



**FREE**

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SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 13, Issue 614

# Peekskill Council Favors Retail Marijuana Dispensaries

By Rick Pezzullo

The majority of the Peekskill Common Council supports allowing retail marijuana dispensaries to set up shop in city limits.

During a spirited discussion at last week's work session, councilmembers expressed their views on the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) enacted in New York State on March 31 that legalized recreational pot and gave the green light for retail dispensaries and consumption sites, also known as lounges, to locate in all communities.

Each municipality has until December 31 to adopt a local law that prohibits such

businesses, which is referred to as opting out of the regulations. If elected officials take no action, they can pass legislation that governs the hours and location of the businesses.

"We think it's time for the council to make its intent clear," City Manager Andy Stewart said when the topic was first brought up September 20.

Councilwoman Kathie Talbot was the first to show her support for the city not opting out, saying most of the people she has spoken to share her opinion.

"I don't think it makes any sense for us to opt out," she said. "We really have to be leaders. I think it's clear what we should do. It won't be harmful to the city."



Councilwoman Patricia Riley



Councilwoman Kathie Talbot

*continued on page 2*

## Sprucing Up Peekskill



The City of Peekskill held a tree planting ceremony September 3 along North Division St. to kick off its citywide tree planting project. City officials were joined by Manzer's Landscape Design & Development, Inc., which is overseeing the work.

## Cortlandt Pumps the Brakes on Solar Farm Projects

By Rick Pezzullo

The Cortlandt Town Board voted unanimously last week to pass a nine-month moratorium on Tier 3 Ground Mounted Solar Farms.

Although board members maintained the move was not targeted at slowing down a controversial solar farm within a nearly 58-acre forest on two parcels along Red Mill Road and the end of Mill Court, the public hearing that preceded the vote was dominated by passionate neighbors of the project proposed by CVE North America that urged the board to stop it in its tracks.

"People are outraged at what is being proposed," said Rick Ribeiro, a 25-year resident of Mill Court whose backyard abuts the 58-acre forest where at least 2,800 trees would be clear cut to make room for the farm and its 9,504 solar panels.

"It's just not right. Something is not adding up," Juan Ramos, an eight-year resident of Mill Ct., remarked.

"I think a moratorium is a great idea," resident Daniel Asis added. "The people that will end up paying for this will be the private citizens."

Since Cortlandt adopted a law in 2018 allowing solar farms, the town has received five applications for Tier 3 projects. Two of those plans were withdrawn.

While expressing their support for green energy, board members stressed solar farms did not belong in residential neighborhoods.

"That's not where they should be going. We want to find locations where they would be more appropriate," said Cortlandt Supervisor Linda Puglisi. "We feel we are being prudent and doing the right thing."

"It does not seem green to me to cut down trees for solar," said Councilman Dr. Richard Becker. "We need a policy that is townwide. We need to decide where solar goes."

Stephen Grable, an attorney for CVE, noted CVE has modified its original layout to where only 15 acres will be disturbed, along with 547 fewer trees. It also reduced the number of solar panels from what was envisioned at 11,592.

Other CVE representatives have touted the environmental benefits of producing clean energy from the 4 MW solar farm and explained the area was chosen because it is situated within the ConEdison electric

*continued on page 2*



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# Con Ed Underground Electric Pilot Project Begins in Yorktown

By Rick Pezzullo

Con Edison was scheduled to begin moving overhead electric wires underground on two Yorktown streets Monday as part of a regional pilot program.

Con Edison's Underground Storm Resiliency Pilot program is the utility's first effort in Westchester County and it focuses on 41 customers along Foothill Street and Lockwood Road, an area dense with trees. As storms become more frequent and severe, underground electrical wires will help communities keep the lights on and bounce back to normal more quickly.

The burial of the electric lines in the pilot area will also benefit residents in the larger surrounding area on Emma Lane and Casey Court because their power supply will become less vulnerable to falling trees.

"Our residents have experienced extraordinary power outages over the years, so I'm pleased that Con Edison has chosen Yorktown for its first resilience pilot in Westchester County," said Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater. "Con Edison's pilot is a welcomed solution that will protect our

residents from increasingly severe weather events."

Con Edison engineer Carlos Morillo to the Town Board last week that the area has experienced 14 outages since 2009 and seven of them were due to fallen trees. Storms Riley/Quinn and Isaias collectively caused 244 hours of power loss for customers in the area.

The pilot program will bury about 2,200 feet of electric wires and install concrete-pad mounted transformers in metal boxes that will sit by the side of the road. Each of the transformers will serve three to four customers.

Work to dig the trenches for the underground electric lines will begin on Monday and will continue through February. Landscaping for the disturbed areas is scheduled for March and Con Edison will repave the disturbed streets.

Con Edison began sending notices to affected residents last Wednesday. Some of the work will pass through wetlands and the Town Board has scheduled an October 5 public hearing for a wetlands permit.

## Cortlandt Solar Farm Project...

*continued from page 1*

utility territory. The company has also stressed the monthly electric discounts an estimated 1,061 local residents could receive by subscribing to the facility.

"Our goal is not to say this project must be approved as is," Grable said. "We are here to say please let us go forward in trying to obtain approval. We do not believe a solar farm qualifies as a crisis condition that would legally warrant a moratorium. Our hope is to work through these issues with you."

Others disagreed with Grable's assessment.

"If you apply the commonsense test, it fails," said resident John DeBenedictis.

"This is a brief timeout to make sure we get this right," Councilman James Creighton said of the moratorium. "We're hoping what we do here will be a model for other communities."

CVE has estimated the solar farm would be built in six months and has a lifespan of between 25 and 30 years.

## Four Hen Hud High Seniors Named Commended Students in National Merit Scholarship Program



(L-R:) HHHS seniors Aidan Wong, Brooke Kivel, Nish Mistry and Isabella Zahl were named Commended Students in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Hendrick Hudson High School has announced that seniors Brook Kivel, Nish Mistry, Aidan Wong and Isabella Zahl have been named Commended Students in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Approximately 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Although they will not continue in the spring 2022 competition for National Merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 students who entered the 2021 competition by taking the 2020 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/

NMSQT®).

"Those being named Commended Students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success," commented a spokesperson for NMSC. "These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments, as well as the key role their schools play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broaden their educational opportunities and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success."

## Council Favors Retail Dispensaries...

*continued from page 1*

Mayor Andre Rainey, Councilwoman Vanessa Agudelo and Councilman Dwight Douglas were also firmly on Talbot's side.

"I would hate for us to paint a negative picture of marijuana," Agudelo remarked. "We're talking about legitimate businesses here. The money is there, and we would absolutely be leaving it on the table if we opt out. We can be making really good use of our money."

Any tax revenues on local sales of marijuana and other products would be distributed as a 9% excise tax to the state, 3% to the municipality and 1% to the county.

"Opting out would be a grave mistake," Douglas stressed. "100% this is in our benefit."

However, Councilwoman Patricia Riley, who is a teacher, vehemently argued Peekskill should join the growing list of municipalities in Westchester that have opted out.

"I understand it's legal. I understand it's here to stay. I do have a problem with dispensaries in the City of Peekskill," Riley said. "I just feel we're going to send a mixed message doing this. I know people smoke weed. I'm not a prude. If you want to do it, knock yourself out. I just feel uncomfortable right now with this."

Deputy Mayor Vivian McKenzie, who is running for mayor in November, said she was trying to change the negative image Peekskill has had for years.

"We have always been depicted that Peekskill is the place to get your drugs. I don't want that for Peekskill," she said. "All money is not good money."

Councilman Ramon Fernandez said he

wanted to hear input from the Peekskill NAACP, schools, churches and business community.

Talbot said the Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce was firmly behind the city not opting out, but Chamber President Deb Milone said that's not the case, stating in a September 21 letter to the council the chamber has taken no position on the cannabis issue and "currently has no intention to do so."

"As an involved resident of the City for 31 years, I complied with a request to complete a survey sent to all residents. I indicated my personal opinion, in favor of dispensaries but NOT lounges. During a recent ribbon-cutting a Councilwoman asked for my opinion on dispensaries. My reply was the same as the survey response, strictly as an individual and not in my capacity as President of the HVGCC. At no point during that conversation was I asked about the HVGCC's position," Milone stated.

"It is offensive to publicly announce my personal opinion as a resident while insinuating that it is the position of the HVGCC. With such an important issue, there is no place for political posturing by mischaracterizing a conversation at a social event," she added.

In the spring, the city sent an online survey to residents seeking input. As of September 8, the city revealed there were 1,191 responses, with 71% supporting dispensaries and 65% supporting café lounges.

The Common Council Monday night scheduled a public hearing on the cannabis legislation for October 12.

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# Unvaccinated Health Care Workers Face Termination With Mandate

By Martin Wilbur

New York State's vaccine mandate for all health care workers is now in effect, with the state bracing for possible staffing shortages.

In a final plea to convince vaccine holdouts to get the jab, Gov. Kathy Hochul said Monday it is time for the state to put the pandemic behind it and that needs to be accomplished first by the people who work in direct contact with patients in hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities.

"My job, number one in this state, is to keep people safe," Hochul said in a Monday morning briefing. "Clear, simple, there's no way to cloud that, there's no gray area. I need to keep people in the state safe and we'll be nation-leading with our mandate which strikes at midnight tonight when everyone is expected in a hospital in the state of New York or a health care facility to have been vaccinated."

Unvaccinated health care workers will be terminated from their jobs if they fail to get the shot.

In the event of potential shortages, Hochul said the state would ask retired health care workers to return to work, entice out-of-state workers to come to New York and deploy medically trained members of the state's National Guard.

It is not certain exactly what percentage of health care workers are vaccinated. Hochul said that she will be receiving a report in the near future to get a full grasp on how many will lose their jobs. Some downstate health care organizations are reporting compliance rates of 98 to 99 percent, she said.

"We know this has been tough," Hochul said. "We know this has been a hard decision, but we really do hope that you'll come around to that decision to help us make sure that we can do everything we can in our power."

The mandate comes at a time when the state has reached the 75 percent vaccination threshold for adults 18 years old and up. In Westchester County, that number is 88.5 percent and 83 percent in Putnam County.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said that during the past week there were about 11,000 first-time recipients of the vaccine, a high number considering the rate had stalled for much of the summer.

But with the Delta variant having pushed cases higher through much of the summer, there continues to be a relatively significant uptick in people who are getting inoculated.

"As much as there's vaccine hesitancy and vaccine resistance from various areas, we are

still getting people vaccinated at this point, and we're encouraged by that number," Latimer said.

Countywide, there have been 729,342 people 18 years old and up in Westchester who have received at least one dose of the vaccine, he said.

Latimer was also encouraged by the continued reduction in active COVID-19 cases in the county. The mid-August high of nearly 2,800 cases has fallen to 2,137 as of Sunday.

Hospitalizations have also dropped to 63 from an August high of 110. During the past week there were two deaths, compared to a combined 13 fatalities over the previous two weeks.

The downstate region continues to have a

comparatively low infection rate. On Sunday, the seven-county Mid Hudson region, which includes Westchester and Putnam, saw a 3.1 percent rate. The seven-day average stood at 2.8 percent.

However, some of the upstate regions' rates have raised some eyebrows. On Sunday, the Southern Tier, the area that borders Pennsylvania, had a 9.1 percent infection rate, while Central New York, the Mohawk Valley and the North Country were at more than 7 percent each.

New York City had the lowest infection rate at 1.7 percent.

Westchester County had a daily rate Sunday of 1.8 percent, and 1.9 percent on the seven-day average. Putnam County was at 2.7 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively.



Gov. Kathy Hochul made a last-minute plea Monday to unvaccinated health care workers to get their COVID-19 shot.

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# Two No. Castle Town Board Members Quarrel Over Masks at Meeting

By Martin Wilbur

Two North Castle councilmembers became embroiled in a spat over masks at last Wednesday's Town Board meeting, when one board member called out his colleague for initially failing to wear a face covering.

During the board and town administrator reports portion of the meeting, Councilman Jose Berra pressed Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto to put on a face mask.

Berra and DiGiacinto sit next to one another at one end of the dais in the Town Hall meeting room.

He also asked Town Clerk Alison Simon, who sits to Berra's left and was also not wearing a mask during the work session and for roughly the first 40 minutes of the regular meeting, to put one on as well.

Berra said the emergence of the Delta variant this summer and the fact that he is often around children less than 12 years old who cannot yet receive the vaccine has made him extra vigilant.

"My goal is not to embarrass anyone or make them feel bad," said Berra, who is vaccinated and wore two masks while spending the work session sitting in the seating reserved for the audience. "Last time people who watched saw I expressed my appreciation for the whole Town Board for wearing the masks. To me, it's a public safety issue, a public health issue and an etiquette issue."

He said the town requires visitors in



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto and Councilman Jose Berra clashed at last week's Town Board meeting because DiGiacinto was not wearing a mask.

attendance at Town Board meetings to wear masks and that government should be held to a higher standard. Furthermore, the town's guidelines, based on guidance from the county and state health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recommends social distancing, avoiding in-person meetings, and when they do occur, they should be short.

Berra said he now must consider whether to isolate because people are refusing to

wear masks.

"Barbara, I've asked you. Last time you wore it. Last year at budget meetings, you refused, belligerently refusing for no reason I can understand," he said.

At that point, DiGiacinto said she felt personally attacked.

She explained that about 20 years ago she was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer requiring numerous surgeries. As a result, there have been side effects that have

persisted.

"One of the side effects that I still live with today is that my body thermostat can really be out of whack, and I go from being very comfortable to like 150 degrees," DiGiacinto said.

When that occurs, she said she takes off her mask to avoid extreme discomfort.

DiGiacinto said she lives alone and exercises great caution because she is "petrified" of contracting COVID-19. However, the town policy for employees is if they provide proof of vaccination, they do not have to wear masks, she said. Town Board members are considered employees.

"So I take great offense at what Mr. Berra has said and to single me out, and I will put a mask on now because I don't want to waste any more time, and as you said we have a lot of work to do," DiGiacinto said. "But from time to time I'm going to take it off. It's not being disrespectful, it's because I have to."

When Berra tried to respond, DiGiacinto cut him off by saying, "Oh, please, stop getting the last word in."

Both DiGiacinto and Simon wore masks for the remaining three hours of the meeting.

But Berra was irked that he had to bring up the issue publicly.

"This is me being pretty angry and I really resent it, and I really hate trying to call people to task and to be responsible instead of selfish and irresponsible in my view," he said. "So I really would appreciate people doing what I think they should be doing."

