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Carter's crew comes through Volunteers help to build ramp for handicapped youngster

by Curtis Schmidt

Sometimes in life you make a decision to give of yourself to help others in need. And you ask nothing in return, for the satisfaction you gain from knowing that you dropped everything and truly helped out is far greater than any monetary payment could ever be.

In this case, the result of that train of thought – a stable and sturdy ramp at his home – has given seven-year-old Carter Bernhard of Hyde Park his “best day ever.” And that is quite a statement from a kid who already has met and had his photo taken with singer Bruce Springsteen.

Carter was born with Spina Bifida. It is a neurological disorder that is the most common permanently disabling birth defect in the United States, according to the Spina Bifida Association.

Carter is a sharp and active little fellow. He maneuvers his specially constructed wheelchair like a pro, even turning on a dime if necessary. He performs even better academically in the integrated classroom and classes at Violet Avenue Elementary School.

One of his major barriers, however, has been getting in and out of his family's home.

A broken-down front porch made for unsafe conditions.

“There was no other way to get in or out of the house. I literally had to carry him and the wheel chair,” said Scott Bernhard, Carter's father. “Getting to the bus was an incredible daily challenge.”

This past winter, deep snow from storm after storm only made matters worse. A safe and strong ramp was a desperate need. Rose Kozlowski of the Pleasant Valley Fire Department did provide a temporary ramp; however, a permanent structure was still needed.

Well, every story needs a little luck. In this case, it came in the form of a connection. Scott and wife Chrissy's daughter,



Several volunteers visited Carter Bernhard (center) and his family this past Saturday. They all took part in constructing a much-needed wheelchair ramp at the family's home in Hyde Park. From left are Luigi Coppola, Mike Whalen, Scott, Carter, Chrissy and Skye Bernhard, Brian Altmann and Dave Stewart. Right: Seven-year-old Carter maneuvers his wheelchair up the new ramp at his family's home. Photos by Curtis Schmidt

Skye, attends the same daycare with Shana Whalen, daughter of Heather and Mike Whalen, who happens to work for DBS Remodel.

“Mike always told me ‘If you ever need any help with minor structures, just let me know,’ So I told him about our situation and the need for a ramp,” said Scott.

Whalen informed DBS owner Brian Altmann, who came out to meet Carter and his family and assess the situation.

“After meeting and talking to Carter, I said ‘Absolutely. We're in,’” said Altmann.

Long story short: With the help of architect Patrick Kozakiewicz (Scott's brother-in-law) and Town of Hyde Park Supervisor

Aileen Rohr and Chris Lapine of The Chazen Company assisting with permits, and Town of Hyde Park building inspector Don Westermeyer expediting the zoning issues, Altmann and his team from DBS Remodel were able to gather donated materials and move forward.

During four Saturdays of volunteer labor in May, they constructed a sturdy ramp, which even has donated recessed lighting, with Dave Stewart of DS Electric of Hyde Park providing the volunteer electrical assembly. Throw in free pizza from Coppola's Restaurant and Bistro, and this

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Federal court rules in favor of higher electric rates

by Ray Fashona

The federal capacity zone that could raise local electric rates as much as 10 percent stays in place – at least for now.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit denied a request for a stay of the capacity zone ordered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The suit was filed by Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corp. and the state Public Service Commission.

Both have argued the zone is unnecessary and will put undue hardship on

ratepayers in the Hudson Valley. Central Hudson has estimated the zone will raise residential rates 6 percent and commercial rates as much as 10 percent.

In a brief ruling issued June 4, the three-judge panel denied the stay request without offering any explanation.

“We are very disappointed in this ruling, as the new capacity zone will needlessly increase electricity costs for our customers,” said Central Hudson spokesman John Maserjian. “We are considering our next steps in light of this decision by the court.”

“Every step of the way, I've been

shocked by these Washington bureaucrats' complete and utter disregard for hard-working families and businesses in the Hudson Valley – FERC's plan to raise rates defies all common sense,” said Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney, D-District 18.

“The blatant disregard for the financial burdens faced by Dutchess County residents and the fragile state of our economy is not only disturbing, but again shows complete disconnect between the federal government and our local constituency,” said Dutchess County Executive Marcus

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Carter Bernhard

continued from cover

was a project that could not fail.

For Carter, it's all about independence. "He can go in and out of the house on his own. It has done wonders for his confidence. I think it has even helped him to improve in his classes," said Scott. "It brings tears to my eyes to think that all of these people gave of themselves and their time."

"I'm just saying 'Thank you.' It's a gorgeous ramp. They really came through for us. I don't know what we would have done without them – all of them," he said.

