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# The NORTHERN WESTCHESTER Examiner

Covering Yorktown, Somers, Cortlandt, Croton-on-Hudson, Buchanan, Ossining and Peekskill

## COVID-19 Breakdown:

**Yorktown 3,809 (152)**  
**Village of Ossining 3,707 (101)**  
**Peekskill 3,564 (112)**  
**Cortlandt 3,228 (152)**  
**Somers 1,746 (71)**  
**Croton-on-Hudson 701 (20)**  
**Town of Ossining 531 (17)**  
**Buchanan 239 (20)**

March 16 - March 22, 2021

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 13, Issue 586

## Mixed-Income Rental Project Proposed on City Site

By Rick Pezzullo

The Peekskill Planning Commission last week reacted favorably to a conceptual plan to build 231 affordable rental units on a former waste generating site on Lower South Street.

Kearney Realty & Development Group, Inc., which constructed the well-received Lofts on Main mixed-use, artist housing development on Main Street in Peekskill, is looking to bring 129 one-bedroom and 102 two-bedroom apartments to the 11.6-acre property, currently owned by the city, that once was home to Karta Container & Recycling.

"I'm happy to see something is being done on the property," said Planning Commission member Victor Drapala.

Noting prominent Peekskill business owner Louie Lanza was working with him,

Ken Kearney, founder of Kearney Group, explained 37 units in one of the buildings would be dedicated to senior citizens. Approximately 100,000 square feet of commercial space is also envisioned.

"We think we have our arms around this project," Kearney said.

Planning Commission member Mark Porterfield said the location would be ideal for a "Trader Joe's-type specialty supermarket."

"I'm not sure we'll get a major tenant, but it lends itself to that," Kearney said. "We're very confident because of the lack of supply in locating tenants. We have to put the word out there quietly on the commercial and light industrial."

Porterfield noted his biggest concern with the concept was the "connectivity" to the nearby train station and other destinations, a sentiment also mentioned by other

colleagues.

"I see Louisa Street as a bit of a barrier. There are some uses not inviting to pedestrians," said planner Frank Filiciotto. "There are a lot of trucks. Just crossing that street will be an impediment. Let's make sure we don't build an island."

"Getting people across Louisa Street can be intimidating," said Planning Commission Chairman Jeffrey Stern. "To make this project really successful, the city needs to make a major investment."

Peekskill Director of Planning Jean Friedman said Kearney is proposing to build sidewalks in the area and agreed the intersection needs to be revamped to make it pedestrian-friendly.

"This will not be no man's land for very long," Friedman said. "You will have a distinct neighborhood down there."



KEN KEARNEY

## Yorktown Man Killed in Hit-and-Run Crash

By Rick Pezzullo

A Yorktown man was charged Thursday with leaving the scene of a hit-and-run crash Wednesday evening on Route 6 in Shrub Oak that resulted in the death of a 40-year-old town resident.

Marcos Suscal, 45, was arrested by Yorktown Police after investigators went to his Donald Court residence and discovered the vehicle involved in the accident, that occurred about 7 p.m. March 10 between Sunnyside Street and Barger Street, was parked there.

Suscal was interviewed at police headquarters and subsequently charged with the Class

D felony. He was arraigned by Yorktown Town Justice Sal Lagonia and released on his own recognizance. He is due back in court March 16.

Demetrios Doupsis was declared dead at the scene after police arrived on the scene following reports of a subject lying in the roadway. It was determined Suscal was heading east on Route 6 when Doupsis was struck.

An investigation into the accident is being conducted by the Yorktown Police Department Accident Investigation Unit and Westchester County Department of Public Safety Accident Investigation Unit.

## Ossining Breaks Ground on COVID-19 Memorial in Park

By Rick Pezzullo

The Village of Ossining broke ground Saturday on a COVID-19 Remembrance Memorial at Nelson Sitting Park.

When completed, the memorial will have benches and a wall for people to visit and reflect on loved ones who have succumbed during the pandemic and those who have stepped up to help others.

Ossining Mayor Rika Levin, whose father died from coronavirus last April, stressed the village's new addition, which is located near Park School, was intended to honor not just Ossining residents, but anyone in the world who fell victim to the deadly

strain.

"This community was hit very hard," Levin said. "This has to be meaningful moving forward."

Village Manager Karen D'Attore said several village employees were affected by COVID-19 and noted how Ossining was one of the first municipalities to partner with Feeding Westchester to support needy residents.

"As we look towards the end of this awful pandemic, it's important that we take a moment to acknowledge the tremendous heartbreak and strain so many people have suffered," D'Attore remarked.

Town Supervisor Dana Levenberg, whose father-in-law died of

coronavirus alone in a hospital in December, called the last 12 months "the worst year of our collective lives."

"I hope it (memorial) offers the smallest reprieve from dark times today, tomorrow and for many years into the future," she said.

State Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick said he hopes the memorial is viewed in the future the same way similar places dedicated for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks are embraced.

"To have a space for the community to come and remember and grieve will be very meaningful," he said.

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# Hen Hud School Trustee Heads GOP Ticket in Cortlandt

By Rick Pezzullo

A longtime Hendrick Hudson Board of Education member is at the top of a full Republican ticket that has its sights set on the November election in Cortlandt.

Laurie Ryan, a high school math teacher in Elmsford and a school trustee for 12 years, is running for supervisor to replace retiring Cortlandt chief executive Linda Puglisi. She will be squaring off against Democratic nominee Councilman Dr. Richard Becker.

"I offer you a complete package – leadership, management, and people skills," Ryan stated. "I wish to continue to move the Town of Cortlandt forward and build upon the successes we have enjoyed while bringing forth new visions of innovation and improvement."

Ryan has lived in Cortlandt for 25 years. She has been a sports coach with the town, CYO and AAU. During her tenure on the



The 2021 Cortlandt Republican slate of candidates.

school board, Ryan said she has been involved in successfully negotiating more than 30 bargaining agreements, restored \$12,000,000 to the district after researching boundary lines, passed 12 budgets, and passed five bonds.

"I initiated the implementation of summer school programs and redesigned board/staff/commu-

nity communications. I've held positions on several committees including Finance, Policy, Facilities, Safety, Curriculum, and Strategic Planning. I am currently working with the Board and Superintendent for strategies regarding the closing of Indian Point," Ryan stated.

For the two available Town

Board seats, Republican district leaders nominated Tom Walsh, a member of the town's Zoning Board of Appeals since 2018, and Warren Smith, president of the Verplanck Residents Association.

Walsh has been employed by Burnham Nationwide, Inc. in New York City since June 1998. He started as a Project Manager and worked his way up to Executive Vice President and Director of NY Operations. Burnham Nationwide specializes in Building/Zoning Code Consulting and Building Permit Expediting.

Walsh, who has played an active role in informing neighbors about the progress of the ongoing projects in the Medical Oriented District (MOD) near NY Presbyterian/Hudson Valley Hospital, stated he wants to control taxes, encourage new economic development, streamline local government processes, open up decision and planning process to keep all citizens informed of what is being planned, and "make smart, com-

mon-sense decisions."

Smith has lived in Verplanck since 1963. A 1981 Hendrick Hudson High School graduate, Smith has been the Director of Operations for a commercial printer in New York City. Over the years, he has volunteered in his community as a lector at St. Patrick's Church, a member of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Society, and a leader with Boy Scouts of America.

Also on the Republican ticket is Kylie Fitzgerald-Bernard for town clerk, Peter Marengo for receiver of taxes and Robert Chappick for town justice.

Besides Becker, the Democratic Committee selected Councilman James Creighton and newcomer Cristin Jacoby for Town Board, and Councilwoman Debbie Carter for receiver of taxes to succeed retiring Mary Breining. Town Clerk Laroue Rose Shatzkin and Town Justice Kimberly Ragozzo are also seeking reelection on the Democratic line.

# Peekskill Schools Planning for Full In-Person Learning Reopening

By Rick Pezzullo

Peekskill Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Mauricio will be recommending an in-person learning reopening plan to the Board of Education next week.

During a virtual Town Hall-style session held in English and Spanish March 10, Mauricio plans are in place to bring students back into the classroom, sooner than later.

"At some point we will have to have increased in-person learning. That could happen as early as this spring," Mauricio said. "We know there are some comfort levels. Some are already there."

A survey was circulated last week to parents in an effort to gauge interest in a four or five-day in-person instructional model.

Mauricio stressed in the coming weeks there will no longer be hybrid model of teaching. Students will either be fully in the classroom or taught exclusively virtual.

"We want to end the school year strong," he said. "Full virtual remains an option for parents and students until the end of the school year for Pre-K to 12."

The district's reopening plan will be consistent with guidance from the Center for Disease Control and the New York State Health Department. Mauricio noted while

the goal will be to maintain six feet social distancing, if that's not achievable, barriers will be used.

Under Phase I of the reopening strategy, elementary students will return in-person five days a week, while middle and high school students will attend four days a week.

"We will prioritize special education, English as a new language students and students who are academically failing," Mauricio said.

Mauricio is slated to address the Board of Education March 22.

Dr. David Mauricio



## Red Devils Take to the Turf

The Peekskill High School varsity football team was able to practice for the first time last week on the new \$3.9 million turf at Torpy Field.

# Yorktown Pop-Up Vaccine Sites Inoculate 1K

The Town of Yorktown, in partnership with Westchester County and Save Mor Drugs, successfully vaccinated about 1,000 residents last week through pop-up sites.

Last week, Westchester County vaccinated 720 people at the Albert A. Capellini Community and Cultural Center on March 8 and Save Mor Drugs of Croton-on-Hudson vaccinated another 250 Yorktown residents at Jefferson Village.

Save Mor Drugs—whose owners are longtime Yorktown residents—also vaccinated another 100 people at the Beaveridge and Wynwood Oaks apartment complexes. Another 300 vaccines will be administered on Thursday.

"As we cross the one-year anniversary of this terrible pandemic we once again showed how local and county officials can collaborate with each other and private-sector partners like Save Mor to vaccinate

more than 1,000 people in a matter of days," said Supervisor Matt Slater. "But we're not stopping there as this vaccine is the key to reopening our community and society safely for all."

The pop-up sites are part of a state and county effort to bring vaccines to communities that lack easy access to mass vaccination sites like the Westchester County Center.

"What you are seeing here is another example of government at its best; multiple levels of government all working together to ensure that Westchester residents have access to this life saving vaccine after a year of enduring the largest challenge in many of our lifetimes," said County Executive George Latimer. "Our Administration, through Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler, has spearheaded this pop-up vaccine site effort and I am grateful to the leadership in towns

in the northern part of the County who helped to make this site come to fruition. There is light at the end of the tunnel, and through vaccinations we will get there."

Local pharmacies that are administering the vaccine are receiving their supplies from the federal government.

"The vaccine is critical to get us back to normalcy and we are happy to partner with the Town of Yorktown to provide this service directly to residents," said Yogi Kao of Save Mor Drugs.

Yorktown officials have helped residents find and travel to vaccine appointments through a volunteer sign-up sheet and a tutorial posted on the town's web site.

Yorktown has set up a web page for residents who want to sign up for a vaccine stand-by list: <https://www.yorktownny.org/covid-19-vaccine-sign-up>.



# Vaccination Percentages Begin to Accelerate Throughout Westchester

By Martin Wilbur

About one out of every eight Westchester residents have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of last week and nearly one-quarter are at least partially inoculated.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said that as of last Thursday 13.6 percent of the estimated one million residents in the county have received both doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Another 11 percent have received their first dose of either the Moderna or Pfizer shots, and are awaiting their second dose.

County officials have been trying to ramp up availability and keep up with vaccination supplies, which are expected to increase. As of Monday, more than 108,000 doses have been administered at the County Center, just over 21,000 at Westchester Community College and another 9,500 at the armory in Yonkers.

Along with the county's Health Department clinic in White Plains and pharmacies and pop-up sites, Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler urged all residents to sign up for an appointment to get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible.

"The bottom line is they're all effective, they'll all protect you, so whatever vaccine you can lay your hands on is the vaccine you should get as quickly as you are eligible and able to do so," Amler said.

The County Center now has the capacity of administering up to 2,500 vaccines a day, Latimer said. It began operations on Jan. 13.

Westchester is expected to receive a shipment of additional Johnson & Johnson vaccines on Mar. 29, Latimer said. Those are considered best for seniors, including the homebound, because they require just one dose and would prevent the less mobile population from having to venture out for a second shot, he said.

The county is working with Empress Ambulance Service to distribute the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to homebound seniors who are at least 65 years old, said Latimer.

"The vaccines are the great encouragement that we think puts us closer to putting the pandemic behind us," Latimer said.

All people at least 60 years old can now sign up for the vaccine. Previously, the threshold had been 65 and up, along with health care workers, first-responders and other priority occupations.

Starting this Wednesday, municipal workers who deal directly with the public will also be eligible for the vaccine, said Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order that entitles any worker, either in the public or private sector, up to four hours of leave from their job in order to receive the vaccine, according to Latimer. If a worker gets either the two-shot Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, they are allowed up to four hours for both doses.

On Monday, active cases fell across Westchester to 5,347, down nearly 500 cases since Mar. 8 and by more than 50 percent since the January peak of 11,500.