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## County Legislators to Add Water Bottle Refill Stations at Westchester Parks

You've probably seen water bottle filling stations at gyms, schools, airports, national parks and elsewhere. Now, you're about to see them at Westchester County parks, thanks to a new measure passed last week by the Board of Legislators.

On Sept. 20, the board passed a \$750,000 plan for the Parks Department to begin replacing old water fountains at county parks with modern refill stations.

Legislator Ruth Walter (D-Bronxville), who first proposed the program, hailed the unanimous vote.

"I'm so excited that we are finally getting this project underway, and I want to thank my colleagues for their support," said Walter, who chairs the Environment & Health Committee.

"Single-use plastic bottles are one of the most common things that pollute waterways and pile up in landfills," she continued. "Anything we can do to reduce that is a huge plus. That means recycling, of course,

but also using refillable water bottles. Plus, if you're out at a park for a ball game, or a bike ride, or hike, you want to be able to take water with you, even if you're not always right next to a water fountain. Being able to easily and quickly fill up your reusable water will be a really nice benefit for park-goers."

Another benefit of the new fast-fill stations is that they will be freeze-resistant and can operate year-round, where many existing fountains have to be shut off for the winter.

Parks Department leadership told lawmakers that the department has taken inventory of all drinking fountains in county parks and will use the newly allocated \$750,000 to replace as many as possible with the new fast-fill stations. The department also will look to include in future capital projects the addition of water lines where feasible to add fast-fill stations where water fountains may not exist today.

## Masks Up



Westchester County has partnered with the county Superintendent's Association to distribute child and adult-sized masks to students returning to in-person classes in the fall.

County personnel visited the Bedford School District's Mount Kisco Elementary School last week to deliver 20,000 for use by the entire district.

"We want children, who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated, to continue to be safe and learn in a healthy environment," said County Executive George Latimer. "These masks are part of the continued safety protocols our school districts are taking to keep our children well so they can succeed academically while being in the classroom."

The county has procured more than

200,000 child-sized masks for students up to 12 years old. These masks are specifically designed to protect Westchester's most vulnerable population of children who are not yet eligible for the vaccine.

The Bedford School District received 10,000 child-sized masks and 10,000 adult-sized masks.

Masks have already been delivered to the White Plains Central School District; Somers Central School District; Pleasantville School District; Yorktown Central School District; Greenburgh-North Castle Union Free School District; Ossining School District; Mount Pleasant Central School District; Blind Brook School District; Elmsford School District; Port Chester School District; Bronxville School District; and Mamaroneck School District.

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# Pleasantville High School Recognized as National Blue Ribbon School

By Abby Luby

Pleasantville High School has been named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2021, the second time it has received the prestigious honor.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona announced on Sept. 21 that 325 schools received the designation nationwide, including two Westchester high schools, Pleasantville and Briarcliff. The award recognizes the work of educators, families and communities that contribute to a positive, safe and welcoming educational environment.

"This award shows a true partnership," said Pleasantville Superintendent Mary Fox-Alter. "I am honored that the residents of Pleasantville entrust us with the education of their students and I want to thank the community and the board for their support in having an exemplary high school providing multiple programs and pathways to succeed."

Fox-Alter thanked high school Principal Joseph Palumbo, Assistant Principal Gregg Fonde and the entire staff.

"That includes teachers, psychologists, counselors, support staff, assistants, aides, clerical, custodial and our incredible high school student body and their families," she said.

The award is especially significant because it comes during the COVID-19 pandemic, a year that challenged educators and students. The school previously was named a Blue Ribbon school in 1991.

"It is very heartwarming to be able

to celebrate this incredible achievement during one of the most challenging and unprecedented periods in public education," Fox-Alter said.

Cardona also praised schools for achieving high academic success during the coronavirus pandemic.

"This year's cohort of honorees demonstrates what is possible when committed educators and school leaders create vibrant, welcoming, and affirming school cultures where rich teaching and learning can flourish," he said in a statement.

A school must place in the top 15 percent of all schools for student performance on state English and math assessments and graduations rates.

Fox-Alter explained that there are two levels of consideration before a school is recognized for exemplary achievement needed to qualify for the award. The state reached out to the district when the school passed the first bar by meeting the criteria in performance, she explained.

The school district's entry for the award described the high school as a place where "students actively engage in a 21st century holistic education that fosters a passion for lifelong learning, service to others, and leadership. Also, that the high school was an inclusive learning community that celebrates diversity and empowers all students to realize their full potential."

Now in its 39th year, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed some 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools across the country. The National Blue

Ribbon Schools award "affirms the work of educators, families and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content."

A local ceremony for Pleasantville High School will be planned but the specifics have not been announced. A ceremony is expected to be held in Washington at some point in the future.

## Panther Power



CHAD KRAUS PHOTO

Members of Pleasantville High School's volleyball team celebrate following the team's match last weekend. The team faced Haldane in a contest that was held during the school's Homecoming Weekend.

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## Obituary

### Christine Camarra

Christine Allison Camarra, a Cortlandt resident and a teacher at Somers Intermediate School, died peacefully on Sept. 13. She was 41.

Born in Rochester, Mich. on Sept. 15, 1979, she is survived by her loving husband of 15 years, George W. Camarra, also a teacher in the Somers School District. She was a loving mother of three beautiful girls, Katelyn, 11, Emily, 10, and Natalie, 7. She was the daughter of Dale M. and Delores C. Dietrich of Phoenix, Ariz. She is also survived by her loving siblings, Kelli M. Dietrich of Phoenix and Steven M. Dietrich, of Chino Hills, Calif.

Christine was a 1998 graduate of Brighton High School in Brighton, Mich. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona in 2002. She also earned a master's degree in elementary education from the University of Phoenix, where she met her future husband, while they pursued their teaching careers.

In 2005, Christine and George relocated to Westchester County to begin their lives together. Christine spent several years teaching in the Valley Central School District before eventually settling in the Somers School District. During her tenure, she earned a special education certificate allowing her to impact a broader population of children. In her time as a teacher in Somers, she quickly became a beloved



Christine Camarra

member of the faculty, and to students and the community.

Christine was an avid fitness and health enthusiast. In her spare time, she loved spending time with family and friends, traveling to the beach and seeking out new adventures.

In June 2018, Christine was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of ovarian cancer. She met this cancer with a fierce determination to live life to its fullest. Over the last three years, Christine became a passionate advocate for raising awareness and funds for ovarian cancer charities and research.



Generations of local families have placed their trust in **Pleasant Manor Funeral Home**. We are grateful to the families we serve and appreciate their confidence in our ability to create meaningful services that help them begin the healing process. Some people think that choosing a modest memorial means sacrificing service. Our commitment to excellent service allows us to say that no matter what kind of memorial you have in mind, we will provide you with the best service available.



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## Police Blotter

### Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

**Sept. 13:** Patrol responded to Maple Street at 2:07 p.m. on a report that a dog was inside a vehicle with the motor running. The area was checked with negative results.

**Sept. 13:** Report of a fight in progress on Brook Street at 11:09 p.m. One party, who was not injured, was interviewed and the other party fled the scene. The area was canvassed with negative results. No report was taken.

**Sept. 14:** Patrol responded to a commercial area on Cleveland Drive at 4:20 p.m. after an employee reported a verbal argument ensued due to the establishment's mandatory face mask policy.

### North Castle Police Department

**Sept. 21:** Report of a suspicious incident on Whippoorwill Road at 7:47 a.m. A resident reported that while her daughter was waiting for the school bus outside, an older white male in a small grey SUV pulled up and asked her daughter for directions to the Whippoorwill Club. She provided him with directions, but a short time later the man returned, this time pulling into the driveway again asking for directions. At that time, the caller began screaming and running down the driveway toward her daughter and the vehicle, at which time the vehicle pulled away. All patrol units were notified. The complainant was advised that patrols would be on the lookout for suspicious activity, but that no illegal conduct had occurred at this time.

**Sept. 22:** A Round House Road resident reported at 9:34 a.m. that he believes someone attempted to break into his house overnight because the screens on the windows appear to have been cut. The responding officers gathered information and secured photos. The complainant will be responding to complete the deposition.

### Pleasantville Police Department

**Sept. 18:** A Hopper Street resident

reported at 11:30 p.m. that two white males in their 30s are looking into vehicles. The responding spoke to the two men and the caller. No crime was committed.

**Sept. 18:** A caller reported at 12:05 a.m. that a vehicle belonging to her husband was damaged at on Saratoga Avenue by an unknown male. The matter is under investigation.

**Sept. 18:** Report of criminal mischief on Bedford Road at 4:08 a.m. Three males headed east on Bedford Road damaged flower pots in front of Beecher Flocks Funeral Home and a sign in front of Pleasantville Presbyterian Church. The matter is being investigated.

**Sept. 22:** A caller reported at 4:51 p.m. that a larceny occurred the previous night at a business at 4 Washington Ave. The matter is under investigation.

### State Police

**Sept. 15:** State police in Troop K arrested Travis M. Campbell, 35, of White Plains, on two counts of third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a Class B felony. At 6:31 p.m., troopers initiated a traffic stop of a 2001 Honda Accord for a violation of the vehicle and traffic law on the Taconic State Parkway in the Town of Pleasant Valley. Investigation discovered Campbell was in possession of about 33.3 grams of cocaine with intent to sell.

### Yorktown Police Department

**Sept. 21:** At 2:04 p.m., Brooke Lee Tschudy, 28, of Yorktown, was charged with possessing a quantity of heroin, tampering with physical evidence and operating a vehicle with suspended driving privileges following an accident on Oakside Road.

**Sept. 21:** Sonya Ennis, 41, of Yorktown, was charged with endangering the welfare of a child at 11:20 p.m. She is accused of driving from her residence to the Yorktown Police Department on town and state roads with her 15-year-old child standing on the rear bike rack outside of the vehicle with no restraints.

## County Police Special Response Team Honored By National Group

The Westchester County Police Special Response Team (SRT) recently took home some top honors following the National Tactical Officers Association's Physical Fitness Qualification Test.

After putting 370 tactical teams from across the nation through its paces, the NTOA reported that Westchester County Police Officer Jason Payne had achieved the highest individual score in the nation in 2021.

As a unit, SRT achieved the third highest score of any tactical team on the association's rigorous fitness test.

Payne joined the county police in July 2016 after several years of prior law enforcement experience. He is currently

assigned to the Westchester County Police Academy, where he is an instructor in defensive tactics, physical fitness and other topics. He was recently selected to begin training to become a member of the Hazardous Devices Unit, known more informally as the Bomb Squad.

The Special Response Team is a group of highly trained, specially equipped police officers who are deployed for tactical operations that involve armed-active violence situations, high-risk warrant service, dignitary protection and escorts, hostage rescue situations, armed barricaded subjects and other incidents requiring specialized weapons, tactics or equipment.

# Thornwood American Legion Post Flooded as Members Look for Home

By Martin Wilbur

The epochal flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Ida on Sept. 1 heavily damaged the American Legion post in Thornwood and now its members are searching for an alternate home.

Gilbert Rauh Post 1574 on Garrigan Avenue took on about four feet of water in its lower level following the storm, rendering the building virtually unusable, said the post's Commander Drew McFadden.

McFadden said although the upstairs portion of the structure escaped any damage, the downstairs level that contains the facility's restrooms and kitchen. The Legion acquired the space from the Town of Mount Pleasant in 1955.

In addition to using the building for Legion functions, it has been rented out to various community organizations for meetings and events that has provided the post with much-needed revenue, McFadden said. The building will likely need expensive renovation, which the Legion wouldn't be able to pay for, he said.

There is a water body that flows several feet from the edge of the parking lot, which overflowed during the storm. The parking area is still covered in mud after the flood waters receded.

"We have had many floods before because of that, but nothing like this," McFadden said. "We're in a flood plain."

He said the post's members, who are mostly in their 70s, 80s and 90s, have requested the town reclaim the property, which the Legion acquired for \$400. The 1955 agreement stated that if the town

were to ever take back the land, it would pay the same \$400 it received 66 years ago, according to McFadden. The post is looking to hold their meetings in a town facility, he said.

Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi raised the topic at last week's Town Board work session, asking what could be done to help the Legion's members. He acknowledged that the downstairs would have to be rebuilt. Town Board members suggested holding a fundraiser.

"They're a bunch of World War II and Vietnam vets and they just don't have the manpower," said Councilwoman Laurie Smalley.

The flooding that befell the American Legion post was similar to several other areas of town and the region from the storm, which saw eight to 10 inches of rainfall within a few hours.

This week the Town Board is expected to authorize going out to bid for the third and final phase of work to improve drainage on Whittier Drive. Several homes on that street, which is across from Carroll Park, were inundated with water. It was the third time within the past decade after a major storm, two residents said earlier this month.

Fulgenzi said the town recently installed a bypass system under the north parking lot to reduce the impacts of storm water flows and sediment going into the pond and provide direct access for the water coming onto Whittier Drive. The water will be released into the culvert to the north toward the Saw Mill River.

The rehabilitation project involves dredging the pond of silt to its original depth,



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The members of American Legion Post 1574 in Thornwood may abandon the building they've used for 66 years after flooding during the Sept. 1 storm severely damaged the building's lower level.

re-establishing the shoreline and creating a sustainable habitat for fish and other wildlife. The additional storage area of the pond will also help store more water during storms.

The pond area and parking lot at the park are currently closed to the public, but the playground at the park remains open. Parking on Rolling Hills Road can still be used. Scheduled completion of the project is

sometime next month.

"Carroll Park has seen a substantial increase in usage by our community in recent years," Fulgenzi said. "It is vitally important that we continue to update the park as well as add new facilities to the park."

Future improvements planned for the park include a new gazebo and fountain.

## How Business Owners, Residents Can Apply for Federal Disaster Assistance

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced last week the opening of a Business Recovery Center at the New York Power Authority building in White Plains to provide one-on-one assistance to businesses and residents in submitting a disaster loan application as a result of the remnants of Hurricane Ida on Sept. 1-3.

Businesses, homeowners, renters and private nonprofit organizations in seven counties, including Westchester, are eligible to apply for physical disaster loans and for Economic Injury Disaster Loans from the SBA. Small businesses and most private nonprofit organizations in Putnam County are eligible to apply only for SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans.

Customer service representatives will be available to answer questions about the disaster loan program and assist business owners, homeowners and renters in completing their applications. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the SBA has established protocols to help protect the health and safety of the public. All visitors to the BRC are encouraged to wear a face mask.

