

Cuomo's prison degree idea raises questions

You've heard of jailhouse lawyers. Now, how about jailhouse nurses, public relations specialists, engineers, business-people and historians?

In theory, at least, that could be the result of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's new plan to offer free college educations to some inmates at 10 prisons across the state.

Compassionate grounds aside, Cuomo justified the proposal with two related arguments. First, that educating inmates would reduce recidivism and the crime associated with it. Second, that lower rates of recidivism would save the state more money than the \$5,000 a year per participating inmate that it would spend on the program — the savings would occur because the state would not have to spend \$60,000 a year to incarcerate each inmate that does not re-offend.

Cuomo's arguments have



EYE ON GOVERNMENT

BY JIM MILLER

merit, but they also ring hollow to parents and kids trying to pay for college educations without state funding, to some crime victims advocates and citizens who want prisons to emphasize punishment, and to local legislators. "The Governor's proposal to provide college degrees to incarcerated individuals lacks a shred of common sense and demonstrates how out of touch he is

with the real-life issues facing New Yorkers," Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb, R-131 of Canandaigua, said in a press release typical of those coming from the Legislature's Republican members. "If the State is going to hand out free college educations, why don't we start with deserving students who actually respect the law?"

Kolb called the proposal an insult to families trying to pay tuition or pay off student debt.

"Any effort to reward convicts with something that law-abiding men and women can hardly afford is an affront to all New Yorkers," Kolb said.

While concerns like that make sense, the fact is most inmates are going to get out of jail someday. Despite an understandable desire to punish criminals, society has to deal with that fact ... and with its implications.

If we give inmates the tools to succeed, be it college degrees or

vocational training, they may be less likely to return to jail and create more crime victims in the process. If we eliminate rehabilitation from the justice system, as tempting as it sometimes sounds, we may simply guarantee that our jail's revolving doors will keep on spinning instead of creating an effective deterrent to crime.

That said, Cuomo's plan does raise some questions, specifically:

- **Employability.** College-educated people without criminal records struggle to find work in the current economy. With large pools of applicants, will employers even consider former inmates? If they won't, Cuomo's plan won't work.

- **Eligibility.** How many inmates have the necessary educational background to take and pass college classes? The smaller the pool of eligible inmates, the lower the program's cost — and

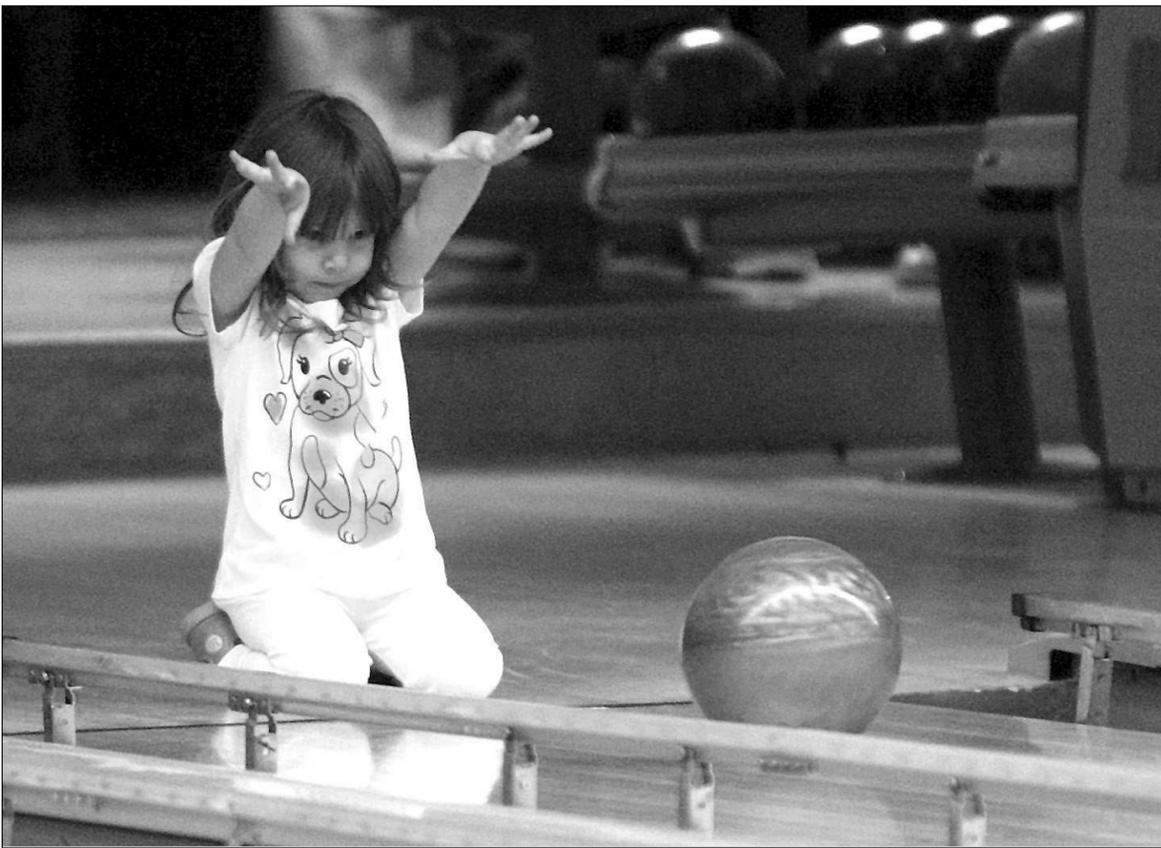
the smaller its impact.

