



FREE

January 25 - January 31, 2022

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 14, Issue 631

Puglisi Decides Not to Take Paid Consulting Role in Cortlandt

By Rick Pezzullo

Former Cortlandt Supervisor Linda Puglisi has decided not to accept a paid consulting role that was approved by the Town Board following a rash of criticism posted on social media.

During its first voting meeting of 2022 on Jan. 11, the Cortlandt Town Board voted to enter into a consulting agreement for a maximum of 10 months with Puglisi, who just retired at the end of 2021, at a rate of \$6,500 month.

Puglisi, who served 34 consecutive years on the Town Board, including 30 as supervisor, was slated to assist the current administration with background information and other expertise on various issues, including the decommissioning of the Indian Point nuclear power plants.

"It's good governance," Puglisi said last week when asked about her new responsibility. "I'm looking forward to it. I appreciate Richard (new Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker) and the Town Board wanting me to be in that capacity. I have a lot of knowledge to bring to the table."

However, Becker said last Wednesday a "significant number" of individuals criticized the action, prompting Becker and Puglisi to reconsider the arrangement.

"In light of the many concerns voiced over the last week, we both decided that it is in the best interest of the town government to move forward," Becker said. "We are supposed to represent the people and if they are upset about something we will stop it."

Becker said he took offense to some comments that he wasn't ready for the job, and noted some critics were upset with taxpayers' money being used to pay

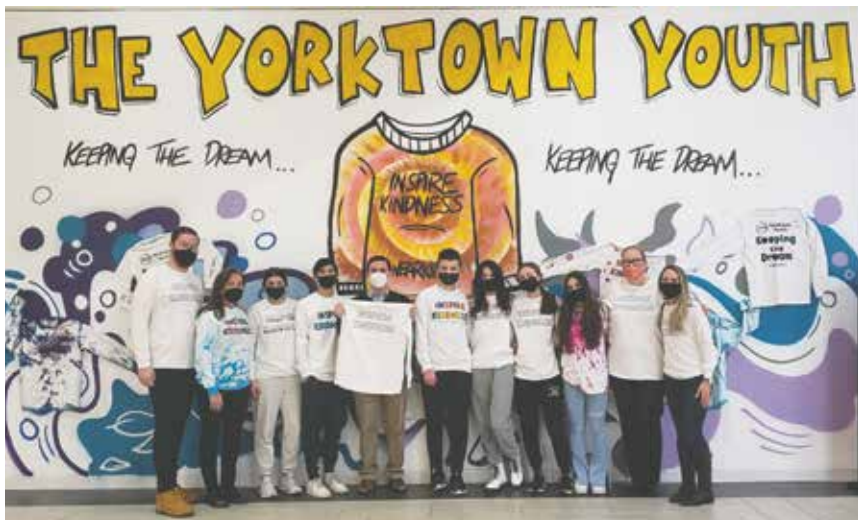
Puglisi, which he acknowledged, "I was very sensitive to that."

He did mention that having a former executive help in a transition period was very common in the business world, adding he experienced that when he took on a managerial role at Phelps Hospital.

Puglisi, who earned an annual salary of \$179,000 last year, said she had agreed to continue in a volunteer capacity on a few committees and organizations.

"I appreciate Supervisor Richard Becker and the Town Board's opportunity to work
continued on page 2

Keeping the Dream Alive



Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater (center) took part in a Keeping The Dream event sponsored by Alliance for Safe Kids last week that was held in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Ossining High Senior Named Finalist in Science Talent Search

By Rick Pezzullo

An Ossining High School senior was named last week as one of 40 finalists in this year's Regeneron Science Talent Search, the nation's oldest and most prestigious science and math competition for high school seniors.

Nyasha Nyoni has already earned at least \$25,000 for her project, entitled "Unhealthy Scrolling: Instagram Influencers Endorse More Unhealthy Food and Beverage Products Compared to Celebrities," and is the running to receive an additional \$250,000.

"We are excited to welcome an exceptional group of Regeneron Science Talent Search 2022 finalists and continue our tradition of supporting the next generation of scientific leaders," said George D. Yancopoulos, M.D., Ph.D., Co-founder, President and Chief Scientific Officer of Regeneron, and a 1976 Science Talent Search finalist and winner. "Competing in the Science Talent Search was life-changing for me and helped give me the inspiration and confidence to devote myself to a life of using science to help fight disease. We look forward to seeing how this year's finalists, with their demonstrated perseverance and creativity, continue to harness the power of science to address the



Ossining High School senior Nyasha Nyoni

many challenges facing society, and improve the lives of people around the world."

The finalists were chosen based on their projects' scientific rigor and their potential to become world-changing scientists and leaders. They were selected from 300 scholars, named earlier this month by Regeneron and the Society for Science.

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Cortlandt Authorizes Incentive for Employees to Get Vaccinated

By Rick Pezzullo

The Cortlandt Town Board is offering incentives to encourage employees to get vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus.

Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker said about 20% of the town's workforce, which amounts to approximately 40 employees, have yet to be vaccinated, putting a strain at times on services.

For example, Becker noted five employees in the Highway Division were unavailable to clean up after a winter storm.

"It makes staffing very difficult," Becker said.

No employees have died from COVID-19 complications, but several have been hospitalized, according to Becker, while others have been forced to quarantine or take sick time.

In 2021, Becker said it has been estimated the COVID-19 pandemic cost the town about \$1 million.

At its Jan. 11 meeting, the Town Board authorized the town comptroller to implement a vaccine incentive in which employees are paid \$125 for their first vaccine and an additional \$125 for their second vaccine for Pfizer or Moderna. Employees who chose the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine would receive \$250.

Booster shots would give employees an additional \$125.



Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker

The offer extends through Jan. 31. To date, Becker said no employees have taken advantage of the incentive.

Yorktown Votes to Continue Outdoor Permit Fee Waivers

By Rick Pezzullo

The Yorktown Town Board voted last week to continue waiving fees for businesses for sidewalk sales and outdoor dining.

The permit-fee waiver began in 2020 as part of the town's effort to help local retailers during the pandemic.

"Our small businesses continue to need help because of all the disruptions caused by the pandemic," said Supervisor Matt Slater. "The permit fee waiver is one of several actions the business community has pointed to as a helping hand to get back on their feet."

Some of Yorktown's other pandemic responses have included expedited permit reviews by the Building Department and the Destination Y marketing campaign, which launched in mid-2020.

"This is a common-sense policy that is easy for the town to offer and helpful to many businesses," said Councilman Sergio Esposito, former president of the Yorktown Chamber of Commerce who still is a member of its Board of Directors.

Last month, the town, Chamber of Commerce and the Yorktown Small Business Association launched a new shop-local promotion on Black Friday. Yorktown: Your Home Base for the Holidays is a multi-platform promotion that celebrated local shopping, dining, and entertainment.

"Even though it's cold, there are still some people who feel safer eating outdoors, so this waiver helps our residents feel more secure," said Councilman Tom Diana.

"We will continue exploring new ways to promote our business hamlets. The fee waivers are just a small piece of our efforts," said Councilman Ed Lachterman.