Businesses of all sizes and private nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace disaster-damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets.

For small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture and most private nonprofit organizations, the SBA offers Economic Injury Disaster Loans to help meet working capital needs caused by the disaster. Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance is available regardless of whether the business suffered any physical property damage.

Disaster loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners to repair or replace disaster-damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for up to \$40,000 to repair or replace disaster-damaged or destroyed personal property.

Applicants may be eligible for a loan amount increase up to 20 percent of their physical damages, as verified by the SBA, for mitigation purposes. Eligible mitigation improvements may include a sump pump, elevation, French drain or retaining wall to help protect property and occupants from future damage caused by a similar disaster.

Interest rates are as low as 2.855 percent for businesses, 2 percent for nonprofit organizations and 1.563 percent for homeowners and renters, with terms up to 30 years. Loan amounts and terms are set by the SBA and are based on each applicant's financial condition.

Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application via SBA's secure website at [https://](https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela/s/)

[disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela/s/](https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela/s/). Applicants should apply under SBA declaration #17147, not for the COVID-19 incident.

To be considered for all forms of disaster assistance, applicants should register online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://DisasterAssistance.gov) or download the FEMA mobile app. If online or mobile access is unavailable, applicants should call the FEMA toll-free helpline at 800-621-3362. Those who use 711-Relay or Video Relay Services should call 800-621-3362.

Businesses and individuals may also obtain information and loan applications by calling the SBA's Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955 (1-800-877-8339 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing) or by e-mailing [DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov](mailto:DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov). Loan applications can also be downloaded at [sba.gov/disaster](https://sba.gov/disaster). Completed applications should be mailed to U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Rd., Fort Worth, Texas 76155.

The filing deadline to return applications for physical property damage is Nov. 4. The deadline to return economic injury applications is June 6, 2022.

The Business Recovery Center at the New York Power Authority building is located at 123 Main St. in White Plains. It is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., until further notice.

Letters to the Editor

Experience, Proven Track Record Serving Taxpayers Counts as Supervisor

Last week, I read a letter to the editor where my opponent in the upcoming election claimed that the Town of Mount Pleasant needs a leader who “puts the taxpayers first.” I certainly agree with this statement, and my record as town supervisor demonstrates, unequivocally, that as your town supervisor for the last seven years, I have, indeed, put the taxpayers of Mount Pleasant first.

By way of illustration, during my tenure as supervisor, the average town property tax has increased only 1.9 percent a year – below the state’s 2 percent tax cap. Moreover, in the 2021 tax year, the Town Board passed a budget that I proposed which included a 0 percent tax increase. While some residents have likely seen an increase in their overall property

taxes, the town tax levy makes up only, on average, approximately 18 percent of a resident’s property tax bill. The remaining 82 percent of a resident’s property tax bill is for school and county taxes.

Additionally, during my tenure, the town’s municipal bond rating has also been increased from Aa2 to Aa1, with a positive outlook for the future. What that means is that the independent rating agencies, Moody’s, S&P, etc., after auditing the books and records of the town, have found that Mount Pleasant is fiscally sound. This high bond rating allows the town to borrow money for capital projects (roads and infrastructure improvements) at a low interest rate – ultimately saving taxpayers significant money.

As supervisor, I, together with the

Town Board, also created a five-year capital budget plan to pay for road and infrastructure improvements. My pledge is to continue to put the taxpayers first, and for the next two years, I will propose a budget to the Town Board that will again include a 0 percent tax increase. All these facts demonstrate a proven record to put the taxpayers first, and I pledge to continue to do so.

I also pledge to continue the green initiatives, which I have championed during my tenure as supervisor, which will include new LED lighting, more electric vehicles, finalizing the construction of solar panel carports and many more.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the town was also able to maintain all employment positions (no layoffs), and

while our senior program was put on hold during the initial stages of the pandemic, I worked with the Town Board to ensure that our town’s seniors received their meals and other essential services without having to leave their homes. Our Recreation Department was also able to safely open the town pool for all residents and safely offer programming for our youth.

As a full-time supervisor with no paid town administrator (as some municipalities may have), I believe that my salary is commensurate with that of neighboring communities. Running the day-to-day operations of a \$55 million-plus town budget with more than 150 employees and 150 part-time employees takes proven leadership and fiscal responsibility. My seven-year record as supervisor and over a decade on the Town Board, including serving as deputy supervisor for four years, demonstrates a proven track record of leadership for a town that I love, and where I have lived all my life.

Experience counts and as supervisor I will continue to support our taxpayers, our seniors, our youth, our veterans and our first responders.

Carl Fulgenzi  
Supervisor, Town of Mount Pleasant



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Puglisi’s Stewardship Has Left Cortlandt in Strong Financial Position

Cortlandt Republican Party Chair Dan Pagano seems to believe that he has uncovered a wide-ranging conspiracy by the entire government of Cortlandt to “lie to everyone about the financial conditions of the Town.”

Fortunately for Cortlandt residents, Dan is just a little bit confused. Maybe Dan’s just engaging in wishful thinking because it’s an election year and he’s desperate to find an issue for the misleadingly named “Cortlandt United” slate, which is really just another name for the Conservative-Republican slate.

We’ve been lucky to have decades of effective Democratic leadership by retiring Supervisor Linda Puglisi. Over Linda’s 30 years in office, property tax increases have averaged just under 1 percent per year; over the last 10 years that number is less than 1.4 percent. We’ve never broken the tax cap and our tax base has grown.

That’s why our most recent audit won an award from New York State, and it’s why Moody’s just increased our town’s bond rating to Aa1. At the same time, we’ve made huge investments in our quality of life and the quality of the public services we provide.

That strong record is a big part of why Supervisor Puglisi was either unopposed or won in a landslide in every recent election. Now that she’s not running, Dan seems to think that if he repeats a set of untruths loudly enough, he can make them come true and win her seat.

It is difficult to know where to start with a set of claims as outlandish and untrue as those Dan is making. But let’s make it simple: Cortlandt has NEVER had a budget deficit at any point in recent memory and has a growing fund balance. The idea that town taxes are up 25 percent in the last few years as Dan claims is pure fiction.

Don’t fall for it. If you want to build on Linda’s legacy of strong fiscal management, vote for the Cortlandt Forward slate on Row A, the Democratic line. Early voting begins Oct. 23 and Election Day is Nov. 2.

To be fair to Dan, perhaps he’s so confused because one local entity has raised taxes in recent years: the Hendrick Hudson School District under the watch of former trustee and current Republican candidate for Supervisor Laurie Ryan. If Dan wishes to complain about those tax increases, I’m sure he knows where to find Laurie. There’s no need to send a letter to this paper or post more misleading or outright false attacks on Facebook.

Maria F. Slippen  
Chair, Cortlandt Democratic Committee

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## Guest Column

### The Catholic Church is Thinking Outside the Climate Box

By Michael Gold

If it seems our climate is being tossed around a giant box like a rag doll, the Catholic Church in New York state is thinking outside it.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers just unveiled a new solar canopy in the parking lot of their mission in Ossining.

The Archdiocese of New York (ADNY) installed a solar array on the roof of St. Anthony's Catholic School in Yonkers in 2018 and recently completed a solar roof installation project at Archbishop Stepinac High School in White Plains earlier this year.

It's installing a solar array on the roof of the closed St. Theresa K-8 school in Briarcliff Manor, which is still used for day care and religious education. The project should be completed by the end of this year.

Additionally, the ADNY is exploring the possible installation of a solar array on the roof of Maria Regina High School in Hartsdale.

It looks like the church is working on fulfilling the Pope's vision in his 2015 encyclical, "Laudato Si" ("Praise be to you").

It's worth revisiting what the Pope wrote in the encyclical. It contains messages that are relevant today and far into the future. The Pope calls the Earth "our common home." This is a critical point. There may be almost eight billion people inhabiting this world, but we share the air, water and plant life that keep us all alive.

As Pope Francis wrote, "The Earth was here before us and it has been given to us... Our bodies are made up of her (the Earth's) elements, we breathe her air, and we receive life and refreshment from her waters."

"The climate is a common good, belonging to all, and meant for all...The Earth is a shared inheritance.... We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world...Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us," the Pope wrote.

Another important point Pope Francis made was this: "Human life is a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement."

In other words, if I am reading the encyclical correctly, the Pope is saying that climate change, with its horrific heat waves, long, punishing droughts, food shortages, increasingly frequent and widespread wildfires, torrential storms and destructive floods – an ongoing nightmare of enormous, previously unthinkable environmental destruction – is degrading human life.

The encyclical elevated the debate about fighting climate change. The Pope made it a question of spiritual ethics, not just survival. How willing are we to come out of our boxes as individual consumers and think and act in defense of our common humanity? How willing are we to work with other people in our communities, first to reduce and then

stop our consumption of oil, natural gas and coal, not to mention cut down on the mountains of plastics, metals and other waste we're generating?

The Pope condemned "rampant individualism" and a "self-centered culture of instant gratification" in "Laudato Si."

This thought makes a very conservative point. We need to spend less time thinking about consuming more and more products, which give us a momentary thrill, and that quickly fade into memory, and devote more of our energies long-term to building a better world, one that is not threatened by the radical weather we're so casually unleashing because of what we consume and the way we consume it.

Another important matter the Pope brought up was this: "Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded."

This is a critical issue. We need to think about our children and what kind of world we are leaving them. Every parent wants their child to succeed. If we bequeath to them an unstable climate, we greatly diminish their chances at building a successful life. In fact, we may be harming their future ability to survive.

We should support the church as it increasingly builds solar installations on roofs

and in parking lots and expands the amount of renewable energy it can generate.

Other organizations should follow the church's lead. For instance, school, town and shopping center parking lots are prime candidates for the type of solar canopy installed at Maryknoll.

Parking lots stretching for hundreds of yards in every direction are scattered all over Westchester, from village train stations to shopping malls. The stores in those shopping malls have enormous roofs that are ripe for solar panel installations.

Every business owner, government entity and school administrator should start thinking about how they can get solar panels on their roofs and in their parking lots. It will save them money on their electric bills. Plus, they can earn payments for leasing their roofs and lots. And it's good for everyone living on the planet.

The Pope, ever optimistic, wrote, "Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home."

I want to believe that. Businesses, schools and governments need to follow the church's lead and do much more to stop using fossil fuels and build up our renewable energy capabilities.

*Michael Gold has written op-ed articles about the environment for The New York Daily News, the Albany Times-Union, The Virginian-Pilot and other newspapers.*

## Letters to the Editor

### Jehovah's Witnesses Support COVID-19 Vaccinations

In his daily briefing on Sept. 23, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio misstated the clear stand of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding vaccines, which is currently featured on the home page of the official website of Jehovah's Witnesses, JW.org.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not opposed to vaccination. We view vaccination as a personal decision for each Christian to make. Thus far 4,902 (99 percent) of the 4,926 at the offices of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York State are fully vaccinated.

Please note the background provided at

this link to our website:

<https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/jw-vaccines-immunization/>  
Jehovah's Witnesses who choose to get vaccinated view their decision to be consistent with their "love of neighbor" and their belief in the sanctity of life, two bedrock Christian principles.

Jehovah's Witnesses seek quality medical care and appreciate the many advancements of medical science to reduce the risk of serious illness. We are grateful for the commitment and dedication of

health care professionals, especially in times of crises.

I do not see where your outlet has shared the comments made; however, it is important that the public has accurate information about Jehovah's Witnesses position on vaccinations.

**Nick Chouloute**  
**Public Information Officer**  
**U.S. Branch, Jehovah's Witnesses**

### Mt. Pleasant Has an Obligation to Reject 31 Homes on Pocantico Lake

We face a worrisome future of both water scarcity and floods.

The Town of Mount Pleasant, given scarcity, has an obligation to consider Pocantico Lake as a future source of clean water.

The town, given flooding, has an obligation to reject the building of 31 new homes, which would imperil the lake; the back-up of sewers will result in contaminating runoff, even in the event of separate sewage and stormwater pipes.

The town cannot be guided by decisions made about Pocantico Lake and its environs in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. Given the climate emergency upon us, the town has an obligation to put access to clean drinking water for some 50,000 people over the lifestyle wishes of 31 private homeowners.

And all of the above says nothing about the wisdom of felling one million square feet of forest containing CO2-absorbing trees.

I served as a congregational rabbi in Mount Pleasant for 18 years. I am still a frequent visitor to your town and hiker in your parks. We who live downstream from you are amongst the many stakeholders to your decision – as residents and taxpayers of Westchester County, as global citizens and as living beings on a very fragile planet.

**Mark Sameth**  
**Hastings-on-Hudson**

### Pierce Has the Skills, Background to Be Highly Effective County Lawmaker

We have a wonderful candidate to follow Kitley Covil, who is stepping down as county legislator in District 2. Erika Pierce was assistant to Kitley, and, in addition to the knowledge she acquired on how county government operates, she brings leadership experience in the private sector and in the nonprofit world. She is a certified high school and special education teacher and was an active parent when her children went to Katonah-Lewisboro public schools.

County government is complex and involves maintaining and enhancing physical infrastructure (for example, parks, roads, bridges) and human infrastructure (services for children, the elderly, the disabled and others). Erika has worked with local office holders, school administrators and community organizations. She is known to listen and advocate.

The Census results indicated growth for Westchester. We do not want to go backwards with respect to fighting COVID-19 or being a place people come and stay to live. Vote for Erika Pierce and vote to re-elect George Latimer.

**Jeanine Meyer**  
**Mount Kisco**

**SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS**

# Nominate a Family for Christmas Tree Giveaway

United Way of Westchester and Putnam and American Christmas want to make the upcoming holiday season exceptionally festive for struggling families in Westchester.

They are teaming up to give artificial Christmas trees, complete with lights and ornaments provided by American Christmas, to 15 families nominated by nonprofits and selected by United Way. United Way is looking for non-profit organizations to nominate families who have struggled this year and for whom the reception of a tree would make this Christmas exceptionally festive.

Nominations are due by next Friday,

Oct. 8. Nonprofit organizations can submit nominations via a form on United Way of Westchester and Putnam's website at [uwwp.org/american-christmas-nomination](http://uwwp.org/american-christmas-nomination). Awardees will be announced in October.

Families who are nominated and selected will be invited to American Christmas' new storefront, at their headquarters in Mount Vernon, in early November, where they will be able to decorate their new lighted tree with a selection of ornaments provided by American Christmas. Selected families will also tour American Christmas' spectacular showroom and receive free tickets to a Christmas light display, produced by

American Christmas in North Salem.