- **Course content.** Cuomo's plan aims to offer inmates college degrees. College is a laudable goal for anyone. However, would vocational programs — advanced manufacturing training, for example — be just as effective, or even more effective, for inmates and less costly for the state?

The answers to those questions may emerge during the debate over Cuomo's plan, but they probably won't change many minds. The issue has provoked an emotional response as much as a logical one, and that seems likely to continue — with an added dose of partisanship as the Legislature gets involved.

Jim Miller's "Eye on Government" appears each Sunday in the Finger Lakes Times. Contact Miller at 789-3333, ext. 258, or jmill@ftimes.com.

Bowling for athletes



Spencer Tulis / Finger Lakes Times

Natali' Chiclana, 4, of Romulus, lets a bowling ball fly down the lanes at Sunset Bowl in Waterloo last week as part of the seventh annual Alan White Memorial Tournament. Seneca Meadows donated \$500 to this year's event. Some of the proceeds go to benefit Special Olympics athletes.

Man charged after cutting wife's arm with sword

ONTARIO — A town man who allegedly cut his wife's arm with a sword was arrested Thursday.

Wayne DeRue, 49, of 5725 Route 350, was charged by Wayne County deputies with second-degree assault, second-degree menacing and fourth-degree criminal mischief.

Deputies said his wife suffered a severe laceration. DeRue was sent to the Wayne County Jail in lieu of bail.

POLICE BEAT

Presumed innocent until proven guilty

YATES COUNTY

PENN YAN — A Branchport woman faces several charges, including DWAI-Drugs and DWI, after the vehicle she was driving nearly struck a Penn Yan Police Department patrol car Friday.

Village police said Leah M. Brady, 29, of Prosser Road, Branchport, was arrested around 5:50 p.m. on Clinton Street after she failed to stay in her lane and almost hit a patrol car that was traveling in the opposite direction.

Brady also was charged with failure to keep right, unlicensed operator and seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance.

She was issued an appearance ticket for Village Court and released.

DWI ARRESTS

The following individuals were charged with driving while intoxicated:

- Luke P. Robinson, 20, of White Springs Road, Geneva, by Ontario County deputies about 2:20 a.m. Saturday on Routes 5&20 in Canandaigua; also charged with failure to keep right and littering.

He was issued an appearance ticket to Canandaigua Town Court.

- Jarrod M. Crytzer, 36, of Kims Drive, Victor, by Ontario County deputies about 3:30 a.m. Thursday on Gillis Road in Victor;

also charged with first-degree aggravated unlicensed operation and driving on a suspended license.

The DWI charge is a felony because Crytzer was convicted of that offense within the last 10 years.

He was issued an appearance ticket to Victor Town Court.

PETTY LARCENY

The following individual was charged with petty larceny:

- Gregory D. Essman III, 20, of Lakeshore Drive, Canandaigua, by Ontario County deputies Friday; accused of stealing \$83.35 worth of merchandise from the Hopewell Walmart.