Small businesses looking to make outdoor seating or sidewalk sales a permanent fixture of their business model will need to go through a more thorough approval process including Planning Board review.

"Many of us have enjoyed outdoor meals at local restaurants that have survived almost two years of disruption. I'm pleased that the town will continue to offer the permit fee waiver," said Councilwoman Luciana Haughwout.

Puglisi Decides Not to Take Paid Consulting Role in Cortlandt

continued from page 1

with the new administration," Puglisi stated. "Having had 30 years as Town Supervisor we thought it would continue the excellent transition we had in the two months after Election Day to bring my experience to the new administration. It's difficult for me to not be involved so I will be available to assist only as a volunteer to Supervisor Becker and his administration when and where needed.

I would NEVER do anything to negatively impact the community that I care for so deeply and have worked so hard to make it better over the years for our residents."

Councilman Frank Farrell, who served 26 years with Puglisi on the Town Board, voted against the consulting agreement, expressing, according to Becker, "one era ends, and another era begins."

Ossining High Senior Named Finalist in Science Talent Search

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The scholars were chosen from a pool of more than 1,800 highly qualified entrants, all of whom completed an original research project and extensive application process.

"Congratulations to the Regeneron Science Talent Search 2022 finalists," said Maya Ajmera, President and CEO of Society for Science, Publisher of Science News and 1985 Science Talent Search alum. "This year's finalists have shown resilience and dedication in the face of so many obstacles in their educational pursuits. From the COVID pandemic to the harsh realities of climate change, these students have demonstrated their leadership and commitment to STEM innovation. As our world continues to heal and find ways forward, these students will be the key to solving global challenges not only today, but in the future."

Finalists will participate in a week-long competition from March 9-16, where they will undergo a rigorous judging process and compete for more than \$1.8 million in awards. They will also have an opportunity

to interact with leading scientists and share their research during a virtual "Public Day" event on March 13.

The top 10 awards range from \$40,000 to \$250,000. The top 10 Regeneron Science Talent Search 2022 winners will be announced during a live-streamed awards ceremony on March 15. In total, more than \$3 million in awards will be distributed throughout the Regeneron Science Talent Search, which includes awards to finalists as well as \$2,000 provided to each of the top 300 scholars and their schools.

Award winners use the prize money to advance their education and scientific research.

Program alumni include recipients of the world's most coveted science and math honors, including 13 Nobel Prizes, 11 National Medals of Science, six Breakthrough Prizes, 22 MacArthur Foundation Fellowships and two Fields Medals, as well as the founders of many important science-based companies, including Regeneron.

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2020 Anne Pichon Grenache Noir



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Dan's Wine of the Year

2014 Casa Santos
Lima Reserva



The nose on this wine bursts through the seems with dark fruit notes earthy spice-tinged berries that remind you the wine is old school. The palate brings Very complex on the palate with coconut, blackberry, jam and dried fruit, prune and fig. The addition of the Syrah in this blend is what separates this wine from anything ordinary.

\$11⁹⁷

Jason's Wine of the Year

2019 Oak Farm Tievoli
Cabernet Sauvignon



Deep garnet in color, this Cabernet Sauvignon is composed of complex aromas of black currant, blueberry, cedar, and floral characteristics. The wine is full bodied with echoing aromas on the palate. The finish is abundant in textured tannins, yet smooth and velvety.

\$14⁹⁷

Suburban's Sparkling Wine of the Year

NV Isotta Manzoni
Prosecco Rose



Subtle and fresh aromas with hints of small red berries, rose, and pomegranate. On the palate it is silky and full with elegant flavors of strawberry and crushed violets, finishing with well-balanced minerality. You will have no problem finishing the bottle once it's opened. This is crushable!

\$13⁹⁷

Tom's Wine of the Year

2018 Laurent Combier
Crozes Hermitage



Mesmerizing deep dark ruby with dark pink shimmers along the rim of the wine. This Syrah emits a nose of black cherry jam, figs, black currants, and subtle notes of bacon fat, cured meat, and violets. The palate is rich with bright and juicy blackberries, blueberries, and cranberries. Black peppercorns, dried thyme, and subtle notes of river rocks breakthrough the berry medley. A lingering finish of dried blueberries and cacao finalize this wine.

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Dozens of Police Agencies Show Support to NYPD Precinct of Slain Officer

By Martin Wilbur

Hundreds of police officers throughout the lower Hudson Valley participated in a caravan Sunday afternoon to the Harlem police precinct that saw one of its officers fatally shot Friday night and another fighting for his life.

About 50 law enforcement agencies were represented, many from Westchester and Putnam counties, in a show of support and a tribute to the fallen officer, Jason Rivera. They brought flowers, food and cards and various Police Benevolent Associations and police fraternal organizations in Westchester made donations to the fund established by the NYPD to support the family of Rivera, who married last fall.

The caravan started at the Westchester County Police Academy in Valhalla and made its way down to the 32nd Precinct on West 135th Street in Manhattan. The New York City police escorted the caravan from the Westchester-Bronx border, down the Major Deegan Expressway and to the stationhouse.

"It's really just to show the NYPD and to show everybody that when something bad happens to anybody in law enforcement it affects the entire community," said Westchester County police Sgt. James Dress. "We all wear different patches but we're all from the same family. So it's just an opportunity to show our support from all the northern precincts of the area north of New York City."



WESTCHESTER DES PHOTO

Police officers from throughout the Hudson Valley stand with NYPD members for the laying of wreaths outside the 32nd Precinct in Harlem on Sunday. On last Friday night, a 22-year-old NYPD officer was shot and killed and his partner is fighting for his life.

Rivera and his partner, Officer Wilbert Mora, were ambushed Friday night while responding to a domestic violence call. When they arrived at the apartment, Lashawn McNeil allegedly emerged from a rear bedroom firing his gun, hitting Rivera and Mora.

Over the weekend Mora underwent two surgeries to remove a bullet near his brain. After the two officers were struck, a third officer fired at McNeil, hitting him twice.

Dress said the shooting has been particularly hard on the police community because the officers were responding to a type of call that is made on a routine basis.



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

A police caravan, which included members from about 50 departments throughout the Hudson Valley, leaves the Westchester Police Academy on Sunday on its way to the 32nd Precinct in Harlem.

"They were there doing their jobs, they were there to render some aid to the people who called for their help and unfortunately they weren't given the opportunity, the perpetrator opened the door and fired and the officers, they really didn't have much time to react," he said. "That's very tragic and the fact that some of the officers from that command in New York City actually had to carry the officers to the hospital, which was at the end of the block, (it's) very emotional, very tragic."

Westchester County police spokesman Kieran O'Leary said the slain officer's age – Rivera was 22 years old – and the fact that last week was especially brutal for police officers in the city and around the nation has likely heightened the outpouring of support this time. Last week four NYPD

officers were shot.

In most previous instances when an officer has been hit, the county police and representatives from several Westchester departments and the lower Hudson Valley would make the trip, O'Leary said.