American Christmas has been providing local communities with beautiful Christmas displays for over 30 years. American Christmas provides displays and lights for many events, most notably the Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular.

United Way is looking for nominees from Westchester communities whom the nominating nonprofit organization thinks are most deserving of the gift. The only requirement is that receiving families can store the tree to be reused for several Christmases.

Tom Gabriel, CEO of United Way of

Westchester and Putnam, said,

"We are so excited to be partnering with American Christmas on this new initiative," said Tom Gabriel, CEO of United Way of Westchester and Putnam. "With 40 percent of our neighbors living paycheck to paycheck or in poverty, we hope that by providing some extra Christmas spirit this year, we can give a little hope to those who may need it."

American Christmas' CEO Dan Casterella put together these events to give back to the local community that helped grow his company.

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The United Way of Westchester and Putnam is an anti-poverty organization that supports education, income and health initiatives to help residents become self-sufficient. These include the 2-1-1 helpline, early literacy programming for preschoolers, job skills training and financial empowerment for adults, as well as access to health services for all.

United Way of Westchester and Putnam is located at 336 Central Park Ave. in White Plains. For more information, call 914-997-6700, visit [www.uwwp.org](http://www.uwwp.org) or visit Facebook at [www.facebook.com/UnitedWayWP](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedWayWP) and Twitter @UnitedWayWP.

## Seal of Approval

The Sleepy Hollow Tarrytown Chamber of Commerce took the somewhat unusual step of endorsing a political candidate last week when it announced that it will be supporting County Executive George Latimer in his re-election campaign. Chamber Executive Director Stephanie Rodnick said Latimer's administration has assisted the business community through unprecedented challenges. "His steadfast leadership during COVID-19, his commitment to seeing us through it and his constant presence made it clear we must break our norms and endorse," Rodnick said.



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

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# Bikers Make Stop in Yorktown for Kidney Donation Awareness

By Abby Luby

Compassion comes in all forms, and for cyclist Mark Scotch, pedaling a 1,600-mile journey is one way to raise awareness about kidney disease and donation.

Last week a stopping point for Scotch and his riding partner, Steve Wilson, was downtown Yorktown Heights. They were traveling along what they call the "Organ Trail." Last year, Scotch and Wilson each donated a kidney to two needy recipients.

Scotch, 65, left Martha's Vineyard on Sept. 19 and was joined by Wilson, a Katonah resident. They biked through southeastern Connecticut, and by Thursday reached Times Square in New York City at about noon. They continued to Yorktown Heights, arriving at 4 p.m.

Scotch said he hoped his Organ Trail would inspire people to learn more about kidney donations.

"More than 3,000 patients are added to the kidney waiting list each month and 13 people die each day while waiting for a kidney transplant here in the United States due to lack of donors for kidney transplants," he said.

According to a recent study by The Kidney Project at the University of California,

nearly 750,000 patients per year in the United States and an estimated two million patients worldwide are affected by kidney failure.

Wilson, 54, said he donated his kidney in



ABBY LUBY PHOTO

Bikers Mark Scotch, left, and Steve Wilson stopped in Yorktown Heights for a break on their Organ Trail to raise awareness about kidney disease and donation.

February 2020.

"It was a nondirected kidney donation, which means my kidney was given to an unnamed transplant recipient," he explained.

A nondirected living donor is someone who donates an organ, usually a kidney, as a gift; the transplant recipient remains anonymous to the donor.

Scotch gave a big hug to Leesa Thompson, who received a kidney transplant in October 2018.

"Three years ago, I was told I needed a new kidney or be on dialysis," said Thompson, a Cortlandt resident and former speech pathologist who worked in Peekskill. "There was very little education for organ recipients, nothing about how

it works or how your organs function. They really want you to be on meds and go on dialysis instead of getting a kidney transplant."

Frustrated with her long journey to find a donor, Thompson sent out an e-mail blast and posted a message on Facebook and eventually found a donor. Since her transplant, Thompson has strongly supported and worked with the National Kidney Donor Organization (NKDO), a nonprofit advocating for the living donor process. She also supports the National Kidney Registry, which manages thousands of patient microsites, free websites to transplant patients seeking donors.

This is not the first bike trek Scotch has made to generate organ donor awareness for kidney disease. Scotch has been cycling from his home in Steven Point, Wisc. since his own kidney donation last year. This part of the Organ Trail will take him 28 days. Scotch is scheduled to arrive back home on Oct. 16.

Greeting Scotch and Wilson was Westchester County Legislator Vedat Gashi (D-Yorktown) who presented the cyclists with a county proclamation honoring the NKDO. Joining Gashi were Yorktown Councilman Vishnu Patel, Yorktown Town Clerk Diana Quast, former Yorktown supervisor Ilan Gilbert and a representative for state Sen. Peter Harckham.

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# P'ville Alumni, School District Retirees Honored at Alumni Plaza Ceremony

By Abby Luby

Sunny skies provided a perfect day for some 60 people gathered outside Pleasantville High School last Saturday morning to pay tribute to district alumni and retired staff.

The bricklaying ceremony is an annual event that coincides with the school district's Homecoming Weekend. This year 55 dedicated bricks were engraved with the name of an honoree, to be added to numerous other bricks in the semicircle known as Alumni Plaza located at the school.

After Saturday's ceremony about 85 spots in the semicircle remain unfilled.

The four-by-eight-inch bricks cost \$100 each, and those with a graphic cost \$125. The tax-deductible contribution goes to the Pleasantville Fund for Learning, a nonprofit organization that provides funding to enrich education programs in the Pleasantville School District. Proceeds from bricks sold this year totaled more than \$5,000.

Hugs and flowers were exchanged among attendees, as former students were reunited with teachers and other alumni. Hosting the event and announcing the name on each brick were Dodd and LaVern Kittsley. The ceremony wasn't held last year because of the pandemic.

"We're thankful to be back here," said Dodd Kittsley, which was followed by a hearty round of applause.



ABBY LUBY PHOTO

Holly, Will, Rial and Larry Boes hold bricks dedicated in their honor that will be installed at Alumni Plaza at Pleasantville High School. The school held the annual ceremony to honor alumni and staff last Saturday during Homecoming Weekend.

As he presented each brick, Kittsley would offer a humorous or emotional story if he knew the recipient. One brick had the

name of their son Payton who graduated last year. This year the school broke a record with 55 bricks added, he said.

There to honor her father, English teacher and varsity golf coach Robert Delle Bovi who retired two years ago, was Amanda Delle Bovi, a Pleasantville alumnus who has been an eighth-grade special education math teacher at Pleasantville Middle School for six years.

"He doesn't know I'm here and I want to surprise him," she said.

Superintendent Mary Fox-Alter shared her memories of Rita Killian whose name is on a brick. Killian worked in the main office at Pleasantville High School in the first days of Fox-Alter's tenure about 11 years ago.

"You could not walk into the main office without getting Rita's beaming smile," Fox-Alter said. "We miss her charm, energy and enthusiasm."

Last year's valedictorian, Carolyn Lee, was joined by 10 members of her family, including six who have graduated from Pleasantville High School from 1970 to 2007. Three separate bricks were for former Board of Education president Larry Boes and his children, Rial (Class of 2021) and Will (class of 2020).

"This event has funded the district for years," said former Pleasantville school board member Louis Conte whose three sons are district graduates. "Alumni Plaza acknowledges the history and the people who contributed to the district's life. It keeps the spirit alive and kicking."

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*\*Westchester Magazine*

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# Young Readers Rejoice: Chappaqua Children's Book Festival Returns

By Martin Wilbur

This Saturday's Chappaqua Children's Book Festival may be scaled down compared to previous years but there is still plenty for young readers and their families to get excited about this weekend.

While organizers have reduced the number of authors and illustrators to about 70, just under half of what had become the typical turnout, much of what makes the day special remains intact. Children will be able to meet some of their favorite authors in a celebration of reading, literacy and fun for everyone.

"I've always known if we couldn't do it safely, we wouldn't do it and now we absolutely feel we can do it safely, especially (as) the vaccination rate keeps rising in our area and the schools are doing a great job at containment," said festival Executive Director Dawn Greenberg. "We've had one author back out because of underlying conditions but we feel confident, and our authors feel confident, we can do it right and safely."

All visitors at least two years old will be required to wear masks, regardless of vaccination status, Greenberg said. However, reservations to attend at one-hour intervals that had been announced last May have been scrapped, she said. With various precautions being taken that was no longer deemed necessary.

The festival, which will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., will be in a new location this year. It has been moved to the Chappaqua

train station parking lot, which will allow the authors' and sponsors' tents to be about 10 feet apart and in a new configuration. Volunteers will make sure to encourage social distancing should it get crowded.

There will also be plenty of parking available for those who drive toward the back lot at the train station near the Chappaqua Farmers Market.

In recent years, the Chappaqua Children's Book Festival had been held on the opposite side of South Greeley Avenue on the grounds of Robert E. Bell Middle School.

Greenberg said the day will still be a special celebration. There will be four read-along sessions held, and similar to last week's New Castle Community Day, authors will bring items with them to create a sense of the community coming together again and sharing stories, she said.

There will also be celebration of the 25th year of Biscuit, the popular bestseller used to launch the "My First I Can Read Series" from HarperCollins, and the late children's author, Jean Craighead George, who had been a Chappaqua resident. The Town of New Castle will soon dedicate a town park in her memory.

Then, of course, there are the authors and illustrators. While it was difficult to pare down the roster from 150 to about 70, Greenberg said, many of the favorites from previous festivals will return. Dan Gutman will be back, as will Chris Grabenstein, The New York Times best-selling children's writer, and many others.

"There's a lot going on, a lot to celebrate,"



The popular Chappaqua Children's Book Festival is scheduled for this Saturday with about 70 authors expected to be on hand. The event will be held this year after last year's cancellation due to the pandemic.

Greenberg said. "We just need the weather to cooperate."

New Castle Acting Supervisor Jeremy Saland said the town owes a debt of gratitude for the efforts of Greenberg and a small army of volunteers who organize and hold the annual event. Last year's festival was canceled because of the pandemic.

"It is just an incredible testament to their energy and vision, and it really shows off this town as a can-do community, so I couldn't be

more proud of them," Saland said.

Visitors can buy lunch from one of four food trucks or get a snack from two ice cream carts that will be at the festival.

For more information about the Chappaqua Children's Book Festival and for a complete list of the authors who will be attending this year, visit [www.ccbfestival.org](http://www.ccbfestival.org). The event is scheduled to be held rain or shine.

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# Annual Support Connection Walk Adjusting to COVID-19

By Rick Pezzullo

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a challenge, and for non-profit organizations such as Yorktown-based Support Connection, adjustments must continually be made to remain viable and provide the services they have offered for the last 25 years.

The most significant change Support Connection was forced to make last year was with its annual Support-A-Walk for Breast and Ovarian Cancer, normally held the first Sunday in October at FDR State Park in Yorktown.

Due to the health and safety restrictions of the pandemic, that live event wasn't possible in 2020, so instead it took place virtually with a theme of "Walk With Us, Wherever You Are."

Still not out of the woods this year with COVID-19, the 2021 version of Support-A-Walk, scheduled for this Sunday, Oct. 3, still won't feature the typical crowd of thousands of people that have made it a can't-miss day of love and hope.

"For years, we have been helping people nationwide. Now, rather than just making a donation to the Walk, people throughout the country are able to walk in their own communities, regardless of where they live," said longtime Support Connection Executive Director Kathy Quinn.

Since Support Connection does not receive funds from any national cancer organizations, including Relay for Life, Susan G. Komen or Making Strides, it relies heavily on donations raised from Support-A-Walk. The goal is to raise \$250,000.

While Support Connection is encouraging everyone once again to "Walk With Us, Wherever You Are," FDR Park will be open for anyone that wants to lend their support in person and get some fresh air.

Support Connection representatives will be at the park by 9 a.m., in the area near Parking Lot 1. For those who decide to walk in the park, there will be a Support-A-Walk Welcome Table, with volunteers to answer questions. At 9:45 a.m., a brief opening ceremony will take place on the walk path next to Parking Lot 1. The kickoff is at 10 a.m.

Support Connection is suggesting a good place for groups or individuals to meet is the grassy area near Parking Lot 1 between 9 and 9:45 a.m. Everyone who will attend in person is being encouraged to practice social distancing, wear masks when in close proximity to others and use hand sanitizer if needed.

A. DeVito & Son has been one of many businesses that has backed Support Connection over the years.



This year's Support-A-Walk, scheduled for this Sunday at FDR State Park in Yorktown, will be held both in person as well as remotely. The annual walk raises money for Support Connection, the Yorktown-based organization that assists women with breast and ovarian cancer and their families.

"The service they provide, free of charge, to women with breast, ovarian and other gynecological cancers and their families is second to none," said Janet DeVito.

"There truly isn't another organization in our area that comes close to doing what Support Connection does, and unlike most other cancer support organizations, almost every dollar raised by Support Connection goes directly toward helping women in need."

"The most important reason we support Support Connection is its incredible staff and volunteers," DeVito added.

"They know first-hand what these women and their families are going through and are uniquely qualified to provide them with help, strength and hope during a very difficult and frightening time. This is not a job for the Support Connection staff, it is a vocation and they do it with incredible passion, compassion and empathy."

To learn more about the Support-A-Walk or to donate or participate, visit [www.supportconnection.org/support-a-walk](http://www.supportconnection.org/support-a-walk) or contact Support Connection at 914-962-6402 or [walk@supportconnection.org](mailto:walk@supportconnection.org).



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# The Lazy Man's (or Woman's) Guide to Easy Furniture Refinishing

Some years ago, I wrote a Home Guru column called The Lazy Man's Guide to Gardening which proved very popular. It presented an assortment of techniques to bypass back-breaking labor in the garden (mostly focusing on proper mulching).

I still receive comments from amateur gardeners about how helpful that article was to them, one woman even going so far as to say the piece improved her experience of living in the country.

Since then, writing as The Home Guru, I've always sought to explore ways of making home life and chores easier. Why go for the harder way to do things, after all?

Such is the case with refinishing the surfaces of furniture. Not so long ago, I wrote a column about classic refinishing techniques for furniture that was purist in its approach, step by step, to achieving a fine finish, called a "French polish finish." But more recently, I reconsidered my approach in that article and acknowledged to myself that I was violating my own quest to make things easier, rather than harder, for the homeowner in everything that he or she does.

So, here's the easier – much easier – approach to furniture refinishing.