COVID-19 hospitalizations have also been slowly decreasing, with the number standing at 252 people on Monday, 32 lower than last

week, and down from 588 in January.

From Mar. 8 to 15, there were 21 virus-related fatalities, a decrease of six since the previous week. In all, the county's COVID-19 death toll stands at 2,149.

Latimer said he has asked New York State for guidance on high school graduations for this June. School officials have been requesting some sort of direction on whether they can hold an event and how that can be done.

The county has told the state Department of Health their parameters and hope the state will accept.

"Decisions on how graduations are going to be structured really can't wait until the month of June when the graduations would be held and we think getting direction by the end of

March, early part of April is essential," Latimer said.

Starting Apr. 1, domestic travelers from any of the 50 states or U.S. territories will no longer be required to have any type of quarantine, Jenkins said. However, travelers from abroad or those returning home from overseas must continue the quarantine upon return, he said.

## County Golf Courses Teeing Off

Latimer said that four of the county's six golf courses opened last Saturday, a sure sign spring is just days away.

Dunwoodie and Sprain Lake golf courses in Yonkers, Maple Moor in White Plains and



## CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Saxon Woods in Scarsdale will allowed residents to tee off for the first time in 2021.

For the two county's northernmost courses, Hudson Hills in Ossining

was not allowed to operate until Monday and Mohansic Golf Course in Yorktown will open its doors on Wednesday. Snow cover lingered at each one of those facilities, which resulted in the slight delay of their openings.

Latimer said the county is working on a plan to open Playland by the last week in June. Last summer the amusement park remained shuttered.

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# Jones Touts Benefits of \$1.9 Trillion American Rescue Plan

By Martin Wilbur

The American Rescue Plan will provide \$187 million to Westchester County, \$19 million to Putnam County and billions more in aid to pandemic-ravaged New York State and its local governments.

In a press conference last Friday outside the county office building in White Plains, Rep. Mondaire Jones (D-White Plains), called the measure “the most transformative piece of economic legislation in modern American history.”

About \$23.5 billion has been earmarked for New York State and its municipalities and counties, Jones said. Another \$128 billion will be used to reopen schools safely nationwide, including about \$560 million for schools in the 17th Congressional District.

There is also \$71 billion for additional COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and \$25 billion will be appropriated to close the health care disparities in low-income areas. The City of White Plains is scheduled to receive about \$22 million in direct aid.

There will be \$1,400 “survival checks” to individuals earning \$75,000 or less and to each spouse for couples earning up to \$150,000, which accounts for about 85 percent of the country, said Jones.

“The American Rescue Plan provides transformative, life-changing, urgently needed relief for the American people, including right here in Westchester and Rockland counties,” Jones said. “You cannot make up or exaggerate how necessary it is to have this relief in order to, as the President



Congressman Mondaire Jones spoke last Friday in White Plains on how the American Rescue Plan will help local governments, schools and residents. He was joined by, from left, White Plains Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Ricca, Board of Legislators Chairman Ben Boykin and Terrance Jackson, deputy commissioner of the Theodore Young Community Center.

of the United States has said, build back better and lift us out of the devastation that we’ve been experiencing.”

White Plains Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Ricca said the pandemic has disrupted life for thousands of children across Westchester and millions more across the United States.

In order to safely return students to the classrooms, precautions and health and safety measures, such as providing personal protection equipment, and barriers are

needed. However, many districts cannot afford the expense or would be pressured financially if they had to pay it on their own, Ricca said.

In White Plains, the return to school full-time is scheduled to begin next Monday, he said. Money from the American Rescue Plan is the beginning of the nation making its comeback from a pandemic, Ricca said.

“This is not a bailout, this is not a stimulus, it’s an investment in the United States of America,” Ricca said. “It’s an

investment in our children and our families and our communities. Because of this investment, we will very soon be bringing all of our children back into our classrooms five days a week.”

Jones said the money that will be allocated for schools is based on need using the Title I formula, and not the property tax.

In Westchester, there is food insecurity, people who face the threat of eviction and small businesses that need to reopen along with schools, said Board of Legislators Chairman Ben Boykin.

“We are very pleased that Congressman Jones has been able to secure these funds for the County of Westchester, for the County of Rockland to help us all recover from this pandemic, which will have long-term effects,” Boykin said.

From the \$23.5 billion, New York state government will receive \$12.6 billion and its local governments a combined \$10.9 million, said 18th Congressional District Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-Cold Spring).

He said it will have a profound impact at nearly every level of life in the United States.

“The American Rescue Plan Act is a beacon of hope for hard-working New York families,” Maloney said. “More than 75 percent of the American public support it including large numbers of Republican elected officials right here in our district who are saying we need it, and we need it now. This is the decisive action we need to save American lives and livelihoods.”

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# Cuomo Won't Resign as Support Erodes Among Democratic Officials

By Rick Pezzullo and Martin Wilbur

Gov. Andrew Cuomo vowed last week not to resign despite a seventh woman accusing him of harassment and a growing list of Democratic elected officials calling for him to step down.

During a teleconference Friday afternoon, Cuomo insisted allegations against him were untrue and urged New Yorkers to wait for the completion of investigations from the state attorney general and the Assembly before jumping to conclusions.

"I did not do what was alleged. Period," Cuomo remarked. "I will not resign. I never harassed anyone. I never assaulted anyone. I never abused anyone, and I never would. What is alleged simply did not happen. I have not had a sexual relationship that is inappropriate. Period."

Cuomo said politicians forming opinions without hearing the facts were "reckless and dangerous."

"The people of this state have known me for 40 years. I have been in the public eye my entire life," he said. "I have been under public scrutiny since I was 23 years old. Any opinion without facts is irresponsible. You don't have facts now. You have allegations. I have confidence in the decision based on the facts."

His comments came a day after Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie authorized the Assembly Judiciary Committee to begin an impeachment investigation to examine



An increasing number of legislators from the Democratic Westchester contingent are urging Gov. Andrew Cuomo to resign after a seventh woman leveled allegations of sexual harassment against him.

allegations of misconduct by the governor. The committee will interview witnesses have subpoena power and evaluate evidence, according to the speaker.

Last week, support among local Democratic officials continued to crater. State Sen. Peter Harkham (D-Lewisboro), a close ally of the governor, suggested

Cuomo should allow Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul to take over the daily leadership of the state. He said there are too many critical issues facing New York, including completing work on the budget, helping the state recover from COVID-19 and dealing with constituents' needs, for the distraction to continue.

"It's very tough. He's someone I've known for 20 years, somebody who's a mentor and a friend and a colleague, but at the end of the day we're all accountable," Harkham said. "It's not about the personalities, it not about any of us individually, it's about the work and when something gets in the way of the work, then that something has to step aside."

The seventh accuser, New York magazine reporter Jessica Bakeman, accused Cuomo of flirting and groping.

Last Thursday, state Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) also called for Cuomo to resign from office. Initially, she supported having the state attorney general's investigation run its course in the growing scandal, but after the sixth accuser, a former aide, stepped forward, Mayer said it was "the last straw" of a "deeply disturbing pattern of women alleging sexual harassment" by Cuomo.

On Friday, Rep. Mondaire Jones (D-White Plains), was one of at least 12 Democrats from the state's congressional delegation urging Cuomo to step down. Jones said he had deep concerns not only about the sexual harassment allegations but also

about the nursing home deaths coverup and concealing the structural deficiencies of the Mario M. Cuomo Bridge.

"We have to move forward with a leader in Albany we can be confident in, who has high ethical standards and who is committed to working collaboratively with the Democratic legislature," Jones said.

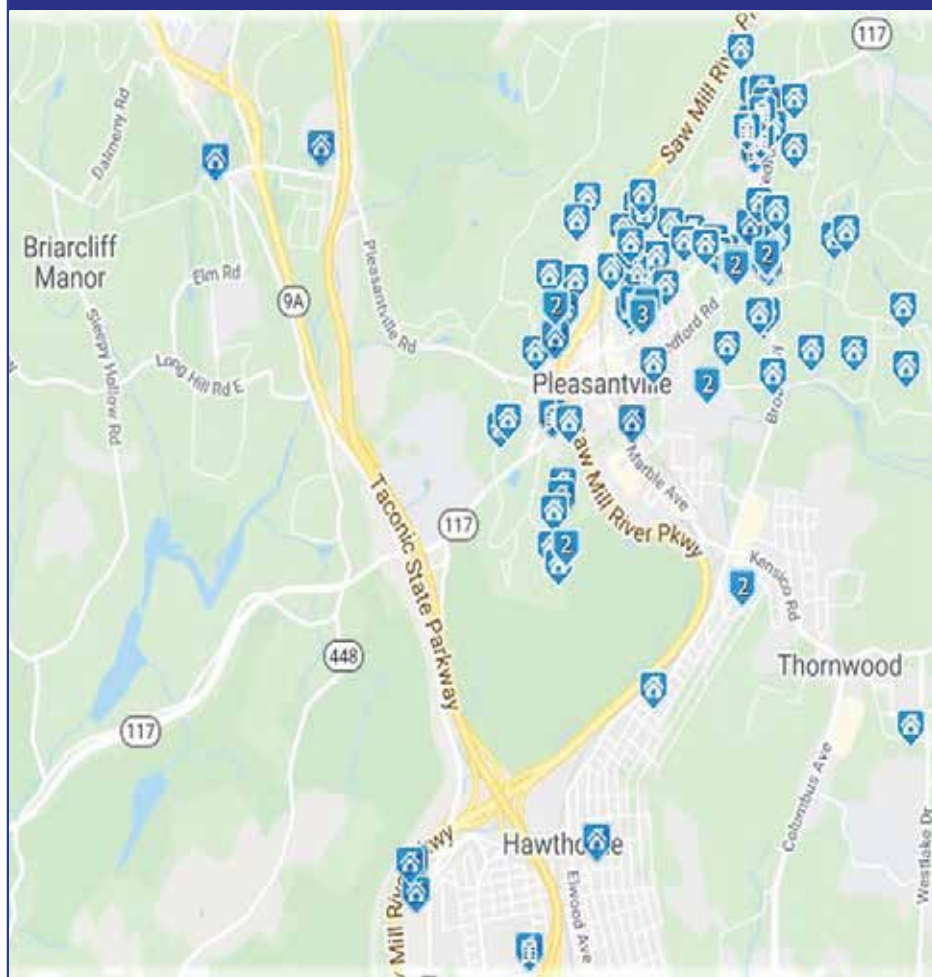
Assemblyman Kevin Byrne (R-Mahopac) said he agreed with the launch of an impeachment investigation. He did not want to weigh in on whether Cuomo should resign because it would appear to be partisanship on his part, but for a governor unwilling to step down, the immediate commencement of impeachment proceedings could be more effective.

Byrne said that under the state constitution, if Cuomo is impeached, he would still retain the title but would be prevented from carrying out the duties of his office. That would fall to Hochul.

"I think she's in better position to have negotiations to speak with us without the growing list of scandals against the governor," Byrne said.

On Mar. 7, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-Yonkers) started the flood of Democrats calling for Cuomo to step aside. Until then only Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti (D-Pleasantville), a frequent Cuomo critic, had been the only local legislator to take that position.

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# Millwood Fire District to Save \$1.1M By Refinancing Firehouse Bonds

By Martin Wilbur

Millwood Fire District taxpayers received encouraging news recently after commissioners decided to reissue bonds that will retire the firehouse expansion project debt two years earlier than scheduled, which will save about \$1.1 million in interest.

Fire district Treasurer Rose Cohen said that with historically low interest rates having dipped to 1.25 percent from nearly twice that figure, it made sense to refinance the remaining \$7,365,000.

"It's really a perfect time to refinance a municipal bond," Cohen said.

Commissioners have decided to maintain the current payment levels for the owners of the approximately 1,800 parcels in the district. However, two years will be shaved off the original 25-year bond. Instead of expiring in 2037, the bonds will now be fully paid off in 2035, Cohen said.

Voters approved nearly \$10 million in borrowing in 2011 for the 18,600-square-foot, five-bay facility on Route 133, several hundred feet down the street from the old firehouse, an antiquated structure built in 1924. Much of the remaining portion of the more than \$13 million project came from a district capital reserve fund. Another \$700,000 came from the sale of the old firehouse property.

Alan Schapiro, chairman of the board of the Millwood fire commissioners, said the board could have reduced the annual payments for taxpayers for the new bonds



The Millwood firehouse that opened in 2015. District commissioners have refinanced the bonds for the expansion, saving about \$1.1 million.

but maintain the 2037 maturity date or keep the payments the same as scheduled and have the debt retired sooner. The savings was greater by cutting two years off the life of the bonds, he said.

"By choosing this option we're able to not pay any more than we were paying previously and cut two years off the term of the loan," Schapiro said.

The refinancing was made possible because the fire district has been able to maintain its AA2 rating from Moody's despite the added expenses, Cohen said. She said the ratings outfit commended the department on its strong fiscal management.

Schapiro said it helped that the project came in on budget while commissioners continue to look for ways to improve the district's fiscal situation.

The new firehouse has also been as good as advertised since it opened more than five years ago.

