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Langworthy, Paladino set for primary showdown

Cenedella quits GOP race in new 23rd district

By JERRY ZREMSKI

NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

WASHINGTON — Manhattan businessman Marc Cenedella on Friday dropped out of the race for Congress in New York's 23rd district, meaning Republicans in southern and eastern Erie County and the Southern Tier will likely choose between Buffalo businessman Carl P. Paladino and State GOP Chairman Nicholas A. Langworthy in an Aug. 23 primary.

Cenedella, a Fredonia native who went on to found the career services company called Ladders Inc., originally entered the race in hopes of offering a more conservative alternative to Rep. Chris Jacobs of Orchard Park. But then on May 27, Jacobs announced a change of heart, saying he would favor an assault weapons ban and other gun control measures favored by Democrats — a move that prompted Republican leaders to push Jacobs out of the race just one week later.

Jacobs' departure made Cenedella rethink his campaign, even though he said he collected enough signatures to appear on the primary ballot. Friday was the deadline for filing petitions in the race.

"I am very gratified by the work of so many in helping me to successfully qualify for the August 23rd ballot," Cenedella said in a statement. "However, I got into the race to ensure there was a conservative voice for Erie County and the Southern Tier in D.C. We now have multiple conservative voices in the race, so my effort has been successful, and I will not be a candidate for NY's 23rd Congressional District in the upcoming primary."

Those conservative voices are Paladino and Langworthy. Both of their campaigns said they, too, filed enough signatures to qualify for the ballot.

See 23rd on Page A5

Families grieving after Tops attack vow to turn their agony into action

Those who lost their loved ones to join D.C. gun control march

By JERRY ZREMSKI

NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

WASHINGTON — Four weeks to the day since his 86-year-old mother, Ruth Whitfield, and nine others were shot to death in a racist attack on the Tops on Buffalo's East Side, Garrell Whitfield Jr. will stand before a crowd of up to 50,000 on the National Mall on Saturday and call for gun safety measures aimed at preventing such attacks from happening again.

Twenty-five days after the Tops gunman left her son Zaire Goodman with deep wounds in his neck, his back and his left leg, Zeneta Everhart sat stone-faced before a congressional committee, just as Whitfield had a day before, and described the horrors of the attack and the role that racism played in it.

And on that very same day, Pamela Pritchett — whose mother, Pearl Young, was slain in that attack — repeated the mantra she coined at a news conference a day earlier, a phrase that could well serve as the motto for the families of the Tops slaughter.

"Every tear I cry is going to be a fuel for action," she said.

Plenty of tears have been shed since a shooter clad in body armor took aim at defenseless shoppers on that sunny Saturday afternoon in Buffalo — and judging by what those who lost loved ones in that attack said and did this week, there's plenty of fuel for action. Several of those family members were omnipresent on Capitol Hill and in the

Inside:
JUNE-TEENTH WILL HAVE SPECIAL MEANING THIS YEAR. PAGE B1



Associated Press

Pamela Pritchett, whose mother, Pearl Young, was killed in the Tops mass shooting, speaks at a news conference about a resolution condemning "great replacement theory" on Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday. "Every tear I cry is going to be a fuel for action," she says about fighting white supremacy.

Renovating instead of building anew restores Tops to Jefferson Avenue faster

New store estimated to take years to build

By MIKE PETRO AND LEAH CLARK

NEWS STAFF REPORTERS

In the end, the decision by Tops Markets to reopen a renovated store at the site of the mass shooting on Jefferson Avenue was a matter of time.

Renovating the store would allow it to reopen by the end of July, restoring an important food-shopping venue to a neighborhood that



Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

Tops Markets President John Persons calls renovating the Jefferson store the best option.

has few other options. Building a new store — an option preferred by some in the neighborhood because of the trauma associated with the site, could take years.

"For us, or anybody, to open a new store in that area would be years," said John Persons, Tops' president, in an interview Thursday. "We really believe that the best option for us to be able to serve that community again and do it successfully is by us reopening that store."

And that's what the Williams-

See Tops on Page A4

CITY & REGION

ALLENTOWN ART FESTIVALS RETURN THIS WEEKEND



Mink Connors/Buffalo News

After a two-year sabbatical, the Allentown Art Festival and Allen West Art festivals are back. Organizers and city officials say the ongoing construction in the neighborhood shouldn't affect the exhibitions.

Story on Page B1

After a bruising hearing on Jan. 6 rioting, Tenney and Stefanik try to change the subject

WASHINGTON — Americans who watched Thursday night's congressional hearing on the Jan. 6 insurrection heard then-President Donald Trump's attorney general dismiss his claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen, calling it, well, cattle dung. They learned that when Trump heard rioters chanting "hang Mike Pence," he replied that maybe his vice president "deserves it" for refusing to

play along with his plot to stay in office. And they saw harrowing footage of the melee in the Capitol, where a police officer recalled getting unconscious and later slipping on the spilled blood of her colleagues.