By Bill Primavera

When my wife Margaret and I owned an antiques shop, first in Brooklyn Heights (big success over a five-year period), then in Yorktown Heights (big dud, which closed after a year), we sold a lot of old furniture, some genuinely antique (over 100 years old) and some reproductions from the early 1920s to the '40s. Many times, it would come from auction houses or private homes with damaged finishes, but that was okay because we had an instant fixer-upper in our trusty bottle of Old English Furniture Polish, which filled in the scratches quite nicely.

But sometimes there is a need or desire to do a better job of refinishing wood surfaces, but still, it need not be a laborious or costly project.

While purists might insist on stripping down a finish to bare, raw wood, I always preferred to work with what I had, without starting from scratch, and the major tool for doing that is steel wool. Specifically, 000 steel wool, which is its finest version. If the surface is really bad, one might start with 00 steel wool, which is more efficient in roughing up the old surface, then finish with the finer 000 version.

After that, I would determine whether



the deeper color was needed and, if so, I would take a soft rag folded into a pad, dip it into wood stain and rub it into the surface. After that dried thoroughly, I would decide whether I wanted to create a patina with either shellac, varnish or polyurethane.

In my early days, when I was willing to put

a little more time into the process, I would use shellac which, even though it dries faster than varnish, was still not as fast as polyurethane. I would apply a primary coat of the shellac, wait until it dried, then rub it down with steel wool to remove the specs and bubbles. I would repeat this process two to three times until I built up a lustrous patina. Following that, I would finish it off with either Butcher's Wax or – a neat short step – wax shoe polish.

But as I got older, and more desirous of instant gratification, I abandoned even the shellac and turned to polyurethane, which provides a harder, waterproof surface and dries faster. Also, I could get it in either shiny or semi-gloss finishes. I would choose the semi-gloss, and, after it dried, I would buff it with the 000 steel wool, just as I would do with shellac, then complete the task with wax shoe polish that I would buff up.

As I look around my house at pieces of furniture from various periods of my life, I am proud to say that their finishes are still all in great shape from having used this technique.

Bill Primavera, while a publicist and journalist, is also a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate and founder of Primavera Public Relations, Inc. ([www.PrimaveraPR.com](http://www.PrimaveraPR.com)). To engage the services of The Home Guru to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.

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# Jacob Burns' Popular Jewish Film Festival Returns for 20th Year

By Martin Wilbur

The Jacob Burns Film Center's Jewish Film Festival has been the longest running of all its annual special programming and events.

It's been 20 years since the independent, nonprofit theater and cultural arts in downtown Pleasantville opened to film lovers, and for 20 years the Jewish Film Festival has been a fixture on the calendar.

Now in the second half of 2021, after more than a year of closures and schedule upheavals, the festival is opening for two weeks on Thursday evening in an uncustomary spot on the calendar. Previously, it had typically been held in March or April.

Regardless of season, subject matter or generation of filmmaker or film patron, Bruni Burres, who programmed the 23-film lineup for the festival, said its popularity has been unwavering. That speaks to the wealth of talented Jewish filmmakers but also of stories that span the decades that appeal to multiple generations of families who enjoy the Jewish Film Festival.

"I think different waves of what people wanted to tell stories at different times in the world, especially just soon after or just before World War II," Burres said. "But I would say the last 20 or 30 years, there's been a real awakening of the breadth of what are the Jewish stories of people of different ages want to tell, especially young people."

The festival kicks off Thursday with the Nir Bergman feature "Here We Are," a



JACOB BURNS FILM CENTER PHOTOS

Above: "Adventures of a Mathematician" and "Til Kingdom Come," right, are two of the 23 works that are part of the 2021 Jewish Film Festival at the Jacob Burns Film Center. The festival kicks off this Thursday night and continues through Oct. 14.

dramedy that explores the complications of family ties, the rights of the differently abled and the melancholy of aging. Aharon, a middle-aged divorcee, has devoted himself to raising his son, Uri, who is autistic. Uri is becoming a young man, and his mother is eager for him to move away from her ex-husband, but father and son are reluctant to separate.

"Shiva Baby" is the first feature-length work from filmmaker Emma Seligman, hilarious and witty comedy-drama about life, families, religion and taboos, all timeless themes, Burres said.

"I think people of all ages can see it



because they can see their own relatives in this, even if their own relatives and their timing was from the 1950s and this is from 2020," Burres explained.

Previous festivals have in the past also pieced together episodes of television series from other countries that focus on topics of general Jewish interest, and this year is no different. Six episodes of a television miniseries from Switzerland, "Labyrinth of Peace," will be shown twice, each in sets of three episodes each.

It explores whether or not the Swiss were neutral during World War II when the Nazis had overrun much of Europe.

The first program consisting of the series' first three episodes will be screened on Oct. 1 and 11 while the final three episodes are scheduled for Oct. 4 and 13.

Burres said an intriguing and inspirational film on the schedule is "Irmis," about a German woman who had experienced life-

changing tragedies at a young age. However, because of her life's story, after World War II she develops a love of life, living until 96 years old.

"This is an incredible film about her story about all the chapters in her life and how she kept going," she said.

As part of this year's festival, the Burns will present a three-film tribute to actor George Segal, who died earlier this year at 87 years old. The tribute is comprised of the movies "The Hot Rock," "A Touch of Class" and "California Split."

For tickets and the full schedule of films that are in this year's festival, which runs from Sept. 30 through Oct. 14, visit [www.burnsfilmcenter.org](http://www.burnsfilmcenter.org). The theater is operating with 60 percent audience capacity and vaccinations and face masks are required for all patrons. If a patron is seated and is eating or drinking, they may remove their mask.



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A new regional neurosciences program linking Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco and Phelps Hospital in Sleepy Hollow is in place, headed by neurosurgeon David Gordon, MD, regional chief of neurosurgery at both hospitals.

### What's the benefit of a regional neurosciences program in Westchester?

**1. We offer state-of-the-art treatment for stroke.** Unless treated quickly with the latest interventions, strokes can cause severe disability or be fatal. A revolutionary minimally invasive procedure called endovascular mechanical thrombectomy is so effective that people who might have been permanently disabled or even died are actually walking out of the hospital.

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**3. Gamma Knife treatment** for metastasized brain tumors. In this situation, a cancerous tumor, arisen somewhere else in the body, has spread to the brain. Our program has the only Gamma Knife in Westchester County and permits

highly focused delivery of radiation to the tumor while protecting the surrounding brain. Even with Stage 4 cancers, the technology can prolong a person's quality and length of life.

**4. We're a regional center for pituitary surgery.** Lying directly under the brain and part of it, the pituitary gland controls hormones for the entire body. Most pituitary tumors are benign; surgery is called for when a tumor puts pressure on the nerves that serve vision, threatening blindness, or when it produces excess hormones itself.

**5. We are experts in extremely complex skull base neurosurgery.** Tumors can develop at the base of the skull, an area from above the eyes to the back of the head, through which run important nerves and blood vessels. By using endoscopic techniques that provide superior viewing capacity, we can now remove tumors formerly thought to be inoperable.

**6. We offer cranial navigation "GPS system" for brain tumors.** The system guides us to the diseased area, ensuring we avoid injuring key blood vessels that supply blood to the brain or areas that serve such critical faculties as speech and motor functions.

# Peekskill Woman-Owned Bakery Makes Dam Good English Muffins

By Martin Wilbur

There are plenty of shops that primarily sell bagels, so why not have a bakery that produces only English muffins?

That was one thought that crossed Denise Weale's mind when she and her family launched Dam Good English Muffins about four years ago. Today the bakery not only supplies Westchester retail outlets with four varieties of sourdough English muffins – original white, whole wheat, multigrain and cinnamon swirl – but they have robust sales with wholesale outlets, including FreshDirect, and online customers nationwide.

"When you think about it, it's not that much different than bagels," said Weale, who opened the bakery with her husband, Ross, and daughter, Olivia, who's the operations manager. "They just make bagels, so we're doing the same thing."

Business had grown to the point where Weale moved into a 1,500-square-foot warehouse space on John Walsh Boulevard in Peekskill in spring 2020 during the height of the pandemic and has since taken over about an additional 700 square feet.

Denise and Olivia Weale and their six other employees make about 1,600 English muffins a day that are vegan, all natural and soy-free and griddled in avocado oil.

Since the muffins are made with a combination of sourdough starter and dry yeast, it doesn't have the overpowering tangy taste that could turn off some who may



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

A batch of sourdough English muffins are tended to on the griddle at Dam Good English Muffins' bakery in Peekskill.

not be sourdough lovers.

"I really didn't know anybody else doing sourdough English muffins," Denise Weale said. "We wanted to do something that was healthier, no preservatives, there's no artificial ingredients, no GMOs, and that's pretty much why we stayed with that."

Olivia Weale said the process to make the muffins is more involved because of the sourdough. The flour, water and sourdough starter are mixed in large bowls, divided, and after rising, are laid out to be pressed and cut on their hydraulic press machine before

being placed in the refrigerator to ferment overnight. Then the next morning, they're griddled on each side.

After the griddling, the muffins are placed on trays that are cooled by a large fan for about 15 to 20 minutes before they are packaged. Each package contains four muffins. She said the sourdough starter is the key to the muffins.

"It's kind of like wine. It ages and gets better over time as long as you take good care of it," Olivia Weale said. "So we're feeding it every single day and you dump some of the discard out so it's fresh and it's alive."

The idea to start an English muffin bakery was not something that Denise Weale said she had ever contemplated, even though she and her husband are both graduates of Johnson & Wales University's culinary program. She recalled visiting with friends one year around the holidays. After a friend shared some homemade English muffins, Ross, who has always had a passion for bread baking, declared that they were never going back to store-bought English muffins.

So, they started baking their own English muffins, and for the holidays, they gave them as gifts to friends and family. After receiving positive feedback, they thought "How about an English muffin company?"

Then one day in 2016, when taking a walk in the neighborhood, the Weales noticed a single piece of trash on the sidewalk – a Thomas' English Muffins box. The family took this as a sign to launch the company. That box is hanging in the bakery today.

Weale signed up to sell her product at various farmers markets, then pitched them to the Croton-on-Hudson bakery Baked by Susan. That led to her English muffins being sold in additional retail locations in other communities before reaching an agreement with FreshDirect about a year-and-a-half ago, which is now one of the bakery's largest accounts.

Olivia Weale said their muffins come in different shapes and sizes, not uniform like the larger companies' packaged products. It's also in keeping with the company's commitment to social justice issues, which includes work with Caring for the Hungry and Homeless of Peekskill and other organizations.

"We have the triangles, which is a result of the way the dough gets spread out," she said. "We take pride in the fact that all the muffins are different. Our slogan is 'Every One is Different,' so the muffins are different shapes and sizes, so just like in general, everyone in the world is different and we embrace the differences between us."

This Saturday morning, starting at 8 a.m., the Weales will be onsite making vegan breakfast sandwiches on their English muffins at Peaceful Provisions bakery's new store in Beacon, which will be making a sourdough-themed donut with Dam Good English Muffins' starter, as part of a Sourdough Fest.

For more information on Dam Good English Muffins and to order online for pickup or shipment, visit [www.damgoodenglishmuffins.com](http://www.damgoodenglishmuffins.com).

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# Mt. Pleasant Shows its Spirit Raising \$60G for Childhood Cancer Research

By Martin Wilbur

Last Sunday morning was a perfect day for football. The air was cool and crisp and the bleachers were full of parents, friends and community members who turned out at Westlake High School for the seventh Mount Pleasant Wildcats Spirit Day.

But the real winner last weekend wasn't any of the three teams in different age groups from the Mount Pleasant Wildcats Football Club and Cheer program or their opponents from Valhalla, Armonk or Scarsdale. It was the Ty Louis Campbell Foundation, a non-profit organization established nearly a decade ago to help raise money for innovative research geared toward finding treatments and cures from the most aggressive forms of childhood cancer.

The foundation is named after Ty Campbell, who died of a brain tumor in October 2012 when he was five years old. His parents created the organization so one day no other parents will have to go through the heartache that they experienced of losing a child to cancer.

"We really rely on this event," said his mother, Cindy Campbell, whose foundation has raised nearly \$2 million since its inception. "We count on it."

Of most importance, progress is being made on clinical trials on potential treatments and technologies that weren't around when Ty was battling for his life, giving families greater hope that their children may recover, Campbell said.

This year's Spirit Day had its most successful renewal, raising \$60,000 from donations and sales at the event, easily eclipsing the \$42,000



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTOS

Cindy Campbell, second from left, holds a proclamation that Mount Pleasant Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi and Councilwoman Laurie Smalley, second from right, presented to her at last Sunday's Spirit Day as event organizer Lori Ferrara looks on. Campbell established the Ty Louis Campbell Foundation, which raises money for childhood cancer research, after her son died from a brain tumor in 2012.

that was brought in from the day in 2019, said event organizer Lori Ferrara.

She said the pent-up energy and excitement from not being able to hold the event last year along with perfect weather helped drive community members to spend the day outside with family, friends and neighbors, sparking the turnout. In the seven years that Spirit Day has been held, it has now raised about \$165,000 for the foundation.

Ferrara said it wasn't certain that the event could be held this year until about three weeks



A big part of Mount Pleasant Wildcats Spirit Day is continuous youth football games that are played by various age groups featuring opponents from nearby communities. This year Spirit Day raised \$60,000 for the Ty Louis Campbell Foundation.

earlier, and the Mount Pleasant community came through in organizing Spirit Day in a hurry.

"We pulled together in three weeks and it's even bigger and better, so it's a testament to a lot of people and volunteers because that's what this day is truly about," she said. "It's about community and teaching our kids to give back and fight for something bigger than them."

After the first of three football games, Mount Pleasant Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi and Councilwoman Laurie Smalley presented Campbell with a town proclamation, lauding

her and the foundation along with the Spirit Day volunteers who have made the event an important day on the local calendar.

Campbell fought back tears when describing how much Spirit Day means to her and to children who will hopefully be able to not just survive difficult childhood cancers but grow up and thrive.

"On a personal level, it's very important for me to know how this community remembers my son and know the impact he made years ago is still remember and honored in this beautiful way with so many people," she said.

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# Tenants Sought for Berkeley College's White Plains Campus

RM Friedland, a regional leader in commercial real estate brokerage, has announced it is marketing Berkeley College's Westchester campus at 99 Church St.

The property represents a rare opportunity for a user, investor or developer to lease or own a mixed-use property in the heart of downtown White Plains.

