



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Free Home Energy Audits, Buy Madison, and New I81 Outreach Center Open

DAVID J. VALESKY February 10, 2014

Another flu death was reported in Central New York this morning for a total of seven. If you have not yet gotten a flu shot, I urge you to do so soon, particularly if you have a chronic health condition. To find the nearest location where you can get a flu shot, visit [HealthMap Vaccine Finder](#).

Assistance with Heating Bills

The Federal Government has released additional funds for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which helps those who are struggling to afford their heating bill. Eligible households in New York may receive one regular HEAP benefit per season and could also be eligible for an emergency benefit if they are in impending danger of running out of fuel or having their utility service shut off. Anyone who seeking a HEAP benefit can submit an application online at [myBenefits.ny.gov](#). Visit [HEAP's website](#) for more information.

Free Home Energy Audits Available

Homeowners can get a free home energy audit to find out how to improve their energy efficiency and save money on heating bills. Visit the [NYSERDA web page](#) to sign up for an audit, and after a certified auditor checks a home head-to-toe, homeowners receive a list of

options to reduce energy waste.

Buy Madison Promotes Local Purchases

Buy Madison is an initiative that encourages people to buy local goods and services, visitors and residents alike, within Madison County. Buy Madison has teamed up with Oneida Savings Bank to offer a Buy Madison Debit Card. The card works like a typical debit card but offers discounts and incentives to its user. Businesses can submit any promotion or discount they would like to offer to customers using the Buy Madison Debit Card. These promotions and discounts will be posted and shared on the [Buy Madison website](#) and [Facebook page](#). The cards are available at Oneida Savings Bank and are free to all bank members.

Firemen's Association Offers College Tuition Program

The Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) is accepting students for a tuition reimbursement program. It's called the Higher Education Learning Plan (HELP) and it's the first statewide community college program with the goal to increase volunteer firefighters around the state. Any person, regardless of age, who has not achieved a college degree can apply. Recipients must maintain good grades and fulfill service requirements at a volunteer fire company. The deadline for the spring 2014 semester is February 21st to apply. Visit the [FASNY website](#) for more information.

New I-81 Opportunities Outreach Center Open

A new I-81 Opportunities Outreach Center is now open in the Carnegie Building at 335 Montgomery St. in Syracuse. The center provides an additional resource for area residents to access information and ask questions about the I-81 viaduct project. It is located on the main floor of the building, and will be open Tuesdays through Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The center is staffed by two members of the I-81 Opportunities project team, and all of the information shared with the public at the initial scoping meeting will be available, including

the informational boards displayed at the meeting and the scoping information packet. Visitors will have access to comment forms, and a computer will be provided so visitors can submit comments online. For information, or to submit comments on the project, please visit the [project website](#) or call the project hotline at 1-855-181-TALK (855-481-8255).

Mentoring Help for Small Businesses

An innovative new program called Business Mentor NY is the State's first, large scale, hands-on mentoring program geared to help entrepreneurs and small businesses overcome challenges and spur growth. The free mentoring program connects volunteers working in the private sector to small businesses and minority and women-owned businesses to help them address specific challenges and obstacles to success. Small business or mentors interested in participating in the program should contact Amy Greenstein at 212-803-3216 or agreenstein@esd.ny.gov.