

New legislator one of the youngest ever

- [E-mail story](#)
- [Comments](#)
- [iPod friendly](#)

New legislator one of the youngest ever

By [Justin Mason](#) ([Contact](#))

Wednesday, January 2, 2008

SCHENECTADY COUNTY — Jeff McDonald may well have made history on his first day on the Schenectady County Legislature.

At the age of 28, the civil engineer who helped restore his family's historical Stockade Inn restaurant became one of the youngest county legislators in recent memory. In fact, aside from former legislature chairman Peter Guidarelli — who also was 28 when he took office — county officials attending the inauguration ceremony Tuesday couldn't recall any past member younger than the newly installed Democrat.

"Right now, I'm taking it all in," he said before the legislature convened its organizational meeting. "I have a vested interest in the county and I can't wait to be a part of the decision-making process."

McDonald trounced former Schenectady Mayor Albert Jurczynski — who ironically was once the youngest person ever elected to the City Council — for one of two District 2 seats up for election in Schenectady. Incumbent Democrat Gary Hughes was elected to the other seat and named the legislature's majority leader Tuesday.

McDonald brings with him to the legislature both enthusiasm and a good work ethic, explained City Court Judge Guido Loyola, who swore him into office. Loyola recalled once seeing McDonald driving a new Ford Thunderbird and wondering how a young man could afford such a car.

"When I asked him how he bought a new car, he looks at me and says 'I work hard,' " the judge reflected.

But McDonald isn't the only fresh face joining county government this year. Also inaugurated Tuesday was Republican Angelo Santabarbara, 35, who was the top vote getter in District 4.

Also a civil engineer, Santabarbara is the recently appointed chairman of Rotterdam's Industrial Development Agency. Like McDonald, he said he's ready to start serving his constituents in Rotterdam, Princetown and Duanesburg and looks forward to hearing the needs of the people who elected him.

"It's about the people, and without them, I wouldn't be here," he said after being sworn in by Republican state Assemblyman George Amedore. "I'd love to say I won, but we won together."

Also taking the oath of office were Michael Petta, D-Schenectady, Vincent DiCerbo, D-Schenectady, and Tony Jasenski, D-Rotterdam, all of whom won four-year terms in November. Joining them were Republicans Robert Farley, R-Glenville, and James Buhrmaster, R-Glenville, who also won re-election.

As expected, Susan Savage was re-elected chairwoman of the Legislature, despite a pro forma push by Republicans to place James Buhrmaster in the seat. Savage, a Democrat, has held the position since her party assumed a majority in the legislature in 2004.

Likewise, the Republicans attempted to install Joseph Suhrada, R-Rotterdam, as the legislature's vice chairman, only to be thwarted by the majority party. County Democrats teamed to elect Judith Dagostino, D-Rotterdam, to the position.

After being sworn in by U.S. Rep. Michael McNulty, D-Green Island, Savage reflected on the positive changes that have swept through the county. In four years, she said, the county has witnessed more than \$100 million worth of private investment in the Rotterdam Industrial Park, a rebirth of Schenectady's State Street, expansion at General Electric's Global Research Center in Niskayuna and 650 new jobs coming to the company's plant, which straddles the city border.

"It's sometimes difficult to remember how bad it was back then," she said of Schenectady County four years ago. "The county didn't have smart growth, it had no growth."

After being named majority leader, Hughes, D-Schenectady, called on local officials throughout the county to work together for a better Schenectady. He stressed the need to continue efforts toward establishing shared services and economic development.

"Together, we can make good on the promise that Schenectady County's best days are yet to come," he said.

Farley was re-elected minority leader for his third two-year term. In his remarks, Farley outlined initiatives to deliver wireless Internet broadband service throughout the county and to freeze taxes for residents 65 years or older and earning less than \$65,000 annually.

Farley also asked county officials to leave party politics behind when it comes to economic development efforts. He urged legislators to recall and rekindle efforts from a decade ago, when the Metroplex Development Authority was created.

"There are no Democrats or Republicans when it comes to business and economic development," he said. "We're all Schenectadians."