"It's an aesthetically pleasing building, it's functionally efficient," he said. "It really worked out for the firefighters, for the district and for everyone."

The district tried for years to build a new firehouse with larger structures receiving community opposition because of cost and potential environmental concerns.

## New Castle District Permit Extension

Representatives for New Castle Fire District No. 1 are scheduled to appear before the town's Planning Board Tuesday night to ask that its permit be extended that would allow for a future expansion of the King Street firehouse.

Last year, it was believed that the fire district would schedule a referendum for the project but commissioners announced in January that it would first commit to public outreach before a vote would be scheduled.

Last week, New Castle fire officials mourned the passing of former fire chief Douglas Hunter, who passed away on Feb. 28 at the age of 92.

Hunter, who was also a retired New Castle police officer, was a 70-year life member of the fire department.

Board of Commissioners Chairman Terence Hoey said Hunter will be missed.

"His passing creates a void in our district, department, community that cannot be filled," he said.

Former commissioner Anthony Oliveri, who officially resigned from the board last week because he is moving out of the district, said he knew Hunter for about 60 years. When Oliveri entered the department, he said Hunter had been overseeing trucks and communications and Oliveri took his place.

"He taught me a lot when I came on," Oliveri said. "I'm going to miss him a lot."

After Oliveri's resignation, the board appointed Dwight Smith to fill the vacated commissioner's seat.

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# P'ville Man Sentenced to Prison in Child Sex Abuse Case

By Anna Young

A Pleasantville man will serve up to six years in prison after he admitted to taking sexually explicit photos of a young child in her Port Chester home.

John Passaretti, 52, was sentenced on Mar. 4 to two to six years in prison after pleading guilty to a dozen charges. Passaretti sexually abused the daughter of an acquaintance and used his familiarity with the family to create a situation in which he was alone for several moments with the child, according to Westchester County District Attorney Mimi Rocah.

Video of the incident, which occurred in 2019, was captured by a motion-triggered security camera.

"This was a terrible crime that

traumatized a young child and had a devastating impact on the entire family," Rocah said. "Crimes against children are every parent's nightmare and this case is a perfect example of how perpetrators of child sex abuse often manipulate relationships of trust. We must do all we can in law enforcement to prevent these and hold perpetrators accountable."

Passaretti, who has been held at the Westchester County Jail since his October 2019 arrest, pleaded guilty to two counts of use of a child in a sexual performance, a Class C felony; two counts of promoting an obscene performance by a child, a Class D felony; two counts of promoting a sexual performance by a child, a Class D felony; two counts of possessing an obscene performance by a child, a Class



John Passaretti

fearless to explore, but now instead I witness fear upon my children's faces every time the [door]bell rings," the victim's mother said.

The victim's father spoke of his anxiety and the trauma of the abuse on his daughter, stating "Imagine how this must feel when something of this magnitude happens in your own home while you are there."

The case was investigated by the Pleasantville and Port Chester police departments in collaboration with the Westchester District Attorney's office. The case was prosecuted by assistant district attorneys Janelle Armentano and Mary Clark-DiRusso.

E felony; two counts of possessing a sexual performance by a Child, a Class E felony; first-degree sexual abuse, a Class D felony; and endangering the welfare of a child, a misdemeanor.

Upon his release, he will be required to register as a sex offender.

In the victim impact statements read at the sentencing, both parents of the victim spoke of the enormous impact the incident has had on their children and home life.

"My children were trusting and friendly,

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# Obituaries

## Catherine Dickmann

Catherine Elizabeth "Liz" Dickmann of Pleasantville passed away on Mar. 5 after a brief illness. She was 65.

She is survived by her husband of 40 years, Thomas Martin Dickmann; sister Christine Bassett (William); brother Michael Lowery (Amanda); sister-in-law Christine Lowery, the widow of brother Patrick who predeceased her in 2019; six nieces and nephews; and 10 grandnieces and grandnephews.

Liz was born in Tarrytown on June 2, 1955, to the late Edward Lowery and Catherine (Curtin) Lowery. The family moved to Yorktown Heights in the late 1950s where Liz attended Yorktown public schools and graduated from what is now Berkeley College in White Plains in 1972. She then worked as an executive assistant at Ecolab, Inc., a White Plains consumer products company, for some 20 years.

Liz was an outdoor and physical fitness enthusiast who loved animals – especially

horses and dogs. For a number of years, she served as a volunteer for Pegasus Therapeutic Riding, a program that enhances the lives of individuals with disabilities and challenges through equine-assisted activities.

There was no one who did not like Liz. She was the caretaker of the family; whenever anyone was sick or injured, she was the first to volunteer to help. It was said that she had the ability to light up a room when she walked into it. And if there were any strangers in that room, she knew their names before she left.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Westchester SPCA and Feeding Westchester are requested in Liz's memory.

A memorial visitation was held for Liz on Mar. 13 at Beecher Flooks Funeral Home in Pleasantville.

A memorial service will be held at a later post-COVID date.

## Lynn Zaleski

Lynn Zaleski, 82, of Sunset Beach, N.C. passed away on Feb. 28.

Lynn was born in Peekskill on Aug. 25, 1938, daughter of the late George and Cornelia Acker.

Lynn is survived by her husband of 62 years, Walter Zaleski, of Sunset Beach, N.C.; son Christopher Zaleski of North Carolina; daughter Jody of North Carolina; sister Carol

(Sandy) Donahue of Buchanan; grandson Joshua Zaleski; great-granddaughter Alana Zaleski; and nephews Greg and Todd Donahue and their families.

There are no services planned at this time.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to a charity of one's choice.

## Arthur Abraham

Arthur Abraham, 84, of Andover, Vt. and formerly Chappaqua passed on Feb. 13 holding hands with his beloved wife, Andrea, whom he shared 49 years of marriage and friendship.

Arthur was born on Mar. 19, 1936, in Brooklyn. He attended Brooklyn Polytech and NYU, where he studied electrical engineering. He was in the Army as a reserve stationed at Fort Dix, N.J.

Afterwards, he joined his father, Simon, in growing Advanced Ring Manufacturing

on 45th Street in New York City. Later on, after its sale, he started Autech, Inc., which specialized in engagement and wedding rings.

His hobbies included a love for foreign sports cars, golf and skiing. He was a season ticketholder of the New York football Giants for 50 years, starting in the early 1960s.

He is survived by his wife, Andrea; his three sons, Eric, David and William; eight grandchildren; his sister, Judith; as well as many cousins and friends.

## John Collins

Dr. John Collins, 77, of Pleasantville passed away Mar. 8 after a courageous battle with lung cancer.

His wake will be held at Beecher Flooks Funeral Home with a Mass of Christian burial to be celebrated at Holy Innocents Catholic Church in Pleasantville.

John was born on Dec. 15, 1943, in New York City to Patrick and Kathleen Collins. He earned a bachelor's of engineering from Manhattan College, a master's from Columbia University and he went on to earn his doctorate from New York University.

John started John Collins Engineers, a successful traffic and transportation consulting business, which he led with his close business partner, Dr. Phil Greal, for more than 30 years before selling to Maser Consulting. He was a passionate teacher of the civil engineering profession, teaching at both Manhattan College and Westchester Community College (WCC), retiring as chairman of the Engineering Department at WCC.

He married Julia Brady Collins on Aug. 16, 1969. Together they raised three children, their pride and joy, Trish, John and Michael; he loved their spouses, Neil, Ali

and Merry, and six grandchildren, Norah and Matthew, Jake and Libby and Rose and Grant.

John, known as Dad, Grandpa, Pee Paw and UJ, was the most loving and caring man anyone could know. Family was the most important thing in his life. He was very thoughtful, immensely kind and overwhelmingly generous to all who met him. He had a calming presence and influence that resonated with everyone. Time with John was time well spent.

He is survived by his loving and caring wife of more than 51 years, Judy, and their children, spouses and grandchildren. He is also survived by his brothers, Patrick and James, and their families; his brother Edward's family; and many nieces, nephews, colleagues, associates and friends who absolutely adored him. He is predeceased by his parents, Patrick and Kathleen, and his brother, Edward.

John was very strong in his faith and community and for that reason the family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to Holy Innocents Parish in Pleasantville.

## William Siemerling

William H. "Bill," a.k.a. "Hill Billy Chief," Siemerling of Granite Springs passed away on Mar. 8. He was 79.

Siemerling was born in Peekskill on June 12, 1941, the son of Widmer (Buck) and Ella (Barlow) Siemerling. He lived his entire life in Somers. Near the end of his proud service in the U.S. Navy, he married Anne Fredette on May 21, 1966, in West Chazy, N.Y. Together for 54 years, they raised their five children, Ella, Laurie, Bill Jr., Carrie and Tad.

Bill's hard work and dedication to his family and community could be seen in his work at American Legion Post 1575 in Katonah, his proudly owned tree service and in his 50-plus active years in the Somers Volunteer Fire Department, including service as chief and fire commissioner. But his family most remembers his sense of humor, his unwavering work ethic and

his role as a caring dad and grandfather. His support of local businesses and communities, kept the lights on at Michaels, where he was the life of the party.

Bill is survived by his wife, Anne; his children, Ella McGovern and her husband Joseph, Laura Campo and her husband Paul, Bill Jr. and his wife Margaret, Carrie Siemerling and Tad and his wife Rachael; 15 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Visitation was at Joseph J. Smith Funeral Home in Mahopac on Mar. 11. A private funeral service was held at The Church of the Good Shepherd. Interment was open to all on Mar. 12 at Ivandell Cemetery in Somers.

Donations may be made to the Church of Good Shepard, Somers Volunteer Fire Department, Gary Sinise Foundation or your favorite charity in Bill's name.

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# Croton Mourns Village Trustee Habib; Known for His Passion for Service

By Anna Young

Croton-on-Hudson Village Trustee John Habib, a prominent civic and community leader who friends described as a warm, positive and caring person who tirelessly advocated for his hometown, died last Thursday.

"He was a very caring and passionate person, uniquely positive with a personality that could fill up a room or Zoom call," said Croton-on-Hudson Mayor Brian Pugh. "It's really hard to imagine village government without him. He brought such compassion to his work."

Those who knew him best and those in the local political sector took to social media in the days following his death, sharing their condolences, love and memories of Habib, who died suddenly while on vacation with family and friends. A cause of death was not immediately released.

He is survived by his wife, Tanya.

Habib was elected to the Village Board of Trustees two years ago and was gearing up to run for a second term in November. He had just been endorsed by the Croton Democratic Committee earlier this month.

Pugh said that Habib was someone who always talked about Croton-on-Hudson and the honor it was for him to assist in the development of his hometown. In a statement from the village, officials said Habib used his unique blend of energy, humor and optimism to guide his efforts on the board.

"John will be sorely missed for his



Croton-on-Hudson Village Trustee John Habib, being sworn into office two years ago, was an unabashed advocate for his home community. Habib died suddenly last week at 58.

infectious energy, megawatt smile, passion for public service and abiding love for his hometown," the Croton Democrats posted on Facebook.

Habib grew up in Croton-on-Hudson and was a graduate of Holy Name of Mary and Croton-Harmon High School. He earned his undergraduate degree from Colgate University and his law degree from Emory University School of Law.

Habib was described as a citizen of the world but always called Croton home. After decades of accomplishment in the United States and overseas, he returned to home to help make his community the best village it could be.

"All of Croton should be grateful to John for this," village officials said in a statement.

During his 30-year professional career, Habib held several executive positions with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and American Chamber of Commerce, as well as major law firms across the nation and overseas handling commercial litigation. Habib also operated his own law firm in Westchester.

Prior to his tenure on the Village Board, Habib served as chair of the Business Development Committee. While in office, he established the Croton Business Council, exercising his expertise to organize and energize the business community.

Officials attest the council has made a significant impact on the village.

"He cherished his memories of the village as a young boy but knew communities must grow and evolve to meet the challenges of today," officials' statement read. "Its work will be a lasting tribute to John's vision and dedication."

Habib was always known for his big ideas and unwavering ability to question conventional wisdom or how things could improve. Board members said they will remember his insistence to strive for excellence as they continue in the work he valued so much.

Pugh added that while a new trustee will likely be appointed in the coming weeks to fill Habib's seat, the Westchester County Board of Legislators will be dedicating Mar. 17 in Habib's name. Legislator Catherine Borgia (D-Ossining) will be making the recommendation on behalf of the district, Pugh said.

"It was always a great adventure to walk the streets of Croton with John, as he pointed out memories of days gone by, described new ideas or said hello to old and new friends," officials' statement read. "John loved Croton, and Croton clearly returned the affection."

