

## INVESTIGATION

# Truck driver killed in crash

Driver who died in Ashland was from Schenectady

By Roger Hannigan  
Gilson

Ashland

A woman from Schenectady died Thursday afternoon when a dump truck she was driving crashed into a vacant home and burst into flames.

Chasondra McGill, 37, was pronounced dead at the scene, according to the Greene County Sheriff's Office.

McGill was driving a tandem-axle dump truck contracted by Callahan Construction as part of their project repaving Route 23 in Greene County, according to the Sheriff's Office.

She lost control of the truck with a full load of asphalt while approaching Route 23 from West Settlement Road and crossed through the intersection at high speed,

then slammed into a vacant home on the intersection's opposite side. The house immediately caught fire, and several workers in the area tried to save McGill, but were forced back by the heat and flames, according to the Sheriff's Office.

A firefighter from the Ashland Fire Department was taken to Albany Medical Center after inhaling a dangerous amount of smoke while also trying to rescue the woman. The fire spread to an adjacent vacant home and was only extinguished after several hours of efforts by local fire departments. Both homes were "completely destroyed," according to the Sheriff's Office, and the fire was hot enough to damage the siding on a third home across the street.

The crash occurred around 1:30 p.m., with Route 23 reopened just before 1:30 p.m. The investigation into the crash is ongoing.

## DIVERSE

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take to get on the force.

To help get a recruit through the police academy, part two of the course will focus on the physical fitness aspect of the job, as well as working on interview skills and a review of a person's background for potential red flags.

Police Chief Eric Clifford said earlier this week that the partnership with the college is part of the understaffed department's ongoing efforts to diversify to make it better reflect the city's demographics.

Over the years, recruitment campaigns to change the complexion of the mostly white department have for the most part yielded meager results. Of the 154 members, eight identify as Black with one of those being a Black Hispanic person, five are of Hispanic heritage, and eight are white females.

Clifford is appealing for community groups to get behind the effort, which is an outgrowth of last year's police reform efforts.

"We're hopeful that if I have 15 community organizations, that includes churches, if I can get 15 of

them to send me one candidate each, specifically from our community, ideally our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color), that's going to be a huge win for us," he said, adding the initiative includes getting more women on the force.

Clifford said the city has some scholarship funds available to those who qualify through a pre-screening process, to help them defray the \$1,300 per session cost to take the class.

Gardner said that outreach is already underway. He spoke at a Black church last week.

Last summer, Kuteesa went on a few ride-alongs during which he spoke with Schenectady police officers.

The experience made him realize that he has a lot of hard work ahead of him if he wants to make it onto the force.

The city plans in the future to expand and tailor the training to the fire department and code enforcement office, among other municipal jobs, said the chief.

Anyone wanting additional information about the police training program can contact Michelle Kraines at 518-621-4007.

## FUNDRAISER



Paul Buckowski / Times Union

## Charity strokes

Alaant Recruiting employees Maddy O'Rourke, left, Christina Noeldechen, Alex Cosmer and managing partner Miriam Dushane take part in a mini-golf tournament put on by Pioneer's Charitable Foundation on Thursday at the Pirates Hideout in Waterford. The Pioneer Charitable Foundation gives 100 percent of funds raised through its events to local nonprofits that "help kids be kids." The mini-golf event raised more than \$5,000. Since the launch of its charitable foundation in 2018, Pioneer has given more than \$1 million to more than 375 Capital Region organizations that work to improve the health and welfare of children.

## LOCAL BRIEFS

### Archaeology event at historical society

SCHAGHTICOKE — The Knickerbocker Historical Society invites the public to attend a public archaeology event from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday and again June 25-26 at the Knickerbocker Manstion, 132 Knickerbocker Road.

Adults and children at least 10 years of age with a supervising adult are welcomed to join a team of experienced archaeologists in looking for the circa 1707 house built by Johannes Knickerbocker I. Participants must wear long pants and closed-toe shoes or boots. It is highly recommended that participants bring leather or

leather-palmed gloves, a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent.

There will be tours of the mansion every other hour and food will be available onsite with all proceeds benefiting the Knickerbocker Society. Principal investigators are Registered Professional Archaeologists David Moyer of Birchwood Archaeological Services and Vivian James.

For more information, contact Vivian James: vjames17@gmail.com

### Sharon Springs hosts July 4 parade

SHARON SPRINGS — The Schoharie County Chamber of Commerce will present a county-wide Fourth of July Parade in

the village of Sharon Springs beginning 10 a.m. July 4. The parade will begin at Dairyland on Route 20, proceed west to Chestnut Street and to the Athletic Field off of Chestnut Street. Organizations and businesses are encouraged to participate by submitting a parade entry application.

Registration forms are at available online at www.schohariechamber.com/fourth-of-july-schoharie-county/ or call 518-295-8824 or e-mail admin@schohariechamber.com for more information.

### Research library named for Regent

ALBANY — The New York State Library's Re-

search Library was dedicated this week in memory of former Regent Joseph E. Bowman Jr., who died in 2013.

