



PROUDLY PROVIDING EFFICIENCY, PROTECTION, & CURB APPEAL SOLUTIONS TO AREA HOMEOWNERS!

- SCHEDULE A COST-FREE CONSULTATION
- TOP ROOF PROTECTION
- PROVIA WINDOW AND DOOR DIRECT DEALER / CERTIFIED INSTALLER

ROOFING - SIDING - WINDOWS - DOORS

TRUSTED EXTERIOR UPDATE DESTINATION!

HOMEPROEXTERIORSINC.COM
845-343-1777

GO WITH THE PROS!

HOME PRO EXTERIORS INC

121009

ProVia

Thought for the day:

"Each man's life touches so many other lives. And when he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"

Henry Travers

6 45781 08031 7

SULLIVAN COUNTY

Democrat

www.scdemocratonline.com
VOL. CXXXV NO. 58 2 SECTIONS | 16 PAGES

EARLYBIRD EDITION

Published twice-weekly
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2024 \$2.00

HAPPY HANUKKAH: To all our Jewish friends! **4-5A**

EDITORIAL: Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. **6A**

READY TO RUN: All-Sullivan County Cross-Country teams announced. **8B**



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO BY FRED STABBERT III

Livingston Manor Central School voters approved the merger with Roscoe overwhelmingly on Thursday, 351-227. The two districts already share many services, including sports teams.



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO BY KATHY DALEY

Roscoe Central School, the smallest school by enrollment in all of Sullivan County, will merge with Livingston Manor following Thursday's approval by Roscoe district voters, 283-106.

Livingston Manor, Roscoe approve merger

BY ANTHONY MORGANO

ROCKLAND — After nearly three years of studies, meetings, votes and petitions, the communities of the Livingston Manor and Roscoe Central school districts elected to merge via centralization on Thursday, December 19.

The vote was first presented in 2022 and failed in both communities, but a significant increase to incentive aid brought the potential merger back to the forefront of voters' minds in September of this year.

This time around, the boards elected to gather signatures for a petition in both communities to gauge interest in a merger vote, with both petitions reaching the number needed to present a vote to the taxpayers.

In Livingston Manor, the vote passed with 351 in favor and 227 opposed, while the numbers were 283 yes and 106 no in Roscoe. Despite centralizing the two districts, the new one will still



Livingston Manor-Roscoe Superintendent John Evans

be the smallest in Sullivan County.

John Evans, who serves as Superintendent of both the Livingston Manor and Roscoe Central School Districts, said, "I appreciate our residents' support of the measure, which will benefit our students and the communities."

Evans was one of the many shared services prior to the potential merger was first studied in 2021. "I want to thank all of the people who contributed to making this happen."

Alongside the vote to merge, there were additional questions on the ballot regarding the new school board. Voters decided on a seven-member school board with staggered three-year terms.

An optional exit survey was also passed out to voters along with their ballot to gauge interest on the important issues for voters, which included a priority list for the incentive aid.

The election of the new Board of Education is expected to take place in February, and those interested must gather enough signatures. More details on the petition process will be available at a later date, as well as a finalized date for the board election.

A new operating budget for the 2025-26 school year

Voters decided on a seven-member school board with staggered three-year terms.

will be presented to voters on May 20.

According to the news release, the new district will begin operation on July 1, 2025. Building reconfiguration will not happen immediately, but the extra funding through incentive aid will begin at that time.

There will also be a restructuring committee comprised of board members, administrators, faculty, staff parents and students formed to recommend the best grade configurations and building makeup for the new district, with implementation gradually taking place over the 2025-26 school year and beyond.

Skimmers Falls Bridge to be permanently destroyed

BY ALEX KIELAR

MILANVILLE, PA & SKINNERS FALLS, NY — During a virtual public meeting on Tuesday, December 17 the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) announced its new plan to now permanently destroy the currently standing Skimmers Falls Bridge which connects the communities of Milanville, Pennsylvania and Skimmers Falls, New York.

This is a reversal of the project team's previous plan of only dismantling the bridge, which has been closed to vehicular traffic since 2019, and storing its pieces for later use.

In the public meeting, the project team said that they evaluated several disassembly options, which included lowering spans of the bridge to the ground with a large crane before dismantling it there. However, the team was concerned with the safety of this method and determined that the bridge would not be able to be picked up and moved without putting the workers and the public in danger.

As they explained the need for a demolition of the bridge, the project team referenced an inspection report from October. Rich Roman, District Executive of PennDOT District 4, said that the main concern coming out of the inspection was a down-



VINCENT KURZROCK | DEMOCRAT

The Skimmers Falls Bridge is now set to be demolished permanently as decided in a new plan announced by PennDOT this week.

grade of the structure from "critical" to a "failed state."