"I think the uptick in violence against police officers is a factor for everybody to come together and stand united, and I think the young age of the officer, who was 22 years old, at the start of his career, and I think that really just hit everybody, too," he said. "This is like a life and a career that's not going to happen because of the violence that happened to him and I think that really resonated with everybody also."

Also participating in the caravan were departments from Rockland, Dutchess and Orange counties and Stamford, Conn.



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COVID Cases Plummeting But Westchester Sees Fatalities Rise

By Martin Wilbur

The worst of this winter's COVID-19 surge appears to be over as cases locally and statewide continue to plunge but an increase in deaths from the Omicron variant continue to hit the area.

During the past week the percentage of positive tests returned dipped below 10 percent across New York State, while Westchester County has recorded a single-digit positivity rate for five consecutive days through the weekend. On Sunday, Westchester had an 8.3 rate of infection from 5,205 tests. It actually was slightly higher than Friday and Saturday, which saw readings of 7.9 and 7.5 percent, respectively.

The statewide number closely mirrored Westchester's, with an 8.5 percent rate on Sunday, up slightly from 7.8 percent on Saturday under 10 percent since last Wednesday. Cases per 100,000 residents are declining in each one of the state's 10 regions, said Gov. Kathy Hochul.

"Our hard work to bring down the numbers during the winter surge is paying off, but we are not through this yet," Hochul said. "Let's keep using the tools – the vaccine, booster and masks – that will help slow the spread of this virus, protect our families and keep our schools and businesses open."

Westchester saw its active caseload on



Westchester County Executive George Latimer reported that active COVID-19 cases in the county have declined by nearly two-thirds in less than two weeks, but fatalities from the virus have soared over the past two months.

Sunday plummet to 13,309, a little more than one-third of the peak of the Omicron-induced surge that reached 36,345 10 days

earlier.

County Executive George Latimer said given the pattern of the variant abroad as well as the timing of the surge from last winter, which peaked about two weeks after New Year's and the end of the holiday season, it's an encouraging sign.

"We're hopeful that what we've seen overseas will also be fully manifest here, which would be a significant drop in the number of hospitalizations, not only as we get further away from the holidays, but as we get a little closer to spring and the better weather," said Latimer, who acknowledged that it's nearly two months until the start of spring.

The improving numbers have not resulted in a deceleration of fatalities, which health officials often repeat is a lagging indicator. Through Saturday, Westchester has seen 160 people die from COVID-19 in January alone, up from seven for the entire month of November and 60 for the full month of December, Latimer said.

Although new daily infections have fallen by nearly two-thirds in Putnam since that county topped out at 1,584 infections on Jan. 3, the positivity rate on Sunday was at 13.9 percent. On Friday and Saturday, Putnam saw rates of 9.7 and 8.3 percent,



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

respectively, the only two days this month below 10 percent.

COVID-19-related hospitalizations have been as well, but will take some more time before

those numbers have a comparable rate of reduction to cases. Through Saturday, Westchester had 486 hospitalizations; at the peak of this season's surge less than two weeks before that, there were 627 patients hospitalized from the from the virus, Latimer said.

Hospitalizations statewide stood at 9,798 over the weekend, down slightly under 3,000 since the peak earlier this month, according to the state's tracker on matters related to COVID-19.

Latimer said Monday that testing and vaccinations by appointment at the County Center in White Plains will continue at least through the end of February. Appointments for boosters can be made for Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and some Saturdays by visiting health.westchestergov.com.

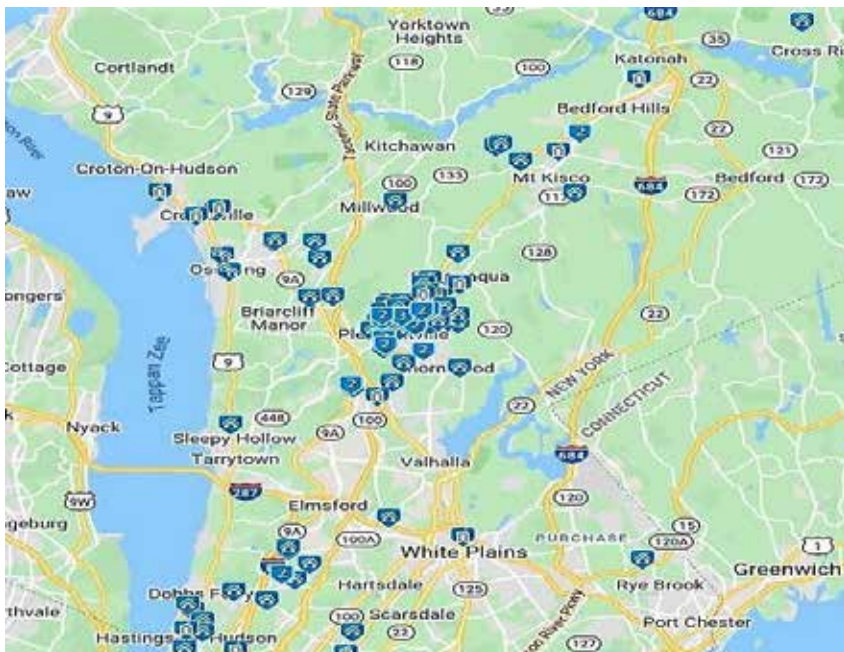
Testing is available Mondays and Tuesdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to noon and Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. through the end of next month.

To make an appointment for a test, visit <https://tinyurl.com/3kz9nfw9>.

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Mobile COVID Testing Site Opens in Yorktown

In response to long lines for testing at local pharmacies and urgent care centers, a mobile testing site opened last week at Yorktown's Granite Knolls Park.

Yorktown officials responded to the surging demand for COVID-19 tests by partnering with Ridgewood Labs to offer drive-thru services in the park's parking lot. The site, located at 2975 Stony St. in Yorktown.

It is Ridgewood Lab's fourth site established in the tristate area.

"This pandemic has required local government to innovate and build new partnerships in order to provide critical services to its residents," said Supervisor

Matt Slater. "We encourage those in need, both in Yorktown and our neighboring communities, to take advantage of this free service."

The drive-thru testing is being offered Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"I'm glad that we can help our residents get the tests they need," Councilman Tom Diana said.

Appointments and masks are required for the tests. The public can sign up for the tests by visiting <https://testny.online/reg.aspx>.

"We have been working on establishing this program for nearly two months and I am glad it has finally come to fruition," said

Councilman Sergio Esposito. "This will help our community take another step closer to normalcy."

The testing is expected to continue in the park until March.

"Just as we offered our community center for vaccinations, we are offering a public park for mobile testing to help our community stay safe," Councilman Ed Lachterman said.

Yorktown Town Board members outside the new mobile testing site at Granite Knolls Park last week.



TOWN OF YORKTOWN PHOTO

Winter Blood Drive Set for Monday in P'ville

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a negative impact on blood donations as traditionally major sponsors of blood drives such as schools and businesses opt to hold off on hosting the drives. The cold weather and seasonal colds and flu are also preventing people from donating.

