

Ciao and Arrivederci, Aurora!

On December 31st, Aurora Rubens Valenti will end 24 illustrious years as Tompkins County Clerk, where she has served as County Clerk, Clerk of the Supreme and County Courts, and Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles.

A native Ithacan, and a first-generation American born of naturalized parents, Aurora has been elected as candidate of both the County's major political parties, and during her many years as County Clerk has produced and directed the U.S. Homeland Immigration & Naturalization ceremonies that have sworn in approximately 2,400 applicants as new citizens of the USA.

In recent remarks of thanks to members of the Tompkins County Bar Association, Aurora said, "My life in the law started when I was 18 years old (60 years ago), and I cannot think of a more challenging, fulfilling, and ENJOYABLE career. If I were gifted with 'living my life over,' I would not change a thing."

Aurora has garnered numerous awards during her service, including County Clerk of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards from the New York State Association of County Clerks. An *Ithaca Journal* editorial published after she was recognized as County Clerk of the Year states, "It might sound like just another plaque, but Valenti has lent a flair and drive to her job that transcends the norm...Valenti doesn't mince words about her primary goal: Courtesy and efficiency have to be staples at the county's DMV and records office, no excuses please."

In presenting Aurora a "Town-Gown Award" at ceremonies this month, Cornell's John Gutenberger (himself a fellow native Ithacan, as well as former Mayor of the City of Ithaca) remarked, "There was a time when Aurora and her staff were getting so many awards, news stories, and media attention that folks in County government were calling them 'the Kardashians of Local Government,'" and he credited her for creating the customer-friendly environment at the Clerk's Office and DMV—the transformation of the DMV under Aurora's leadership written up in the *New York Times* as an example of the way government should provide customer service.

In farewell remarks to the County Legislature December 16, Aurora thanked the Legislature and the people of Tompkins County who made it possible for her to become Tompkins County Clerk on January 1, 1991.



Aurora R. Valenti
Tompkins County Clerk



"I thank you and all the people of this wonderful county for permitting me to serve you as your County Clerk, the Clerk of the Courts, and as Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles," she said. "Congratulations to all of us for being residents of this great county as well as employees and representatives thereof."

"I am sure my parents are so proud that they became citizens of the United States upon their arrival from Italy to Ithaca, thereby permitting their daughter to be First Generation American. Aurora Rubens Valenti ran for office and won. TOMPKINS COUNTY: THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH TO WORK. Second only, perhaps, to Disney World."

"Thank you again for this fabulous opportunity!"

Thank you, Aurora, for the fabulous opportunity you have provided for all of us to work with you. And thank you for all that you have done over these many years for Tompkins County. We will miss you!

Ciao, Aurora, and Arrivederci!



" "**IT'S COMING!**"

" Not a polar vortex or a tsunami, but it's just as powerful..."

" "**The Tompkins County Workplace Climate Survey!**"

" **Open to All County Employees. JANUARY 19-30, 2015.**"

" Let your voice be heard." "

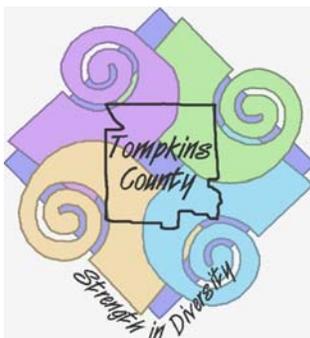
" Get ready to participate in the Tompkins County Workplace Climate Survey next month." "

" Tompkins County is partnering with the Chicago-based Kaleidoscope Group [<http://kgdiversity.com>] to develop and administer the survey, which will provide an understanding of how our organizational culture supports or hinders performance and will assess our culture's strengths and weaknesses." "

" Watch your email for more information about the Workplace Climate Survey, and visit the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee web page [<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/workforcedi>] for updates." "

" We want to hear from you!" "

" *Get involved. Be proactive. Stay engaged.*" "



A Message from the Corridors Team

Watch for changes coming to *County Corridors* in 2015!

In cooperation with our web developer, Catalog & Commerce, we're developing a new format for this publication that will provide more frequent, timely communication, which we believe will better serve you.

More from us early in the New Year!

Also...a reminder that we are always eager to receive your department news, and are looking for more people to join us on the Corridors Team. If you're interested, or would like to know more, please be in touch with Editor Geri Lockwood – 274-0314 or glockwood@tompkins-co.org.

Happy Holidays to all from the Corridors Team!

Solid Waste Division Celebrates America Recycles Day

Submitted by: Juliet Barriola, Project Assistant

Photos by: Emily Wilson, Outreach Assistant

America Recycles Day (ARD) was observed on November 15th. It is the only nationally-recognized day dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the U.S. This year, the Solid Waste Division celebrated ARD at the new Food Scraps Recycling drop spots and at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center on Commercial Avenue in Ithaca.