But it is as though some



ANALYSIS

top Republicans in New York didn't see or hear any of that. Rep. Claudia Tenney, a Upstate-area Republican who's running to represent a redrawn district stretching from rural Niagara County to the Watertown area, issued a statement dismissing the work of the House

Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol.

"It is partisan performance art produced by the mainstream media to defame President Trump, attack his supporters, divide the American people and advance the federal takeover of our elections," Tenney said.

And while Tenney de-

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CONTINUED FROM THE COVER

Families aim to confront 'myth of white supremacy'

RELATIVES • from A1

national media. And to hear them tell it, they will be omnipresent activists for as long as it takes to reform the nation's gun laws and confine racism to history's dustbin.

"Our family made a conscious decision upon the death of our mother not to go quietly into the night, not to just be a victim, but to use the immense pain and anger in a positive way to advocate for justice for her and the other victims as well as for impactful change," said Whitfield, who will return to Washington to speak at today's "March for Our Lives," a rally for stronger gun safety measures.

Whitfield said he sees the united families from Buffalo's East Side as the latest in a long line of American activists who have fought for change from the abolitionists to those who joined the civil rights movement to the Flight 3407 families to the gun safety advocates from Parkland, Fla.

"We're not reinventing the wheel here," said Whitfield, a former Buffalo fire commissioner. "We certainly are trying to model ourselves after those precedents who have successfully advocated for change."

Whitfield and several others who lost loved ones in the attack described themselves as fundamentally changed — and moved to act to try to prevent others from suffering losses such as they have.

Kimberly Salter said she felt she had to work for change to honor her husband, Aaron Salter Jr., the Tops security guard killed in the massacre.

"He made the ultimate sacrifice for everybody and for me, and I'm making the sacrifice for him," she said.

Similarly, Michelle Spight was moved to come to Washington after losing two family members: her aunt, Pearl Young, and her cousin Margus D. Morrison.

"It has fueled my life in a way that I never thought would be," she said of the shooting.

And Pritchett spoke with an unexpected, unbridled passion at two news conferences last week.

"Listen to me," she said after baking in the sun for nearly an hour at the second of those two press conferences. "I sound like I'm preaching, y'all."

All of this impressed Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer, a New York Democrat, who praised the families as "saint-like."

"Those deaths, as horrible as they



Garnell Whitfield, Jr. of Buffalo, whose mother, Ruth Whitfield, was killed in the Tops supermarket mass shooting, testifies at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on domestic terrorism on Tuesday.



Kimberly Salter, wife of slain Tops security guard Aaron Salter Jr., cries during the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing Tuesday. "He made the ultimate sacrifice for everybody and for me, and I'm making the sacrifice for him," she said of working for change.



Zeneta Everhart, whose son Zaire Goodman, 20, was shot in the neck during the Buffalo Tops mass shooting and survived, testifies during a House Committee on Oversight and Reform hearing on gun violence on Wednesday. She vows to work hard for change.

were, as searing as they are in our hearts, you are making sure they will not have died in vain," he told the families last week. "We will join you in that effort until we succeed. Thank

you and God bless you."

The change the families are seeking starts with the nation's gun laws. They're pressing for comprehensive background checks for all gun buy-

ers, thereby closing loopholes that now exist for guns sold online and at gun shows, as well as for moving the minimum age for buying rifles from 18 to 21 and other reforms.

"Lawmakers who continuously allow these mass shootings to continue by not passing stricter gun laws should be voted out," Everhart told the House Oversight and Reform Committee last week.

A bipartisan group of senators is trying to negotiate a deal on guns, but even if one passes, it will likely fall short of what many activists want: a ban on the kind of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines used in the Buffalo attack.

The family members stressed, though, that their advocacy is not just about gun safety.

"The march is all about gun violence in America, and obviously, we are the children of a slain victim of gun violence," said Raymond Whitfield, Garnell Whitfield's brother, who will also attend today's march. "But our particular angle is a slightly different in that we are all about shining a light on the myth of white supremacy as it relates to that gun violence."

That point came particularly clear in Everhart's testimony at that House hearing on the proliferation of guns in America.

Everhart combined her thoughts on guns with comments on race that seemed to make some Republicans at the hearing uncomfortable. Amid a time when Republicans are pressing to downplay the history of race in America in the nation's schools, Everhart repeatedly described herself as a descendant of slaves and said: "We cannot continue to whitewash education, creating generations of children to believe that one race of people are better than the other."

Later that same day, Everhart reiterated that point at a press conference with House members, and further spread her message on interviews on several national television networks.

She expects to be doing plenty more of the same, for a very long time, she said, knowing that the problems she's trying to fix often seem intractable.