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Matzo Farfel & Mushrooms

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Sweet Potato Pudding • Potato Pudding

### **\$239.90 for 6**

#### **APPETIZER**

6 pieces of Gefilte Fish & 1.5 pts. Chopped Liver

#### **SOUP**

2 qts. Chicken Soup & 7 Matzo Balls

#### **ENTREE (Choose One)**

3 Roast Chickens with Tray of Stuffing

2.5 lbs. Fresh Turkey Breast

2.5 lbs. Sliced Fresh Brisket

#### **ACCOMPANIMENTS (All Included)**

1 pt. Cranberry-Pineapple Compote

1.5 pts. Fresh-Cut Cole Slaw

1 pt. Carrot Tsimmes • 1 pt. Ben's Homemade Gravy

Small Relish Tray

#### **SIDES (Choose Two)**

Broccoli Almondine

Matzo Farfel & Mushrooms

Parsley Red Potatoes

Sweet Potato Pudding • Potato Pudding



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# Lottery Will Determine Spots for Pleasantville Summer Camp

By Abby Luby

Pleasantville village trustees and members of the Parks & Recreation Department laid out a plan on how to safely run the village's summer day camp during a Mar. 10 public forum.

A survey had been sent to 318 parents, and 283 of those responded in favor of the village operating camp even with various limitations.

Superintendent of Recreation & Parks Matt Trainor said the camp, which will run for six weeks starting the last week of June, would adhere to Westchester County Department of Health COVID-19 guidelines, which includes maintaining social distance, establishing cohorts of campers, wearing masks and frequent hand washing.

Traditionally the camp has been held at Bedford Road School but this summer the school is unavailable because of scheduled upgrades to the building. Instead, officials have decided to operate the program from three different locations: Parkway Field on Marble Avenue, Soldier and Sailors Field on Manville Road and the village pool on Lake Street. The pool will be available to campers every day until 12:30 p.m. when it will open to the general public.

About 300 campers have typically enrolled each summer, but this year capacity will be capped at 210. Previously, the camp could accommodate more children because of field trips and a tot's day camp. However, trips and the tot's camp have been scrapped this year because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Staff and budgetary constraints and the expense of outdoor equipment, including tents, convinced officials a smaller number of campers would be more manageable. Because of the reduced number of campers,



The Pleasantville Village Pool will be one of three locations where the municipal summer camp will meet this year.

the village will hold a lottery for families wanting to send their children to camp.

"The details for the lottery are to be determined," said Pleasantville Mayor Peter Scherer. "If a family is successful in the lottery, they can enroll all their kids."

Camp scholarships will also be offered to families who win a slot based on economic need. The village is prepared to spend \$15,000 on the scholarships.

A projected deficit to operate camp is between \$15,000 and \$30,000.

The camp will run every day from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with 40-minute time blocks for specific activities. There will be four staff members for every 12 to 15 campers. Each

pod of campers won't be able to merge with other pods.

The cost will be about \$960 per child for village residents and \$1,065 for children of non-residents, similar to the cost in previous summers.

Drop off and pick-up points will be rotated between the three locations, and there will be a calendar indicating day and location, Trainor said. Campers will be screened for COVID-19 similar to school screenings.

"If there is a positive case in a pod then every child in that pod will have to stay out of camp for 10 days," Trainor said.

The three tents set up at each location will provide shade on hot days and will be a

place for lunch and arts and crafts activities. The cost of the tents will be about \$19,000, Trainor said.

Other rentals will include portable bathrooms, hand-washing stations, personal protective equipment, storage for equipment and tables and chairs. If one group uses a ball or other equipment, it would have to be wiped down before the next group uses it, Trainor said.

Although the village can't actively solicit donations to help run the camp, the Village Board discussed encouraging donations similar to those made to the Clinton Street Senior Center.

More than 60 participants at last week's public forum posed various questions including suggestions about changing the plan to include more campers. Dividing the camp into two, three-week sessions along with a six-week option was posed to achieve that goal.

Because of dedicated pods that are stipulated by the Department of Health, Trainor said shifting the make-up of the pods in mid-session would pose health risks and would be difficult to monitor.

"If we did two three-week sessions and folks were not assured of getting a six-week session, that becomes a new and different challenge for working families again," Scherer said.

The board took an on-the-spot poll of those attending Wednesday's forum asking who would be in favor of the three-week sessions. Half of the attendees indicated they would support shorter sessions.

"Even though right now a simple game of capture the flag is a lot more complicated, we're hoping as much as you do that these kids have fun," Trainor said.

## Jones Asks for Federal Probe Into Reports of Cuomo Bridge Deficiencies

Congressman Mondaire Jones (D-White Plains) on Monday urged the federal government to launch an investigation into potential structural deficiencies on the Mario M. Cuomo Bridge.

Jones sent a Mar. 12 letter to Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg urging the federal Department of Transportation to open an investigation into the possible use of faulty bolts on the four-year-old span.

The letter follows a report last week in the Albany Times Union that raised serious questions about the integrity of the bolts used to construct the bridge. The 17th Congressional District covers much of central and northern Westchester and all of Rockland County and the bridge is at the heart of the district, which Jones represents.

He said the bridge serves New Yorkers and out-of-state travelers every day, with as many 144,000 vehicles crossing it daily.

"It is key to the economic success of the region and critical to the livelihood of my

constituents, many of whom use the bridge to commute to and from work," Jones stated in his letter. "Therefore, the importance of this issue to my district cannot be overstated. New Yorkers deserve to have confidence in the safety of the bridge, especially those whose livelihoods depend on the bridge."

State Sen. Elijah Reichlin-Melnick, who also represents Rockland and Ossining in Westchester, said it is imperative that the bridge is safe to travel across.

"Any safety failures or attempts to cover up safety concerns are completely unacceptable," Reichlin-Melnick said. "My colleagues and I will work swiftly to get to the bottom of this issue."

The Times Union report stated that Tappan Zee Constructors, part of a four-company consortium that built the bridge, attempted to hide dozens of broken bolts from state authorities.

—Martin Wilbur

## Holocaust & Human Rights Center to Offer Annual High School Program

The Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center (HHREC) of White Plains will offer its annual High School Institute online this Thursday Mar. 18.

This event provides area students and teachers an opportunity to promote awareness of human rights issues and empowers them to take action in their schools and communities.

This year's event will feature Derek Black as keynote speaker. Black is a former white supremacist who has publicly renounced white nationalism and chronicled his personal journey away from his family's beliefs. He is the son of Don Black, the founder of the Stormfront online community and godson of former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke. His speech will focus on human rights abuses and injustices, and the importance of youthful leadership in confronting prejudice and discrimination.

"We are pleased to continue offering this program to area schools this

year," said Julie Scallero, HHREC co-director of education. "Our keynote speaker Derek Black will be delivering a very powerful message that we believe will resonate strongly with students today who are increasingly aware of white nationalism and guide them to become more active about human rights issues."

The HHREC Student Institute was developed to further promote student awareness of human rights issues on both the local and global levels, and to empower students to be upstanders by creating and implementing action plans in their schools and communities. HHREC has organized and offered this event to Westchester County area students and teachers since 2002. Past events have attracted more than 700 students and educators from 50 high schools to Iona College in New Rochelle.

For more information about the program, visit [HHRECNY.org](http://HHRECNY.org) or contact Julie Scallero at [jscallero@hhrecny.org](mailto:jscallero@hhrecny.org).

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# Bedford Schools to Return to Full Live Instruction on April 12

By Martin Wilbur

Bedford School District students in all grades will return to in-person learning five days a week on Monday Apr. 12 after a strong majority of parents supported the move in a recent survey.

The decision, released last week, will have its largest impact on students in grades 3-12, since most children in grades K-2 have had full-time in-school instruction since September. Most students starting in third grade have been on a hybrid schedule this year that has alternated between two and three days of remote learning and coming to school each week depending on the cohort.

"We're committed to doing it and wanting to do it right," said Amy Fishkin, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. "So, we're rolling up our sleeves to do the hard work because it's the right thing to do for kids."

Fishkin and Dr. Edward Escobar, Bedford's director of pupil personnel services, presented a detailed full-time re-entry plan to the Board of Education last Wednesday. The plan requires up to six feet of space between desks, or barriers between students if that distance cannot be achieved, and mask wearing for everyone at all times except when eating. Daily health screening will continue and an emphasis on hygiene will also be emphasized.

A survey of parents with children in grades 3-12 this winter found that about 75 percent of the 2,234 respondents favored a return to full-time in-school instruction. Superintendent

of Schools Dr. Joel Adelberg said that the responses closely mirrored the proportion of students currently in the hybrid model and those that are fully remote.

Families must decide by this Friday whether they will commit to five-day-a-week in-class instruction for their children or to continue or switch to a full remote schedule for the remainder of the school year, Adelberg said.

He said students have not seen each other in person the entire school year.

"That's why we're doing this, to get all kids together so they're in one mode of learning, back in a classroom pre-COVID, but with some precautions and some necessary things we can do to mitigate any risk," Adelberg said.

Each student in the hybrid model will have two days of in-person learning the week of Apr. 5, followed by an asynchronous learning day for all 3-12 students on Apr. 9.

For some students in grades 3-5, there may be teacher changes depending on the split of children that are live and remote. Livestreaming of classes will continue at the middle school and high school. Outdoor spaces will be used as much as possible for instruction and lunch.

There will not be an opportunity for families to change their decision, although if quarantining is still necessary, a student will switch to remote learning for that period of time without penalty, Fishkin noted.

"We want kids to be in school, so we want you to really think carefully with your parents, your family to make the right choice for you," Fishkin said. "The goal is not to have families

waver and change their mind and change their commitment at some point."

To accommodate a return of all students, each school has had ventilation upgrades with the installation of MERV-13 filters and air purification systems, which mixes fresh and recirculated air. Classroom windows will be open as much as possible and daily cleaning and disinfection will continue.

Capacity on school buses will be capped at 50 to 60 percent. School officials are encouraging parents who would like to drive their children or have them walk, if possible. Some adjustments to arrival and dismissal schedules may be needed to limit congestion. About 66 percent of survey respondents requested district transportation.

School officials stressed that the district must receive cooperation from the entire community for the plan to work. That means students must not only follow the guidelines while in school but families need to be responsible in their own time.

"This is incredibly exciting to open up the doors to more students, but I ask all of us to not take it as an invitation to let our guard down but to let our students thrive in the schools by doing what we've been doing," said board member Michael Bauscher.

In many ways, the full reopening will be like the first day of school again, Adelberg said.

"(This) is like the new day after Labor Day," he said.

## Environmental Film Series, Panel Discussion Set for March 25

Films on Purpose ([www.filmsonpurpose.org](http://www.filmsonpurpose.org)) is partnering with the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County ([www.fcwc.org](http://www.fcwc.org)) and PCTV to show three documentaries: "Queen of the Sun," "SEED: The Untold Story" and "Modified."

These films are streaming now, so please watch any or all three films for free in advance of the panel discussion, scheduled for Thursday, Mar. 25 at 7:30 p.m. on Zoom.

The panel will include Joan Gussow, a noted food policy expert, and other local food, farm, soil and bee experts.

Information on seeing the films and

registration for the discussion can be found at <https://filmsonpurpose.org/environmental-film-series-seed-modified-and-queen-of-the-sun/>

While the films are free to view, the panel discussion is a fundraiser for our partners in this series and donations are appreciated, though not required.

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## Guest Column

### Westchester Takes the Offensive Against COVID-19

By Michael Gold

Westchester's battle against COVID-19 has finally been joined.

A line about 600 feet long, socially distanced, in the Westchester Medical Center's Taylor Pavilion in Valhalla, tells a tale of progress against this microscopic apocalypse.

It took about a dozen attempts looking online to get this appointment for my first shot. A two-year-old diagnosis of coronary artery disease allowed me to sign up.

Various pharmacies and the Westchester County Center repeatedly pounded out the same message on their websites: no appointment available. Some of the websites were confusing to navigate, too. I did manage to get on a waiting list for a pharmacy in Croton-on-Hudson. Syracuse and other upstate towns have appointments available, but that's a long haul.

Then I hit the vaccine lottery, by scoring an appointment with the Westchester Medical Center (WMC) in Valhalla. The big day for me was Mar. 5.

I expected to sit in a nice chair arranged on calm, blue carpeting and wait to be called into an office for the shot.

Boy, was I wrong.

When I arrived at the site, the line trailed down the long corridor, then made a right angle into another hallway. People stood patiently, communing with their cell phones, talking about real estate and staring into space. A few sat on the floor, tiled in 50 shades of beige. I read a book.

The assembled men and women were dressed in sweatshirts, winter coats, sneakers, industrial work boots and a few sport jackets and ties. The guy in front of me wore a purple fleece cap, which gave me something interesting to look at when I got tired of reading.

A number of people pumped their legs to work the stiffness out of their joints.

A woman on crutches walked by, and said, "Oh, come on," when she tried to find the end of the line. The WMC staff were on the case quickly. They found a special chair on wheels for her to sit in.

A security guard re-formed the line on occasion, to get everyone standing up on both sides of the corridors of the building, to make sure no one had to stand in the subfreezing, winter wind, which pushes you around, seemingly just for fun.

WMC staff walked by and handed out clip boards. The New York State Department of Health required us to answer questions about our health and insurance.

I read that the vaccine was being given under an Emergency Use Authorization, which states, "known and potential benefits (of the vaccine) outweigh the known and potential risks."

After about two hours, I was able to walk into a carpeted room with several booths, curtained on three sides – the promised land.

Gentle music was playing on the public address system and video screens displayed mountains, forests, vast fields of green meadows and purple and orange flowers, waterfalls and flowing streams filled with

sunlight.

