

Guest Opinion

Protecting Health Care for More than 300,000 New Yorkers

By Angela Riddell

In recent years, politicians across the country have been working overtime to strip away people's access to basic health care at Planned Parenthood and other trusted women's health providers. Thankfully, this week President Obama finalized a new rule to protect access to health care for millions of Americans. The rule ensures patients can access care at qualified health care providers like Planned Parenthood.

Title X, the nation's family planning program, is meant to help ensure that every person – regardless of where they live, how much money they make, or whether or not they have health insurance – has access to basic, preventive reproductive health care. Planned Parenthood health centers provide care for approximately 1.5 million patients through Title X – roughly one-third of the more than 4 million people served by the program. In 2015, statewide, 308,483 New Yorkers used Title X family planning services. By protecting this program, the President is protecting health care for people with low income or who might not have access to other providers. The President is taking

steps to ensure that women across the country, regardless of income, zip code, have access to lifesaving cancer screenings, STI tests, birth control, and other vital care.

Here in the Southern Finger Lakes we are proud to serve nearly 10,000 people every year. People turn to us for many reasons – because they know and trust our clinicians, because we're in their community, and because they know they can get quality, affordable care. The Title X program is a fundamental part of our ability to deliver affordable health care to so many people in our community, and it is so important that this program is protected from political attacks.

While the rule provides strong protections for millions of people like our patients, it could face attacks with extremists like Vice President-Elect Mike Pence and anticipated HHS Secretary nominee Tom Price joining the Trump administration. Vice President Elect Mike Pence has been on a crusade against Planned Parenthood and reproductive health care for nearly a decade. He was the first member of Congress to ever author and introduce federal legislation to "defund" Planned

Continued on page 10

Signs of Sustainability

Municipal Sustainability: A Look Back, A Glimpse Forward

By Nick Goldsmith

Since the election, it has become clear that major changes are coming to Federal climate policy, with promises from the incoming administration to expand fossil fuel development and pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Agreement, which just became international law last month. Now, more than ever, it is clear that climate action must be led at the local level.

Following is a look back at what the Town of Ithaca and the City of Ithaca accomplished in 2016, and a glimpse of what is to come in 2017. The Town and the City continue to collaborate by means of the shared Sustainability Coordinator position, which is funded equally by the Park Foundation and the municipalities.

In January, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County launched the Energize NY Financing program, which uses the innovative Property Assessed Clean Energy model to offer long-term low-cost financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in commercially-owned buildings – even single family homes. Tompkins County and the City were the first two upstate communities to offer this program, which is now available in 35 municipalities across the state. Learn more at commercial.energizeny.org/city-of-ithaca.

In March, the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Plant completed a feasibility study for a microgrid centered on the wastewater plant, which was funded by a NY Prize award, a program of the State Reforming the Energy Vision initiative. The city recently applied on behalf of IAWWTF for additional funding from NY Prize, which would provide close to a million dollars for a detailed microgrid design and business plan. Award announcements are expected before the end of December. The creation of the proposed microgrid would help IAWWTF to become a nationally-recognized net-zero facility.

The planning phase of the Residential Energy Score Project came to an end this fall. The Town

and the City of Ithaca, along with the Towns of Ulysses, Caroline, and Danby, provided leadership in this effort to create a voluntary residential energy score program for homes in Tompkins County. The final program document was endorsed by all five municipalities. New York State is now considering regional pilot programs, thanks in part to this effort.

A local pilot program is to be implemented as soon as funding allows; the project team is currently exploring options for a program host and funding. Learn more at www.town.ithaca.ny.us/resp.

We believe that digital communication is an important tool to foster a sustainable community. 2016 saw the continued publication of the monthly Ithaca Sustainability newsletter, which shares news and events from Ithaca and the surrounding area. The newsletter now has more than 575 subscribers. Help us reach our near-term goal of 600 readers by subscribing at <http://tinyurl.com/IS-subscribe>. Readers are not only locals, but also organizations at a regional and national level, which helps shine a light on the great work getting done locally by the non-profit, higher education, municipal and commercial sectors – not to mention engaged residents.

By collaborating with community initiatives, the municipal Sustainability Coordinator is able to leverage limited work hours. The Town and the City supported many notable local projects by providing staff time, such as the Tompkins County Energy Roadmap, the Sustainability Center, and the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan.

