

letters



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Gratitude felt toward community

On June 14, a benefit was held to help raise funds for my impending kidney transplant. While I live in Clarence Center and received tremendous support from my community, I wish to thank the many residents, friends and businesses of Amherst who helped make the

event such a special day for myself and family. I was fortunate to have attended Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart and had a huge response from friends and former classmates. Many members of Amherst Presbyterian Church, where my in-laws, Dick and Marie Garrett, belong, were also very generous and supportive. Words cannot express my gratitude.

Jill Garrett

Correction

In last week's letter to the editor by Roger LeGoff, the last paragraph should have stated ... "the taxpayers (employers) could compare ..."

Jamie Kenyon's name was left out of the Lou Gehrig Lasers Blue 12U team photo caption which appeared in last week's Bee.

Latest Hevesi scandal? Not surprised

So it turns out Alan Hevesi, New York's disgraced comptroller, is facing more legal woes. Hevesi was forced to resign in shame less than two years ago after admitting via a plea deal that he used state employees and other resources to help him care for his sick wife.

The Democrat from Queens, who served a quarter of a century as a state assemblyman and another eight years as comptroller of New York City before his now-infamous four-year run as state comptroller, has been linked to a probe being conducted by a secret grand jury about a possible illegal payoff scam linked to the state pension fund.

According to published reports that first surfaced earlier this week, Hevesi's involvement in this "pay-to-play" investigation is tied to Hank Morris, one of Hevesi's political henchmen.

One source familiar with some of the nitty-gritty details of the case stated to the New York Daily News that Morris accepted \$25 million from officials of various companies who were told they must pay these "placement fees" if they wanted to be considered a candidate for work related to the state pension fund.

Morris allegedly pulled in the \$25 million from 2003 through 2006, which just happened to be the four years during which Hevesi served as comptroller.

The inquiry is being led by state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, and the thought amongst political insiders in Albany is that the end result will be the filing of multiple criminal charges.

The whole thing stinks worse than a container of vegetable dip dressing left out in the sun on a picnic table in Delaware Park in mid-July.

While there is no evidence — at least not yet — that Hevesi knew what Morris was doing, the fact remains that Morris is his close friend and political consultant.

Add to that the fact that public records clearly show that Morris, who has also served for years as a loyal supporter of Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer, rather conveniently obtained his financial broker license just months after Hevesi took office in 2003, and you just have to wonder what exactly Hevesi knew.

Remember, folks, this is a man who resigned

because he defrauded the public after ordering staffers to chauffeur his ailing wife to and from doctor appointments, drop off her dry cleaning and water her houseplants. That estimated \$208,000 tab is something taxpayers won't soon forget, and it's probably only former Gov. Eliot Spitzer's sexual escapades as "Client No. 9" that keep Hevesi from top billing on the state's list of "Public Officials Who Abused Their Power For Their Own Personal Self-Interests."

My opinion on this still-developing story? Why hasn't either Hevesi or Morris been called to testify before the grand jury? The jury reportedly has been hearing evidence in Manhattan for approximately three months, so when is someone going to send a cab to pick up Hevesi — who, for the record, has stated through his attorney that he had no knowledge of Morris ripping off these companies — and then scoop up Morris on the way



DAN MEYER

Political Columnist

back?

On a related note, in this day and age of cell phones, text messaging and BlackBerrys, neither Morris nor his attorney could be reached to comment on allegations that most believe have already tarnished the reputation of the latest political hack whose friend in power allowed him to try to stick his hand in the cookie jar, in this case, a shiny container that is packed with \$154 billion and is managed by a single individual — the state comptroller.

* * *

I'm still trying to dissect what exactly Gov. David Paterson was thinking when he named M&T Bank Chairman Bob Wilmers as the state's new economic czar. Wilmers is a prominent antiunion activist, so why would Paterson run the risk of ticking off his prounion and progressive supporters by letting Wilmers run the Empire State Development Corporation? From what I can figure, Paterson wants to ruffle the feathers of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has made it clear in recent weeks that he's not happy with some of Paterson's decisions related to economic development and their impact on his city. And don't forget that the billionaire mayor would serve as a very formidable opponent for Paterson in a couple of years.

In other words, it's all political. Stay tuned.

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Thank you to the Sweet Home community

The 49th commencement of Sweet Home High School took place on June 27. It is always the most emotional and exciting event in a school year, the culmination of 13 years of work by students.

The intense emotion surrounding the commencement ceremony gives one pause to reflect upon all those things that make a difference in the school experience for students. In my conversations with parents and students, the importance of art, music and athletics, in addition to a strong academic program, resonated loudly.

We know from data analysis that students who participate in art, music and sports perform better in the classroom. We also know that it is absolutely necessary for the school district to commit resources so that as many opportunities as possible exist for our students.

At the Senior Awards Night, 185 scholarships were granted with a combined four-year award value of \$3,304,640. Eighty-five percent of the graduating class will seek to further their education by attending either a two- or four-year college.

Amazingly, 50 percent of the Class of 2008 earned a Regents Diploma with Advanced Distinction, signifying the most rigorous graduation standard, and 58 percent of the class finished their high school career with an average of 85 or better.

Twenty-four of 28 sports teams at Sweet Home received scholar-athlete recognition this year,

meaning that the teams had an overall GPA of 90 percent or better. The Class of 2008 made the most of their opportunities at Sweet Home, and their achievement speaks volumes about dedication and commitment of our faculty and about the core programs that successfully prepared them for the next level.

One month ago, the Sweet Home community passed the 2008-09 school budget by a 3:1 margin.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the community for sending a clear message of support for the students of the district.

I am also grateful for the support of the state legislators who represent Sweet Home for the additional state aid that was part of the budget, allowing the district to actually reduce our tax rate for next year.

Our message to the community during this year's process was simple; the budget we crafted was fiscally responsible, and it protected the core programs of the district. I think our community took that message to heart and provided us with a referendum of support.

We are extremely grateful for over a quarter-century of successful budget votes at Sweet Home, especially in a fiscally difficult year, and we recognize that with the support of the community comes the responsibility to provide the very best educational, extracurricular and inter-scholastic programs possible.

I don't believe you could find a better testament to fulfilling that promise than the success of the Class of 2008.



GEOFFREY M. HICKS

Superintendent Sweet Home Schools