Since August, drop spots have opened at the Dryden Town Highway Department and Lansing Village Office on Saturdays and at Cornell Cooperative Extension on Willow Avenue in Ithaca on Sundays. The free service allows residents to expand their recycling options and reduce their trash disposal costs. The material collected is taken to Cayuga Compost in Trumansburg for processing, with the resulting compost sold as a soil amendment to farmers, landscapers and homeowners. Visitors to the Recycling and Solid Waste Center or any of the drop spots received ARD recycling pledge forms and buttons. Cayuga Compost samples were also handed out.

In addition, a textiles collection was held at the Food Scraps Recycling drop spots in support of a new statewide textile recycling campaign. The clothing and textiles collected at the drop spots were taken to the St. Pauly collection area of the public drop off at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center.

This year, America Recycles Day fell on the same day as the final Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off event of the year. Solid Waste Division staff greeted customers as they waited in line at the RSWC, handing out ARD buttons and promoting the clothing and textiles drop off and the food scraps recycling program.

Throughout the weekend, it was estimated staff reached about 300 residents and collected 530 pounds (820 gal.) of clothing and textiles. Many people were surprised to learn they could bring the same materials to the RSWC drop off year round.





Highway Highlights...

Submitted by Geri Lockwood, Administrative Assistant, with input from Jeff Smith, Highway Director

Buffalo Snow Event Assistance

While hundreds of highway crews from across New York and surrounding states responded to mutual aid requests for assistance with the devastating snow storm that crippled Western New York/Buffalo Area, dropping up to 84" in some areas; *Tompkins County Crews joined in the effort.*

Tompkins County Highway Division, along with Towns of Dryden, Danby, and Caroline sent crews and equipment. Leaving November 21st, the Crews were given tasks immediately upon arrival. On-scene reports included mountains of snow and appreciative people. The Tompkins County Crew was assigned to clear several downtown streets. Many hidden objects were avoided by careful removal of lots of snow, with the exception of a fire hydrant... oops, sorry...!!

Crew members asked to not be identified, reporting that, "we are only doing our job"; and, "we were selected to go, but many other department employees were ready to go as well." Regardless, many thanks to all who went and provided assistance!!



Tompkins County Highway crew performing snow removal operations.



Buried!



Vehicle #1



Vehicle #2 (buried in front of the garage)



Abandoned Police Cruiser



Almost Cleared!



Department News



Youth Services

News from the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth



Though its ten-year federal grant has ended, the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth (CCHY) continues its work to engage a wide range of community members in reducing youth substance use. The Tompkins County Youth Services Department coordinated the grant, provided staffing, and assured full compliance with all grant requirements. Our new role is as a CCHY board member.

CCHY's first major post-grant activity was the administration of the biannual countywide student survey in late October. This survey was a grant requirement and also provided invaluable data to many planning groups in our county. Many community partners felt it was vital to continue the survey and agreed to collaborate in funding it. Data and reports from the 2014 survey of students in grades 7-12 from all Tompkins County public secondary are expected in early 2015.

CCHY has prepared a work plan for the coming year. Without grant funds, activities will be cut back, but significant initiatives will continue, including public presentations, Sticker Shock, media campaigns, underage drinking tip line, and outreach to parents and families.

A summary report of CCHY's accomplishments during the grant period is being prepared. CCHY welcomes individuals or organizations to join its efforts. It also welcomes donations; please visit www.healthyyouth.org for more information.

Ensuring and Measuring Program Quality



In the May 2014 *County Corridors*, the Tompkins County Youth Services Department (TCYSD) described Results-Based Accountability, a tool we are using to measure the all-important question, "Is anyone better off?" as a result of receiving services from programs we fund. Over the first two quarters of 2014, our contracted agencies have honed their data collection instruments so that beginning in the third quarter that information could be collected. We are now beginning to analyze the programmatic success.

In the fall, we implemented an additional tool to improve quality in programs, Program Quality Assessments (PQA). A trainer from Onondaga County introduced PQA to program managers of Cornell Cooperative Extension's Rural Youth Services (RYS) programs, funded jointly by our department and local municipalities. This tool will be used to evaluate the quality of programs and identify staff training needs. For PQA, there will be two assessments done of each program: the first will be conducted by RYS staff of their colleagues, the second by TCYSD staff. The two teams will then meet to develop a combined score. Eight areas are covered by the assessment, everything from the safety of the space where the program takes place, whether the relationships (youth-to-youth as well as youth-to-adult) are supportive, and the opportunities for youth to build skills.