In response, the Emanuel Lutheran Church in Pleasantville is sponsoring a community blood drive this Monday, Jan. 31 from 1 to 7 p.m. at the church on 197 Manville Rd. in Pleasantville. Both whole blood and red cell units will be collected from qualifying candidates. Although this drive makes it convenient for Pleasantville residents to participate,

blood donors from all towns are welcome to come to lend their help.

All persons donating during the month of January will be entered into a sweepstakes to win a Mirror Home Gym.

Donors will be required to wear a mask. To allow for sufficient social distancing, appointments are preferred and strongly encouraged, although walk-ins will be accepted if and when distancing requirements can be followed.

For questions regarding eligibility, including questions regarding travel, medications and last donation, call 800-688-0900. To make an appointment, call 800-933-2566 or visit www.NYBloodCenter.org/donate-blood.

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Cortlandt Adds New Community Resource Officer From County

By Rick Pezzullo

Police services in the Town of Cortlandt were enhanced last week with the addition of a new uniformed law enforcement officer from the Westchester County Department of Public Safety who will serve as a community resource officer (CRO).

The new position, which will cost Cortlandt \$252,000 this year, is an outgrowth of the state mandated police reform process that municipalities participated in last year.

"We are excited to offer this new coverage to our community with our ongoing partnership with Westchester County Department of Public Safety," said Cortlandt Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker. "I would like to thank County Executive George Latimer for working with our community in making this partnership a success and one that continues to grow."

"The work to be done by a CRO will enhance the safety and security of the people of Cortlandt and will also build trust and a stronger relationship between the police and the people they serve in the town," Latimer added.

Since Cortlandt eliminated its own police department as a cost-cutting move in 1999, the town has contracted with Westchester to fill that void, along with getting coverage from the state police. The state police operate out of barracks in the Crugers section of Cortlandt and pay the

town \$100,000 annually for the use of its headquarters on Route 9A.

The CRO is expected to work closely with the Cortlandt Town Board, business community and neighborhood organizations to identify and address issues requiring police intervention.

CRO training includes instruction in a wide range of topics such as crisis intervention, de-escalation, implicit bias, procedural justice, crime prevention, mental health issues and domestic violence.

"The addition of a CRO will enable our department to engage more fully with residents, business and community leaders, youth groups, clergy and others to hear their concerns and build a strong partnership in addressing those issues," said Westchester Public Safety Commissioner Thomas Gleason.

Police Officer Deopaul Mahadeo, who currently serves as a patrol officer in Cortlandt, has been selected as the CRO. Mahadeo is a United States Marine Corps veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He started his law enforcement career with the White Plains Police Department where he served for five years before transferring to the Westchester County police.

"This officer already has an extensive knowledge of the Cortlandt community that he can build upon in his work as the CRO," Gleason said.

The CRO will also work on collaborative

initiatives with the Westchester County Police officers who currently serve as School Resource Officers in the Hendrick Hudson and Lakeland school districts.

The Village of Mount Kisco, which also

disbanded its local police department in 2015 and receives police services from the county, has also been exploring the possibility of adding a community resource officer.

Fun Time



Kindergartners participate in Mount Kisco Elementary School's gymnastics unit in physical education. The activities encourage a growth mindset in students as they cycle through stations designed to develop their gymnastics skills by practicing strength, balance, agility, coordination and flexibility – all while having fun. Physical education teachers look for progress, not perfection.

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Letters to the Editor

Those Suffering From Alzheimer's Must Have Access to New Medication

Say it ain't so Joe.

I am beyond disappointed in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) decision to cover the recently approved Alzheimer's drug Aduhelm only for people in clinical trials. During President Biden's acceptance speech, he encouraged us all to look ahead to an America that cures diseases like Alzheimer's.

This outrageously expensive drug, at a cost of \$28,200 per month, has the potential to offer hope to the families of the more than five million Americans living with Alzheimer's. But with its current price tag only a select few will be able to have access. As someone who lost my mother to early-onset Alzheimer's disease I know what a devastating impact it can have on

a family's emotional, mental, physical and financial stability.

The drugs currently available are decades old and have shown minimal benefit. Aduhelm is the first drug to gain FDA approval in a long time and Americans living with Alzheimer's are entitled to therapies, just as people with conditions like cancer, heart disease and HIV/AIDS. Treating people living with Alzheimer's differently than those with other diseases

is discrimination and simply unacceptable.

For the 16 million Americans providing 18.6 billion hours of unpaid care to people with Alzheimer's and other dementias, I call on the CMS to change this decision and ensure equitable access for all who could benefit from FDA-approved treatments.

**Nancy Keane
Ossining**

Greater Transparency is Required From Putnam County Government

Whether we stand on the left or the right politically, we can agree that we want to know that our government is fiscally responsible and gets good value for the hard-earned dollars that we pay in taxes. However, our Putnam County government has demonstrated fiscal irresponsibility. They recently voted themselves raises while increasing our county income taxes and at the same time cutting mobile medical services and not adequately funding our health department.

As voters and taxpayers, we should demand full transparency from our elected leaders. The practice of going into closed executive sessions must end and the proposed county budget should be available for all to see and comment on at least a month before it is voted on.

**Steven Altarescu
Putnam Valley**

Living Peacefully Starts at Home and Includes All Species

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. referred to renowned spiritual leader and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh as "an apostle of peace and nonviolence" in a letter nominating his respected colleague for the Nobel Peace Prize.

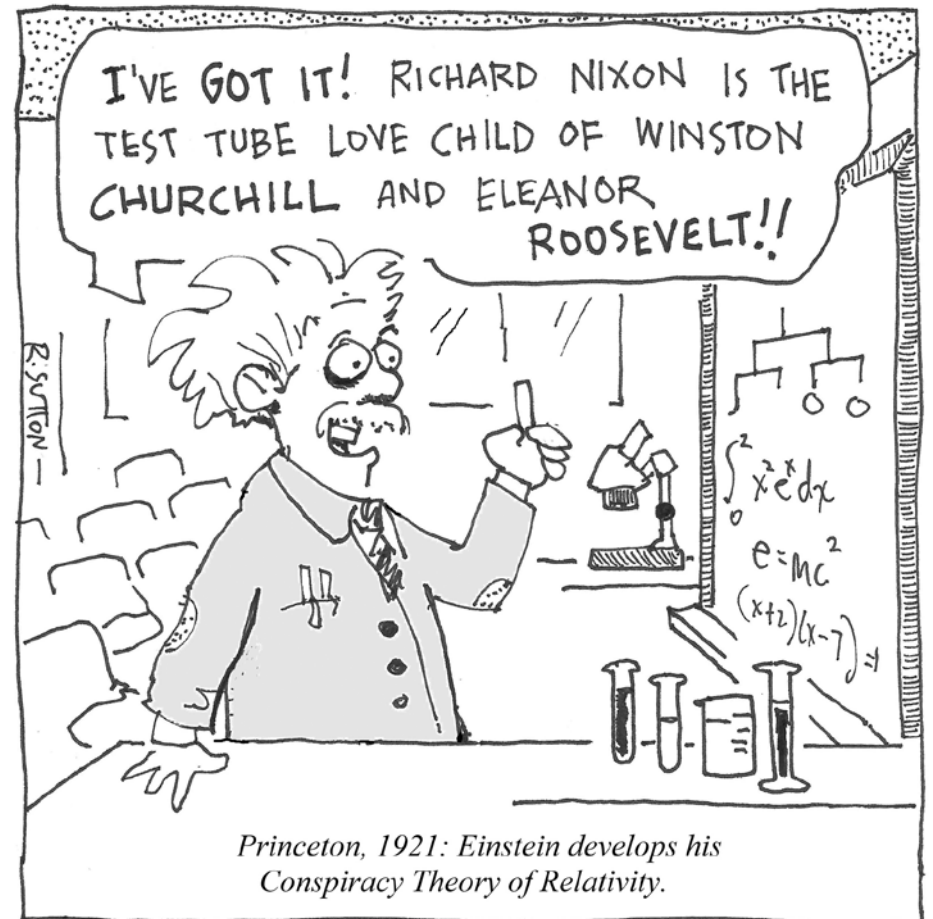
Thây, as his Buddhist followers called him (Vietnamese for "teacher"), had certainly earned such high praise. Often compared to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Nhat Hanh devoted his life to helping humanity learn to coexist peacefully with one another and with the other sentient beings with whom we share the planet.