I was called first to a registration table. Two women asked questions about my medical history and typed my information into a computer.

I was called to a booth, where a nurse talked with me briefly about my medical history questionnaire, then pushed the needle into my arm. After all that build-up, it was very quick.

I was then directed to a waiting room. The WMC staff wants you to wait 15 minutes before leaving to make sure you don't experience any immediate side effects from the shot, so you can drive home safely.

The waiting room had a video screen of the Eiffel Tower, lit up and glittering in the Parisian night. Soft jazz – a saxophone and piano – played on the speakers in the room.

It all added up to a quiet celebration in my mind, of us getting the vaccine.

Better yet was a woman dancing in her winter coat in the corridor as I walked into the building to get on line.

It was a perfect moment. We need that dance. It's a dance of progress, the first steps in taking the initiative in fighting a virus that has taken far too many of us and bedeviled the world for more than a year.

Somebody, call Snoopy and the Peanuts gang to do a victory dance and put it on YouTube. That's a show I'd be happy to watch over and over.

*Pleasantville resident Michael Gold has published op-ed articles in the New York Daily News, the Albany Times-Union and other newspapers.*

## Letters to the Editor

### Candidate's Mailer Was Misleading and Contained Multiple Falsehoods

I refer to a recent mailer by Sean Murray, who is running for a trustee's seat in this week's Village of Buchanan election. It is full of lies, mistruths and misleading statements.

Mr. Murray falsely claims the present board lost \$150,000 on "some false intervention" that never happened. Yes, the board did borrow money to repair a pumping station to keep the system viable and safe.

Mr. Murray lied about an unofficial policy prohibiting village residents from becoming permanent village employees. The board picks the most qualified applicants available.

Yes, there was a small utility tax to gain

revenue, as the rest of the communities in Westchester do. Yes, we created a sewer usage fee, which was offset by reduced tax charges. The board did NOT authorize \$640,000 for an energy performance contract. The board did not fail to prosecute code violations. Our current judge failed to prosecute code offenders.

Now let's turn to Mr. Murray. This is someone who can change allegiances to suit his own endeavors. He left the Democratic Committee in Buchanan having done little as chairman. Instead, he changed allegiances. Mr. Murray is an employee of Entergy/Holtec. When it comes time to negotiate

property taxes, fees and a PILOT, who will he give allegiance to, the village or his employer who pays his wages and benefits?

On the other hand, this board spent hundreds of hours working and passing legislation that will give Buchanan the right to tax the spent fuel rods.

It should be noted that Mr. Murray has failed to state any accomplishments he had in six years on the Board, including four years as mayor.

**Richard Funchion**  
Deputy Mayor  
Buchanan

### People of Color Should Consider Police Work to Achieve Greater Diversity

Westchester County recently announced that it has scheduled the Civil Service Police exam for May 15 and 16. This will be the first exam for police officers in Westchester County municipalities in five years. The deadline to register for the test is Mar. 29. Details about registration can be found on the county website at www.westchestergov.com/hr.

One of the central findings in the Police Reform and Reinvention process has been the need for more diversity in our police departments. To achieve this goal,

it is essential that people of color who are underrepresented in the ranks of our first responders be encouraged to consider a career in law enforcement.

The public outcry following the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others in 2020 has highlighted the long history of abuse that minority communities have suffered because of bias in law enforcement. If society is serious about moving beyond the legacy of police harassment and abuse that African Americans have endured, the nature of

policing must change. Bringing more people of color into law enforcement will be an important part of this change.

I urge parents, teachers, school counselors and civic leaders to reach out to young people who might be willing to consider a career in law enforcement and encourage them to register for the Westchester County Police Exam before Mar. 29.

**Aaron Moore**  
President, Ossining NAACP Branch



# Chappaqua's \$130.4M School Budget Proposed to Go to Tax Cap

By Martin Wilbur

For the first time since New York State instituted the tax cap 10 years ago, the Chappaqua School District has proposed a budget that would levy the maximum allowable taxes to balance next year's spending plan.

The \$130,460,188 budget proposed for 2021-22 would increase the levy by \$2,270,845, or 2.03 percent, to \$113,934,076, said Assistant Superintendent for Business John Chow. For the upcoming school year, the regional Consumer Price Index (CPI) is 1.23 percent, but the district is allowed a higher percentage because of assessment growth, he said.

"We were one of the few districts that have never gone to the tax cap," said Board of Education President Victoria Tipp. "I think a majority of the districts go right to the tax cap every year."

Chow said that typically about 60 percent of districts in Westchester and Putnam counties reach their tax cap ceiling, sometimes because officials do not want to leave money on the table. However, it has never been Chappaqua's practice to request unnecessary funds from taxpayers.

For the 2020-21 school year, the district

was allowed 3 percent yet held its tax levy increase to 1.19 percent.

"We feel like we should only ask for the money that we need," Chow said. "But this year we do need that amount."

Board member Jane Shepardson said the district does not want to relinquish its programs and personnel it has worked hard to build despite a more challenging environment. It can avoid doing that by asking for the full amount while still adhering to the cap.

"It's not typical for us to go up to the tax cap but right now there's a reason for having it in terms of maintaining what we have and anticipating what we're going to need," Shepardson said.

Spending is proposed to increase by \$2,223,020 or 1.73 percent over the current year.

Recommended personnel additions on the instruction side are the director of equity, inclusion and wellness, who was hired during the current year, to address issues of diversity, among other tasks, and an associate director of instructional technology and communications, a position that will be needed as a result of a heavier reliance on technology.

Non-instructional positions that may be added for next year are a full-time office assistant for special education and a .57

payroll assistant, to make that job full-time.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Christine Ackerman said class sizes will be maintained within the contract thresholds for the various grades.

The board must also consider a capital project referendum for a Horace Greeley High School gym boiler for \$650,000. A steam pipe break between the main building has forced the need for a boiler system for the gym rather than replacing the pipe, Ackerman said.

Despite the expense, the referendum will not impact taxes because it would represent a transfer of money to capital, which requires voter approval.

The Board of Education and administration will be discussing the curriculum, technology, special education and athletic budgets at this Wednesday night's meeting and will review the operations and maintenance, non-instructional budget, revenues, tentative tax rate and contingencies at the Mar. 24 meeting.

Budget adoption is scheduled for Apr. 14 and the budget vote and school board elections will take place on May 18.

## Small Increase in Byram Hills

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jen Lamia has proposed a \$95.2 million budget for

2021-22, a 0.75 percent spending increase, or \$709,009, over the current year.

The projected increase comes after district spending was flat from 2019-20 to this year.

Lamia said the extra expenses needed to reopen schools full-time for students in grades K-6 during a pandemic put the district under some pressure.

"We have had a year like no other," she said. "During this past year we have had to use funds we did not anticipate using so that we could create socially distanced classrooms for kindergarten through sixth grade, so we could present the necessary programs and technology with the support of the Board of Education."

The district's goal continues to be to present at least as robust a program for today's kindergartners throughout their school career as graduating high school seniors have had.

The lone proposed staffing increase is an additional second grade teacher to handle this year's large first-grade enrollment of eight sections.

Information on the tax cap and tax rates will be discussed during an upcoming meeting. This Tuesday, Mar. 16 and next Tuesday, Mar. 23, the board will resume deliberations on the proposed budget. Adoption is scheduled for Apr. 20.

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The illustration above is an artist's depiction of the Indian Point property after the completion of major decommissioning work.

Indian Point Energy Center





# Thornwood Woman Gives Birth in Car on Way to Hospital

By Serena Norr

Giving birth typically happens in a hospital, but for Thornwood resident Erin Andrews and her boyfriend K.C. Brown, that experience happened just off of Route 117 as the couple was rushing to Northern Westchester Hospital.

On Jan. 20, an otherwise typical day quickly changed at about 9 p.m. Andrews started to feel cramps and increasingly rapid and stronger contractions. At about 12:25 a.m. her water broke, and by 12:45 a.m. they were on their way to the hospital.

However, soon after passing Roaring Brook Road, Andrews said “the feeling intensified” – and minutes later her baby daughter, who they would name Kendra Taylor, was born at 12:52 a.m. Brown had turned off of Route 117 onto Taylor Road to await help.

“The craziest part was how quickly everything happened,” she said. “The seven-minute car ride when we left our house, to when she was born, felt like seconds. But the eight minutes on the call with 911, waiting for the EMTs to arrive, while trying to keep our newborn safe and alive, felt like hours.”

As they waited for the EMTs, they had turned off the car engine and battled the cold with their new baby.

“Sadly, we weren’t thinking,” Andrews said. “Trying to get her to breathe we didn’t even think of how cold it was for her.”



Erin Andrews and her boyfriend K.C. Brown with their daughter, Kendra. The baby was born in January in their car off of Route 117 as they were rushing to Northern Westchester Hospital.

In those tense moments, Andrews recalled that Kendra appeared to look gray and wasn’t making any sounds. They also had to figure out how to cut the umbilical cord. The 911 dispatchers gave them directions on how to tie it off with something sharp.

“We had no idea what to do,” said Andrews who grew up in Thornwood and

works as a product designer for a local business. “When she came out, she was gray, not making any noise, not crying or really moving around. We did not know if she was okay, and if we kept driving, if she would make it. K.C. made a quick decision to pull over and clear her airway. I was not able to let go (from hovering) to help, the contractions were still coming and my legs

were weak and shaky.” Brown never had to cut the cord, as a police officer and the EMTs arrived moments later. Mother and baby made their way to Northern Westchester Hospital safely in an ambulance where Erin delivered the afterbirth and Kendra was taken to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and placed in an incubator for about five hours because her body temperature was low. She weighed in at six pounds. Now, nearly two months old, Kendra Taylor (her middle name is after the road her parents pulled onto) and her mom are doing well and will be able to share an incredible story for years to come.

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## Greenburgh Receives Grant to Address Vaccine Hesitancy

After just over two months in action, the COVID Angels initiative of Greenburgh announced this week that its 260-plus volunteers had surpassed an important milestone of making 5,000 calls and booking over 1,000 vaccine appointments for the town's most vulnerable citizens.

The volunteers also helped make the first vaccine clinic at the Theodore D. Young Community Center a success by distributing 750 doses to seniors, return for their second dose on Mar. 28.

With the first phase of guiding citizens in getting appointments slowing down as vaccines become more available and eligibility opens further, Greenburgh is beginning to plan a grassroots marketing initiative to conquer any vaccine hesitancy that might occur with citizens fearful or less informed on the benefits of getting vaccinated.

The town announced grant funding of \$6,000 has just been awarded from the UJA-Federation of NY's Vaccine Education & Accessibility program to further these efforts. Town officials hope to supplement with further grant funding from other sources.

The innovative idea to overcome vaccine hesitancy in Greenburgh and beyond involves creating a targeted marketing program with two other important key goals – to drive consumers

to struggling small businesses and support local families by giving their teenage children opportunities for substantial paid work.

The goal is to encourage small businesses to offer discounts or incentives to customers who show they've been "vaxed." The businesses will then be promoted in informational flyers on how and why to get the vaccine (and how the Angels can help), which the town intends to distribute widely from printed flyers in shop windows to social media.

Local teens will be supported by volunteers with professional marketing expertise who are already at work creating a character based on Marc the Pharmacist, a real neighborhood pharmacist of Marinelli's Village Pharmacy in Elmsford.

Teens who were pulled from those who have taken the Crossroads work-readiness summer program last year will receive valuable work experience, help businesses, and truly have a hand in saving lives.

More volunteers are welcome to support this effort in various capacities based on their skills and interests. If interested, reach out to kmadsen@greenburghny.com and copy pfeiner@greenburghny.com to sign up.

## Beloved Therapy Dog at White Plains Funeral Home Passes Away

Lulu, a therapy and comfort dog for the families of Ballard-Durand Funeral & Cremation Services, unexpectedly passed away on Mar. 10.

In 2015, Lulu the golden doodle, became Westchester's first therapy dog to serve families in a funeral home. Like those used in hospitals and nursing homes, Lulu acted as a source of comfort and love in times of emotional distress.

Families who requested her presence could soothe their grief by stroking her soft fur or merely enjoying her supportive companionship.

"Lulu created such a strong bond with our families that some would refuse to have the funeral if she wasn't there," said Matthew Fiorillo, president and owner of Ballard-Durand Funeral & Cremation Services. "That's how impactful her presence was for people who were going through a difficult time."

A fixture at both funeral home locations, Lulu was well-known and well-loved by everyone in the Westchester community. Her sweet, outgoing nature touched the lives of all she came into contact with and contributed a gentle presence to the funeral home.

Though her passing was unexpected, Lulu leaves behind a lasting legacy of caring for and supporting others during their time of grief.

"Lulu was a trailblazer for therapy dogs



Lulu, the first therapy dog to serve in a funeral home in Westchester, with Ballard-Durand Funeral & Cremation Services owner Matthew Fiorillo.

in the funeral profession," Fiorillo said. "We think her example will influence other funeral homes to bring on comfort animals, and she certainly set the standard for all future therapy dogs at Ballard-Durand."

Lulu's presence will be greatly missed by both Ballard-Durand staff and the Westchester community, but the memory of her dedicated life of service will continue to live on.

