

Story on Southside cancer prompts Lazio's Elmira visit

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SOUTHPORT — U.S. Senate candidate Rick Lazio dropped by the home of Andrew and Julie Patros on Monday evening to gather information about the cancer cases and possible contamination at Southside High School.

Lazio met with the Patros and Tobin families informally for about a half-hour to learn more about a topic he had read about in an article in USA Today on Aug. 9, Julie Patros said.

Patros is the mother of 21-year-old Thomas Patros, who graduated from Southside in 1997 and is one of at least 40 former and current students who have developed cancer since the school opened in 1979.

The results of the state's investigation of the cancer incidence are expected to be presented at 7 p.m. Wednesday during a public meeting in the school auditorium, 777 S. Main St. However, that date could change if results are not back by midday today.

"He didn't offer any suggestions on what he could do to help," Patros said. "He just wanted more details.

He was concerned."

Members of Lazio's campaign said the Senate candidate did not have time Monday to discuss the visit.

Lazio's visit was meant to be private, said Maggie Tobin, mother of Mike Tobin, who has cancer and will return to Southside as a junior in a couple of weeks.

Some neighbors peered out their windows and checked on their lawns while the Lazio mobile was parked about a block away from the Patros' home on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Residents are hoping to hear the results of soil, air and water tests Wednesday evening, but if the state does not release the results of soil samples by midday today, the meeting will be postponed, said Thomas Kump, director of environmental health for Chemung County.

Kump, who also is the Elmira school board president, said residents, as well as panelists for the meeting, need time to prepare to discuss the results.

If the meeting is postponed, the public will be notified through the media, Kump said.

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Sun, Apr 14, 2019