

Community to honor (Continued from page one)

in Gainesville and starting his own business, said his father, Francis Cote.

But any lingering hope was diminished when the family learned Cote's body had been recovered.

The last time they saw him was

Schratz

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Lancaster recently passed a resolution supporting Stachowski.

Schratz said for most towns this is a future problem as many don't have nearly as many condos as Amherst. She said she wants to address, "what a condo is" and who should qualify for the status — and thus the tax breaks.

She added that true condos should be allowed the status, but her problem is with developments that look like any single family home but don't pay a fair share of taxes.

To address those structures, her resolution requires that all condos and patio homes be built in the Multi-Family Residential 4 and 5 zones areas, not in R-1, 2 or 3 areas. That would mean single-family dwellings would not have a condo status.

She said she has been fighting the issue since she first ran for Town Board seven years ago when she realized the unfair tax amounts.

"All it does is make the average homeowner pay more," she said. "If a development is going to be a condo, then be one. Put it in writing that will hold up."

She added that at a recent trade show she talked to a group of people who said Amherst's condo issue was a joke, saying they use Amherst as an example in a video that addresses why Western New York doesn't have enough tax dollars.

Schratz is seeking support from other towns and villages and more importantly, support at the state level. She suggests that Amherst be used as a pilot program for making changes to the loophole.

"Most residents don't know they have a different tax; it needs to be fair," she said.

Traditionally, condominiums have involved shared walls and spaces and several residences in one structure. They also have private infrastructures, and residents pay for services such as plowing. The tax breaks were designed to reflect the fact that residents use fewer town services.

The resolution will be presented at the 7 p.m. Monday, May 5, meeting in Town Hall, 5583 Main St. For agenda information, visit www.amherst.ny.us.

Honor Roll

St. Mary's High School in Lancaster named the following Amherst students to the first honors roll for the third quarter of the 2007-2008 school year: freshman, Grace Daigler; sophomore, Alex Beilman; junior, Kathryn Hamilton; and seniors, Brittany Carleton, Cassandra Carleton, Robert Hamilton, Brittany Lampart, Douglas Robinson, and Leonardo Storniolo.

(Editor's note: information for this list has been printed exactly as supplied by the school. The Bee will not reprint any lists because of school errors. Questions should be directed to 683-4824.)

on a video released in January 2007, where Cote made a brief statement about his captivity.

Since then the family had been dedicated to seeing his safe return home, relying on faith to give them strength.

On April 24, the family held a press conference with Francis and Christopher joined by Francis' wife, Nancy, who is also Cote's stepmother, and Cote's step-siblings Samantha and Max Shroyer.

"In addition to our belief in God, we have been surrounded by relatives, friends and even strangers who have kept Jonathon and our family in their prayers," Francis said. "We could probably keep you here for hours telling you stories about how this situation has touched others."

He added, "Our family, friends and, yes, even strangers have been there for us. They have supported us, at times fed us and kept us company when we needed it, and for all they've done, we thank them from the bottom of our hearts."

The family displayed sorrow, anger and relief, finally knowing that their son and brother was at rest.

Cote's mother, Lori Silveri, was traveling to Western New York from Florida at the time.

"We wanted his body back, we needed some closure," Francis said. "But this is not how we wanted it to happen, obviously."

Autopsy results won't be available for another six to eight weeks, but Francis said that while he wants to know what happened to his son, he already suspects how the autopsy will read, based on those of the other contractors.

"We believe he passed sometime between two to six months from today," he said. "What was I doing that very day?"

Christopher expressed anger through his tears, saying he hoped that everything had been done to bring his brother home.

"I can't believe this happened ... The world did not recognize how important he was to us, to take him like he is nothing," he said. "It's their loss, and ours."



Jonathon Cote

While Francis expressed forgiveness for those involved in his son's death, Christopher said it will take him a lot more time, hoping justice will be served.

One question Christopher would ask his brother, "Did you forgive those that did this to you?"

The family wants Cote to be remembered as a veteran. He served in the U.S. Army in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"He would do anything for anyone; he would bend over backwards," Christopher said. "What he loved more than anything was to help people."

Cote was a joker, the clown of the classroom, he would be the one at a party with a lampshade on his head, the family remarked.

Francis' message to others is to take every opportunity to be with their children and love them.

"You never know when they will be called (up)," he said.

Questions still remain regarding the day of the kidnapping and Cote's captivity. Francis said he suspects his son's crew was set up, and the events leading up to the day and after are "strange." "A life was lost for nothing," he said.

The community can remember and honor Cote at a closed casket viewing from 4 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 30, and Thursday, May 1, at Dengler & Roberts Funeral Home, 8630 Transit Road, north of Klein Road in East Amherst.

Donation or Mass cards are preferred. To donate, visit www.freecote.com, "Start Helping," or mail a donation or Mass card to FreeCote, P.O. Box 89 Getzville, NY 14068.

The memorial service will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, May 2, at Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary Church, 8550 Main St., at Harris Hill Road, Clarence.

In closing, Francis said, "We'd like to send our appreciation to our U.S. military forces that assisted in recovering Jonathon's and the others' bodies. Also to members of the FBI and the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) who have assisted our family."



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