In 2015, PQA will be introduced to agency programs and RBA will roll out in municipal programs. Quality influences the participation of youth, the satisfaction and retention of youth workers, and the impact programs have on young people, families, and the community. Although they may feel right, sometimes programs fail to meet the high bar of quality that is essential for producing meaningful outcomes for young people.

Twitter: You can now find the Tompkins County Youth Services Department on Twitter @TompkinsCoYouth. Please follow us to learn about upcoming events, resources for parents, youth workers and agencies, updates on research, and much more. Feel free to mention us in your tweets at #ToCoYouth.

Submitted by Kris Bennett

Highway Division



The Highway Division welcomes *John Licitra*, Civil Engineer.

Best wishes to *Wayne Lauper*, who retired from his position as a Heavy Equipment Operator on June 26th, after 27 years with the Highway Division.

Congratulations to *Zachary Fredenburg* on the birth of his daughter, Edith, on June 18th; to *Nate Emery*, on the birth of his daughter, Arrow, on September 2nd; to *Tom Jacobs*, on the birth of his grandson, Owen, on November 30th; and to *Jeff Lucas*, on the birth of son, Lincoln, on December 3rd.

Personnel Department

Benefits Day – Thank You!

Thanks again to all County employees for making the 2014 Benefits Day a success. Thank you for taking the time to learn about the benefits that you are currently enrolled in and the benefits that are offered to you as a County employee.

In total we gave away 12 raffle prizes sponsored by benefit vendors. Prizes included gift cards, gift baskets, tote bags and Fitness Center discounts. Congratulations to all who won -- their names are listed below! If you are a raffle winner and have not received your prize, please contact this office to make arrangements to pick up your prize. Thank you.

2014 Benefits Day raffle winners:

Sylvia Allinger Excellus Gift Basket

Kevin McGuire Excellus Gift Basket

Anita Buck \$50 gift card donated by from Pearl Carroll

Daequan Elliott \$50 gift card donated by Pearl Carroll

Cindy Hart ProAct gift basket

Carol Beebe Tompkins County Employees FCU

Travel ~ coffee mug, lighted key-chain

Coral Uettwiller ProAct gift basket

Monica Vandenberg Lifetime Benefit Solutions Mug/umbrella \$20 gift card

Marge Dean \$50 Wegman's gift card donated by Tompkins County

Kathy King \$50 Lowe's gift card donated by Tompkins County

Denise Sanders Finger Lakes Fitness Center 1 month membership

Anne Drake Finger Lakes Fitness Center 1 month membership

STEP UP COMPETITION

22 teams participated in this year's Step up Challenge hosted by the Personnel Office. The competition began the middle of June for 4 weeks and there were roughly 130 county employees that participated. Participants kept track of their daily steps and fruit and vegetable servings and submitted weekly team totals. Weekly prizes were given to the teams with the most steps, most fruit and vegetable servings, or highest combination of both steps and servings and a grand prize was given to the team that had the highest combination over the 4 weeks of the competition. Thank you to all of you who participated, especially the team leaders who coordinated with their team mates in order to submit your weekly totals on time. Big congratulations to all of the winners! We hope you all had a great time, enjoyed the friendly competition, and we hope many more will participate in the next competition.

Weekly Winners:

Week 1 (Fruit Basket from Wegmans): [Team Pro-Active](#), Probation Department

Week 2 (Wrist and Neck cooling bands/towels and mini personal fan): [Team Broccoli](#), Planning Department

Week 3 (Gift Cards to YogartLand): [Team Change Agents](#), Department of Mental Health

Week 4 (Fruit Basket from Wegmans): [Team Fluffer Nutters](#), Department of Social Services

Grand Prize Winner (Catered Lunch from Wegmans in the Park): [Team Broccoli](#), Planning Department



2014 Halloween Costume Contest

The winners are.....



Group



“ITS Department as Greg Potter”
(ITS)

Individual



“Elvis”
Adam Scholl
(DSS)

See all the great entries on the *County Corridors* website:
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/Halloween%20Costume%20Contest-2014.pdf>.

Thank you to all the participants who “dressed” for the contest, to all who voted, and to the Vending Committee for providing the awards (\$20.00 Group and \$10.00 Individual).

Kudos Korner...

Congratulations to the *County Clerk's Office* and *ITS* for receiving *The 2014 Cheryl Steinbach Annual Archives Award for Excellence in Local Government Records Management*, presented by the New York State Archives and Archives Partnership Trust to a local government in the state that has demonstrated leadership in managing records economically and effectively. The award was presented October 21 in Albany.



