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BUSINESS, 5A

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Man accused of pointing a gun at car with kids inside

Casey Pritchard
Utica Observer Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Prospect man was arrested and charged after allegedly pointing a gun at another driver who had two children in the car, according to a statement from the Utica Police Department.

At around 1:05 p.m. on April 7, Utica police were dispatched to the area near Albany Street and Kossuth Avenue in Utica regarding a menacing investigation in which the driver of a vehicle

pointed a long gun at another driver who had two small children in the vehicle with them.

It was further relayed that the victim had last witnessed the suspect vehicle near the intersection of Mary Street and Tilden Avenue. An officer arrived in the area and located the vehicle occupied, parked on the side of the road.

As they approached, police say they ordered the man from the vehicle and immediately detained him.

When approaching the vehicle, police were able to see an AR style rifle in

plain in view in the front seat. The weapon was secured and several boxes of ammunition and magazines.

The suspect, Justin Dawes, 36 of Prospect, was then transported to the Utica Police Department.

At the conclusion of the investigation, Dawes was charged with second-degree criminal possession of a weapon, third-degree criminal possession of a weapon, criminal possession of a firearm, second-degree menacing, and two counts of endangering the welfare of a child.

Journey sending message on Parkinson's

Man's cross-country run to raise funds, hope

Gene Myers
NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Eight days into a 100-day run across the country, Larry Grogin was already feeling the weight of it.

"I'm pretty tired right now. I really am," said Grogin, a 71-year-old endurance athlete from Bloomingdale, New Jersey, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2019.

To raise awareness, he's now attempting to run the equivalent of 100 marathons in 100 days on a route that stretches from North Jersey to Los Angeles.

"If the devil offered me a mattress, I would lie down on it," a weary Grogin said during a telephone interview in Pennsylvania as he rested in the passenger seat of his support vehicle, driven by his friend Linda Hirschberg.

Hirschberg gives Grogin hourly supplements and, along with other friends, watches out for him.

"I want to make sure that he's safe and that he's OK and not falling," Hirschberg said. "His balance is a little bit off some days."

But Grogin said the mission is bigger than his limitations or his fatigue. He wants to send a message to people living with Parkinson's that movement matters, even when the disease makes that feel risky or frightening.

"There is an aversion to exercising with Parkinson's disease, which is a tragedy in itself, because the exercise is so very important for managing the syndrome," Grogin said. "That movement is the medicine."

Grogin, a chiropractor, acupuncturist and herbalist, began his run March 24 in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. He plans to reach California by early July, running about 26.2 miles, the length of a marathon, every day.

He is running in partnership with the Colorado-based Davis Phinney Foundation for Parkinson's and his own nonprofit, Strides for Humanity, to raise awareness, funding and hope for people living with Parkinson's.

The foundation is helping with media expenses and marketing, as well as making connections for him through its network as he crosses the country. A map on its website shows his intended route, which will take him through Pennsylvania, into the Midwest and across Kansas, Colorado and Arizona before his final steps on the Pacific coast.

"We're getting those people all throughout the U.S. to support Larry to come out, to provide housing, to provide any sort of extra transportation if they need it," said Polly Dawkins, executive director of the Davis Phinney Foundation.

People who want to support the run can donate through the foundation's Strides for Humanity campaign website. The money will support programs intended to help people with Parkinson's stay active and maintain independence. So far, Grogin has raised about \$150,000, Dawkins said.

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Gov. Kathy Hochul at a labor rally connected to a push to reform New York's pension system on March 8 in Albany. PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE OF NEW YORK GOVERNOR

Pension reform plan could cost NY taxpayers billions

Emily Barnes
New York State Team
USA TODAY NETWORK

Several local government groups are warning that New York property taxpayers could face tax rate hikes or service cuts due to pension reform proposals being debated as part of this year's now-late state budget.

In a recent statement aimed at Gov. Kathy Hochul and Legislature leadership, the groups said the state budget needs to include sufficient funding for any public employees' pension changes that get approved. They urged Hochul and lawmakers to "resist the impulse to pass those costs on to local property taxpayers," citing state law intended to ensure state government shoulders the financial responsibility for pension benefit enhancements.

"Counties, cities, towns, and villages already operate under severe fiscal con-



New York State Budget Director Blake Washington spoke with reporters inside the New York State Capitol on April 1, as the state legislature faces another late budget.

EMILY BARNES/USA TODAY NETWORK-NEW YORK

straints — the property tax cap, rising costs for essential services, and the growing burden of unfunded state mandates," the groups said.

"Any increase in employer pension contribution rates resulting from Tier 6 (pension) amendments would force local governments to make impossible choices: cutting essential services, eliminating positions, or seeking property tax increases that local taxpayers cannot afford," they added.

The groups also asserted local governments will soon take a hefty financial hit as pension fund returns previously projected to stabilize employer contributions for 2027 have been altered due to recent stock market unpredictability. Nearly 60% of county, city, town and village employees currently participate in Tier 6, they noted.

It's not the first red flag being raised about the push for pension reform. The Citizens Budget Commission also said last month that changes could increase taxes and destabilize budgets.

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