This honor recognizes Bowman's lifelong work as an educator, advocate and champion of libraries, and "the indelible legacy he left through his efforts to advance equity in educational technology," state Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa said.

Bowman's family joined Board of Regents members and New York State Education staff on the seventh floor of the Cultural Education Center in Albany on Tuesday to unveil the newly updated entrance wall, renaming the library as the Regent Joseph E. Bowman, Jr. Research Library.

## POLICE

## 'Felony Lane Gang' duo caught

By Mike Goodwin

Colonie

Two women with ties to Pennsylvania who are suspected members of an identity-theft ring dubbed the "Felony Lane Gang" by authorities were arrested after a chase Wednesday that ended at the Albany County ice rink on Albany Shaker Road, police said.

The incident began to unfold after a woman tried to access an account at a local bank with a stolen driver's license, police said. The woman was wearing a disguise but police said the bank employee recognized the woman as a possible suspect in earlier incidents at other local banks.

The woman was gone by

the time police arrived at the bank after the 4 p.m. call but officers spotted her car a short time later and tried to stop the vehicle, police said. A brief pursuit began with police briefly losing sight of the vehicle near Albany International Airport before finding it abandoned at the nearby ice rink, investigators said.

Police surrounded a nearby wooded area and took two women into custody after a 90-minute search.

Town police said the suspects, a 36-year-old homeless woman from Pennsylvania and a 33-year-old from Philadelphia, were charged with identity theft, possession

of a forged instrument and possession of stolen property. The older woman was charged with reckless driving and traffic offenses tied to the chase.

Arraigned in town court, the two women were released under the supervision of the probation department.

Town police said the women appear to be part of a group of thieves who often steal pocketbooks from vehicles and then use the victims' identification to commit bank fraud. Often, members of the group alter their appearances to resemble the victims. Police said they expect to link the women arrested Wednesday to several local cases.

## STUDENT ACHIEVERS

### GRADUATES

#### VERMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Delana Castle of Averill Park, Isaac Carlo of Schaghticoke

#### UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

George Brown of Cohoes, Melissa Schupp of Averill Park, Kyra Shetsky of Hudson, Emma Sitterly of Galston Spa, Amanda Labadie of Fattersonville, Renee Parry of Schaghticoke, Tanner Rotoli of Mechanicville, Todd Dubrey of Scotia

#### COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Mikayla Burrows of Glens Falls, Ashley Williams of Nassau, Trevar Hall of Berlin, Ethan Samaria of Castleton, Madison Graber of Schenectady

#### FLAGLER COLLEGE

Colleen McLoughlin of Schenectady

## BRIDGE

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we're going to have a new bridge with sidewalks and that helps travelers get by."

The bridge was hit last year by a trucker hauling a boom lift, causing millions of dollars in damage and leading to the need to replace the bridge. Last month, the Times Union published a story highlighting the significant costs that result from vehicles striking bridges across the state.

The collision in Clifton Park 14 months ago led to the closure of the bridge for about three weeks, snarling traffic in the surrounding areas because it is one of several key Northway crossings in Saratoga County. Officials put up blockades in some residential neighborhoods off Sitterly Road, hoping to prevent trucks and other motorists from cutting through those areas to avoid traffic jams, but residents said many drivers ignored the barricades, including driving across lawns or speeding.



Lori Van Buren / Times Union

A trucker hauling a boom lift on the Northway last year collided with the bridge carrying Sitterly Road, causing millions of dollars in damage and leading to the need to replace the bridge. Above, a sign warns drivers of the closure starting Saturday.

Clifton Park Supervisor Phil Barrett said the community has "not been looking forward" to the bridge's closure.

"It's an important road within our (Northway) Exit 9 commerce area and

so the fact that it will be closed is definitely a challenge for many motorists and our overall transportation system," he said.

The hope is that the project is completed be-

fore its Sept. 12 deadline, Barrett added.

Area businesses that could be impacted include a water supply company, retail outlets and a medical center. A representative for Ellis Medicine

Medical Center of Clifton Park, located on Sitterly Road, said the facility isn't facing an immediate threat as a result of the bridge's closure.

In addition, there will be a shuttle service of-

fered to pedestrians with pickup and drop-off points at the intersection of Sitterly Road and the entrance to the Ellis Medicine Medical Center, according to a DOT press release.

The shuttle will also operate at the intersection of Sitterly Road and Crossing Boulevard.

"We appreciate everybody's patience as we get to the final stage of what has been a lengthy process to go to have a permanent bridge installed," Barrett said.

The new 16-foot, 7.5-inch bridge, estimated to cost \$6.5 million, will be taller than the previous span and will feature two 11-foot-wide travel lanes with 6-foot-wide shoulders on either side, according to the state.

A new 5-foot-wide sidewalk will be installed on the north side of the 270-foot-long bridge, and a closed-circuit television camera will be installed to enhance safety during emergency situations to assist in "identifying and quickly clearing" disruptions on the Northway.