

# INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



## IT'S ALL HANDS ON DECK WITH HEAD START

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

We learned the same day as many parents and teachers that Sullivan County Head Start was shutting down - immediately. We didn't have time to be shocked, confused or upset. We had 350 children, 100 staff and many families who needed our help right then and there.

From a legal and technical standpoint, we could have let the Federal government and Head Start's leadership wallow through this mess. Head Start is almost completely funded by the U.S. government, and the County has no authority over the local program.

But this was a true emergency for these families, who were left without crucial daycare and education services, and for these teachers, who suddenly and unexpectedly found themselves without employment and pay. We could not leave them to suffer. I'm very proud to say all of County government - and many of our partners - immediately stepped in to care for everyone impacted by this calamity. Indeed, we treated it as a full-scale emergency, acting as we would in a natural disaster or major catastrophe.

Our Legislature leapt into action, staying on top of the matter and using their vast contacts to make needed connections.

Our Division of Health & Human Services tracked down every parent/guardian of every child and made sure they received the services to which they were eligible.

Our Division of Community Resources ensured food, employment opportunities and a comforting hand were provided to those who needed such.

Our Childcare Council and its partner nonprofits found room for the children displaced by the closure and gave many parents desperately-needed time to make alternate arrangements with work and family.

We still aren't exactly sure why this happened, but we were there for people when it did, and I want to thank every County employee, official and our partners for their ongoing efforts to assist.

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# NEW LEGISLATURE LOOKS AT HOUSING, EMS

A majority-new Legislature took office earlier this year, and with it came a desire to focus on some of our most challenging dilemmas.

I've no qualms about calling our housing situation a true crisis, as we continue to see a rise in homelessness as rental units become unaffordable and/or short-term.

Thankfully, we have a newly-completed Housing Study from which to draw ideas. Our Planning and Health staff are leading the effort, and Hudson

Valley Pattern for Progress is advising legislators on how best to bring affordable housing back to Sullivan County. Another major issue is the dwindling amount of ambulances and EMS crews in the County. Volunteerism has been on a downslide for many years, and we are not a particularly attractive region with for-profit EMS services due to our ruralness. The result has been an alarming decrease in response times, due to a lack of ambulances and personnel. Legislators continue to meet with our EMS Advisory Council to address this truly life-or-death concern.

## CRIME ANALYST JOINS DRUG TEAM

Earlier this year, the Sullivan County District Attorney's Office, in conjunction with local police departments, formally hired a Sullivan County Crime Analyst thanks to the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) designation by the President of the United States' Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

District Attorney Brian Conaty, who leads our County's Drug Task Force, intends for this analyst to help investigate local narcotics and violent crimes through statistical and mapping tools, and provide critical incident response support to develop leads and information.

To protect their work, we aren't naming the person, but they are already collaborating with local law enforcement agencies, the ten Crime Analyst Centers across New York State, and similar centers across the country.

They're actually headquartered in the Hudson Valley Crime Analyst Center (HVCAC) located in our neighboring Orange County Emergency Services Center in Goshen, but they work under the Sullivan County District Attorney's Office, and the position is funded by the New York County District Attorney's Office.

We shouldn't be proud or happy about the tragic need to have this HIDTA designation, but I am grateful we are seeing more funding to tackle one of our most serious issues. I thank the Task Force for their truly diligent, tireless work in this area.



**Sullivan County District Attorney Brian Conaty (at podium) speaks this past summer at the County Courthouse in Monticello during the HIDTA designation announcement. To his left are Senator Chuck Schumer and Office of National Drug Control Policy Director Dr. Rahul Gupta.**



# FOOD SCRAP RECYCLING PROGRAM



LET'S KEEP FOOD OUT OF  
A LANDFILL AND TURN IT  
INTO USEFUL COMPOST!

The first 400 registrants get a FREE  
kitchen collection bin and a larger,  
5-gallon exterior collection bin!

Register to try out this pilot program by contacting  
Recycling Coordinator Kassie Thelman at **845-807-0291**  
or [recycling@sullivanny.us](mailto:recycling@sullivanny.us). (Pre-registration is required.)

## IT TAKES A COUNTY TO DO THIS RIGHT...

So we've hit the 300 mark in the number of registrants for our Food Scrap Recycling Pilot Program, which is great! But we're aiming for 400 in order to use up all our recycling kits (free to any registrant) and to make the case to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation that there's sufficient demand in Sullivan County for a municipal composting system. Right now, we're sending food scraps to Ulster County's composting facility. We're happy to turn that waste into a useful product instead of the potent greenhouse gas known as methane (which is produced by decomposition in our landfills), but we're giving up any profit from the sale of that valuable compost, and we're incurring truck transport costs to get it to Ulster. Why not have our own facility in Monticello? You can help us realize that possibility, and it won't cost you anything other than time. Just give a call to our Recycling Coordinator Kassie Thelman, who remains very eager to sign you up for the program (845-807-0291).

In exchange, she'll provide you with bins and instructions on how to drop off your food scraps at most of our transfer stations - for **FREE**.

## AWARD-WINNING CITIZEN SERVICE IS SIMPLY OUR USUAL STANDARD

For an incredible 33rd consecutive time, the Sullivan County Treasurer's Office has been accorded the Financial Reporting Achievement Award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).

The GFOA is a national nonprofit association serving approximately 17,500 government finance professionals, with offices in Chicago and Washington, DC.

The award was given after an impartial panel of judges determined the County's 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) met GFOA's high standards, including demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" in communicating financial details and motivating people to read it. The report can be found at [sullivanny.us/Departments/Managementandbudget/Audits](http://sullivanny.us/Departments/Managementandbudget/Audits).



Credit for this rests with County Treasurer **Nancy Buck** (left) and her awesome staff. They have a very challenging job - especially during tax season, when folks aren't necessarily happy with their bills - but Nancy and crew are 110% committed

to prompt, professional, high-achieving customer service.

Take a look at the 2022 ACFR (one for 2023 is coming). You will clearly see how we are focused on ensuring at all times the proper collection and use of taxpayers' dollars. We owe you no less.



# GET IN ON THE FUN!

Every month there's something new to see, to hear, to touch, to experience at the Sullivan County Museum & Cultural Center on Main Street in Hurleyville. The band Little Sparrow (**left**) often plays with other talented musicians during openings and lectures, as members Aldo and Carol Troiani organize most every event. The Frederick Cook Society celebrates Dr. Cook, a Sullivan native who was renowned for his Arctic exploits (**that's his iceberg pic**), while also bringing scientists and scholars (like paleontologist Patrick De Deckker, **lower left**) to speak. Work (**below**) by famed potter and local visitor Robert Segall was displayed this past summer, and a large crowd gathered to see the bagel-making machine (**bottom**) invented by native son Louis Wichinsky. Stop by for a free visit!