He knew that we could never achieve nonviolence without rejecting the

subjugation and abuse of other species – and that a peaceful world begins on our plates. As he put it, "I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill and not to support any act of killing in the world."

Nhat Hanh allowed PETA to use those words in a beautiful ad encouraging everyone who prays for peace on Earth to start in their own homes and to choose compassion three times a day. As we mourn the loss of Nhat Hanh, there is no better way to honor his legacy.

**Michelle Kretzer
The PETA Foundation
Norfolk, Va.**



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Five-Story Apartment Building Explored for Somers Commons

By Rick Pezzullo

The owner of the Somers Commons shopping center in Baldwin Place is looking to revitalize the longtime retail-only property by bringing in multifamily housing.

Willing Biddle, president and COO of Urstadt Biddle Properties, presented the Somers Planning Board on Jan. 12 with plans to build a five-story, 160-unit apartment building in a 30,000-square-foot space being vacated by Home Goods in early March. Somers Commons is located on Route 6.

Home Goods is relocating about seven miles away to the Cortlandt Town Center on Route 6 in Mohegan Lake to occupy space near Home Depot. The space it is moving into was most recently a Bed Bath & Beyond.

Having reached out to about 100 retailers across the country without success for a possible replacement for Home Goods, Biddle explained that his company, which also owns the Town Centre at Somers and the Heritage 202 Center, both on Route 100 in Somers, was hoping to capitalize on a popular trend in the industry.

“There have been a lot of challenges in the retail world. It’s more and more difficult to find big-box retailers to come into a shopping center,” Biddle said. “We’re looking at potentially a white elephant and we’re scared of that and what it could do to the rest of the center. We’re concerned this store will go dark and we won’t be able to find a replacement for it.”

Plans call for the demolition of the Home



The Home Goods site at Somers Commons where 160 apartments have been proposed by a developer.

Goods building and the construction of a complex with a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom rental apartments. There would be 72 one- and two-bedroom units each and 16 with three bedrooms. Of those units, 24 would be set aside for affordable housing.

The existing Goodwill, Cold Stone Creamery and Penny Lane stores near Home Goods are scheduled to remain. There are currently four other vacancies in the shopping center.

Anup Misra, a consultant for Urstadt Biddle Properties, said the new apartment building, which would include 5,000 square feet of amenities, would help attract baby boomers and millennials to Somers.

“There’s a gap that needs to be filled,” Misra said. “We’re aiming for this to be a top-class development. I think this would be a great thing for the town and a great thing for the shopping center. This is a transition happening all over Westchester. This change is creeping up north.”

Dave Smith, Somers’ consultant planner, agreed mixing housing with retail was “consistent with what is going on in Westchester County.”

“There’s certainly a need for housing in Westchester County of all types,” Smith said. “A lot of synergy can be created with this type of concept.”

However, several Planning Board

members strongly balked at the building being five stories, which would require a zoning change from the Town Board. Planning Board member David McNamara said it would be “precedent-setting.”

“While it’s good for you, it’s not necessarily good for us,” board member Nancy Gerbino asserted. “This is a major, major change to our zoning. We are bucolic and how we keep that is by not having five-story buildings.”

“A five-story structure is quite bold for northern Westchester. I understand the concept, but I believe it belongs down county,” added board member Chris Zaberto. “This is a massive project. I don’t see how a five-story complex with 320 parking spaces is a good fit for Somers. I don’t see public opinion in your favor either.”

Planning Board Chairman John Currie said he would be “very comfortable” if the building was three stories, commenting, “I’m not in favor of a five-story building anywhere in this town. I would hate to see even one change the character of the town.”

Biddle, who mentioned his company has been a fixture in Somers since 1993 and paid about \$1.14 million in property taxes in 2021, said the easy solution would be to do nothing, but he expressed hope town officials would work with him to craft a mutually acceptable project.

“We want the community to thrive and we’re here to stay,” he said. “What’s good for Somers, is good for us. We need zoning flexibility to help ourselves. We’re not going to build something that’s not going to work.”

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Taghkanic Chorale Welcomes New Singers for Spring Season

Rehearsals for the Taghkanic Chorale's spring concert have begun and new singers are invited to join.

The concert program, "Across the Vast Eternal Sky," features the ethereal music of Ola Gjeilo ("Sunrise Mass") and Enrique Granados ("Song of the Stars"), coupled with Leonard Bernstein's powerful "Chichester Psalms" and selections from his "West Side Story" – all music designed to inspire and uplift.

Performances will be held on May 14 and 15 at Holy Name of Mary Church in Croton-on-Hudson.

Now in its 55th season, the Taghkanic Chorale offers music lovers in northern Westchester and surrounding communities the opportunity to sing and hear the greatest choral music of all eras from the Renaissance to contemporary composers.

Throughout the pandemic the chorale has persevered with virtual concerts and Zoom rehearsals, always aligned with New York State and CDC guidelines.

"Last September we began

rehearsing in person again, with masks. And our December concert in Croton was our first live performance for an audience in two years," said Deb May, the chorale's president.

That concert celebrated the music of Bach and Vivaldi, supported by five accomplished soloists and a 20-piece Baroque orchestra.

Rehearsals for the upcoming spring season are every Tuesday evening from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., initially held via Zoom. Plans are to return to in-person rehearsals with a live streaming option for remote participation on Feb. 8.

The Chorale welcomes singers of all ages, vocal ranges and skill levels. No audition is required. Prospective singers are encouraged to drop in on a Tuesday rehearsal, with no obligation to join.

For more information on the Taghkanic Chorale, Maestro Jason Tramm, Zoom log-in, rehearsal specifics and a video link to the December concert, visit www.taghkanicchorale.org.



The Taghkanic Chorale is holding rehearsals for prospective members to join the group for its 55th season and its scheduled spring concert program on May 14 and 15.