"This is a table that we don't ever get up from," Everhart said on Friday before boarding another plane bound for Washington for today's "March for Our Lives." "I have to stay at the table as long as I possibly can until I feel over. I am optimistic, extremely optimistic, but I'm also a realist. I'm a logical thinker, and I live in the real world. So it's going to take some hard work. But I promise that I'm not going to stop until I see some sort of change."

Tops diverts materials from other stores for Jefferson remodel

TOPS • from A1

ville-based grocer intends to do. Persons said the supermarket chain hopes to have its Jefferson Avenue location refurbished and reopened by the end of July.

Tops Markets officials say that is the best approach if the highest priority for Buffalo's East Side is to provide the community with fresh food options as soon as possible.

The store has been closed since the racially motivated mass shooting on May 14 by a white supremacist that killed 10 people and injured three others.

Tops opened its Jefferson Avenue supermarket 19 years ago after residents for more than a decade had been calling for a full-service grocery store in their neighborhood, once considered a food desert. The community is facing that same issue again now that the store has been closed.

"We sort of internally coalesced around that thought early on," Persons said.

Persons said he understands the concern from some community activists and civic leaders asking that the East Side Tops be built at another location so that people don't have to go back to where the carnage of this mass shooting occurred.

"In practical terms, that's just a very complicated endeavor if we want to service the community quickly," he said.

Masten Council Member Ulysses O. Wingo Sr. said he is pleased with Tops' reopening announcement. He has met with community members opposed to the reopening of the store at that location. Wingo said he told them they should neither "build the legacy" of the work put in to get this Tops built, nor allow a white supremacist's actions to make



A painter in a lift works on the facade of the Tops Friendly Markets on Jefferson Avenue on Wednesday. In the future, the store will incorporate community-oriented elements at the site, such as murals by local artists.

them tear it down. He said it took nearly a decade of work by many East Side advocates to get that store built.

"We cannot segregate or neglect the work that was put in to have that Tops there," Wingo said. "People sacrificed to ensure that store was built there through their blood, sweat and tears, fighting for this community. We have to honor that as well. That would literally be tearing down the legacy and the life work of others before us."

Ann Eason of Buffalo believes the reopening of the Jefferson Avenue Tops could be part of the healing that the community needs.

"We need it in this area," Ea-

son said. "We're just going to go day by day and do what we've got to do (to heal), but they definitely need to open it back up and we need more."

However, some local residents, like Handel Taylor and his daughter Neveah, would like to see Tops move to a different location in the community or a different grocer or market come to Jefferson Avenue altogether — one that doesn't elicit memories of what happened May 14.

"I don't think it should open back up because of those memories. No one wants those memories," Taylor said. "Maybe if it was at a different location further down from this one."

Persons said the best Tops

could have done in opening a new store is getting it completed in about two-and-a-half to three years, and that would be "doing it pretty quick."

In some places, it has taken Tops as long as seven to eight years to complete a new store project, he added.

"For us, it was an easy decision," he said. Before even presenting a site plan and then building a new store, Persons said Tops would need to undertake studying potential sites and evaluating them for potential customer traffic.

Then it would have to acquire the pieces of property necessary to build on — and seldom is that just one parcel with

a lone owner to negotiate with. There would also be planning work, environmental reviews and other city approvals that would be required.

"All of that stuff needs to happen even before you begin contemplating building a facility," he said. "It is a considerably long timeline."

And then there's the expense. Building a new store would cost more than renovating the existing one. Persons wouldn't say how much more. But building new would be "a different project, for sure," he said.

"It is certainly a different scope of a project so there would be different costs associated with it," Persons said.

The Jefferson Avenue store remodel has been off to a quick start thanks to Tops being able to divert materials already ordered from remodels planned for other Western New York stores. That includes flooring, new registers and updated décor and displays.

Tops is in the midst of a \$120 million capital project to update many of its stores in the Buffalo market where the grocer originated 60 years ago. The several-year project includes renovating 35 of its Western New York stores. Twenty-five of them have already been completed or are being finished soon.

"That has helped us expedite the process of remodeling," Persons said. "The store will take on a similar style reminiscent of our current remodel program and will have much of the same feel."

Down the line, the store will also incorporate community-oriented elements at the site in collaboration with the City of Buffalo and local activist groups. That could include the work of local artists creating murals and a more sophisticated memorial than what will be there at the reopening.

"Ultimately, we want this store being representative of the community," Persons said. "We want to try to have some sort of respectful memorial by the time we open, but given the timeframe, some of these elements will likely take considerably longer."

Wingo believes it's possible to both memorialize the tragic events of that day while reopening the store. He'd like to see the community offer suggestions on the best way to do so.

"Tops is going to reopen the store by the end of July and that is great, but the community can also brainstorm on what a memorial would look like for the 10 victims of this heinous crime," he said.