Berkeley is closing its operations in Westchester County and consolidating to its New York City location. The property features two detached buildings, a four-story, 110,000-square-foot office building with full basement at 99 Church St. and a six-story dormitory-style residential building at 6 Cottage Place with 55 dormitory units that have 140 beds.

The office building, which is partially leased, is versatile and could be ideal for an institutional user who may also need the dormitory units in the residential building. It could also be equally attractive to a developer as the nearly one-acre site could accommodate an estimated 136,000 square feet of new development assuming the demolition of all existing buildings and could also be attractive to a value-add investor as the office building currently has four tenants leasing 24,103 square feet of space.

"This outstanding property offers a wide range of benefits for a purchaser including



The office building at 99 Church St. will have plenty of room for tenants once Berkeley College consolidates to New York City.

an excellent location in the central business district, easy access to mass transit, great demographics and a rare opportunity to be part of the momentum of a vibrant and booming downtown," said John Barrett of RMF's Investment Division.

"This property could be perfectly suited for repurposing, a trend which has become a prominent one in the Westchester office market," added Chris O'Callaghan of RMF's office division. Chris and John will be teaming with RMF team members Charlie Dewey and Reed Waggoner on this new assignment.

For more information, call 914-968-8500 or e-mail [info@rmfriedland.com](mailto:info@rmfriedland.com).

## Westchester Walk to End Alzheimer's Set for This Sunday at WCC

The Hudson Valley Chapter is pleased to announce that the annual Westchester Walk to End Alzheimer's will be held this Sunday, Oct. 3 on the campus of Westchester Community College in Valhalla.

Check-in will open at 1 p.m. and the opening ceremony will be at 2 p.m. followed by the walk. The walk had previously been held at SUNY Purchase.

"We are excited to have our biggest walk at this fantastic new venue this year," said David Sobel, executive director for the Alzheimer's Association Hudson Valley Chapter. "We appreciate Westchester Community College welcoming our event to their campus."

Appropriate safety protocols will be in place, and walkers who prefer to walk from home can still engage in many experiences through our mobile app. Per CDC guidelines around crowded outdoor settings, all attendees are asked to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or wear a mask when in crowded areas. Masks will be available on site.

The Westchester Walk to End Alzheimer's has been among the top 30 highest fundraising walks in the

country for the past five years. Last year, despite the pandemic, it raised more than \$430,000.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alzheimer's Association Hudson Valley Chapter has continued to offer its programs and services online and by phone. These include care consultations, where families affected by dementia can speak with a licensed social worker about helpful community resources as well as support groups where caregivers, family members and people in the early stage of the disease can share their experiences with others who understand.

The chapter also offers free educational and social webinars for the general public and families living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Some of these are gradually returning to an in-person format.

For specific dates, times – and in some cases, locations – for support groups, educational and social webinars, visit [alz.org/hudsonvalley](http://alz.org/hudsonvalley) or call the 24/7 hotline at 800-272-3900 to register. Pre-recorded online educational programs are also available.

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The following will be required:

- Masks will be required if 6 ft social distancing cannot be maintained.
- HHWD - All participants MUST remain in their vehicles at ALL times.
- Sanitizer will be available not only to staff & vendors, but also to participants.

These additional safety precautions are to ensure that we all are operating in compliance with these important social distancing directives, which are designed to prevent the spread of this virus.

**Please place all materials to be discarded in rearmost compartment or trunk of your vehicle**  
Thank you for your cooperation.

**Items Accepted: Consumer commodity packaged household products only, inclusive of:** Photo chemicals, non-latex driveway sealer, pool chemicals, creosote, kerosene, flammable liquids, metal polish, drain/oven cleaners, rug/upholstery cleaners, wood preservatives, turpentine, stains, varnishes, strippers, thinners, mothballs, rodent poisons, flea powders & collars, bug spray, nail polish remover, hair dyes, hair sprays, gasoline/oil mixtures, brake fluid, antifreeze, auto fluids, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers, adhesives, resins, solvents, oil-based paints, mercury containing products, button cell batteries (from watches and hearing aids), lithium & sealed lead acid batteries, rechargeable batteries, fluorescent light bulbs and tubes, smoke detectors, propane tanks up to 20-pound size, household size quantities of recalled hand sanitizer (methanol tainted).

**Items Not Accepted: Industrial or commercial type and/or quantity hazardous waste or reagents, inclusive of:** Electronic waste (e-waste), used motor oil, latex paint, plastic bags, tires, unlabeled/unidentified containers, household batteries (AAA, AA, C, D, 9V), ammunition, explosives, fireworks, asbestos products, construction debris, furniture, toys or clothing, medical waste, old medications. **ITEMS IN GARBAGE AND/OR LAWN BAGS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

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The Household Hazardous Waste program is partially financed with a grant from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.



# Northern Ireland Odyssey: Take Two (Post-COVID, Post-Brexit)

Like a thief in the night, COVID-19 swept down in the waning days of winter 2020 and hasn't left us yet. Hoping it will soon abate, we turn our sights back to upended plans and delayed dreams.

For my wife and I, and two close friends, that involves a foray into the North of Ireland, where adventures await.

I have roots all over Ireland, and the north is not to be neglected. With Down, Fermanagh and Donegal ancestors, I'm going home, regardless of borders, Brexit, COVID or whatever flag flies on the masts of municipal buildings – Union Jack, Tricolor or the Red Hand of Ulster. It's all Ireland to me, no matter what.

There are four Irelands. You can call them provinces – Leinster, Munster, Connacht and Ulster – or use the compass, as I prefer, the East, the South, the West and the North. Each one has a different flavor, a different sense. In their use of Ireland's native Gaelic, each has its own dialect. And when speaking English, it is far easier to understand a resident of Dublin (the East), than a Galway man or woman (the West).

On an earlier trip to Ireland, I touched on sections of each region, save the North. And on this trip, my aim is to correct that.

And so, confident that Europe will once again open its doors to American travelers in 2022, we will!

We'll begin – and end – our journey in



The Giant's Causeway

Dublin's fair city, spending the first two days there. On our list are some standards, such as the National Museum, Trinity College, Grafton Street, St. Stephen's Green, the Ha'penny Bridge, the Guinness Brewery, Dublin Castle and the General Post Office, site of the Easter Rising of 1916. Less traveled spots are on tap as well – Iveagh Gardens and the Dublin Writer's Museum.

From there, on a jaunt of 119 miles to Belfast, we'll enter the United Kingdom, on the way driving through the Mountains of Mourne, and stopping for a visit to St. Patrick's grave in Downpatrick.

We'll skirt the North Channel Coast, where Scotland lies a scant 13 miles over the water. A tour of Belfast promises 23 sites, including Titanic Belfast, where the RMS Titanic was built and launched, only to sink on her maiden voyage in 1912. Belfast City Hall and the Falls Memorial Garden are also on deck. No "Game of Thrones" on this trip!

Then it's on to Derry – or Londonderry – depending upon which view of Ireland

one holds. On the way, we'll tour the nine Glens of Antrim, the Giant's Causeway, the Carrick-a-rede Rope Bridge and perhaps a stop at the Old Bushmills Distillery. In Derry proper, we'll visit the Tower Museum, the Guildhall Museum and the iconic City Walls.

Then we leave the United Kingdom, entering Donegal, one of the nine counties of Ulster, three of which are in the Republic of Ireland. We'll visit Glenveagh Castle and Glenveagh National Park. With Sligo as our goal for Day Five, we'll skirt the Slieve League Mountains, see Yeats' grave, pass Ben Bulbin, and tour the Belleek China factory.

Leaving Sligo, on Day Six we'll push through Mayo and the Connemara region, and stop at Westport, billed as the most attractive town in County Mayo. Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain, will



By Brian McGowan

loom its massive height before us, and some of us hope to brave the three-hour climb up and back. Killary Harbor and the Maamturk Mountains promise some spectacular sights, before ending the day at Clifden.

Day Seven takes us to Galway Town, where we'll visit Eyre Square, the Salmon Weir Bridge and the Spanish Arch. Then we're off to County Clare,

where we'll see the Cliffs of Moher, the Burren and Poul nabrone dolmen, one of the most ancient and haunting burial tombs in Ireland. A night spent in Ennis promises some great Irish traditional music.

Then it's a long journey back to Dublin, and a return flight to the good old U. S. of A. All this next year, COVID-allowing!

*Pleasantville resident Brian McGowan was born and raised in the Bronx and is a second-, third- and fifth-generation Irish-American/Canadian, as his immigrant ancestors followed several paths to the New World. Reach him at brian.m.mcgowan1952@gmail.com or on Twitter (@Bmcgowan52M). He is the author of two books, "Thunder at Noon," about the battle of Waterloo, and "Love, Son John," about World War II. Both are available at Amazon.com.*

## Irish Eclectic

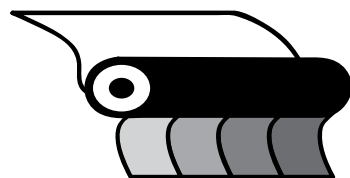
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## THERE'S A WORD FOR IT

A vocabulary-building quiz By Edward Goralski

**No Word Left Behind.** The quiz this week is composed of words that didn't make it into other recent word quizzes. Although these words did not make the final cut in earlier quizzes, that does not mean they should be left behind completely. Here is their chance to test your vocabulary knowledge.

- |                             |                               |                       |                       |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <b>stalwart</b> (adj.)   | A) free from stigma           | B) impaired           | C) loyal and resolute |
| 2. <b>bastion</b> (n.)      | A) a disagreeable person      | B) a stronghold       | C) a low deep voice   |
| 3. <b>munificent</b> (adj.) | A) impressive                 | B) spiteful           | C) generous           |
| 4. <b>proffer</b> (v.)      | A) to present for acceptance  | B) be of service      | C) cause to happen    |
| 5. <b>inappetence</b> (n.)  | A) lack of appetite           | B) empty space        | C) oversight          |
| 6. <b>moil</b> (v.)         | A) to stir up                 | B) work hard          | C) make moist         |
| 7. <b>virtu</b> (n.)        | A) knowledge of the fine arts | B) extreme bitterness | C) commendable trait  |
| 8. <b>prorogue</b> (v.)     | A) to forbid                  | B) put forward        | C) postpone           |

### ANSWERS:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. C. Loyal and resolute; loyal, reliable, and hardworking | 4. A. To present for acceptance; tender; offer     |
| 2. B. A literal or figurative stronghold                   | 3. C. Very liberal in giving; generous             |
| 3. A. Knowledge of, or experience in the fine arts         | 7. A. Knowledge of, or experience in the fine arts |
| 6. B. To work hard; move around in confusion or agitation  | 8. C. To postpone, delay, or defer                 |
| 5. A. Lack of appetite                                     |  |

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*continued on page 26*

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# White Plains Hospital CEO Fox to Lead Westchester County Association

The Westchester County Association (WCA) announced at last week's meeting of the Board of Directors that Susan Fox, CEO and president of White Plains Hospital, was elected to succeed Bill Harrington as the next chair of the organization.

Fox will step up from her current role as vice chair to spearhead innovative ways the WCA can continue to make an impact on economic vitality throughout Westchester County and the surrounding region.

Fox will begin her tenure as WCA chair on Jan. 1.

"I am pleased to share the news that Susan Fox has been unanimously selected to chair by our board of directors," said Michael N. Romita, president and CEO of the Westchester County Association. "Working with Susan over the past 18 months, it's easy to see her dedication to businesses and nonprofits throughout the region. With a visionary leader such as Susan at the helm of our board, the WCA will continue to set the professional agenda for economic growth throughout the region."

As one of the county's most influential health care executives, Fox has been at the forefront of the industry's regional transformation over the last decade. By forging strategic partnerships and aligning and recruiting top clinical and administrative talent, Susan has driven the expansion of White Plains Hospital, which is a member of the Montefiore Health System, into a leading provider of advanced health care in the Hudson Valley.

She has been a fearless advocate for members of the community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and will bring that same tenacity to the new role she holds as WCA chair.

Fox said she is honored to take on the role and thanked outgoing chair Bill Harrington for his longstanding commitment and dedication to the organization.

"Bill helped to advance the mission of the WCA, acting as a strong advocate for our members while overseeing nearly a decade of strong economic growth and development in the region," Fox said. "Westchester has become an economic powerhouse because our community understands that a rising tide lifts all boats. The WCA has been able to create something truly special for the business community through its collaborative spirit, private/public partnerships and a constant desire to innovate and evolve."

Fox added that she looks forward to working alongside Romita to support local corporations and businesses rebound from this pandemic and chart a course for a strong and vibrant future.

In addition to her new role at WCA, Fox also was appointed to the American Hospital Association Board of Trustees in 2019 and chairs its Regional Policy Board 2. She serves on the Columbia University School of Nursing Board of Visitors and the Board of the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS). Fox is a fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine.

Fox will make her first address to the Westchester business community as incoming WCA board chair during the organization's annual leadership event

on Tuesday, Nov. 30 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Westchester Marriott Hotel in Tarrytown.

The WCA is committed to smart growth, economic vitality and presenting a strong independent voice on behalf of the professional community. Its key objectives are economic growth, business development and policy advocacy on behalf of its members. For more information, visit [www.westchester.org](http://www.westchester.org).

Pictured, from left, are outgoing Westchester County Association Chair Bill Harrington, incoming chair Susan Fox, CEO and president of White Plains Hospital, and Michael N. Romita, the president and CEO of the Westchester County Association.