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Arc Stages Upcoming Production to Challenge Audience on Truth, Faith

By Martin Wilbur

From the time that Adam Cohen first saw the Michael John LaChiusa musical "See What I Wanna See" after its 2005 debut, the music and the story has never left him.

Cohen, the artistic director at Pleasantville's Arc Stages, now has the chance, starting on Feb. 4, to provide local theater-goers with the same impact he felt about 16 years ago when the next presentation of his theater company's professional wing opens for a three-weekend, seven-performance engagement.

The challenging two-act musical, which involves a murder in New York's Central Park in 1951 for the first act, and about 50 years later, a priest losing his faith in the second act, will make audiences sit up and take notice, asking themselves to define truth, a timely topic in 2022.

"There are facts that are facts. Truth is a much deeper thing, and I think every story has many sides and truth does, to some degree, as well," Cohen explained. "You have to listen to everyone and at least give everyone that kind of respect and dignity, and I feel like we don't do that as a society anymore. I'm not just pointing out the left-right thing going on (in politics). It's



PETER SCHERER PHOTO

A scene during a recent rehearsal of "See What I Wanna See" at Arc Stages in Pleasantville featuring actors Allie Seibold, center, with Cooper Grodin and Trevor Martin. The show will open next Friday, Feb. 4 for the first of seven performances.

deeper than that, although it's part of it."

The show, directed by Ann-Ngaire Martin, is buoyed by LaChiusa's composition. As preparations continue for next week's opening, Cohen and Martin said the five-member cast has been beautifully executing the musical's intricacies during rehearsals. The cast will be accompanied by a five-piece band under the musical direction of Marcus Baker.

"I don't see how you can walk out of this show and not be –

several things – a little disturbed, a little hopeful," Martin said. "It's not a feel-good, you-don't-have-to-do-anything-as-an-audience-member (production). It sort of washes over you, and it did with me when I first read it, and I had not even seen it."

The cast is comprised of all New York City-based professional actors – Becca Ayers, Joe Chisholm, Cooper Grodin, Trevor Martin and Allie Seibold. Each plays multiple characters over the course of the two acts.

Chisholm said LaChiusa's

music is gorgeous but incredibly complicated; however, the show also provides the audience and cast with a subject matter that is rich and relevant although written in a different time.

"I highlighted this before we started, is how pertinent to right now it is because the past two years our society has gone through this intense grieving process and a crisis of faith kind of naturally, and it's amazing that (LaChiusa) wrote this for a very different event," Chisholm said. "But it still speaks, and I think it speaks to a lot of this kind of existential question we all accept, alone in our apartments the last two years."

Cast member Trevor Martin said he knew little of the show before auditioning and didn't realize how effective the music and the storyline are.

"It's very operatic, honestly," he said. "It feels very much like a small chamber opera and we're all singing our own parts. There's not an ensemble, so you just have to hold onto your part and don't let go."

Adding to the challenges of a complex production has been the observance of COVID-19 protocols through rehearsals and

in the upcoming performances. Cohen said most of the rehearsing has been with the actors in masks. They are tested multiple times a week and must be vaccinated.

There is also blue tape toward the front of the stage so the actors, who will be unmasked during the performances, will be a safe distance from the audience in the roughly 100-seat theater.

"They're so grateful to be working," Martin, the show's director, said. "It's not an easy time for actors right now – or producers. The industry's shows are closing down; people aren't even starting up their season."

Audience members must show proof of vaccination or receipt of a booster shot within the past six months to gain admittance and must wear a mask.

Performances of "See What I Wanna See" will be at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, Feb. 4, 5, 11, 12, 18 and 19. There is one matinee on Sunday, Feb. 13 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$38 for adults, \$30 for students and \$28 for seniors.

For tickets and more information, call 914-747-6206 or visit www.arcstages.org. Arc Stages is located at 147 Wheeler Ave. in Pleasantville.

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Obituaries

Ernest Pacchiana

Ernest Leonard Pacchiana passed away peacefully at his home on Jan. 18 in Stormville, N.Y. with all the love of his family.

Ernie, as he was known to friends and family, was born in Mount Vernon in 1937 to parents Anselmo and Marie Pacchiana.

He attended Iona Prep School, where his football exploits helped the team win the first ever NYSCHSAA championship. From there, he attended Union College (NY) earning his bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Ernie joined the U.S. Army and served diligently during the Cold War as an engineer. After the army, Ernie went to work in the family construction business, Thalle Construction, and managed many municipal and university projects until he embarked on his own real estate and residential development career as a certified professional engineer.

A longtime Little League and CYO basketball coach and organizer, Ernie also created the Pony League middle distance baseball for his youngest son and friends when he saw a need for kids who still wanted to play baseball after Little League. He introduced paddle tennis to northern Westchester and the Briarcliff courts are dedicated in his honor. He founded the Briarcliff Rotary Club chapter with other local businessmen, again creating something new when he saw the need.

Ernie is survived by his loving wife, Nannette Stone, his five children, Dean, Adam, Jennifer, Jean Marie and Joseph,



Ernest Pacchiana

whom he loved slightly more than his dogs (too numerous to name), and also his longtime first wife and devoted mother of his children, Kathryn Adams.

There is no immediate plan for a funeral service due to changing pandemic conditions, but a celebration-of-life gathering is planned for Father's Day weekend. You may contact any family member for details.

If you would like to donate in Ernie's name, please consider the Briarcliff Rotary Club or Westchester SPCA.

Kenneth Oliveri

Kenneth R. Oliveri died on Sept. 7, 2021, at the age of 76 at Northern Westchester Hospital.

He leaves behind his wife of 43 years, Sheila, who was the love of his life; his two daughters, Mandy and Tara; and a very large extended family – all of whom he loved unconditionally and spoke with each day.

Ken was raised in Staten Island, lived in St. Petersburg, Fla. and moved to Westchester, where he resided at Bedford Plaza for the past 30 years. He held roles at Caldor, WARC and for the Village of Mount Kisco as a parking enforcement officer.

His most joyous role was coaching the Mount Kisco Maroons junior league football team for nearly 20 years, where he was given the nickname Cupcake by his young teammates for being such a softie. Ken was kind, encouraging and instilled teamwork and self-discipline in all of those he coached, but above all he cared. In his two decades as a coach, he mentored and positively influenced the lives of more than 700 kids. He developed their self-confidence. He encouraged them. He showed them they could be better than they ever thought they could be. He taught them to believe in themselves both on and off the field.

No matter where Ken went in Mount Kisco – the gas station, the grocery store, the car wash – he always bumped



Kenneth Oliveri

into current and former players and/or their parents, who thanked him for his mentorship. Ken never met a stranger. He brought joy to a lot of people's lives.

In lieu of a traditional service, celebrate Ken by calling your family and friends regularly and being kind to one other; that is what he would have wanted. Ken's life will be celebrated at a later date, which will be announced. We hope you will be able to attend.

Joseph Genovese

Joseph Michael Genovese, a 57-year Pleasantville resident, passed away on Jan. 18. He was 89.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 64 years, Diana; his daughter, Donna Genovese, and her husband, David Ganis; son John Genovese and his partner Mark Bomser; and granddaughters Diana and Danielle Ganis.