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# Seven Features Homebuyers Are Looking for the Most in 2021

The housing market is starting to rebound amid the pandemic, and realtors couldn't be more delighted.

Our would-be sellers might best be thinking about updating areas of their homes in need of it. With inventory low and demand steadily increasing, home buyers are still willing to spend on homes with quality upgrades and good neighborhoods.

People have been sheltering in place for almost a year and many are either ready for upgrades or complete changes in their homes, whether they plan to stay or to sell.

Sellers should know that most remodeling efforts only increase home values by 50 to 80 percent of the average project's costs, according to Remodeling magazine's 2020 Cost vs. Value report. But still, any upgrade increases a home's desirability when it comes time to sell.

To get the most bang for the buck, homeowners can focus on features that most buyers really want. Here they are in descending order.

## Laundry Room

A separate laundry room tops the National Association of Home Builders' (NAHB) list of most-wanted home features by buyers. If a home doesn't have an existing laundry room, the basement is usually the easiest (and cheapest) place to add it. The utility lines

are already there, and in many cases the basement is unfinished, so nothing has to be demolished first.

However, homeowners usually prefer a laundry room or laundry closet (which fits just a washer and dryer) closer to the bedroom. The cost of a large-scale full laundry room, complete with a sink and storage cabinets, could easily surpass \$15,000.

## Energy Efficiencies

Would-be buyers looking to limit utility bills will be drawn to properties with Energy Star-qualified windows and appliances. Energy-efficient windows can trim heating and cooling costs by 12 percent, while individual appliances, such as an Energy Star-certified washing machine (\$598 to \$1,799 at Home Depot), can save homeowners at least \$45 a year on their utility bills. Replacing an existing clothes dryer with an energy-efficient version could save as much as \$245 over the appliance's lifetime.

Energy Star-qualified windows have an invisible glass coating, vacuum-sealed spaces filled with inert gas between panes, sturdier weather stripping than regular windows and improved framing materials – all of which reduce heat gain and loss in the home.

## Outdoor Living Areas

Areas such as a patio offer more living



space without the cost of a large-scale home addition.

## Garage Storage Space

Carving out some space in the garage to help keep clutter out of the main level can also help increase a home's value. Unlike an attic or a backyard shed, the garage is accessible – generally, just a few steps away from the rest of the house – making it easier to transport items such as tools, patio chairs or boxes to and from other parts of the house.

## Outdoor Lighting

Illuminating a well-manicured lawn with exterior lighting can help grab potential buyers' attention before they even set foot in the front door. Options include spotlights, walkway lights and pendant lights.

## Walk-In Pantry

A walk-in pantry is the most-coveted kitchen feature among buyers. Those that shop in bulk at warehouse clubs or big-box

retailers to avoid having to make frequent trips and face in-store crowds will need extra space in the kitchen area to store their goods.

## Hardwood Floors

Hardwood flooring offers a cleaner look, is easier to maintain and is more durable than carpet, which needs to be replaced every 8 to 10 years. Hardwood can be refinished periodically and lasts a lifetime.

If you're ready to upgrade, the above checklist should offer a useful guide for you to follow.

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# Jacob Burns Film Center Scheduled to Reopen By End of April

By Martin Wilbur

Local movie buffs can rejoice as the Jacob Burns Film Center announced last week that it is scheduled to reopen on Friday, Apr. 30.

Founding Director of Film Programming Brian Ackerman said it's "thrilling" to be able to set a date for the return of screenings at the popular downtown Pleasantville venue. The announcement came several days shy of the anniversary of last year's mid-March shutdown.

"We're going to have people to see and we're going to have movies to see," Ackerman said. "It's a sense of connection that people so desperately need and it's such a part of living."

Plans are being made to reopen the film center using the three downstairs theaters with no more than 25 percent capacity and a maximum of 50 people in each auditorium, the current allowable limit, he said. As a result, the largest theater with 250 seats will be less than 25 percent full.

The two upstairs screens will reopen at a later date, he said.

Although movie theaters in the state outside of New York City were permitted to open in late October if the county's COVID-19 positivity rate was under 2 percent, the Burns decided to stay shut. Ackerman said as the necessary steps were being taken to reopen, the rate soon began rising to levels that would have required another closure.

While disappointing to wait six months, Ackerman said looking back he didn't think it would have been very productive to operate for a few weeks before shutting down again.



The Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville will be back in operation for in-person movies starting Apr. 30 with limited capacity.

Since last year, the film center has been offering movies online, which has helped keep it in the public's consciousness.

"We're into the spring, it's getting brighter, it's getting warmer, it's not getting colder," he said. "Certainly, everything is sort of leaning in a way which is kind of exciting and hopeful. Certainly, it's more than exciting, it's thrilling."

The film center is following a long list of health and safety measures to keep staff and patrons safe. It has already installed bipolar ionization air purification units for all air-conditioning systems at the theater and Media Arts Lab. The units help kill airborne particulates and surface mold, including bacteria and viruses similar to COVID-19.

Plexiglass guards and shields have been installed at points of high contact, including the box office, customer service desk and concessions counter. There will also be an outdoor box office window. Online ticket purchases will also be encouraged.

The theater has applied markings on the floor for customers to maintain proper social distancing and will have public hand sanitizers throughout the building.

Patrons will be required to wear masks except when eating in their seats; customers will be assigned seats by staff; seats will be sanitized after each screening; and bathrooms will be regularly cleaned and sanitized.

Ackerman said it isn't known what the

movie schedule will be until closer to the opening. He's hopeful that as more people get vaccinated, movie lovers will steadily return once they feel comfortable.

"It's going to be a slow opening," Ackerman said. "Everything that we open is going to be. A portion of the population is probably going to be conservative."

Pleasantville Mayor Peter Scherer said the pending reopening of the Jacob Burns, even at a reduced capacity, will be beneficial to the village's businesses and residents. Not only will it bring more people to the downtown, it will also signify a steady return to a more normal life.

"The Burns is a tremendously important piece of our local economy," Scherer said. "It's a tremendously important piece of our arts and culture world and to have it dark for over a year, obviously, is an enormous hit on them. But it's been an enormous hit on our residents and also our economy."

Ackerman said he looks forward to re-engaging with the community and rekindling the relationship with the businesses and the village.

He also thanked supporters for their donations to help the film center get through the past year.

"We've been able to survive because we've received unbelievable support from our community and that's been unbelievably heartening," Ackerman said. "It's been amazing to see that kind of wind at our backs, the way the community has stepped up and said 'We want to make sure you guys survived.'"



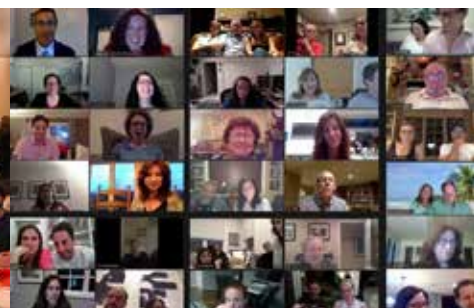
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# The Show Must Go On – Even Virtually – for Pleasantville High School Musical



Despite the pandemic, Pleasantville High School will present its annual musical, “A Grand Night for Singing,” this weekend virtually.

By Martin Wilbur

For decades one of the highlights on the Pleasantville High School calendar has been its annual March musical.

In fact, it’s been a longtime community happening, with people throughout the village supporting the production even if they don’t have a child or grandchild performing, and alumni often returning to take in the experience.

Not even a once-in-a-century pandemic could prevent the show from going on.

This year, under the leadership of the school’s new director Nadia Rizzo and Musical Director Jon Vercesi, the students are virtually presenting “A Grand Night for Singing,” a revue of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s material that focuses in on some of the famous songwriting duo’s lesser-known works.

The pre-recorded production will be shown virtually this Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

“Pleasantville has this amazing community, people who made the arts in education for our students, and to be joining the team this year, of all years, I also have that passion,” said Rizzo who came to the school this year after spending the past 12 years at Albertus Magnus High School in Rockland County. “I share that passion with the community of people in the school and out of the school. It just seemed like a no-brainer that this was going to happen.”

In order to make it happen, there needed to be meticulous planning and creativity involved so students could audition for roles starting in November, rehearse their parts and film this year’s musical.

Rizzo said at no point did she get to see and hear the 52-member cast at the same time during rehearsals. Everything from singing to choreography was done from the students’ rooms. The goal was to only bring in a limited number of students to the school’s auditorium when it was necessary, she said.

“It’s always very detailed and takes a long time but it really had to be planned to the finest detail for these rehearsals,” Rizzo

said. “I didn’t want to have the students sitting around.”

When it was time to film, there was a five-member band in the pit. The show needed a limited set and few props, the most significant being a tree, which changes colors to mark the changing of the seasons as the show progresses, Rizzo said.

Not only were the rehearsals a challenge, but Rizzo needed to have the right masks, face shields and gloves available for the performers. Parental permission was also required to have each student participate.

“That’s not something I ever had to think about as a director before,” Rizzo said. “I’ve been involved with theater and teaching for over 20 years, but I never had to make a phone call to a parent (and ask) is your student allowed to dance. That’s the thing, everybody has such different comfort levels and they vary.”

Maria Peters, a parent and a member of Pleasantville Friends of the Performing Arts, said Rizzo has been fun to work with for both students and the community.

Last year, with the musical scheduled for the first two weekends of March, the school was able to get in all performances, finishing the day before the lockdown went into effect, Peters said. This year, despite the different type of presentation, Rizzo has made the experience fun and memorable, she said.

“We’re so lucky and the kids are so grateful to have been able to have this opportunity,” Peters said. “They need this, they need to have this outlet and it’s the most normalcy I think that they’ve had in the past year and we’re just so thrilled that she’s here.”

Rizzo said there were Years from now, the students will know that they were part of something unique despite it being

“I don’t know if they realize the scope of what we’re doing and they can’t realize it until they’re a little bit removed from the experience,” Rizzo said. “But this will go down for me, with this cast, I will always remember these events that are unlike any other in my career.

To buy tickets and for information on how to view “A Grand Night for Singing” this weekend, visit <https://www.phsfopa.org>.

## A Spiritual View

By Rabbi Joshua Strom

In the weekly reading of Torah, this past week marked the conclusion of the biblical book of Exodus. It is interesting to note that its focus, almost entirely, is on the instructions for and the building of the Tabernacle, the earthly dwelling place for God to reside among the people.

The text speaks of gifts and the Hebrew is similar, but points to two different categories: gifts for God, those the people are to bring to create the majesty of the Tabernacle; as well as the gifts of God, the skills, talents, passions, interests and loves that are divinely-bestowed blessings.

As the snow continues to melt, as the weather warms up, as vaccinations are more plentiful and available and as herd immunity is on the horizon, I pray that we can be thankful and appreciative of the



gifts within us with which we’ve been endowed and blessed, and that we may bring those gifts, and others, out to our friends, our community, to make our nation and world a better place for all of us.

*Joshua Strom is the rabbi at Congregation B’Nai Yisrael in Armonk and is part of the Armonk Faith Alliance. The alliance also comprises Hillside Church, St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, St. Patrick’s RC Church and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.*

## THERE’S A WORD FOR IT

A vocabulary-building quiz By Edward Goralski

**St. Patrick’s Day.** March 17 is St. Patrick’s Day, which observes the death of the patron saint of Ireland. To mark the event, the words in the quiz this week come from the list “English Words Derived from Gaelic” found on the [vocabulary.com](http://vocabulary.com) site. Let’s hope you don’t need too much luck of the Irish to do well on this quiz.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>1. bog (n.)</b><br>A) a source of fear<br>B) wet spongy ground<br>C) a swirling upheaval | <b>2. glen (n.)</b><br>A) a narrow secluded valley<br>B) an open space<br>C) a flash of light                 | <b>3. bob (n.)</b><br>A) a small donation<br>B) a dark bread<br>C) a hair style            |
| <b>4. spunky (adj.)</b><br>A) an ability to recover<br>B) nimble<br>C) showing courage      | <b>5. curmudgeon (n.)</b><br>A) an irascible person<br>B) a small hammer<br>C) a ghostly figure               | <b>6. spree (n.)</b><br>a jet of water vapor<br>B) a brief indulgence<br>C) a sudden twist |
| <b>7. glom (v.)</b><br>A) to give glory to<br>B) become overcast<br>C) take hold of         | <b>8. inglenook (n.)</b><br>A) a corner by a fireplace<br>B) a refreshing beverage<br>C) cleverness of design |  |

- ANSWERS:**
- |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| 1. B. Wet spongy ground of decomposing vegetation. (From the Gaelic adjective bog, meaning "soft, moist.") | 2. A. A narrow secluded valley (in the mountains). (From Gaelic gleann, "mountain valley") | 3. C. A hair style for women and children. (From Gaelic babag, "cluster") | 4. C. Showing courage (From Gaelic spong, voraciously, "devour") | 5. A. An irascible, cantankerous person full of "tinder, pith, sponge") | 6. B. A brief indulgence of your impulses (Ultimately from Gaelic spreth, "cattle, wealth, that is the booty that would be plundered by someone on a spree") | 7. C. To latch or seize upon; take hold of (From Gaelic glam, "handle awkwardly, grab voraciously, devour") | 8. A. A corner by a fireplace (The inglenook is from a Gaelic word for "fire," aineal) |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|



# State Senate Passes One-House Budget Resolution for 2022

Members of the state Senate passed the one-house budget resolution for FY2022 on Monday, which will deliver emergency aid to help New York recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, fund essential services and provide more financial support for working and middle-class families.