The award letter states: “This award recognizes Tompkins County as a leader in 21st century records management in New York. The award commends Tompkins County for being insightful, resourceful and efficient in their approach to addressing county records management and fiscal concerns.” It relates to the electronic document management system the County developed, and its expansion of the program through the countywide local government consortium, the Tompkins Shared Services Electronic Records Repository.



The *Clerk's Office* was also honored as *Challenge Workforce Solutions' Business Partner of the Year* for 2014, the award presented October 14. This award also relates to the electronic document management system, which involved what Deputy Clerk Maureen Reynolds characterizes as Challenge's “never-ending scanning of County records, as well as county municipalities' records, as part of this initiative.

Congratulations, again, to all! As always, you make us proud!



Christmas Tree Safety

Submitted by Geri Lockwood, PIO Team Member

Whether your Christmas tree is live or artificial, precautions must be followed to ensure safety for you and your family.

Below are some safety tips to follow:

- Check for frayed or broken wires and loose connections, on the light sets, and replace non-working bulbs.
- Candles should never be used to decorate a tree.
- Live trees should be fresh, and can be sprayed with a Fire Marshall-approved flame-retardant chemical. They should also be watered regularly, without letting the tree holder become dry.
- Trees should never be placed near open flames, room exits, or heating sources.
- Electrical decorations and lights should not be within children's reach.
- Christmas lights should always be unplugged prior to leaving home or going to bed.
- Trees (and gift wrapping) should not be burned in a wood stove or fire place.

for a
SEASON of HAPPINESS

Enjoy a safe and happy holiday season with your loved ones.

VENDING COMMITTEE

"VENDS"

2014 Post-Trip Information:

NYC Spring Trip, May 31st – 31 passengers toured the City.

"Little Shop of Horrors", Musical at the Hangar Theatre, July 12th – was enjoyed by 19 people.

Darien Lake, August 16th – was visited by 49 people.

NYC Winter Trip, December 6th – 40 people had a great time in the City.

The Vending Committee also contributed the following money:

- \$750.00 toward the Annual Golf Tournament
- \$ 30.00 prize money for the Halloween Costume Contest
- \$ 5.00 per person for holiday parties
- Bereavement memorial donations

Website:

Don't miss out on a chance to enjoy one of the trips or events being scheduled in 2015. Please remember to visit our website on the employee Intranet (click on the link under "Events/News"), and be sure to visit regularly for updated information on all trips, news, etc.

Please see your Department Representative (names listed on the website) to share other ideas. No Representative for your department or building and are interested in joining our team? We would love adding you to our team, so please contact Pete Coats, at 274-6688, or pcoats@tompkins-co.org.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

BECOME A FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT

If you are interested in making a difference in the life of a child, are over 21 and have room in your heart and home, then please consider attending an informational meeting to learn what the next step is to becoming a certified foster, adoptive or respite parent. At this time we have significant need for homes able to take sibling groups and teenagers.

The next meeting for those interested in caring for children and teens in their homes will be held on **Tuesday, January 13th, 12:00 p.m.** at the Human Services Building, 320 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Street in Ithaca. If you are unable to attend this meeting or desire further information, please call 274-5266 so we can arrange for you to meet with our Homefinder at an alternative time.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Submitted by David Weiner, Foster Care & Respite Services, DSS



Classified Ads

Dog Dayz Inn

A place where your dog feels "at home".

Located in North Lansing
 Sandy Strehle, (315) 497-3467
dogdayzinn@yahoo.com
<http://www.dogdayzinn.com>



FOR SALE – 3 dozen goose decoys, clean, great condition, \$250.00. Please call Dan, at (607) 592-6462.

FOR SALE – 2014 18' Skylight Skycat, Model 163B, hybrid travel trailer (hard shell, with 2 end fold-down beds), 2,450 pounds unloaded weight, used only a total of 14 days. Refrigerator (operates on battery or propane), stove, microwave, A/C/heater, TV antenna, manual awning, never-used bathroom, sleeps 7. Please call Michelle, evenings, at (607) 242-6457, or e-mail mmphillips2007@gmail.com.



FREE – New home needed for love-seat sized sofa. No delivery-MUST pick up. Please call the Tompkins County Administration office, at (607) 274-5551.



FOR SALE – Acoustic guitar with case, \$100.00. Please call (607) 330-1595 after 5:30 p.m., or leave message.

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Interested in joining the Corridors team?

Contact Geri at 274-0314 or glockwood@tompkins-co.org



Custom Embroidery for everyone's needs. We work with other businesses, organization/groups, and the general public. We can use your design or work together to come up with a design. It's a great way to advertise your business or organization, or if you just need a gift for someone. We embroider on clothing, hats, bags, and much more.

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