Joe Genovese graduated from New York University and then served in the

Army Adjutant General's Corps during the Korean War. He was a credit analyst for Dunn & Bradstreet for 20 years and subsequently owned and operated several businesses, including Manor Wines & Spirits in Briarcliff Manor. Joe Genovese was active in the Mount Pleasant Italian American Association, the Pleasantville Fire Department Band, the Pleasantville Dad's Club and the American Legion.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at Holy Innocents R.C. Church in Pleasantville on Jan. 21.

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New Model for Big Brothers Big Sisters, But Goal Remains the Same

By Martin Wilbur

On Jan. 1, there was a major change to the well-known youth mentoring organization Big Brothers Big Sisters but the outfit's mission hasn't changed at all.

For the first time in 65 years, the local chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters became an independent, nonprofit organization at the start of the month after being sponsored by Family Services of Westchester (FSW) since its formation.

Now formally called Big Brothers Big Sisters of Westchester County, Inc., it will continue to help boys and girls from single-parent or single-caregiver homes throughout Westchester and Putnam between the ages of seven and 17 who lack a positive male or female role model in their lives.

"It's been in the works for a long time and we're actually really excited about it because where we had a lot of guidance before, (but) we were a board within a board," said Valerie Brown, executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Westchester County, which recently moved its offices to Port Chester.

The transition, which took the local chapter about eight to 10 months to complete, was strongly encouraged by the national



Office staff at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Westchester, including Valerie Brown, pictured third from right, the organization's executive director. Earlier this month the transition from being under the umbrella of Family Services of Westchester to become an independent non-profit was completed.

organization's CEO for each one of the roughly 240 chapters across the United States in order to help forge its own identity, Brown said.

Only about 20 chapters throughout the country remain under the umbrella of a sponsorship organization, a model that worked well a generation or more ago, but with the evolution of online searches and social media and the need for unique branding, became increasingly outdated.

Brown foresees two significant advantages that allows Big Brothers Big Sisters to get its name and mission out to the public, hopefully attracting more volunteers.

Applying for grant money will also hopefully be more effective.

"One is that we'll be able to recruit big brothers and big sisters easier because we will be more visible as a standalone, and the other is we won't have the foundation competition within FSW," Brown said.

Despite striking out on its own, the relationship between Big Brothers Big Sisters of Westchester County and FSW, a social services agency, remains strong, Brown maintained. Both organizations will continue to refer families to one another, she said.

The need for Big Brothers Big

Sisters to find a sufficient supply of mentors is crucial to fulfilling its goal.

"Our children are in need of positive role models in their lives," Brown said. "Most are from single-caregiver families, whether they be from foster homes or homes where there is a biological parent, or homes where they're being raised by a grandparent or (another) relative. So they need someone just for them and they also need someone to expand their horizons from their community."

Adult volunteers, referred to by the organization as Bigs, are asked to spend four to six hours a month over two visits for no- or low-cost outings. That could be a trip to a playground or park on a nice day, going to a pizzeria, a museum, or a ball game, introducing them to things in life that most people take for granted, Brown said.

Like in almost every other walk of life, the pandemic has brought its share of challenges. Many of the in-person mentoring had been curtailed. However, there have been virtual meetings where the youngster and mentor "visit." For example, the San Diego Zoo had a virtual tour developed during the pandemic.

Boys, in particular, are perhaps more in need of positive role

models, according to Brown. Most of the children come from homes where a woman is the head of the household, and there is an overwhelming number of women who want to be volunteers but there are far fewer calls to mentor girls.

"Most of our children are male and they're being raised in single-caregiver, female-led households and so they need guys and it's very difficult to find male volunteers," Brown said. "We spend a lot of time on that."

There are currently about 140 one-to-one mentorship connections, with a waiting list of about 60 boys. Many of the volunteers are empty-nesters.

Westchester-based organizations and corporations have also been recommending volunteers to the Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Despite the hurdles, Brown said the organization is doing fine.

"Bigs' that we have say, 'Oh my gosh, I get so much more out of this than the kid does' and they're referring us to other people," she said.

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sister of Westchester, Inc. or to inquire about volunteering or making donations, call 914-937-3779 or visit www.bigs-westchester.org.



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Obituaries

James Gerth

James Raymond Gerth of Shenorock passed away on Jan. 18. He was 66.

Born on Feb. 6, 1955, in White Plains to the late William and Joan Byrne Gerth, he was raised in West Harrison and attended Archbishop Stepinac High School, graduating in 1973, and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Summa Cum Laude, from Adelphi University in 1977.

He is survived by his wife of 41 years, Karen Sorensen Gerth; son Michael James Gerth; sister Janet Prince (husband Rick) of Nashville, Tenn.; and brothers Robert Gerth (wife Janet) of Amelia Island, Fla. and William Gerth (wife Judy) of Trumbull, Conn.

A lifelong Westchester resident, James spent his life as a true renaissance man, excelling in the performing arts, communication skills coaching, structural design and construction.

To his many friends and fans, he was a brilliant actor and performer first.

His acting career highlights included the Broadway musical, "My Favorite Year" at Lincoln Center (understudy to Tim Curry as Alan Swann), the international tour of "My Fair Lady" (understudy to Noel Harrison as Professor Higgins) and starring as Don Quixote in a U.S. and Canadian tour of "Man of La Mancha." He also starred in two Off-Broadway musicals, "On the Air" and "Madison Avenue." His title roles in regional and stock theaters included "Man of La Mancha," "The King and I," "The Music Man," "Pal Joey," "Scapino," "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "The Wizard of Oz." Jim also toured his one-man show "Mark Twain" throughout the tristate area for many years.

Off stage, Jim was in high demand as both a technical director, stage and facility manager, master carpenter and shop supervisor. Among the many places his talents were on display: Westchester Broadway Theatre, Eclipse Theatre Company, Yorktown Stage, Taconic Opera, Northern Westchester Center for the Arts, Rise of the Jack O'Lanterns, Brown Paper

Bag Video Productions and G&G Scenic. He also played a part in the founding of several regional theaters, including the Mahopac Farm Playhouse and Yorktown Stage.

In later years, Jim went on to a career as a communications coach in a global capacity for CommCore Strategy, where, as a senior communications consultant, he traveled the world to moderate medical advisory boards and deliver communications training and messaging to physicians and executives in a wide range of industries.

Most recently, the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown brought Jim in to consult on needed work around the facility and found himself as the new caretaker to help oversee renovations and maintain this historic church.

Memorial gifts in Jim's name may be sent to the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown, 2880 Crompond Rd., Yorktown Heights, N.Y. 10598 in support of the food pantry that serves our local community in need.



