

released progress report shows that occurring. Agency policy now calls for it state-run or state contract facilities reported to a central database, and for all physical or sexual abuse that may be reported to the police. As a result, the incidents reported to police is up. The agency has also toughened its requirements for workers, including psychological testing, and certified 51 investigators complaints under a new investigatory process both streamlined and independent. The surest sign the new regime is that it's seeking to fire 130 employees accused of abusing the developmentally disabled. That's nearly double the rate of termination at any given time in the past 30 days.

It doesn't mean the bad apples will automatically be removed. As union workers they will still be entitled to arbitration hearings, which have often been held on the wrist. (The state Legislature acted on a bill earlier this year that would allow arbitration and allow state agencies to sue with substantiated charges of negligence those with developmental disabilities. Under the new contract, the state is liable for penalties for abuse and negligence to be used by the arbitrator in making a decision. The table will include a graduated model of penalties, and, for the first time, clearly defined categories of negligence.

The agency becomes as dysfunctional as it can be. It's not just the fault of the employees. It's primarily a failure of management. Finally it seems to be getting better.

OTHERS SAY IT

U.S. policy
towards
Gadhafi

"tagtag" and "rebels" often go to

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why won't Sch'dy County Dems protect land near Glendale?

According to the Oct. 20 article by Michael Lamendola ["Level tax-rate budget OK'd?"], Schenectady County Democratic legislators defeated a Republican amendment that would have protected open space behind the Glendale Nursing Home from future development.

This is the second time in the past year they voted against preserving this property and in doing so, they voted against the wishes of their own constituents.

This (approximately) 18 acres of land includes a pristine field and a popular sledding hill regularly used by county residents for jogging, nature walks, cross-country skiing and sledding, and it is a wildlife habitat as well.

For the past 18 months, Friends of the Indian Kill Field, a group of Democrats and Republicans, has been attending monthly Legislature meetings where we have repeatedly asked for a resolution to preserve this open space as "parkland." More than 300 people have signed a petition, and more than 100 people have submitted statements or letters of support, but we have been stonewalled by our Democratic legislators.

However, Legislator Jim Buhmaster and GOP candidate Kurt Semon have both publicly and avidly supported protecting this piece of property. I would like to thank them for their support, and I would like to thank them for understanding that addressing constituents' concerns is important.

Although I am a registered Democrat, I will be proud to vote for them on Nov. 8.

RAY COLLAR
Glenville

The writer is a member of the Friends of the Indian Kill Field.

Writer who trashed PETA was misinformed

Ken Benson's Oct. 19 letter ["Don't let your children become PETA puppets"] praising a local teen for his efforts to help animals contained false information regarding People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

PETA is a nonprofit group that works to help animals by exposing cruelties in the entertainment, food, clothing and animal-testing industries. PETA's campaigns are certainly sometimes colorful, but everything PETA does — including working with law enforcement officials and bringing litigation against cruelty — is peaceful.

Many people, including everyday law-abiding bus drivers, teachers, lawyers, students and grandmothers, work to expose animal abuse and encourage people to make compassionate choices, such as choosing veggie burgers instead of artery-clogging beef patties or supporting animal-free circuses instead of those that beat elephants into submission.

No one who believes that kindness is a virtue, as we all say we do, can argue that it's acceptable to be cruel when we have the option to be kind.

Anyone who wants to find out what they can do to reduce animal suffering — or learn the truth about PETA — should visit www.PETA.org.

HEATHER MOORE
Norfolk, Va.

The writer is a research specialist for the PETA Foundation.

Protesters need to focus on why they're so upset

The Occupy Wall Street movement has attracted attention on an international scale, demanding the attention of prominent world leaders. Every media outlet carries the story, and many relay constant updates. To me, this movement seems to be nothing more than a complex cry for attention.

The protesters, who call themselves

the 99 percent, have camped out in various cities across the United States. What is it that these protesters wish to accomplish? No one really seems to know, due to the fact that they have not clearly stated their objectives. After a month of setting themselves up and making a lot of noise, they have accomplished very little for such a large-scale protest.

The protesters have been pointing fingers at the wealthy 1 percent of the population for hoarding a majority of the nation's wealth and not paying their fair share in taxes. Something about that mentality just seems un-American.

As these protests seem to gain momentum around the country, it would be wise for the movement to more clearly state its goals. To simply hate the wealthy for being wealthy seems to be quite irrational.

ALISSA FOSTER
Schenectady

Israel has rejected all Palestinian peace offers

For 20 years Palestinian leaders have recognized Israel as a nation-state and offered to surrender 78 percent of historic Palestine to Israel. Palestinian leaders, including Hamas, are willing to accept a Palestinian nation on a mere 22 percent of their land or former land.

This Israeli government has refused to accept this generous offer and continues to violently confiscate Palestinian land and water, demolish Palestinian homes and other property, construct segregated housing for Jews only in the remaining 22 percent of Palestine, and refuse to resolve the legitimate claims of millions of Palestinian refugees. In recent months, and in the face of almost unanimous worldwide opposition, Israel announced plans to construct thousands of new residential units for Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Three times in the last 10 years,

leaders of all Arab nations have offered to permanently end the Israeli-Arab conflict. They offer Israel a peace, similar to what the United States enjoys with Canada or France. Their demand is that Israel withdraw to the borders it had prior to the war, leaving the Palestinians 22 percent of the land (the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip). The Israeli government has rejected this offer.

American leaders are foolish to support Israeli leaders in their refusal to make peace with Palestinians and Arabs. Not only does the Israeli government brutalize Palestinians, it scares Israeli Jews into thinking that Muslims and Arabs are out to destroy them.

When Israeli and U.S. leaders support the Palestinians and other Arabs refuse to negotiate peace with Israel, the lying. We all know that actions speak louder than words. If Israeli leaders were serious about peace, why would they continue their large-scale robbery of Palestinian property?

The U.S. Congress should hold formal hearings on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and invite the courageous leaders of Israeli peace groups, such as New Profile and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, to testify.

TOM E
Albany

Letters policy

The Gazette wants your opinion on public issues.

There is no strict word limit, though letters under 200 words are preferred.

All letters are subject to editing for length, style and fairness, and we will run no more than one letter per month from the same writer.

Please include your signature, address and day phone for verification.

For information on how to send, see bottom of this page.