We are excited to continue ongoing projects, while also starting new ones in 2017. Although much work has been completed in 2016 to tee it up, the Green Building Policy project will officially kick off in January. It will involve a comprehensive study of policy tools that the Town and City can use to incentivize or mandate green

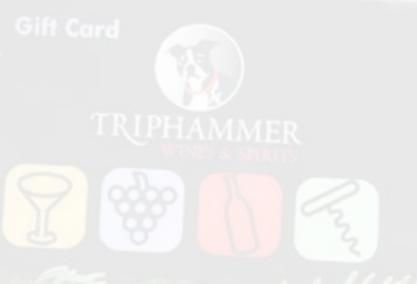
Continued on page 7

TOMPKINS WEEKLY
Presents
The "By the People" Issue
Theme: **Love**



In the Monday, January 2, 2017 issue of Tompkins Weekly, we will be featuring the contributions of our readers, revolving around a common theme of "Love."
This call for content is for everyone, and submissions may come in many forms: articles, essays, poems, photos and artwork and any other outlets of expression our readers can create.
The deadline for submitting your work is Wednesday, December 21.
Please send all contributions and questions to Managing Editor Rob Montana via email at robm@vizeillamedia.com.

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Now is the Time to Get Involved in Local Politics

By Kathy Zahler

In 2016, the Tompkins County Board of Elections registered more than 5,000 new Democrats. Some were unaffiliated or Green or Working Families voters wanting a chance to vote in the primaries. Some were the ordinary influx of new voters in a presidential year. And some, certainly, were people registering to vote in an election that they suddenly saw as significant and potentially harmful to values they held dear – fairness and equity, the right of all Americans to live in dignity, justice for all, the health of the planet.

Several contested Democrats won in Tompkins County – Dan Lamb and Kathy Servoss in Dryden, Beth McGee in Enfield, Matt Van Houten for District Attorney, Barbara Lifton for Assembly. The fact is that we are pretty good at electing Democrats to local seats in Tompkins County, even in towns such as Dryden and Newfield, which once consistently voted Republican.

There are several reasons for that success, including changing demographics, fallout from the Bush years, and the fact that the national Republican Party is currently positioned far from the Party that most people in our towns grew up with and recognize. Preliminary results from the Tompkins County Board of Elections show that Trump/Pence won only in Groton, in two districts in Dryden, and in one district in Newfield.

But a big part of the reason Democrats consistently win in our towns is good, old-fashioned political work. Since Tompkins Weekly has given me this soapbox, I thought I'd talk a bit about how that works.

Interested voters who are registered as Democrats in Tompkins County may choose to join their local Town or Ward committees. Each

Democratic committee member represents an election district in his or her town or ward.

The election process for committee members involves carrying petitions every two years, following the same process that candidates use to get on the ballot. The number of signatures required varies by election district. You need not carry a petition to attend a local meeting, or even to be seated temporarily. Just contact your Town or Ward chair to find out when the next meeting is being held, and then show up!

Town chairs are listed at tcdemocrats.wixsite.com/tcdc/town-chairs.

Ward chairs are listed at tcdemocrats.wixsite.com/tcdc/ward-chairs.

At the town and ward levels, committee members find Democratic candidates to run for office. They fundraise, recruit new members, help with voter registration, and circulate candidates' nominating petitions. They help to turn out voters on Election Day. They have the option of participating in mailings, writing letters to the editor, making phone calls, putting up signs, and all of the myriad activities that make up a local campaign for elected office. They meet regularly, hear reports from elected officials, and participate in social or educational events.

The County Committee includes most of the members of the Town and Ward committees. It brings together members from all election districts to work on countywide, state, and national races as well as to determine and research issues that are of general interest to the membership. Our County Committee rents space prior to a major election and runs a coordinated campaign out of that office. During the year, we meet quarterly in Ithaca.

Our efforts are year-round. Many village elections happen in March,

and towns with village elections are already gearing up for those. Committees will start looking soon for people to run for town and city offices. In 2017, every position on the county legislature will be up for election. Committee members will help to determine who might run for those critical positions.

This election season, there has been a lot of media commentary about the elitism of political parties. At the local level, we have always invited all registered Democrats to join our committees. The Tompkins County Democratic Committee will enhance its efforts to do just that over the coming year.

Consider this an invitation. If you are a registered Democrat, we want you. If you believe in equitable education, health care for all, economic fairness, civil rights and voting rights, and clean energy, we want you. Whether you are a student or a retiree, we want you. Whether you are a union member or a self-employed entrepreneur, we want you.

