



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **July 19, 2011** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Extends Authorization on Military Pay

The Legislature extended the County's authorization regarding pay for County employees called up for military duty. (The vote was 12-3, with Legislators Carol Chock, Will Burbank, and Peter Stein voting no.) The action authorizes the County, during the 2011 calendar year, to pay the difference between base County salary and military pay for up to 90 work days per calendar year when the employee is called to active military duty. No payment will be made if military pay is equal to or greater than County base salary. The Legislature first authorized such supplemental benefits in 2002, covering those employees called to service following the September 11, 2001 attacks, and passed similar measures in 2004, 2007, and 2009. Legislator Chock said she could not support the authorization as a matter of conscience, that she cannot support the principle of spending local dollars as a result of federal defense policy over which the County has no control.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058

Project Generations Program Recognized as Distinguished Youth

The Legislature has recognized Project Generations, a student-run organization at Ithaca College, as this month's Tompkins County Distinguished Youth. Nominated by the County Office for the Aging (COFA), the program, initiated by I.C. junior Melissa Stuzbach, helps older adults combat loneliness and a need for help at home, partnering with COFA to provide in-home assistance to older adults in Tompkins County. Through "Project Generations," 23 students have been matched to visit seniors once a week for about an hour, providing companionship, assistance with light housekeeping, or respite for a caregiver, and also have had access to training on topics related to older adults. "Our experience with this organization has been nothing short of amazing!" COFA's Katrina Schickel states in her nomination letter. "They are conscientious and dedicated in their dealings with our clients. Melissa has been an outstanding leader with tremendous foresight as she has recruited students from freshmen to graduate students who will continue to sustain the important work of Project Generations." The Distinguished Youth Award is cosponsored by A&B Awards and Engraving, Bangs Ambulance Service, Purity Ice Cream, and Cayuga Radio Group.

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434.

Legislature Accepts Falls Prevention Grant

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, accepted a nearly \$18,000 grant from the Health Planning Council of Tompkins County to the County Office for the Aging (COFA) as part of the Council's Falls Prevention program for older adults. The funding will support training to provide in-home safety assessments and falls prevention interventions through two COFA programs. The Community Health Foundation of Western and Central New York recently awarded the Health Planning Council a \$50,000 implementation grant to support the local falls prevention initiative conducted through a coalition of local partners—including the Health Planning Council, COFA, Lifelong, home care providers, and emergency responders. The award is part of a two-year effort, with possible support of more than \$100,000.

Contact: Frank Proto, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-4875; Lisa Holmes, Director, Tompkins County Office for the Aging, 274-5482; Betty Falcao, Director, Tompkins County Health Planning Council, 273-8686.

Among other business, the Legislature

- Heard from four residents, three of them members of the Office for the Aging Advisory Board, who expressed concern about the proposal being examined to relocate the Office for the Aging to space in the Health Department Building rather than the Human Services Annex on West State. Several legislators, in later discussion, said that the potential change in COFA's planned location should be approached in a careful, deliberate, and transparent fashion. The Legislature's Government Operations Committee next considers the issue July 21.
- Heard a report from Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability, on the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Showcase Communities program, under which the County has received a \$375 thousand demonstration project grant.

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