He was issued an appearance ticket to Hopewell Town Court.

BAD CHECK

The following individual was charged with issuing a bad check:

- Charlene L. Travis, 23, of Bristol Street, Canandaigua, by Ontario County deputies Friday; arrested on a bench warrant out of Canandaigua Town Court.

She was arraigned in Ontario County Court and remanded to Ontario County Jail in lieu of \$1,000 bail or \$2,000 bond.

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4 join Nozzolio against LPG site

By DAVID L. SHAW
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READING — Four downstate senators have joined Gas Free Seneca and Mike Nozzolio in opposing a gas storage project proposed for the west side of Seneca Lake.

Arlington Storage, a subsidiary of Houston-based Crestwood Midstream, is seeking state Department of Environmental Conservation and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approval to store roughly 88 million gallons of liquefied petroleum gas and natural gas in salt caverns just north of Watkins Glen. The plan involves pumping brine water currently in the caverns into a large, yet-to-be-built pond.

State Sens. Tony Avella, D-11 of Queens; Liz

Krueger, D-28 of Manhattan; Cecilia Tkaczyk, D-46, of Duanesburg; and George Latimer, D-37, of Rye, have written Gov. Andrew Cuomo and state DEC Commissioner Joe Martens requesting that the necessary permits not be granted.

Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, has asked that the DEC reject the permits and help Crestwood find a better location.

Avella, Tkaczyk and Latimer are on the state Environmental Conservation Committee.

They recently heard testimony about the project from Yvonne Taylor, co-founder of Gas Free Seneca.

In their letter, the senators touted the thriving agri-businesses and

tourism economy in the Finger Lakes, calling it a "jewel in the center of our great state."

They say Seneca Lake is the epicenter of that growth, hosting 108 wineries in the five counties surrounding the lake.

Tourism accounts for 58,000 jobs and puts nearly \$3 billion into the state's economy, they wrote.

"Allowing an out-of-state corporation to turn the Finger Lakes into a storage and transportation hub for the Northeast would require an over-ground infrastructure," they said. "That includes open brine pits, active burning flare stacks, pipelines, a six-track rail siding, a truck depot, above-ground bullet tanks

and increased truck traffic along tourist-filled roads."

The lawmakers cited "serious" safety and environmental concerns, questioning the stability of the underground geology and a history of fires and explosions when storing gas in salt caverns.

Gas Free Seneca officials said they were pleased with the letter. They also expressed gratitude to the Geneva Town Board for approving a motion Feb. 11 opposing the project and urging the DEC to deny approval.

The Town Board noted that Seneca Lake is the source of drinking water for more than 100,000 people, including the town of Geneva, "and is the most important natural resource in the area."

Gas Free Seneca hosting program on lake's future

By DAVID L. SHAW
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WATKINS GLEN — The public is invited to a program on the future of Seneca Lake.

The Gas Free Seneca-sponsored "Seneca in the Balance" is scheduled for 7 to 9 p.m. March 11 in the Watkins Glen High School auditorium.

The presentation will address this question: "Clean water and fine wine or industrial gas storage?" Topics will include:

- How close the area is to becoming the liquefied petroleum gas storage and transportation hub of the Northeast.

- What has been learned about the structural integrity of the salt caverns slated to house the LPG.

- What Schuyler County health care professionals think about the public health impacts of the project.

- The economic impacts of LPG storage.

- What legislative bodies around the lake think about the project.

- The legal standing of the community and possible recourse.

Arlington Storage, a subsidiary of Houston-based Crestwood Midstream, wants to store millions of gallons of butane, propane and natural gas in underground salt caverns along the western shore of Seneca Lake in the town of Reading, Schuyler County.

The project also would involve a large brine storage pond and construction of a major rail and truck transportation center along Route 14.

"Seneca in the Balance" speakers include Professor Emeritus Richard Young

of State University College at Geneseo; professor, researcher and Seneca Lake expert John Halfman of Hobart and William Smith Colleges; Moneen Naismith, an attorney with Earthjustice; Doug Hazlitt, co-owner of Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards; Stephen Churchill, a member of the Seneca County Board of Supervisors; and Paula Fitzsimmons, a physician's assistant in Schuyler County.

For more information, visit gas-freeseneca.com.

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