workers rights hotline**

Tompkins County Workers Center is reminding people that wage theft is a common practice. The minimum wage for fast food jobs is \$15, homecare work is \$17.55. Overtime is time and a half the regular rate of pay for every hour worked over 40 hours in a work week. Workers with a workday longer than 10 hours must be paid an extra hour at the minimum wage. If you are required to come to work but sent home without actual work, you may be entitled to call-in-pay. Call the Workers' Rights Hotline at 607-269-0409 or email [tcwrh@tcworkerscenter.org](mailto:tcwrh@tcworkerscenter.org) if you have questions or want to log a complaint.

## **Disaster recovery training**

The [Citizen Preparedness Corps](#) gives residents the tools and resources needed to help prepare for any disaster or emergency as well as respond and recover quickly as possible. The next training is July 23 at 6 p.m. at the Newfield Fire Department, 77 Main St. Newfield. Trainings are led by National Guard members and experts from the state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) and are coordinated by

emergency management personnel. The training is free but registration is required ahead of time: Click [here](#).



**06**  
AUGUST

**20**  
**24**

**FREE**

# DEMOCRACY FEST

Celebrate the 59th Anniversary  
of the Voting Rights Act!

Free Entertainment featuring:

- SingTrece
- Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers
- Calvary Baptist Church Singers
- Djembe (West African drum) performance by Aloja Airewele



5:30 - Gather at MLK, Jr. sculpture on Ithaca Commons.

5:40 - Begin march to Southside Community Center.

6:00 - Enjoy speakers, entertainment, and ice cream!

**REGISTER TO VOTE**

**FREE BEN & JERRY'S ICE CREAM!**

ASL Interpretation available, please contact Andrea Champlin at [Andrea@FLICOnline.org](mailto:Andrea@FLICOnline.org) for accessibility needs

Co Sponsors:  
Rejoice the Vote  
Your Voice + Your Vote  
The Dorothy Cotton Institute  
Southside Community Center



## **Democracy Fest**

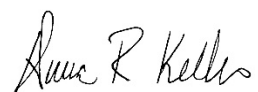
The Tompkins County Office of Human Rights is hosting Democracy Fest on August 6 at 5:30 p.m., gathering at the MLK Jr sculpture on Ithaca commons and marching to the Southside Community Center. The event is to celebrate the 59th anniversary of the [Voting Rights Act](#) of 1965 which outlawed discriminatory voting practices. There will be speakers, artistic performances and an opportunity to register to vote.

## **Finger Lakes Grassroots Festival this weekend**

The historic Finger Lakes [Grassroots Festival](#) takes place this Thursday 7/18 to Sunday 7/21 with an impressive [lineup](#) of national, regional and local talent. The festival offers music, vendors, performances, camping and much more. To travel there via public transit, check out [TCAT](#)'s schedule. The festival is located at 2150 Trumansburg Road, Trumansburg. For ticket information email [tickets@grassrootsfest.org](mailto:tickets@grassrootsfest.org) or call (607) 387-5098 For general inquiries email: [info@grassrootsfest.org](mailto:info@grassrootsfest.org).

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In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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