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POLICE NOTES

Arrested for DWI twice in one week

SULLIVAN COUNTY — On February 20, Officers from the Village of Liberty Police Department were dispatched to the area of Lake Street for a report of an erratic driver. Officers were able to locate the vehicle and identified the driver as Melissa Tschersch, 44 of Liberty. She was determined to be operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol and drugs. She was arrested without incident and charged with Driving While Intoxicated alcohol/drugs combined. In accordance with NYS Bail reform, Tschersch was released with an appearance ticket returnable to the Town of Liberty Court.

On February 24, Officers from the Village of Liberty Police Department were again dispatched to the area of Lake Street for a report of an erratic driver. They were able to locate the vehicle and again identified the driver as Melissa Tschersch. She was determined to be operating a motor vehicle on the influence of alcohol and drugs. She was arrested without incident and charged with Driving While Intoxicated alcohol/drugs combined. In accordance with NYS Bail reform, Tschersch was released with an appearance ticket returnable to the Town of Liberty Court on March 15 at 10 a.m.

Liberty Man charged for residential burglary

SULLIVAN COUNTY — On March 1, the Village of Liberty Police Department arrested Ralph Sparks, 55 of Liberty after an investigation into an alleged residential burglary on South Main Street in the Village of Liberty. Officers were originally called on Monday, February 28, by a homeowner on South Main Street who had returned home to find an individual in the process of burglarizing the residence and attempting to steal jewelry and electronics from inside the house. Upon the homeowner returning to the residence the burglar fled with the proceeds.

A subsequent investigation resulted in identifying and arresting Sparks without incident. Sparks was charged with burglary in the 2nd degree and grand larceny in the 4th degree, both felonies. Sparks was arraigned in the Town of Liberty Court and remanded to Sullivan County Jail without bail. The Village of Liberty Police Department was assisted by the Town of Fallsburg Police Department K-9 division.

A Greene Thumb

Celebrating International Women's Day with Hope Farm's Head Farmer

BY DEREK KIRK

In recognition of International Women's Day (IWD), the Democrat sat down with the Head Farmer at New Hope Community's Hope Farm, Megan Greene, who shared her experiences in the agricultural field as a woman striving to plot out a positive difference in her community, as well as her appreciation for IWD and all that it represents in the progress of women everywhere.

Originally from Ulster County, Greene took an interest in agriculture and gardening and now supports the agriculture scene at New Hope Community's Hope Farm at Loch Sheldrake.

"I got into farming about five years ago. I started by volunteering abroad in Portugal on an organic farm. Then I kinda got hooked after that, and ended up going to Graduate school outside of Pittsburgh at Chatham University for a Master's Degree in Food Studies," Green said.

After earning her degree and leaving Pittsburgh, Green returned to the Hudson Valley with knowledge, experience and the drive to serve her hometown community.

For the past two years, she has utilized her skills and knowledge as the Head Farmer at New Hope Community's Hope Farm.

According to Greene, New Hope is a non-profit organization that supports individ-



Megan Greene, Head Farmer at New Hope Community's Hope Farm, uses her skills and experience to assist in growing the agricultural scene on campus.

uals with intellectual and developmental disabilities including via providing day programs for these individuals.

"We also do a lot of work with our day programs here at New Hope Community," Greene said. "[They are] some of our most dedicated volunteers who come to the greenhouse and the farm, and love to help out with whatever we're doing. They are a huge part of the farm operation," Greene said.

Greene spends her time out in the gardens and greenhouses alongside members of the New Hope community, and guides them with her expertise in the field.

Recognizing IWD

The eighth of March marks International Women's Day, a day which commemorates the cultural, political, and socioeconomic achievements of women around the globe,

and marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

IWD is important to Greene, especially as a woman blazing a trail in a historically male-dominated career field.

"Women have definitely always been involved in agriculture," Greene said.

"It's [IWD] recognizing all of the buried work that women do and realizing we've always been doing this, it's just that we haven't

always gotten the credit for it," Greene notes of the importance of IWD.

"Something I really love about being in a position that's not typically held by women is that we get to do programs with local schools and be able to be an example for the kids," Greene said.

"It shows them that women are not only capable of doing any type of job they're interested in but also that this is an option for them."

In her past, the first farm that Greene interned on outside of Pittsburgh was owned and operated by women, which partially inspired Greene in her chosen career.

"That was really great for me to see and to learn from her and understand the challenges that come along with being a woman in farming," Greene said.

"There are so many female farmers out there that I follow on Instagram that I really enjoy following to see them doing work, and [have] people to look up to, aspire to, and relate to," Greene said.

Today, Greene works alongside a mostly female team at New Hope Community's Hope Farm who work to inspire, lead, and support a community each and every day in the gardens and greenhouses.

To learn more about Hope Farm, check out their website at newhopecommunity.org.