Even if you think you have zero interest in anything other than national politics, we want you. We believe that change starts at the grass roots, and we think we can convince you that by putting people who share Democratic values into local positions, we can start to effect real change. We have genuine examples of that in Tompkins County, and we hope to see more over the next four years, even under the yoke of a Republican administration.

Call Irene Stein at (607) 266-7579 or contact me at kzahler@midline.us to talk about how you could make a difference in our efforts here.

Kathy Zahler is Director of Communications for the Tompkins County Democratic Committee.

Signs

Continued from page 6

building standards for new residential and commercial construction. A broad array of standards (e.g. LEED,

HERS, and Energy Star) and supporting policy tools (e.g. building and energy code, environmental review process, development bonuses, and financial incentives) will be studied.

The Green Building Policy project will build on existing voluntary initiatives targeting energy use in buildings, such as RESP (described above) and the Ithaca 2030 District – a project of the Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative that launched in June. 2030 Districts are unique private/public partnerships bringing together property owners and managers to meet energy and resource reduction targets.

While there is plenty of reason for concern regarding climate action at the national level, we look forward to collaborating with our community to advance local sustainability efforts in the New Year. Here's to a sustainable 2017!

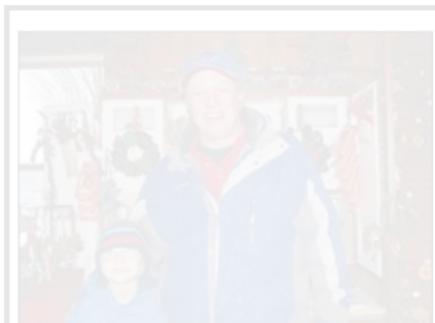
Nick Goldsmith is the Sustainability Coordinator for both the Town of Ithaca and the City of Ithaca. For the monthly electronic Ithaca Sustainability newsletter at <http://tinyurl.com/k486cx6>, or contact Nick at ngoldsmith@town.ithaca.ny.us or (607) 273-1721.

STREET BEAT

The word on the street from around Tompkins County

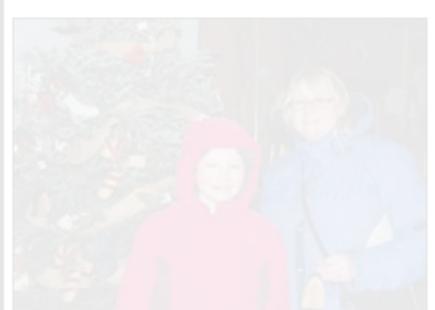
By Kristy Montana

Question: What holiday traditions do you look forward to?



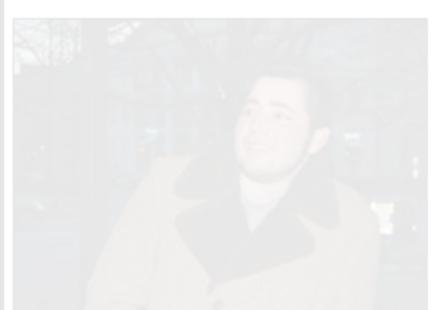
"Coming to Moore's and getting a tree."

— Rob and Jon Thompson, Genoa



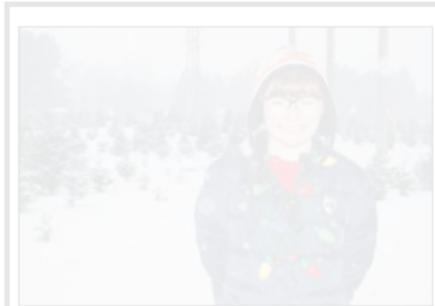
"Decorating the tree and Christmas Eve dinner with family."

— Lauren and Kathy Thompson, Genoa



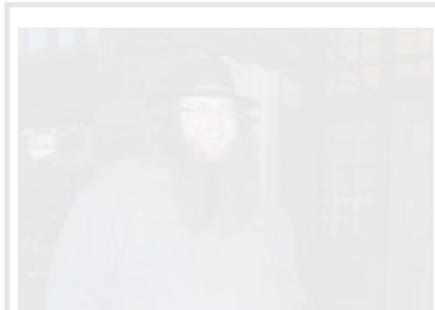
"I fight with family."

— Caleb Harrington, Enfield (said with laughter)



"I go to my grandma's house with my family."

— Caitlyn Ryan, Auburn



"I have a New Year's party and invite all my friends - booze and board games."

— Zakk Dannemann, Millport

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