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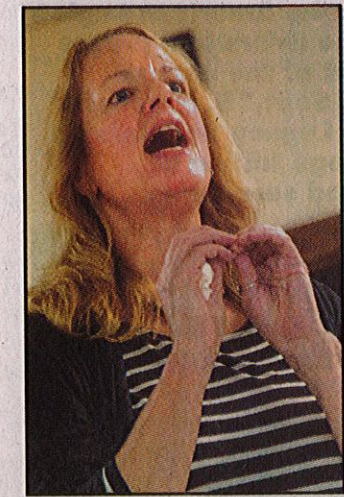
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City of The Hills

Nursing Home Acts On Complaints

More Fruit, More Choices On Center's Menu

By LIBBY CUDMORE



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Fresh produce has returned to Cooperstown Center. "Every day, we have fresh fruit available with at least one meal," said

These people are our customers." **JEFF EMHOFF**
Cooperstown Center Executive
administrator Jeff Emhoff. "We've had peaches, strawberries, cantaloupe, watermelon and pineapple.

And we always stock fresh fruit in the neighborhood kitchens for people to snack on." Following complaints about the quality of food expressed June 5 to Hometown Oneonta by the Residents Council, as well as allegations that *Please See FOOD, A7*



Heather Power, formerly with Bassett, is new food service director as Cooperstown Center seeks to respond to residents' complaints.

Ian Austin/HOMETOWN ONEONTA

Parker Fish/HOMETOWN ONEONTA
Johna Peachin, chair of the Town of Oneonta Fire Commission, tabled a motion to dissolve the fire district.

Commission's Fiery Meeting Ends Stymied

ONEONTA

After a fiery meeting of the Oneonta Town Fire Commission Tuesday, Sept. 18, plans to dissolve the entity were quenched, at least for now. After four dozen towns-

BEATING HARVEST HEAT



Sheriff's Race Still Up In Air

Devlin Over Hurdle, But Fernandez Alive

By PARKER FISH

Devlin Wins; Fernandez Still Threat

DEVLIN/From A1

very lively campaign and election this fall."

The 3,033 ballots cast represents 24 percent of the 12,729 registered Republicans in the county.

It also showed a higher interest in the hard-fought race: only 21 percent turned out in 2012, the last time Devlin ran.

There were three write-ins: two for former county rep. Len Carson; one for Oneonta attorney Otto Rothermel.

"I was happy with the results," said Devlin. "I think there has been a lot of negativity and lot of untruths circulating from this race, so it was good to see a positive result. We'll build on that momentum moving forward into the general election."

The county GOP chair, Vince Casale, echoed that: "The result proved what we felt all along in that people feel safe living and working in Otsego County with Sheriff Devlin."

Fernandez, who lost the GOP County Committee's backing Devlin in March, said "this is what we anticipated ... It would have been nice to win, but like I said, it's all part of the strategy,

and I think we're in a really good position right now."

While Fernandez didn't win, the results show that Republican voters are divided. If Democrats and independents voting Nov. 6 tilt toward Fernandez, anything can happen.

"We're still going out and talking with people, listening to and understanding their concerns, so that I can effectively serve them as county sheriff," Fernandez said, "...and we're going to reach out to more people where we didn't do so well."

Devlin said his day-to-day focus has to be running the sheriff's department, "to ensure the residents of Otsego County stay safe. So we'll continue campaigning on the side, while still focusing on the current duties of the sheriff's office."

Still, he said his campaign in the next six weeks will aim to convince undecided voters that he is the best candidate.

"I think they need to look at my record and the past 12 years that I've been sheriff, and I think they need to ask themselves if they feel safe in Otsego County," said Devlin.

▶ OTSEGO COUNTY V. STATE RESULTS

	COUNTY	OVERALL
▶ SHERIFF		
Richard J. Devlin Jr.*	1,700 (56.24%)	—
Bob Fernandez	1,316 (43.53)	—
▶ GOVERNOR		
Cynthia Nixon*	1,592 (51.59%)	507,692 (33.5)
Andrew Cuomo**	1,485 (48.12%)	963,165 (64.3)
▶ LT. GOVERNOR		
Kathy Hochul*/**	1,608 (55.4%)	720,655 (48.2)
Jumaane Williams	1,291 (44.5%)	635,751 (42.5)
▶ ATTORNEY GENERAL		
Zephyr Teachout*	2,031 (66.85%)	441,640 (29.5)
Sean Patrick Maloney	565 (18.6%)	356,781 (23.8)
Letitia James**	356 (11.72%)	578,552 (38.7)
Leecia Eve	84 (2.76%)	48,639 (3.25)
▶ ASSEMBLY (121st)		
Bill Magee*/**	1,097 (50.7%)	3,406 (58.6)
Dan Buttermann	1,062 (49.1%)	2,229 (38.4)
▶ ASSEMBLY (122nd)		
Cliff Crouch*/**	362 (81.9%)	5,547 (70.5)
Nick Libous	78 (17.65%)	2,202 (28)

* Local winner ** Overall winner

In the Thursday, Sept. 13, statewide primary election, Otsego County Republicans chose the party's endorsed sheriff's nominee, incumbent Richard J. Devlin Jr. Democrats chose Cynthia Nixon over Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who won statewide. And they picked local favorite Zephyr Teachout for attorney general; Letitia James won statewide. Many of the winners must still vie in the Nov. 6, general election.