The action adds \$15 billion in new investments that will empower New Yorkers hardest hit by the pandemic while still delivering another year of middle-class tax relief.

"The Senate's one-house budget resolution proposes a massive investment in the people of New York," said state Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro). "Having reckoned with serious challenges this past year, it is now time to take what we have learned and build a foundation for a healthier economic future, with shared opportunities and prosperity for all of our residents."

The resolution increases total school aid by \$5.7 billion; provides billions in residential and commercial rental and foreclosure assistance; restores critical funding to the health care system; jumpstarts the state economy with investments in transportation and small businesses; protects against AIM funding cuts to struggling municipalities; and advances the \$3 billion Clean Water, Green Jobs, Green New York Environmental Bond Act.

A number of initiatives in the one-house resolution stem from legislation introduced by Harckham. This includes an additional \$500 million in Small Business Assistance Grants,

which will help struggling small businesses get back up and running as New York reopens. Also, the authorization of a special incentive for current government employees to take an early retirement in certain cases at local option, which Harckham has been pushing for, is part of the Senate proposal.

State Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers), chair of the Senate Education Committee, said the one-house budget resolution puts forth "a transformational increase in education funding."

It includes a three-year phase-in of full Foundation Aid owed to school districts, ensuring all school districts receive no less than 60 percent of their statutory Foundation Aid next year; \$3.5 billion more school aid than the executive proposal, supplementing rather than supplanting the federal relief aid; and \$500 million to fully fund four-year-old full-day pre-kindergarten statewide.

"Our proposal underscores our commitment to education equity for all students across the state, particularly for those most impacted by the pandemic, including students with disabilities and those disconnected from their classrooms due to the digital divide," Mayer said.

The Senate proposal also includes nearly \$20 million in funding restorations to critical programs operated out of the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) to help New Yorkers struggling with addiction, which Harckham, chair of the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, advocated for.

Harckham noted that more than 80 percent



State Sen. Peter Harckham supported the one-house budget resolution on Monday.

of the substance use prevention, treatment and recovery program providers recently surveyed said that staff layoffs and service cuts were inevitable because of state funding cuts to their programs that began last summer.

"We need to be strengthening services and increasing resources during New York's opioid crisis in order to save lives," he said.

Another bill sponsored by Harckham included in the one-house proposal will require state and local correctional facilities to establish a medication assisted treatment

program for individuals with a substance use disorder.

The Senate's one-house proposal increases the top state personal income tax rates on families making over \$2 million annually, along with the corporate franchise tax.

A new 1 percent surcharge on capital gains income for the state's wealthiest taxpayers will be put in place, along with a two-percentage increase of the estate tax rate. An additional \$247 million will be raised through legalization of mobile sports wagering.



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# Nonprofit Continues to Provide Work Opportunities for the Disabled

By Sherrie Dulworth

When Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the New York State on PAUSE Executive Order last March responding to the rapidly escalating COVID-19 cases, CAREERS Support Solutions was among the entities that quickly pivoted to adapt to the stay-at-home requirement.

Like many educational organizations, the Valhalla-based nonprofit had traditionally used an in-person curriculum, but they rapidly implemented remote learning capabilities for 25 students with special learning needs who were training to enter the workplace.

Jennifer Retacco, CAREERS' program coordinator and high school transition coordinator, said that their instructors, and their students with learning, developmental, psychiatric and/or physical disabilities, were catapulted into an unfamiliar virtual classroom. For the students, it meant all day on the computer, first for their high school classes, followed by employment skills training.

"We had to add how to safely work during the pandemic to our workforce readiness curriculum," Retacco said.

That included teaching students about wearing masks, proper handwashing and safe physical distancing in anticipation of their

transition to paid internships among CAREERS' Westchester- and Putnam-based employer partners.

S&H Business Apparel and Footwear in White Plains is one such partner. Working at S&H's 40,000-square-foot warehouse and retail store, CAREERS interns learn to properly stock shelves, choose inventory, pack garments and serve as dressing room attendants.

Founded in 1969, the family-owned S&H provides uniforms and other attire for frontline workers. Deemed an essential business, it remained open throughout the health crisis.

Kevin Ross, its owner and vice president, became an advocate of supporting vocational opportunities for people with disabilities almost 20 years ago when he hired Lyle Davidson. Davidson has been a loyal and enthusiastic S&H employee ever since.

Ross has also been the CAREERS board president for the past two years.

"Our entire culture has benefited through taking care of each other," he said of hiring employees with disabilities.

Another hurdle during the early days of the pandemic was the shutdown of public transportation, which many of the workers relied



SHERRIE DULWORTH PHOTOS

Costas "Gus" Pourakis, owner of George's Place in Carmel, has employed workers with special learning needs supplied by CAREERS Support Solutions.

upon. They were eager not to miss work, and CAREERS coordinated with employer partners, co-workers and families to help them get there, Retacco noted.

"These individuals are the most dependable employees you can get," she said. "When they have an opportunity to work, they show up."

Retacco said many people who are disabled are enthusiastic for the opportunity to work. According to



Kevin Ross, left, and longtime employee Lyle Davidson at S&H Warehouse in White Plains. Davidson has worked at the apparel company for nearly 20 years.

the Department of Labor, the pre-pandemic unemployment rate for disabled workers was already more than double that of those without a disability. Then as businesses shuttered, the unemployment rate for disabled workers approached 19 percent last April.

Restaurants were among the hardest-hit industries from the crisis. Employers like George's Place, a CAREERS partner for about 10 years, were affected. The cozy Carmel restaurant with its view of Lake Gleneida was founded in 1978 by the late George Pourakis and is now owned and operated by his son, Costas, who goes by Gus, and daughter-in-law Karen Pourakis.

The eatery was able to stay open, but because of pandemic-restricted customer volume has not hosted CAREERS interns since last year.

At George's Place, CAREERS interns perform tasks such as sanitizing menus, refilling condiments, rolling napkins and silverware, delivering water to diners and bussing tables. They hope to re-engage with the program this spring.

"We now see an uptick in our workforce readiness classes and job placements since businesses are re-opening," said CAREERS Executive Director Tina Cornish-Lauria.

"CAREERS wouldn't exist without our dedicated employers," she added. "They have seen for themselves that with the right training and support, individuals with disabilities have an amazing work ethic and a positive impact on their bottom lines and workplace norms."

Pourakis said that he views helping the interns as part of community service that gives people an opportunity.

"My Dad always told me to treat people the way you want to be treated," he said.

For more information on CAREERS Support Solutions, visit [www.careersupportsolutions.org](http://www.careersupportsolutions.org).

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6255



# Unmet Demand for Afterschool Programs Reaches All-Time High

Parents of children enrolled in afterschool programs are happier with their participation than ever before, according to a new study. At the same time, there aren't nearly enough programs available, and students from low-income families are the most likely to lack access.

For every child in an afterschool program today, three more are waiting to get in.

Commissioned by the nonprofit Afterschool Alliance, and conducted by Edge Research, America After 3PM 2020 builds on household surveys conducted in 2004, 2009 and 2014 and offers a pre-pandemic snapshot of how youth spend their afternoons that has significant implications for the post-pandemic world.

The study finds that the families of 24.6 million children – more than ever before – are unable to access afterschool programming, with many reporting cost as a barrier. It also exposes significant inequities, with Black and Latinx children and low-income households disproportionately affected.

"Quality afterschool programs are essential to student success in school and life," said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. "If we want to emerge from this pandemic strong, we need to provide all youth access to the important enrichment opportunities and resources afterschool programs provide. We're far from doing that now."

To further understand the state of U.S. afterschool programs today, consider these core findings from the report:

- Unmet demand is soaring. Demand has grown 60 percent since 2004, from 15.3 million children waiting to get into a program in 2004 to 24.6 million children in 2020.
- Barriers to participation grow. Sixty-one percent of low-income parents report that cost is a barrier to enrolling their child in an afterschool program, up from 50 percent in 2014. Access, such as a lack of a safe way for their child to get to and from a program, is a barrier for 58 percent of respondents.
- Inequities persist. These barriers especially affect low-income families. The number of children from low-income households in afterschool fell from 4.6 million in 2014 to 2.7 million in 2020, while the number of higher-income children in afterschool fell by just under 450,000.
- Public support is strong. Eighty-seven percent of parents support public funding for afterschool programs in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth, support that crosses demographic and political divides. This may in part be due to the growing recognition of the benefits programs provide. Eighty-three percent of respondents agree programs give working parents peace of mind, 81 percent agree programs help parents keep their jobs, and 76 percent agree programs help children gain interest and skills in STEM.



For low-income families, the survey reveals that programs address additional needs, such as providing children snacks and meals and offering them skill-building workshops, as well as connecting families to valuable community resources.

To view the full report, visit [afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM](https://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM).

"It's unacceptable that the parents of nearly 25 million students are struggling to find or afford an afterschool program," Grant

said. "Every parent should have access to an affordable, quality afterschool program that will keep their child safe, supervised and learning. We need more federal, state, local, business and philanthropic support to meet the needs of students and their families after school."

*This article is reprinted by permission of statepoint.net.*

## Use of Safe Deposit Boxes is Becoming Outdated

It is common practice in New York for banks to "seal" a safe deposit box upon the death of an owner.

Surprisingly, this practice applies even in situations where there are joint owners. Many people who have joint ownership of a safe deposit box – for instance a husband and wife – mistakenly believe that the surviving owner has free access to the contents of the box after the death of the first owner. This is



By Salvatore M. Di Costanzo, Esq.

not the case in New York. Unlike joint bank accounts, there is no right of survivorship feature with safe deposit boxes.

New York banking law provides that access to a safe deposit box must be granted to an executor, administrator, trustee or guardian. This could be a cumbersome process for those who have no reason to probate or administer an estate other than to access a safe deposit box.

Making matters more complicated, the Last Will and Testament of the decedent may be in the safe deposit box. To probate or administer the decedent's

estate, the original must be presented to Surrogate's Court. In this case, one must first file a petition with the court asking for permission to inventory the contents of the safe deposit box, usually under the supervision of a bank officer. If the Last Will and Testament is found, it must be delivered to the court by the bank. Only then can the probate or administration be commenced.

Clearly, safe deposit boxes can become a hassle after the death of an owner. In fact, the use of safe deposit boxes is becoming a thing of the past. A better practice is to store your valuables at home in a safe or lock box. For those who continue to use a safe deposit box, we do not recommend keeping your Last Will and Testament there.

*Salvatore Di Costanzo is a local elder law, estate planning and special needs planning attorney. He can be reached at 914-925-1010 or by e-mail at [smd@mfd-law.com](mailto:smd@mfd-law.com). You can also visit [www.plantodayfortomorrow.com](http://www.plantodayfortomorrow.com)*

## Yorktown Gearing Up for 97th Grange Fair in September



There is nothing that compares to the feeling of walking into a real country fair. It is a sensory feast: the sights of the midway, the tastes and smells of the delicious food and all the fun and great entertainment.

In the spirit of capturing that feeling and holding on tight, the Yorktown Grange is excited to announce that the theme of the 2021 fair will be Out and About at the Fair, a celebration of the emergence from the socially isolated and uneventful existence that many have been dealing with for the past year.

As the Yorktown Grange Fair heads into its 97th year, now seems like the perfect time to approach the fair with a renewed

appreciation for the community connection and fun that it provides.

Westchester County's only true country fair will be held Sept. 10-12 at the Grange Fairgrounds in Yorktown Heights. The plan is to bring back everything that the community knows and loves about the Grange Fair – the food, the games, the rides, the animals, the crafts and, of course, the tractors!

Now is the time to get excited about getting Out and About at the Fair and enjoying time with friends, family and neighbors. Come and celebrate with us at the 2021 Grange Fair. We can't wait to spend the weekend with you.



# Plenty of Authentic Irish Taverns to Celebrate a St. Patrick's Day Meal

The leprechauns are coming!

St. Patrick's Day on Wednesday will be celebrated with all its local color. It's been a stressful year since the lockdown, which took place just prior to last St. Paddy's Day.

Throughout Westchester, towns and villages are hanging shamrocks on storefronts and homes giving the Hudson Valley its sparkling moment in the Emerald Isle. If you want to participate in the traditional foods, spirits and reveling sprinkled with a good dose of blarney, here are suggestions. Be sure to check ahead for special events, and larger groups are advised to make reservations. Takeout and delivery are also good options. Erin Go Bragh!

## Gaelic Fare at Dunne's

Dunne's Pub in White Plains is a neighborhood treasure, an authentic Irish tavern with all the traditional Gaelic accoutrements intact. Over the years, former owner Sean Dunne and current owner Declan Farrell have avoided the modernist Irish mode and remain traditional. It is a friendly, home-style place with a good kitchen to boot, dishing out generous servings of traditional Irish-style fare at prices that will leave some money in your wallet.

