

For Bruce

mentally ill need support

I was greatly saddened to hear of the violent death of Peter Sablich, a former Ithaca resident living in Binghamton and suffering from severe, persistent mental illness. I will not attempt to "second-guess" the police in this situation -- this confrontation certainly was of a violent nature. I am terribly saddened that it turned out as it did, rather than the police being successful in bringing Mr. Sablich to the hospital where he needed to be.

I began to wonder where people in the community were before this incident happened. Was he receiving ongoing treatment and services for his serious mental illness and, if not, why not? He obviously was extremely ill -- his neighbors, the mental health community, the county, and police must have been aware of his needs and the subsequent dangers involved in not providing treatment for this very ill man. I'm also wondering whether the Binghamton Police Department has a Critical Incident Team which includes both police officers and mental health professionals and is providing ongoing training to its officers regarding dealing with mental illness.

Peter Sablich was desperate for help -- treatment for his mental illness, continuous supportive services for his daily needs which involve intensive case managers to check in on him regularly and be aware when more intensive services like hospitalization might be needed. Where were those people?

Our communities need to be proactive in helping individuals struggling with major mental illnesses, like Peter, who desperately need our compassion and help. With such treatment and supportive services, Peter might still be alive, his neighbors would be safe, and the community would be doing the right thing.

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