## Supplemental Summons and Notice of Object of Action

### SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

Action to Foreclose a Mortgage INDEX #: 70410/2019 WILMINGTON TRUST COMPANY, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY AS SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE TO CITIBANK, N.A. AS TRUSTEE TO LEHMAN XS TRUST MORTGAGE PASS-THROUGH CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2006-17 Plaintiff, vs FRANK O'CONNOR IF LIVING, AND IF HE/SHE BE DEAD, ANY AND ALL PERSONS UNKNOWN TO PLAINTIFF, CLAIMING, OR WHO MAY CLAIM TO HAVE AN INTEREST IN, OR GENERAL OR SPECIFIC LIEN UPON THE REAL PROPERTY DESCRIBED IN THIS ACTION; SUCH UNKNOWN PERSONS BEING HEREIN GENERALLY DESCRIBED AND INTENDED TO BE INCLUDED IN WIFE, WIDOW, HUSBAND, WIDOWER, HEIRS AT LAW, NEXT OF KIN, DESCENDANTS, EXECUTORS, ADMINISTRATORS, DEVISEES, LEGATEES, CREDITORS, TRUSTEES, COMMITTEES, LIENORS, AND ASSIGNEES OF SUCH DECEASED, ANY AND ALL PERSONS DERIVING INTEREST IN OR LIEN UPON, OR TITLE TO SAID REAL PROPERTY BY, THROUGH OR UNDER THEM, OR EITHER OF THEM, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE WIVES, WIDOWS, HUSBANDS, WIDOWERS, HEIRS AT LAW, NEXT OF KIN, DESCENDANTS, EXECUTORS, ADMINISTRATORS, DEVISEES, LEGATEES, CREDITORS, TRUSTEES, COMMITTEES, LIENORS, AND ASSIGNS, ALL OF WHOM AND WHOSE NAMES, EXCEPT AS STATED, ARE UNKNOWN TO PLAINTIFF, PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ACTING THROUGH THE IRS JOHN DOE (Those unknown tenants, occupants, persons or corporations or their heirs, distributees, executors, administrators, trustees, guardians, assignees, creditors or successors claiming an interest in the mortgaged premises.) Defendant(s). MORTGAGED PREMISES: 157 6TH STREET VERPLANCK, NY 10596 SBL #: 54.5 - 2 - 9 To the Above named Defendant: You are hereby summoned to answer the Complaint in this action, and to serve a copy of your answer, or, if the Complaint is not served with this Supplemental Summons, to serve a notice of appearance, on the Plaintiff(s) attorney(s) within twenty days after the service of this Supplemental Summons, exclusive of the day of service (or within 30 days after the service is complete if this Supplemental Summons is not personally delivered to you within the State of New York). In case of your failure to appear or answer, judgment will be taken against you by default for the relief demanded in the Complaint. The Attorney for Plaintiff has an office for business in the County of Erie. Trial to be held in the County of Westchester. The basis of the venue designated above is the location of the Mortgaged Premises. TO Frank O'Connor Defendant In this Action. The foregoing Supplemental Summons is served upon you by publication, pursuant to an order of HON. Lawrence H. Ecker of the Supreme Court Of The State Of New York, dated the Twenty-Sixth day of August, 2021 and filed with the Complaint in the Office of the Clerk of the County of Westchester, in the City of White Plains. The object of this action is to foreclose a mortgage upon the premises described below, executed by Frank O'Connor dated the August 10, 2006, to secure the sum of \$384,000.00 and recorded at Instrument No. 462490790 in the Office of the Westchester County Clerk, on the September 26, 2006. The mortgage was subsequently assigned by an assignment executed December 19, 2011 and recorded on March 26, 2012, in the Office of the Westchester County Clerk at Instrument Number 520813583. The mortgage was subsequently assigned by an assignment executed December 4, 2013 and recorded on February 6, 2014, in the Office of the Westchester County Clerk at Instrument Number 540133360. The mortgage was subsequently assigned by an assignment executed February 26, 2016 and recorded on March 8, 2016, in the Office of the Westchester County Clerk at Instrument Number 560683020. The mortgage was subsequently modified on March 6, 2017; The property in question is described as follows: 157 6TH STREET, VERPLANCK, NY 10596 HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS IN FORECLOSURE NEW YORK STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT WE SEND YOU THIS NOTICE ABOUT THE FORECLOSURE PROCESS. PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY. SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT YOU ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING YOUR HOME. IF YOU FAIL TO RESPOND TO THE SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT IN THIS FORECLOSURE ACTION, YOU MAY LOSE YOUR HOME. PLEASE READ THE SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT CAREFULLY. YOU SHOULD IMMEDIATELY CONTACT AN ATTORNEY OR YOUR LOCAL LEGAL AID OFFICE TO OBTAIN ADVICE ON HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE The state encourages you to become informed about your options in foreclosure. In addition to seeking assistance from an attorney or legal aid office, there are government agencies and non-profit organizations that you may contact for information about possible options, including trying to work with your lender during this process. To locate an entity near you, you may call the toll-free helpline maintained by the New York State Department of Financial Services at 1-800-342-3736 or the Foreclosure Relief Hotline 1-800-269-0990 or visit the department's website at WWW.DFS.NY.GOV. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO LEAVE YOUR HOME AT THIS TIME. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO STAY IN YOUR HOME DURING THE FORECLOSURE PROCESS. YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO LEAVE YOUR HOME UNLESS AND UNTIL YOUR PROPERTY IS SOLD AT AUCTION PURSUANT TO A JUDGMENT OF FORECLOSURE AND SALE. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU CHOOSE TO REMAIN IN YOUR HOME, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR PROPERTY AND PAY PROPERTY TAXES IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE AND LOCAL LAW. FORECLOSURE RESCUE SCAMS Be careful of people who approach you with offers to "save" your home. There are individuals who watch for notices of foreclosure actions in order to unfairly profit from a homeowner's distress. You should be extremely careful about any such promises and any suggestions that you pay them a fee or sign over your deed. State law requires anyone offering such services for profit to enter into a contract which fully describes the services they will perform and fees they will charge, and which prohibits them from taking any money from you until they have completed all such promised services. § 1303 NOTICE NOTICE YOU ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING YOUR HOME If you do not respond to this summons and complaint by serving a copy of the answer on the attorney for the mortgage company who filed this foreclosure proceeding against you and filing the answer with the court, a default judgment may be entered and you can lose your home. Speak to an attorney or go to the court where your case is pending for further information on how to answer the summons and protect your property. Sending a payment to your mortgage company will not stop this foreclosure action. YOU MUST RESPOND BY SERVING A COPY OF THE ANSWER ON THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PLAINTIFF (MORTGAGE COMPANY) AND FILING THE ANSWER WITH THE COURT. DATED: August 31, 2021 Gross Polowy, LLC Attorney(s) For Plaintiff(s) 1775 Wehrle Drive, Suite 100 Williamsville, NY 14221 The law firm of Gross Polowy, LLC and the attorneys whom it employs are debt collectors who are attempting to collect a debt. Any information obtained by them will be used for that purpose. 69930

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continued from page 24

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# How to Define Natural? It Depends on the Label



By Nick Antonaccio

We all are aware that highly processed foods in our diet can disrupt our body's natural ability to maintain the delicate balance between a healthy body and compromised states of health. Food additives also affect the natural vitamins

and beneficial organisms present in raw foods.

Foods subjected to sterilization or high-heat cooking are stripped of some or all of the nutritional value that our bodies rely upon to be healthy and to ward off disease. Fresh fruits and vegetables grown with artificial chemicals added to the soil, leaves or fruit may do more harm than good.

The marketing departments of food companies understand Americans are becoming more healthy-food conscious, notwithstanding our inability to maintain our health as obesity and its related health problems are still growing. They have embarked on campaigns to label their food products to project an image of wholesomeness.

One term that is becoming more popular in describing healthy foods produced in a

non-invasive manner is "natural." Whether in advertisements or on package labels, this term has become ubiquitous in our daily lives. But what does natural – or its idealized synonyms, such as organic and/or sustainable – mean for consumers? The additional reference point – biodiversity – is the extreme form of naturally managing a vineyard. Stand by for a future column exploring this precept.

Since "natural" is not a term defined by the FDA, it is subject to interpretation (manipulation?) by those imprinting it on packages and labels. Hence, it is difficult for the consumer to discern whether this product term meets his or her criteria.

Wine is no different. The definition of "natural wine" is in the eye of the beholder, who doesn't always have 20/20 vision. Is

natural wine a connotation of being "organically" produced, in a "sustainable" manner? And just what is organic or sustainable? They are ill-defined as well – and therefore generally unreliable.

There is a notable exception. Many wine-

producing nations have government-regulated terms for a wine to be classified "certified organic." If this identifier appears on a bottle, the consumer is assured the producer followed strict standards to earn this coveted designation. However, relatively few producers of organic wines

seek this very expensive, time-consuming and bureaucratic-forms-preparation path to certification.

My view is that to best understand whether a particular wine has been produced in a historically correct manner, which I define as having no artificial input from producers and satisfying the physiological needs of our bodies, we must in large part rely on the originating winemaker. Relying on government or big business to satisfy this requirement is not feasible – or rewarding – in the 21st century.

Reasonably reliable methods to ferret out these winemakers include:

1. Find an engaged wine merchant who is simpatico with your viewpoint. He or she will reject the term "natural" as vague and unreliable. Through their own research, coupled with interfaces with multiple winemakers, distributors and importers, they have gained a knowledge that should enable them to discern between "nature's wine" and "industrial wine." If they are so engaged, they can direct you to wines that are the fruit of the land.

2. Take advantage of your internet. Many winemakers across the globe take pride in their winemaking heritage and are devout naturists. In the 21st century, they can communicate their ethos and their techniques directly to consumers via their websites.

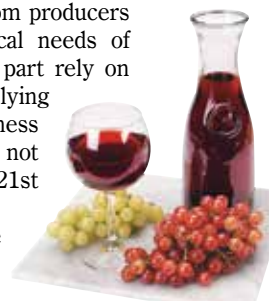
These winemakers take pride in not

resorting to convenient and less expensive modern means to produce their wines. They use no artificial fertilizers to nurture their vines, no chemical herbicides to maintain healthy vines, no industrial pesticides to preserve the yield of grapes, no laboratory concocted hormones to enhance their wines.

What methods do they employ? Grazing sheep in their vineyards to fertilize the soil and keep weeds in check; natural predators to control insects; and natural yeasts to enhance their wines. Understanding the growing desire of American consumers to seek out information, these winemakers have created sophisticated websites and have formed consortiums of like-minded cohorts that disseminate the gospel according to nature.

Natural wines are an admirable trait to seek in all food product labels. Be careful to research the facts behind these claims.

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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# Looking to Retire Early? Ask Yourself These Four Questions First

The pandemic has changed our lives in numerous ways. As a result of all the upheaval, many people are reassessing their priorities and thinking about early retirement.

According to Pew Research, 28 million baby boomers retired in 2020 and a recent study found 39 percent plan to retire by 65, while 18 percent said they plan to retire by age 59.

Before taking that step, here are four questions to ask yourself.

1. Can I afford to stop working? Look at your retirement savings, your life expectancy, your projected income and annual expenditures in retirement. You'll want to consider unforeseen circumstances down the line that could be costly, such as the need to reside in a nursing home.

Use a free retirement calculator and resources available online to help you make a realistic determination as to whether you can afford to retire now, or whether you need to keep earning your full-time salary for a few more years.

2. Do I need life insurance after retirement? There is no one-size-fits-all answer here. However, those carrying debt into retirement, such as mortgages and personal loans, should consider a life insurance plan.

Today, many baby boomers are financially supporting children and grandchildren and have significant debt. According to the



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National Council on Aging, the median consumer debt for households headed by someone aged 65 or older is 4.5 times higher now than in 1989.

Paying off a mortgage is one of the most common reasons to purchase a life insurance policy. Doing so can help ensure your family is able to enjoy the home they love without the burden of outstanding

payments.

"You would do anything to ensure your family has a bright future and having insurance is a simple and affordable way to protect them," said Louis Colaizzo, senior vice president of Erie Family Life. "Life insurance can help loved ones maintain the standard of living they are accustomed to."

So, how much would you need to

leave behind? Calculate your needs with the life insurance calculator available at [erieinsurance.com/life-insurance](http://erieinsurance.com/life-insurance) or contact an independent Erie Insurance agent to discuss options.

3. How will I get health insurance? The current Medicare eligibility age for most people is 65, so if you plan retire before then, you'll need to find another way to get health insurance. Even after you're covered by Medicare, health care expenses can add up, especially if you're on a fixed retirement income.

Some insurance companies offer Medicare supplemental insurance to help pay the portion of expenses not covered by Medicare.

4. How will I spend my time? Retirement can come with ample newfound free time you may not be accustomed to. While that can sound amazing to those working full-time, the transition can be jarring. Whether it's volunteering, taking up new creative hobbies or traveling, planning now for how you will spend your time is a good idea to stave off boredom.

As you consider when to stop working, first ask yourself these four questions so you can take the appropriate steps to help ensure your retirement reality matches your retirement dreams.

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# A Cornucopia of Fall Flavors Abound for Food Lovers

Autumn is in full swing! The air is crisp, apples are falling to the ground at area orchards or just waiting to be picked. Trees are putting on their annual technicolor light show along highways and byways. Area markets are selling their late season harvest of squash, apples, pumpkins and hearty root vegetables.

Restaurant kitchens are geared up with the best the season has to offer. There are many comforting flavors awaiting us at area markets and eateries right now. Follow COVID-19 guidelines and stay safe.

## Dive Oyster House Opens in Briarcliff

Took a break during one of my recent fall drives and stopped into the new Dive Oyster House on Pleasantville Road in Briarcliff Manor. As I pulled up, I was surprised to see Kenny Neziraj tending to the front of the house, aligning the patio tables on the sidewalk.

The last time I saw Kenny, he was affiliated with the original opening team at the popular Kee Oyster House in White Plains. He confided that he had since partnered with his brother, John, who happens to own Fratelli's Trattoria in Croton-On-Hudson, in this new restaurant.

As host, Neziraj is quite the conversationalist, so I took a seat at the artsy seashell bar and sipped on my Captain Lawrence IPA as we spoke. He opened Dive two months ago in the same space that had previously been Chatterbox 54. The renovation is a work in progress, but Kenny was anxious to show off the unique touches he has added throughout the dining room, from the banquet seating to the lighting fixtures. The working kitchen looked spotless.

The menu specializes in fish and seafood as the name implies, but also offers enough meat, poultry and pasta options to satisfy



By Morris Gut

all comers. I had to start with a half-dozen regional oysters, chef's choice, and they came out on a nice platter with all the trimmings. There were three delicious house-made cocktail sauces, including horseradish. Dipped into the ice was a miniature bottle of hot sauce waiting to be opened, for those so inclined. Oysters are always a pleasant indulgence.

For my main course, Neziraj suggested their version of chicken martini – parmesan crusted chicken cutlets topped with breadcrumbs and sauteed in lemon and white wine. They sat on top of a bed of buttery fresh vegetables. Dishes are generously served here, and I did take half home. It was a flavorful experience. Will be back.

Dive Oyster House is located at 1201 Pleasantville Rd. in Briarcliff Manor. Open for lunch and dinner seven days from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Info: 914-236-3911 or visit [www.diveoysterhouse.com](http://www.diveoysterhouse.com).

## A Bite at The Cobble Stone

As I always say, there's nothing like a good old tavern for hearty food, drink

and conversation. The Cobble Stone on Anderson Hill Road in Purchase may be a record holder. It is one of the oldest eateries in Westchester.

