



SPORTS
La Salle star point guard Treddy Faison leaving for prep school. **B1**

REGION
State nurses union rallies against moving Bellevue women’s services. **C1**



BUSINESS
National Grid bills going up after panel approves rate hike. **D1**

TIMES UNION

TIMESUNION.COM FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 2025 ALBANY, NEW YORK \$3.00

Central Hudson admits ‘violation’ in explosion

Utility, which separately got a rate increase, must pay \$5M penalty

By Maria M. Silva
STAFF WRITER

ALBANY — Central Hudson admitted it did not provide safe and adequate service in the lead-up to a devastating natural gas explosion in Wappingers Falls two years ago as part of a settlement that resolves the case, the state Public Service Commission announced Thursday.

The utility company agreed to pay a \$5 million penalty for “ratepayer benefit” and establish a gas safety protocol remediation fund between \$2.5 million and \$3.5 million for targeted

safety measure enhancements to prevent similar incidents in the future. The company said these costs will not be passed on to customers.

The admission marks a reversal for Central Hudson. The utility had long denied any responsibility for the explosion, which leveled two buildings and hospitalized eight people, despite a Public Service Commission investigation finding last year that the company failed to include information about an active gas service line in a project binder it gave to the contractor for the work in the Dutchess County village.

As part of the settlement, Central Hudson stated that contractors it hired for a pipe replacement project “performed work that did not comply with the company’s established procedures in a manner that led to the November 2, 2023 explosion,” adding that this was “a failure” by the company and its contractors to provide safe and adequate service under state Public Service Law §65(1). That law states: “Every gas corporation, every electric corporation and every municipality shall furnish and provide such service, instrumentalities and

See **EXPLOSION**, A3



Photo courtesy of Amy Parks
The 2023 explosion caused the collapse of an apartment building on Brick Row in Wappingers Falls.

Ribbon cut as new arena celebrated



JIM FRANCO/TIMES UNION

Above, Gov. Kathy Hochul and Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy, at center, were among the local dignitaries at the ribbon-cutting for the new M&T Bank Center at Mohawk Harbor on Thursday in Schenectady. The \$55 million facility will be home to the Union College hockey teams and will also host concerts, trade shows and other events. At left, Hochul and Dave Buicko, CEO of the Galesi Group, cut the ribbon. Story in Business, **D1**.

Audit: N.Y. wasted \$485M in Medicaid

Review finds poor oversight of Medicare-eligible enrollees over past decade led to excess costs

By Raga Justin
STAFF WRITER

ALBANY — The state Health Department has failed to transfer eligible individuals to Medicare, costing New York taxpayers around \$300 million in excess Medicaid spending as the threat of federal health care cuts to the insurance program looms, the state comptroller’s office said this week.

The Department of Health was previously dinged by the comptroller’s office in 2023 for insufficiently controlling costs related to the state’s Medicaid spending, which has swelled in recent years and is on track to increase even further in the coming fiscal year.

Over the past decade, the comptroller’s office estimates the oversight has cost about \$485 million in state Medicaid spending that Medicare could have covered.

New York’s Medicaid growth comes even as federal cuts under the Trump administration will almost certainly decrease the amount of spending the federal government provides for the joint health insurance program for lower-income individuals.

That means New York will be forced to shell out even more money to keep people enrolled in the program — or be forced to cut people from health care rolls entirely.

Medicare, however, is a parallel health insurance program offered to Americans aged 65 years or older. People who are eligible for both

See **MEDICAID**, A3

Disabled South Colonie 7th graders being sent to high school; parents irate

By Kathleen Moore
STAFF WRITER

COLONIE — They can’t speak. They still love preschool shows like “Blippi.” In calendar years, they should be seventh graders. But South Colonie is sending them to high school.

The district decided last week to move two disabled 12-year-olds to the high school this fall.

Other children have also been

moved to programs for which they are not suited, and multiple special education teachers have resigned amid complaints that the district is not following the law as it relates to protecting the right of disabled children to be educated, a special education teacher said.

The parents of the two 12-year-olds are furious, citing state law and the fact that middle schoolers who are not disabled would not be sent to high

See **SOUTH COLONIE**, A5



Eliza Mineaux/Special to Times Union
Two disabled children, age 12, are being sent to Colonie Central High School this fall despite a state regulation that states they cannot be placed with children age 15 and older, their parents say.

Ritter back in Russia as Trump, Putin meet

Foreign policy analyst and sex offender says government returning property taken in raid

By Patrick Tine
STAFF WRITER

BETHLEHEM — Scott Ritter, the former United Nations weapons inspector who became a vocal critic of American foreign policy before and after his conviction for soliciting sex with a minor, has had his property returned to him and has



Ritter

been issued a new U.S. passport a year after federal agents raided his home in suburban Albany County, according to a post on his Substack webpage.

In an Aug. 9 post on the blogging platform, Ritter wrote that he was currently in Russia, and on Wednesday, he appeared in a

See **RITTER**, A4