Guilty verdicts following County Court Trial

SULLIVAN COUNTY — District Attorney Meagan Galligan announced that today, March 3, Ronald Royster, 30, of Monticello, was convicted by a jury before the Sullivan County Court of Aggravated Criminal Contempt, Criminal Contempt in the First Degree, Aggravated Family Offense and Criminal Mischief in the Third Degree, all felonies, in connection with his conduct against a former paramour.

At trial, the jury determined that, on October 5, 2018, and March 1, 2019, Royster, in violation of an Order of Protection directing him to stay away from and not contact a former paramour, repeatedly attempted to make contact with her, including by ringing her doorbell and throwing a rock through the window of a car parked in her

driveway. Following delays relating to Royster's prosecution for possession of a loaded and operable firearm in Orange County, and delays relating to the pandemic, the trial commenced on February 28, 2022, and concluded this afternoon, with the jury deliberating for approximately one hour before returning its guilty verdicts.

Royster has previously been convicted of two misdemeanors and one felony Criminal Contempt for his conduct against the same victim. He is currently serving a 3.5 year sentence on his Orange County conviction and faces up to an additional 7.5 to 15 years at sentencing on this case. "This defendant has repeatedly terrorized a hardworking member of our community who displayed



R. Royster

tremendous courage in facing him in court this week," Galligan said. She added, "He has demonstrated that he will stop at nothing to make contact with her, but Sullivan County's law enforcement community will stop at nothing to protect her as well." Galligan thanked the New York State Police for their commitment to this case and the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision for producing the defendant from prison for trial. She additionally praised the work of Assistant District Attorney Lisa Bondarenka, who prosecuted this case. Royster remains incarcerated at Upstate Correctional. Sentencing is set for May 13, before County Court Judge E. Danielle Jose-Decker.

MEETINGS

- TUESDAY, MARCH 8
- Tri-Valley Central School District**, Board of Education, Executive Session, 5:30 p.m., Secondary School Library Upper Level; Anticipated Proposed Executive Session, 5:30 p.m., Secondary School Library Lower Level, 34 Moore Hill Rd., Grahamsville.
 - Village of Monticello**, Planning Board, Public Hearing, 6 p.m., Meeting, 7 p.m., 2 Pleasant St., Monticello.
 - Town of Tusten**, Town Board, Meeting, 6:30 p.m., 210 Bridge St., Narrowsburg.
 - Town of Thompson**, Zoning Board, Work Session, 6:30 p.m., Meeting/Public Hearing, 7 p.m., via ZOOM, 4052 Route 42, Monticello.
 - Kauneonga Lake Fire District**, Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., Kauneonga Lake Firehouse, 3574 NYS Route 55, Kauneonga Lake.
 - Town of Highland**, Town Board, Meeting, 7 p.m., Eldred Town Hall, 4 Proctor Rd., Eldred.

- Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, 3460 Route 55, White Lake.
 - Mountandale Fire District**, Monthly Meeting, 8 p.m., Mountandale Firehouse, 132 Main St., Mountandale.
- THURSDAY, MARCH 10
- Village of Bloomingburg**, Town Board Meeting, 7 p.m., 13 North Rd., Bloomingburg.
 - Town of Rockland**, Zoning Board, Public Hearing, 7 p.m., via ZOOM, 95 Main St., Livingston Manor.
 - White Lake Fire District**, Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., 1596 St. Rt. 17B, White Lake.
 - Loch Sheldrake Fire District**, Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., Loch Sheldrake Firehouse, 1280 ST RT 52, Loch Sheldrake.
 - Town of Fallsburg**, Planning Board, Meeting, 7 p.m., via ZOOM, Town Hall, Court Room, 12 Laurel Ave, South Fallsburg.
 - Town of Callicoon**, Planning Board, Meeting, 7:30 p.m. 19 Legion St., Jeffersonville.

- WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9
- Mamakating Public Library**, Board of Trustees Meeting, 6 - 7 p.m., Mamakating Public Library, 128 Sullivan St., Wurtsboro. Interested parties call (845) 888-8004.
 - Village of Jeffersonville**, Public Hearing, 6:15 p.m., Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Russell E. Duttweiler Community Center, 17 Center St., 2nd Floor, Jeffersonville.
 - North Branch Fire District**, Monthly Meeting, 6:30 p.m., District Meeting Room, 20 N. Branch Rd., North Branch.
 - Town of Cochecton**, Town Board, Meeting/Public Hearing, 7 p.m. 74 Smales Rd., Lake Huntington.
 - Town of Delaware**, Town Board, Meeting, 6 p.m., 104 Main St., Hortonville.
 - Town of Fremont**, Town Board, Meeting, 7 p.m., 12 County Road 95, Fremont Center.
 - Town of Lumberland**, Town Board, Meeting, 7 p.m., 1054 Proctor Rd., Glen Spey.
 - Town of Thompson**, Planning Board, Meeting, 7 p.m., 4052 Route 42, Monticello.
 - Town of Neversink**, Town Board, Meeting, 7:30 p.m., 273 Main St., Grahamsville.
 - Town of Bethel**, Town Board, Audit

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