According to brothers Scott and Craig Sala, fourth-generation proprietors, the restaurant and bar has continuously operated under the Sala family since 1917. While the official signage out front says Est. 1933, Sala explained that has to do with the repeal of Prohibition. The Cobble Stone served its public right through that period, sometimes as a speakeasy.

Well, the history is intriguing. Many of the old fixtures are there: the green vinyl wooden booths, cobblestone walls, stained glass windows, even an old jukebox and cigarette machine sit idle in the bar and lounge.

The restaurant is located amidst vast estates, country clubs and corporate parks and within range of Manhattanville College and SUNY Purchase.

Leave it to Tom, the friendly barkeep, to refill your favorite brew while scanning the menu. Many of your old favorites are here. On this late afternoon I opted for the gorgonzola bacon burger served on a Kaiser roll with a side of steak fries, while my companion went for the chicken chopped Cobb salad, bed of mixed greens topped with avocado, tomato, bacon, hard boiled egg, red onion and cucumber served with choice of dressing. Both were ample and quite good.

For dessert, the house-made New York-style cheesecake with caramel sauce and whipped cream satiated our sweet tooth. We shared throughout our meal. Might try their beer can chicken on my next visit.

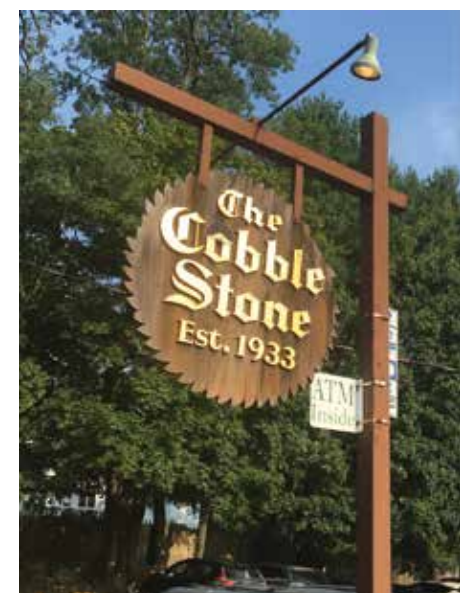
The Cobble Stone is located at 620 Anderson Hill Rd. in Purchase. Open seven days a week, Monday through



What better place to dive into a platter of oysters than at an oyster house – in this case Dive Oyster House, which opened recently in Briarcliff Manor.



The chicken chopped Cobb salad is one of the many excellent choices at The Cobble Stone, one of the oldest restaurants in Westchester.



Stuart's Farm in Granite Springs is one of the excellent area farms to select and buy fall produce.

Friday from 3 to 9 p.m. and 12 to 9 p.m. on weekends. Info: Visit [www.thecobble.com](http://www.thecobble.com).

## Farms and Farmers Markets

Want to pick your own? Take a flavorful fall foliage drive with the whole family. Here are some great destinations and be sure to check ahead for hours and availability.

**Wilken's Fruit & Fir Farm.** 1313 Whitehall Rd., Yorktown Heights. Marking their 105th year, visit the farmers market or pick your own apples, peaches, pumpkins and even Christmas trees. Open daily except Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. through mid-December. Info: 914-245-5111 or visit [www.wilkensfarm.com](http://www.wilkensfarm.com).

**Stuart's Farm.** 62 Granite Springs Rd., Granite Springs. This farm has been operating since 1828, strewn with old tractors and rural artifacts. You can pick your own fruit and produce or visit the farmers market for fresh cider donuts and pies. Open daily 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Info: 914-245-2784 or visit [www.stuartsfarm.com](http://www.stuartsfarm.com).

**Harvest Moon Farm and Orchard.** 130 Hardscrabble Rd., North Salem. Operated by first-generation farmers since 2011, the farm store is open daily 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The on-site kitchen is open Monday through Friday. Get tickets online for apple picking. CSA membership available. Info: 914-485-1210 or visit [www.harvestmoonfarmandorchard.com](http://www.harvestmoonfarmandorchard.com).

**Hayfields.** 1 Bloomer Rd., North Salem. Owner Renea Dayton's multifaceted country market bustles daily inside and out. From the in-house kitchen, there is coffee, breakfast, lunch, soups, salads and ice cream. Colorful flowers, too. Info: 914-669-8275 [www.hayfieldsmarket.com](http://www.hayfieldsmarket.com).

*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 [gutreaactions@optonline.net](mailto:gutreaactions@optonline.net).*

# The Beautiful Struggle: How to Cope After Losing a Beloved Pet

By Brandon Wainwright

As any pet parent will tell you, the joy, love and comfort that comes with adopting an animal companion is a blessing rivaled by few experiences life has to offer.

What they'll also tell you is that losing an animal companion can be more emotionally devastating than just about any of life's many adversities. After experiencing such loss, it takes some pet lovers many years, if ever, before they are willing to open their hearts up to another fur (or feather) baby.

For though they know they will be signing up for much joy, they also know they will be signing up for much pain. This is the unavoidable reality of loving a pet.

I've always been a dog lover, but our beloved chihuahua/dachshund mix, Tyson, was my soulmate. He had a richness of spirit that could best be described as "old soul." He loved with a warm depth that was somehow wise, tough and vulnerable all at once. Losing Tyson in April 2018 was one

of the most emotionally painful experiences of my life, but it was also one of incredible spiritual growth.

In my search for healing, I've discovered a few things along my path that I would like to pass along to anybody who is grieving over a dearly departed pet.

1. Don't buy into the mistaken idea that intense grieving over a pet is weird or inappropriate. Our relationships with our animal friends, though different from those with our human friends, are nonetheless very significant and impactful. Sometimes even more so. The love we feel for another being is not determined by species, but rather by how our souls mesh. We must be gentle with ourselves and understand that our grief reflects our love – and there is nothing weird or inappropriate about that.

2. Don't adopt another animal during your grieving process. For many, the natural compulsion when we are coping with the loss of a fur baby is to try and alleviate the pain by adopting another pet. The problem

is, it is impossible to replace that magic with another pet. This isn't dissimilar to the let-down that invariably comes from a "rebound relationship" after a breakup. The new pet simply can't live up to our expectations, and we end up feeling dissatisfied. Worse, our healthy healing process is often hindered. This is unfair to both the pet and to us.

Instead, spend time with a friend's pet. Perhaps offer pet-sitting services, or even foster a pet awaiting their forever home. This way, we can offer and receive love and companionship from a pet while allowing ourselves to heal without setting a pet up for failure. When we are truly ready for a new fur baby, we will know it.

3. Don't minimize the significance of your healing process, but rather open your mind, heart and spirit to new experiences. For example, Reiki, which is a Japanese form of spiritual energy, offers amazing healing from not only physical ailments, but also mental, emotional and spiritual difficulties. I discovered Reiki during my grieving process. I have since become a Reiki master and animal Reiki practitioner. It has definitely changed my life for the better.

4. Realize that though your pet has crossed the rainbow bridge, their soul is still very much alive and connected to you. Consider sitting quietly and, in your mind and heart, simply reach out to them. You'll likely be very comforted by the beautiful love and peace you receive in return.

You might also consider utilizing the

services of an animal communicator to deliver messages to, and receive messages from, your pet. For some, this may sound far-fetched, but believe me when I say that animal communication is very real. It has the potential to facilitate great healing.

5. With the intense loss we feel when a beloved pet transitions, it can feel like a tragedy. The "tragedy" is only one of perspective. Rejoice knowing that you loved your pet and helped them learn their life lessons – and they did the same for you. Find comfort and peace knowing that you provided them with love and friendship in a way that only you could – and they absolutely did the same for you. This makes their lives a wonderful success and anything but tragic.

Our pets are more than just our friends, companions and protectors. They provide friendship, companionship, love and protection with an innocent joy and dedication that is both pure and unconditional. All they want in return is love. We, their human companions, naturally reciprocate this pure, innocent love and dedication.

Our pets bring out the very best in us. They help us tap into our highest spirits because they make it safe to love with a vulnerability that is rare in most human relationships. The struggle is worth it!

*Brandon Wainwright is a police officer, certified Reiki master and author of "Tyson's Gift." Learn more about the memoir about the journey between he and his beloved dog by visiting [www.TysonGift.com](http://www.TysonGift.com).*

## Harckham Leads Ramble Hike in Peekskill Park



William Janeway of the Adirondack Council and state Sen. Peter Harckham at last week's Hudson River Valley Ramble, a celebration of the natural beauty and historical treasures of the Hudson Valley.

State Sen. Peter Harckham led a mile-long hike in Fort Hill Park on Sunday as part of the official events connected to the 21st annual Hudson River Valley Ramble, a walk, hike, paddle and bike tour celebration of the natural beauty, historical and cultural treasures found in the Hudson Valley.

Over a dozen people joined Harckham for the early morning hike, including William C. Janeway, executive director of the Adirondack Council and one of the architects of the Ramble while he was serving as the longtime regional director of the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in the Hudson Valley/Catskill Region.

"The Hudson River Valley Ramble is a yearly reminder of just how incredible this part of the world is," said Harckham. "The COVID-19 pandemic kept many of us sheltered and indoors last year, and this hike is proof of how important the Great Outdoors is to our physical and mental needs as humans."

Harckham noted that Fort Hill Park, with

its historical importance connected to the Revolutionary War, is "Peekskill's hidden gem," located a few blocks away from the city's downtown area and home to different rock formations, Colonial-era stone walls and a protected woodland, str all open to the public.

"The senator has been a strong friend of conservation and the Adirondack Park and we look forward to making progress for forests, climate, water quality, wildlife and communities in the upcoming session," Janeway said.

In 2019, Harckham was able to deliver a \$221,000 state infrastructure grant to the City of Peekskill for Fort Hill Park, which helped expand and improve the park's trail network.

"Fort Hill Park gives residents who live in an urban setting access to nature," Harckham said, "and it's even close to an elementary school. The park offers great opportunities for residents interested in walking through the woods and taking in vistas of the Hudson Valley."

## Bedford Audubon Appoints New Executive Director

The Bedford Audubon Society Board of Directors announced Monday the appointment of Bill Cavers as the organization's executive director.

Bedford Audubon is one of the oldest Audubon chapters in the nation and serves communities in northern Westchester and eastern Putnam counties.

"We're thrilled that Bill is taking on this leadership role," said Susan Fisher, the board president. "Authentic and engaging with real substance, Bill fits right in with the Bedford Audubon family. His proven leadership and fundraising skills, business background and passion for protecting the environment make him well positioned to deliver on the board's vision and lead us to the next level of growth."

Cavers comes to Bedford Audubon from Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) where he has been a senior fellow for the last 16 months. He serves on the Long Island Sound Study, CLF's Connecticut state advisory board and is also a longstanding member of the Town of Darien, Conn.'s Coastal Commission.

Cavers retired in 2017 from a 30-year career financing large-scale solar, wind and other clean energy projects and ventures.

"It's a privilege to be joining Bedford Audubon," Cavers said. "More than ever, it's a time to engage with birds and nature, and I'm thrilled to undertake that mission in the communities surrounding Bylane Farm."

He completed a nonprofit management



Bill Cavers will be taking over as the Bedford Audubon Society's executive director.

program at the University of Connecticut to transition his business skills. Cavers has an undergraduate degree in political science from Johns Hopkins University and an MBA from the University of Michigan.

He and his wife, Laura, live in Darien. Their two children live in Boston and New York City.

# Arc Stages Strives for 'The Mountaintop' in Return Production

By Martin Wilbur

This Friday evening Arc Stages returns from its pandemic-induced performance hiatus, and the production promises to provide three weekends of riveting subject matter.

The Pleasantville-based theater company is presenting "The Mountaintop," playwright Katori Hall's fictionalized yet thought-provoking work on the last night of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life.

The entire two-character play takes place in his room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis on the evening of Apr. 3, 1968, the day before his assassination and following his eerily prescient final public address, which has come to be known as "I've Been to the Mountaintop."

Director Ryan Quinn said the goal of the play, featuring actor Gabriel Lawrence as King and Shavonna Banks as Carrie Mae, a maid who delivers him room service late that evening, isn't an impersonation but to give greater context to the life and work of the civil rights icon.

Quinn said that Hall has told the story that in her grandmother's house there were only two photos – of Jesus and King – and one of the playwright's missions was to take King off the wall and explore the man, not the myth, and where the civil rights movement was headed if history had not intervened.

"It's pretend, so the goal, again, isn't an impersonation, the goal is a conversation with an icon of what it is of the person that we bring in to what it is we get to see, and I think you'll see right away, because the playwright



Actor Gabriel Lawrence and Shavonna Banks star in Arc Stages' production of "The Mountaintop," a fictionalized story of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s final evening of his life.

does four things immediately to make us understand him as a man and not as a saint," Quinn explained.

Hall, a Memphis native who wrote "The Mountaintop" in 2009, has related the story that her mother wanted to go see King speak in his final trip to the city, but that her mother, Hall's maternal grandmother, refused to let her attend fearing it was too dangerous, according to Quinn. She has woven that into the story as well, he said.

Quinn also said the play continues an important conversation about the civil rights struggle that King was grappling with at the time of his death more than 50 years ago.

"I think we've sanitized history, and the vision is beautiful, but he talks so much about complacency, and especially white complacency within the movement, especially where we were at in '68 after the Civil Rights bill has passed, and we never hear about that," Quinn said. "But that was really happening at

that moment and I think we're still reconciling about what that presents."

He hopes that if theater-goers take away anything from the show, it is to challenge everyone about doing the difficult work of achieving greater equality.

Arc Stages Artistic Director Adam Cohen said when he read "The Mountaintop" it was a moving experience for him even before he and Quinn began with auditions. That's something that often doesn't happen often, even with outstanding works, until it's brought to the stage, he said.

"This one hit me on the page," Cohen said. "I was devastated reading it and laughing and crying, like the person on the page spoke to me so much that I have to do this show."

After theaters were closed since early 2020 because of COVID-19, it also helps financially that there are only two actors, Cohen said, even though Arc Stages had been able to continue with its Education Stage programs and productions for youngsters.

Moreover, Lawrence and Banks are truthful actors, intensely believable in their roles, he said.

The show runs for seven performances on Friday and Saturday evenings, Oct. 1, 2, 8, 9, 15 and 16 with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, Oct. 17. All evening performances begin at 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$38 for adults, \$30 for students and \$28 for students. For tickets and more information, visit [www.arcstages.org](http://www.arcstages.org). All patrons must be vaccinated except for children under 12 and those with medical exemptions.

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