"One of our main concerns is that abatement on the New York side of the river," Roman said. "That abatement is actually starting to shift and rotate in a manner that we cannot control, and we cannot predict what it is going to do or how it is going to function."

Roman also added that there is concern that the New York abatement could collapse during winter in the Northeast as precipitation gets behind it and starts to move around with the change of temperatures. "There is no predicting it,

so there is a major concern on behalf of the department," he said. "And that is leading us to an approach to remove the superstructure of the pier and the abatement as quickly as possible."

PennDOT took a step toward getting the demolition project underway, as there is still a significant amount of administrative work to get done before it can begin. On Monday, December 16, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro issued a declaration of emergency for the project to speed up the process of demolition.

"We do have an emergency declaration in place to expedite the steps that we need to take to do the right thing here by removing the structure along with our inspection done by Pennsylvania," Roman added. "The Federal Highway Administration Pennsylvania Division has reviewed our MBIS inspection and are in concurrence with the failed state of the bridge."

"This is a serious concern that the deteriorated structure would not survive the pick and move by a crane," Lisa Brozey of PennDOT's project consultant AECOM said. "With the condition of the bridge, if the trusses

PLEASE SEE SKINNERS, PAGE 3A

CBS features The Center for Discovery

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

HARRIS — The Center for Discovery (TCFD) was featured on CBS Saturday morning on December 7, offering viewers an inside look at its model for helping individuals with autism and other complex disabilities live healthier and more independent lives.

CBS News Chief Medical Correspondent, Dr. Jon LaPook, narrated the segment, focusing on the journey of 20-year-old Tommy Bove. Diagnosed with autism and is nonverbal, Tommy struggled with significant challenges during the pandemic, including severe weight gain. After a three-year wait, he was accepted into TCFD's pediatric residential program, where he has since made life-changing progress.

"This is the best place for him. This is the best thing that's ever happened to him," said Tommy's parents, Scott and Kelly Bove, during the CBS interview.

Holistic Model

TCFD serves over 1,200 children and adults annually through a model that combines therapy, education, and health-focused initiatives. Residents take part in various programs, including farm work, equine therapy, and personalized nutrition plans, all designed to address their physical, emotional, and developmental needs.

Dr. Terry Hamlin, TCFD's President and CEO, described the Center's approach. "We are true to our mission in that we care for individuals with really complex disabilities," she said. "When parents come here, we describe it as a program that looks at your whole child, appreciating them inside and out."

The CBS segment highlighted how TCFD stands out from other programs across the country by taking a comprehensive approach to care. "Too often, autism is treated as a behavioral problem," Dr. Hamlin said. "We've missed the bigger picture."

Dr. Hamlin told the Democrat the value of the CBS feature. "We are incredibly proud that The Center's work was highlighted on CBS News and seen by a national audience," she said. "This added exposure is crucial in raising awareness of the impactful programs we provide, helping us extend our reach and ultimately, connecting with more families and helping their children with complex disabilities."

Tommy's Progress

For Tommy Bove, TCFD

has been transformative. At the height of the pandemic, Tommy lived at home, struggling with obesity and behavioral challenges. He weighed 360 pounds and needed extensive support for daily tasks. Today, he has made significant improvements, losing weight and developing greater independence.

"He's dressing himself now," Kelly Bove shared. "It's something we always just did for him. Seeing him do it on his own—it's huge."

The CBS segment showed Tommy participating in activities on TCFD's farm, where residents harvest vegetables that are later used in meals. His parents described the changes they've seen as "shocking" and "remarkable."

Food as Medicine

Nutrition plays a central role in the Center's success. Through its "seed-to-belly" program, meals are made with whole, organic foods grown on-site, and ultra-processed foods are eliminated entirely. Jennifer Franck, Chief of the Department of Nourishment Arts, explained the importance of this approach.

"Food has amazing power," she said. "It can either support or undermine your health."

Sixty percent of TCFD's adult residents maintain ideal body weight, and rates of high blood pressure and diabetes are significantly lower than the national average.

Looking Ahead

While Tommy's progress has been a major victory, his family is now preparing for what comes next. At 22, he will age out of TCFD's pediatric program, and adult placements are limited. This transition weighs heavily on his parents and sister, Courtney, who may eventually take on more responsibility for his care.

"It's always there, the worry," Kelly Bove said. Courtney added, "I know one day I'll be in charge of him."

National Model

Dr. LaPook closed the CBS segment by discussing the potential for TCFD to serve as a blueprint for other facilities nationwide. However, scaling the model to reach more families will require significant resources and planning.

The Center for Discovery serves as a resource for families like the Boves, focusing on helping individuals with complex disabilities build independence while addressing the challenges their families face.



Dr. Terry Hamlin, President and CEO of The Center for Discovery, shared on CBS Saturday Morning how their innovative model helps people with autism and other complex disabilities live healthier and more independent lives.