That includes people like Home Depot of Poughkeepsie manager Alex Marra, Tom Decker of Williams Lumber and Home Centers and Dillon Hawkes of Custom Concrete Company, who arranged for the donation of materials. Scott's sister, Erin Kozakiewicz, initiated fundraising efforts by individuals in the Hyde Park Central School District, Our Lady of Lourdes High School and the Pleasant Valley/Clinton Fire Departments. Terry Dietrich and John Kovacs of the Hyde Park CSD transportation department worked with Walt Doyle, Town of Hyde Park Highway Superintendent, to arrange for the removal of the old porch.

The DBS Remodel team included Altmann, Whalen, Shane Kip, Pete Viola, Rob Wheeler and Chad "Jr." McClain.

While the work was progressing, the most interested fan was Carter himself.

"That's what made it so special," said Altmann. "He was such a delight. We had so much fun sharing stories and joking around. He even told us about meeting and having his photo taken with Bruce Springsteen. We grew very fond of him."

He added, "I'm very proud of my team. They were all so unselfish, giving of their time. We all have families and time is precious, but this is such a great cause. It's as much a gift for us as it is for Carter. To know that we helped him and his family with our efforts – I just get goose bumps thinking about it."

Whalen said, "It's a true privilege to have been involved in this effort."

Stewart, who also serves as president of the Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce, echoed those comments. "It's an honor to help a deserving family," he said.

Luigi Coppola added, "The Coppola family always helps other families in need.

Hyde Park organizations donate to Meals on Wheels

During the month of May, Meals on Wheels of Greater Hyde Park Inc., a not-for-profit volunteer organization, was the recipient of two financial gifts. The Hyde Park Rotary Club once again donated \$1,500 to be used for general expenses, and a grant of \$2,047 was given by the John and Gloria Golden Fund for Hyde Park of the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley. This grant was also designated for general support.

Meals on Wheels of Greater Hyde Park is not affiliated with the National MOW (Meals on Wheels) organization and receives no government funding from the county, state or federal government. They cover expenses through the meal payments made by their customers and by the generous support of the Hyde Park community. During 2013 more than 10,000 hot meals and almost 7,000 cold meals were served to customers residing in the Hyde Park area.

For information, call (845) 229-5896 or visit MealsonWheelsofHP.org.

we're on the web!
www.sdutchessnews.com



Brian Altmann of DBS Remodel chats with Carter Bernhard on Saturday. Altmann's team helped to construct a ramp at the Bernhard home in Hyde Park. Photo by Curtis Schmidt. Below: Members of the DBS Remodel team gather around Carter Bernhard of Hyde Park. From left are Brian Altmann, Mike Whalen, Shane Kip, Pete Viola, Rob Wheeler and Chad "Jr." McClain. Courtesy photo



It is our way of saying 'thank you' to everyone who has been there for our family through our toughest times."

Each individual involved in this effort

did his/her part and they have all discovered something Chrissy and Scott Bernhard already know. Altmann and Stewart said it best: "Carter is an amazing young man."

Legislature expected to make two appointments

by Ray Fashona

The Dutchess County Legislature at its meeting Monday was expected to confirm two appointments.

Heidi Seelbach is set up to become the new Commissioner of Finance and Eoin Wrafter the new Acting Commissioner of Planning and Development. Both appointments were unanimously approved at legislature's committee day June 3.

Seelbach, who has been with the county since 2011, told members of the Budget, Finance & Personnel Committee that her three years with Dutchess have been challenging and she looked forward to tackling the "ongoing challenges" facing the county.

County Executive Marcus Molinaro, who appointed Seelbach in May pending legislative approval, said the new commissioner has experience "inside county government and also a more worldly view of finance."

Before joining Dutchess County, she worked for St. Cabrini Home in West Park and Marist College in Poughkeepsie.

She has degrees in both finance and accounting.

Seelbach replaces Pamela Barrack, who retired May 2.

"It has been a pleasure working with Pam Barrack for the last few years and learning the workings of this complex department," Seelbach said in a statement. She was appointed deputy commissioner of finance in 2012.

As commissioner of finance, Seelbach will serve as the chief fiscal officer of the county, responsible for receipt and disbursement of county funds.

Wrafter was appointed after the retirement of Kealy Solomon April 25 after 31 years with the county. Wrafter became assistant commissioner in 2010.

Molinaro told members of the Environment Committee that Wrafter "takes his role very seriously and has a high attention to detail."

He joined the planning department full-time in 1997 after serving as a student intern.

During the committee meeting, he told legislators and members of the audience that the county "doesn't intend to take over the city bus line" unless the city decides to abandon the service.

In answer to a question by Joel Tyner, D-Clinton/Rhinebeck, he said he was in favor of looking into "solarizing" Dutchess County's operations.