Plea Historic, But Families Question Focus Deal

FOCUS/From A1

cared for," Attorney General Barbara Underwood said in a statement after the verdict. "My office will hold accountable all nursing home owners, operators and administrators who disregard their obligation to provide sufficient staffing and adequate care to the vulnerable residents."

On Wednesday, Sept. 12, Zupnik and Herman had plead to a single count of endangering the welfare of "M.P.," the 94-year-old resident left unattended for 41 hours over Memorial Day Weekend 2016.

"I hope other owners and operators can learn from this experience — if you treat a nursing home like a business, you're going to be making people more vulnerable," said Bill Hayes, secretary of the nursing home's Family Council.

Initially charged with eight counts — three relating to Robert Banta, who died after falling out of bed twice; two for M.P., and three counts of Willful Violation of

Health Laws — the two executives pleaded on Wednesday, Sept. 12 in Otsego Town Court to just a single count of endangering M.P.

They will face \$1 million in repayments to the state's Medicaid office, community service and possible exclusion from going back into the nursing home business for five years, according to a press release by the Attorney General's office.

They will not, however, face jail time. Kathryn Reinhardt, Banta's daughter, felt "numb" when she heard of the plea deal.

"I was outraged that they could get away with it," she said. "But I saw it with my court case. It just makes me jaded towards justice."

On Dec. 15, 2016, Reinhardt was awarded a settlement in the wrongful death of her father on June 24, 2015, who died after he twice fell out of a bed with no railings or nurse call button, despite having

been admitted to Focus after hip replacement surgery and with a history of falls.

To date, she has received no money from Focus. "I believe they have no intention of paying," she said. "If they can get out of the other charges, why shouldn't they be able to get out of this?"

"I don't think it was justice done for the residents who were incontinent and not changed on time or whose dietary needs were not met, or the employees who lost their jobs or took cuts," said Bill Dornburgh. "It would seem the Attorney General had plenty of evidence, but they copped out."

Dornburgh served on the Health Facilities Corp., set up by the county Board of Representatives to sell Otsego Manor and voted nay on the Focus sale.

The corporation, CCRN Operator, LLC, was also charged with the eight felonies and will appear in Otsego County Supreme Court at 10 a.m. Monday, Sept. 24.

Center Reacts To Complaints With Fruits, Choice, Repairs

FOOD/From A1

Cooperstown Center ran out of food on at least two occasions, Emhoff said he's been overhauling food services at the nursing and rehabilitation facility.

"We have a Dining Committee that meets once a month so that we can hear concerns and plan holiday meals or special menu items," he said. "But there were enough concerns that I realized we needed to meet every week."

Chief among those concerns was a lack of fresh produce, starch-heavy meals, fewer snacks available in the neighborhood kitchens and the poor quality of food served, especially the meat. "These people are our customers," said Emhoff. "We need to listen to them."

He promoted Heather Power, a veteran of retail food service and, most recently, patient service manager at Bassett Hospital, to Center's food service director. "One of the big changes was a brand new menu," Power said. "We meet every Monday and talk about what they would like to see on the menu."

She also hired new staff and trained the old staff on the dietary needs of the 175 residents, many with dietary restrictions or special food needs, including thickened liquids or pureed food. "Our people spent time with the dieticians and took tests so we know they understood what these diets meant," she said. "It has really helped."

In addition to fresh fruit, among the recommended changes was adding soup to the menu. "We try to offer a fresh-made soup every day," said Emhoff. "We had gazpacho, and some people hadn't had it before, but we like the idea that we could introduce something to someone who is 80 and has never had it. They might like it!"

Several starch-heavy casseroles and pasta dishes were removed from the menu rotation, and the use of canned vegetables was reduced. "We made ratatouille, and all the vegetables were fresh, not

canned," he said. "We made eggplant parmesan with fresh eggplant."

They also took specific requests from residents. "Someone specifically asked for grits, so we added that," said Emhoff. "I got talking with a Navy veteran and he was telling me he used to cook hash on the ship, so we put corned beef hash on the menu."

But most importantly, Emhoff said, is the taste. "I taste everything and I require the kitchen staff to taste it," he said. "I tell them that acceptable is not acceptable. It has to be great or really great."

And when there are complaints, Power said she works with the staff to make sure it doesn't happen again. "We got a complaint that the chicken we served was dry," she said. "So I followed up, and next time we make it, we'll make sure it's not dry."

So far, Emhoff said, the response to the changes has been good. "The food is getting better," said resident Mark Pettengill, Resident Council president. "They've changed everything quite a bit."

But Pettengill said that residents still have some concerns. "If you didn't like the main menu, you could ask for a hamburger or a hot dog," he said. "I've asked them to keep a few of those on the cart, but that fell on deaf ears."

The menu features two alternate items with lunch and supper, as well as cold cereal available at breakfast. "Half the time, that item is a peanut butter and jelly sandwich," said Pettengill. "And if you don't like it, oh well."

Though Emhoff said the broken coffee and ice machines have been fixed, Pettengill said that staff need to stay up-to-task on keeping the machines properly stocked.

Looking ahead, Emhoff hopes to work with local farmers and farmers' markets to increase their fresh offerings. "We want that farm-to-table approach," he said. "It's a long-range goal."