Farrell and his staff know how to pour that pint of Guinness while keeping the crowd in spirited conversation. Try their fabulous kitchen favorites such as corned beef and cabbage, the corned beef Reuben sandwich, beer battered fish and chips or salmon crisp (grilled salmon on sautéed spinach topped with baked mashed potatoes).

Open seven days for lunch and dinner, plus Sunday brunch. Municipal parking available. Dunne's Pub is located at 15 Shapham Place in White Plains. Info: 914-421-1451 or visit [www.dunnepub.com](http://www.dunnepub.com).



The brunch at Jack's Bar & Restaurant in White Plains.



By Morris Gut

## Reveling at Jack's

Among the new kids on the block, partners Shane Clifford and Steven Robinson have opened Jack's Bar & Restaurant on Main Street in Eastchester at the sight that previously housed Edmondo's. It has been completely remodeled, offering an enhanced Irish tavern menu on steroids.

Generous specialties coming out of Chef Brendan Donohoe's kitchen include Scotch eggs; decadent short rib mac n' cheese; smoked seafood chowder; a signature shepherd's pie calzone; and smoked chicken and sausage pizza out of their wood-fired oven.

Carnivores must check out the surf and turf, porterhouse frites and the rump of lamb. Tennessee Thursdays includes such hearty fare as pulled pork and brisket.

There is seating indoors that follows COVID-19 protocols. The staff could not have been friendlier.

Jack's Bar & Restaurant is located at 219 Main St. in Eastchester.

Open daily until 11 p.m. seven days a week. Opens at noon Tuesday through Saturday, 11:30 a.m. on Sunday and 3 p.m. on Monday. Municipal parking is free in the evening. Info: 914-652-7650 or visit [www.jackseastchester.com](http://www.jackseastchester.com).

Here are some other area hotspots to try for St. Patrick's Day.

**Tom and Jerry's Irish House, Brewster.** The house promises plenty of corned beef, cabbage, potatoes and Irish soda bread for eat-in or takeout. Some good brews, too. 987 Rte. 22. Info: 845-278-8900.

**O'Connor's Public House, Mount Kisco.** Irish classics include Galway Bay fish and chips, bangers and mash and hearty bowls of Irish beef stew. Craft brews. 222 E. Main St. Info: 914-241-0777 or visit [www.oconnorsmountkisco.com](http://www.oconnorsmountkisco.com).

**Rory Dolan's, Yonkers.** To many in Westchester's Irish community, this is the motherload. There will be feasting galore all day and evening. Try to get there off peak, if possible. On-site parking. 890 McLean Ave. Info: 914-776-2946 or visit [www.rorydolans.com](http://www.rorydolans.com).

**Hudson Grille, White Plains.** There is a contemporary vibe in this eatery, which translates into good food and drink. Big networking crowd daily. Tented outdoor seating. 165 Mamaroneck Ave. Info: 914-997-2000 or visit [www.hudsongrillenyc.com](http://www.hudsongrillenyc.com).

**Brazen Fox, White Plains.** All decked out for the Irish Fest. Serving traditional specialties all month long. 175 Mamaroneck Ave. Info: 914-358-5911 or visit [www.thebrazenfox.com](http://www.thebrazenfox.com).

**Wolf & Warrior Brewing Co., White Plains.** Brewmeister Michael Chiltern brings White Plains its first microbrewery and it's a good one. The daily brews are listed on a big colorful blackboard. There's a comforting kitchen menu, too.



Dunne's Pub in White Plains, one of a large number of Irish taverns and restaurants that will be offering delicious selections for St. Patrick's Day this Wednesday.

Chiltern promises an authentic Irish home brew to mark the occasion. 195A E. Post Road. Info: 914-368-8617 or visit [www.wolfandwarrior.com](http://www.wolfandwarrior.com).

**Growlers Beer Bistro, Tuckahoe.** You can feel the rattle of the Metro-North trains passing by. A great selection of craft brews available daily. Knowledgeable staff. Good kitchen, too. 25 Main St. Depot. Info: 914-793-0608 or visit [www.growlersbeerbistro.com](http://www.growlersbeerbistro.com).

**Diner Brew Co., New Rochelle.** Chris Sheldon's new tasting room is a charmer with its retro-diner feel. Distinctive house-made brews and ciders and free popcorn for the taking. Good conversation, too. 40 Division St. Info: 914-229-3472 or visit [www.dinerbrewco.com](http://www.dinerbrewco.com).

**Trattoria Vivolo, Harrison.** A solid Italian restaurant housed in a vintage diner, but come St. Patrick's Day chef and owner Dean Vivolo's mom, who is Irish, adds her personal touch to the menu. 301 Halstead Ave. Info: 914-835-6199 or visit [www.trattoriavivolo.com](http://www.trattoriavivolo.com).

**The Quarry, Tuckahoe.** Good tavern fare and friendly networking make this a comforting spot to unwind. The Quarry will be decorated in green for the day with Irish specialties and spirits. 106 Main St. Info: 914-337-0311 or visit [www.thequarryrestaurant.net](http://www.thequarryrestaurant.net).

**McShane's Public House, Port Chester.** Two former Irish bartenders brought a taste of the Emerald Isle to Port Chester and the crowds have been following. Special mention: the corned beef Reuben and lamb sliders are popular. 123 N. Main St. Info: 914-937-7800 or visit [www.mcshanesportchester.com](http://www.mcshanesportchester.com).

## Irish Cooking at Home

If you are planning to cook some Gaelic favorites at home, check out these specialty food markets for authentic Irish ingredients: Butcher's Fancy, Yonkers, [www.butchersfancy.com](http://www.butchersfancy.com); Prime Cut Irish Butchers, Riverdale, [www.butcherinyonkersny.com](http://www.butcherinyonkersny.com); or Food Ireland, Mount Vernon outlet, [www.foodireland.com](http://www.foodireland.com).



The corned beef with fries at Dunne's Pub in White Plains.

com.

## Larger Capacity

Restaurants throughout the Hudson Valley are gearing up to expand indoor dining room capacity to up to 75 percent starting this Friday, Mar. 19. Billions in targeted relief for the food service industry is part of President Biden's massive American Rescue Plan.

And spring is just around the corner on Saturday. It feels like the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel is indeed getting brighter. We must still be careful, though. Please continue to follow COVID-19 protocols and safety measures.

*Morris Gut is a restaurant marketing consultant and former restaurant trade magazine editor. He has been tracking and writing about the food and dining scene in greater Westchester for 30 years. He may be reached at 914-235-6591 or [gutreactions@optonline.net](mailto:gutreactions@optonline.net).*



# New Survey Demonstrates That Summer Camps Can Operate Safely

A new American Camp Association (ACA) study of 486 camps that served 90,000 campers reports that only 30 children had confirmed COVID-19 cases in 2020.

This is a direct result of the summer camp industry's focus on developing leading-edge child safety standards from the earliest days of the pandemic. Camp directors were able to offer crucial childcare and essential experiences for many children and families when they needed it most.

"The science demonstrates that camps that have implemented strict, layered mitigation strategies – including masking, cohorting, physical distancing, cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette – have been able to safely operate in person," said Tom Rosenberg, president and CEO of ACA.

The new ACA survey results provide hope for campers – with evidence that COVID-19 camp cases can be contained and minimized when facilities are prepared with effective mitigation strategies. When camps follow the rigorous scientific approach outlined in the Field Guide for Camps on Implementation of CDC Guidance, camps can operate safely and successfully.

The survey screened 90,000 campers from 486 camps that ran in 2020 and found only 102 total COVID-19 cases identified (less than 1 percent of campers and camp staff).

Other highlights from the research that offer evidence of camp success include:

- Out of those 486 camps, only 74 camps



experienced at least one COVID-19 case (30 campers and 72 staff).

- Camps consistently implemented strategies for quarantining, contact tracing, sanitization practices and cohorting, reporting that they successfully mitigated cases from spreading.
- The study from last summer suggests camps that reported consistent use of nonpharmaceutical interventions also reported lowest incidence of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases.

"This summer is looking hopeful," said Gregg Morrow of UltraCamp, an ACA member and industry leader. "Registration

has already opened for many camps, and spots are filling up fast. We're excited for camps to provide kids a space to learn and grow together again this summer."

As the pandemic continues to evolve and we learn more from researchers and scientists, the ACA will continually update the Field Guide – and the camp community – with the latest and most accurate scientific research and practices. On Mar. 2, the Model State Guidelines for Overnight Camps was released, and in April, ACA will release additional resources for camps based on research to understand children's summertime activity participation specific to last summer and how this changed from

expected participation due to COVID-19.

"Summer camps provide the optimal context for kids to practice social-emotional learning (SEL)," Rosenberg said. "After such an isolating and traumatic year of disruption and loss, the SEL outcomes that result from camp experiences will help young people prepare to thrive in school this fall."

For low-income households, the negative impacts of the pandemic are particularly significant. In addition, many BIPOC families and children are struggling with access to remote-learning technology, causing a higher likelihood of academic failure.

However, we know summertime experiences can help to overcome learning deficits. Decades of camp research have proven that the skills learned at camp support academic performance and are at the core of college and career readiness. The American Rescue Plan focuses on introducing more equitable access to immersive summer learning opportunities right now.

"Last summer's mitigation practices highlight the necessary foundation for a successful 2021 camp season," Rosenberg said. "Our new research demonstrates that children can be with their friends and counselors and take a break from technology this summer. In fact, camp provides critical support for children as they recover from the challenging effects of the pandemic in a safe environment away from home."



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# What Defines an Age Worthy Wine and Are We Worthy of Aging It?



By Nick Antonaccio

"I've been saving this bottle of wine for a special occasion."

"I just purchased a bottle of my favorite California Chardonnay, which I'm placing on my mantle to be opened for my newborn daughter's wedding."

How many times have you heard these comments, and how many times have these statements ultimately resulted in tears?

Among the many opinions regarding the ageability of wine, none is more misunderstood than the dynamics of wine longevity and preservation.

There seem to be polarized viewpoints regarding a bottle's aging viability. There are those who believe wine is at its best when consumed young. They appreciate its freshness, vibrancy and quaffability. Those of the opposite viewpoint vow never to drink wine before it reaches its peak of complexity and balance of fruit and acid, believing that only aged wine can achieve this euphoric state.

It is estimated that over 90 percent of wines are produced to be drunk within a few years of release. This includes the full spectrum of wines, from full-bodied whites

*'The logic behind the aging potential of wine is as much scientific as it is storage principles.'*

to robust reds. The exceptions include certain French wines, notably Bordeaux and Burgundy, Champagne and Sauternes, which are crafted to evolve over time.

Generally speaking, winemakers release their wines from aging cellars when they believe the wines are at their peak, ready to

be consumed within one to two years for whites and up to four years for reds.

If one were to graph the life cycle of a typical bottle of fine red wine, it would be in the shape of a bell curve. Immature out of the fermenting tank, building character as it is aged in barrels,

peaking when the acids, fruit and tannins are in perfect harmony and balance and then fading as these three components are in contraposition to each other. Each of these aspects of the bell curve may last several decades for fine French wines.

However, for most wines the curve is indistinct, quickly rising, peaking and fading

over a short timeline. A winemaker will assess the effort and investment required to realize a desired cash flow from his endeavors. This is quite evident each time we enter our favorite wine shop.

The logic behind the aging potential of wine is as much scientific as it is storage principles. Wine is a living organism, constantly changing. Fruit, acid, tannins, oxygen and bacteria all interact in different ways at different points in the life cycle of wine. Any interruption or corruption of the natural cycle of their interactions will disrupt the natural evolution of a wine.

A personal story will shed light on my goal to consume a wine at its peak of maturity.

I received a special bottle of wine for one of my early decade birthdays – a 1982 Mouton Rothschild Bordeaux. Upon release it was priced at \$40; when I decided to open it to celebrate a subsequent decade birthday, its value had risen to more than \$1,000. I had diligently stored my precious wine in the back of my closet for 10 years and then transferred it to my new, thermostatically-controlled wine cellar for a few more decades.

When I finally opened the wine with great fanfare before my wife and best friends, it was spoiled. To this day, my wife swears she detected a tear in my eye when I tasted the first sip of this classic wine.

What happened? The pedigree of a first growth Bordeaux is impeccable; longevity is its hallmark. In my case, I believe the mistake I made was storing it in its early years in an environment that was subject to



wide variations in temperature, upsetting its natural evolution.

If you wish to purchase and store a "memory" wine, consult your trusted wine merchant for one with a proven reputation, year in and year out, of having long-distance legs to sustain itself for a cherished celebratory moment. Tears are not a good outcome. Believe me.

Nick Antonaccio is a 45-year Pleasantville resident. For over 25 years, he has conducted wine tastings and lectures. Nick is a member and program director of the Wine Media Guild of wine journalists. He also offers personalized wine tastings and wine travel services. Nick's credo: continuous experimenting results in instinctive behavior. You can reach him at [nantonaccio@theexaminernews.com](mailto:nantonaccio@theexaminernews.com) or on Twitter @sharingwine.

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