James Gerth

Police Blotter

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Jan. 11: A resident reported losing her car key in the parking lot of the Van Wyck Shopping Center at 1:01 p.m. She stated that she left her car running while she went into a store. When she returned, her car wasn't running and there was no key inside the vehicle. Patrol assisted the caller in looking for the vehicle key with negative results. Patrol observed surveillance footage that showed a white male in his 40s, wearing a black jacket and blue jeans, open the driver-side door of the vehicle, remove the key from ignition, shut the door and walk away. The owner had the vehicle towed from the lot. At 6 p.m., the owner responded to headquarters with information on who may be involved in the incident. Patrol notified that individual and was able to retrieve the car key and return it to the owner.

Jan. 14: Croton-Harmon High School official called at 11:10 p.m. reporting that a student is on a school computer at home searching for ways to kill himself. Several attempts to contact the parents were negative. Copies of what the student was searching on the computer have been preserved. Croton patrol and EMS was dispatched to the residence. The student was voluntarily transported to Westchester Medical Center.

Mount Pleasant Police Department

Jan. 16: An officer on patrol noticed an illegally parked car with its trunk ajar on Salem Place at 12:57 p.m. The officer spotted an elderly man on the property of 3 Salem Place, which is a construction site, wandering the property. The man said he was walking the property to find two pieces

of wood for personal use. He was advised that taking any items from the property, even those designated as garbage, without the owner's permission could result in criminal charges. He left the site without incident.

Jan. 17: Report of a landlord-tenant dispute at a Stillman Lane residence at 10:58 p.m. Upon the officer's arrival, the tenant said his landlady had pushed him and grabbed his neck after going to the garage to retrieve a snow shovel. The tenant stated that he had video, which showed them visibly arguing, then she shoved him and put his hands around his neck. He had no apparent injuries. The tenant said he is constantly having issues with his landlady and is afraid of her. The landlady, who lived in the basement apartment, stated that her tenant is not supposed to enter the garage and that he has not paid rent for multiple months and is in the process of evicting him. Officers advised this is a civil matter and recommended to the tenant he should not enter the garage.

North Castle Police Department

Jan. 14: Multiple callers reported a tree down at 4:38 p.m. across Round Hill Road and see sparks from a transformer. The responding officer reported a large tree was down in the roadway just past 33 Round Hill Rd., which caused four utility poles to snap. The officer reported that all primary wires were down and suspended across the roadway. Con Edison and the Banksville and Armonk fire departments were notified. Round Hill Road was closed at Megan Lane and at Bedford Banksville Road. The road was reopened the next day at 8:19 p.m. Con Edison is returning on Jan. 16 to perform additional work.

Pleasantville Police Department

Jan. 22: Report of a diesel truck on Dennis Lane that is spewing smoke. It was determined the smoke was due to exhaust.

Putnam County Sheriff's Department

Jan. 10: Deputies responded to a hit-and-run property damage accident on Marvin Avenue in Brewster at about 8 p.m. The driver, a 30-year-old Brewster man, was located in a nearby driveway. Upon investigation, the driver displayed multiple signs of intoxication but refused to perform field sobriety tests. He was arrested and transported to headquarters for processing and provided a breath sample, which produced a result of 0.27 blood-alcohol content. Due to the high level of intoxication, he was transported by Mahopac EMS to Putnam Hospital Center. He was charged with aggravated driving while intoxicated and several traffic infractions. He was released on an appearance ticket and is due in Village of Brewster Court for a future court date.

Jan. 15: A 31-year-old Yorktown man was arrested and charged with second-degree criminal contempt for being at the residence of his girlfriend's house in Patterson in violation of an order of protection at about 1 a.m. He was arraigned in Patterson Town Court where a subsequent order of protection was issued. The suspect was released and scheduled to appear for a future court date.

Jan 15: Report of a female under the influence of narcotics at a Patterson residence at 12:30 p.m. Upon arrival, deputies located a 26-year-old woman outside the residence in a parked vehicle

and determined that she was under the influence of some type of narcotic. The subject was found to be in possession of heroin and cocaine and was charged with two counts of seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance. She was transported to Putnam Hospital Center for evaluation and was issued an appearance ticket for a future appearance in Patterson Court.

Yorktown Police Department

Jan. 15: Christian Arriaga, 41, of the Bronx, was charged at 4:59 a.m. with driving while intoxicated and aggravated unlicensed operation of a vehicle after police received a report of a vehicle parked in the middle of Mohansic Avenue. Upon arrival, police observed Arriaga asleep in the driver's seat with the engine running.

Jan. 15: Kristina Benevento, 41, of Yorktown, was charged with aggravated driving while intoxicated and other traffic infractions at 4:55 p.m. after her vehicle crashed off the roadway on Old Farm Lane. Following an investigation, it is alleged Benevento was operating a vehicle while using a cell phone and intoxicated.

Jan. 18: Michael Portella, 21, of Yorktown, was charged with criminal contempt, criminal tampering and resisting arrest at 3:09 a.m. following a report of a temporary order of protection violation on Glen Road in Mohegan Lake. An investigation revealed Portella allegedly tampered with a vehicle parked in the driveway. While being placed under arrest, he repeatedly pulled his hands down from officers in an attempt to prevent the arrest.

Editor's note: The policy of providing names for people who have been arrested varies between each department.

Storage: We Save More Stuff, But Where to Put It?

Our homes are where we eat, sleep, play, sometimes work and store things we've finished using but somehow can't bear to throw away.

There are many reasons we may want to hold on to stuff we no longer need. But where do we put it all?

Granted, some homeowners achieve living on the light side where nothing is hidden and what you see is what you get. Or they've gotten religion just before the sale of a home. The homes on the market that show best are those where all the traditional storage spaces – the attic, basement, garage and large closets – are bare.

In my own home, a Trump Park condo, my storage room looks like a commercial storage facility, but not as neat. A few years ago, when my wife and I were preparing to sell our former large home, we hired a crew to clean out our basement, which had been packed with possessions from cement floor to beams overhead. There was clear evidence there of many different careers and lifetimes, including those of our parents, even our grandparents, along with tools and leftover materials from house renovation.

One helper took me aside and told me how dangerous it was to have saved enamel paint and paint thinner so close to the boiler. Fortunately, it was before I started writing



By Bill Primavera

as The Home Guru, so I was only half embarrassed. At first, it was a visceral experience to instruct the workers what to throw out for bulk pick up. But as the project wore on and I wore out, memories were discarded wholesale. It felt liberating.

Actually, my wife is the more practical one between us. When she took charge for having our garage cleaned out prior to our sale of our home and a helper asked her what should be saved, she replied simply, "Just keep the cars."

My propensity to hang on to stuff started young. Maybe I had thought that someday I would be

so famous that future generations would want some piece of who I was and what I did in life. But since I turned out to be just an ordinary guy, I have no excuse.

It all started when I was an adolescent and my mother gave me a white envelope on which was written, "My Son William's First Haircut, Aged 2." Inside were Titian red curls that bear little resemblance to my hair today. It was a real curiosity for me.

That was the first item I tucked away in a sturdy cardboard box that originally housed Florida oranges we would receive each Christmas from my Aunt Helen. Through the years, that box accommodated all my other official documents, from my birth certificate to a special blessing from the Pope (my wife

had connections) when my wife and I married. Since then, that one box has multiplied like loaves and fish.

By the time I was a teenager, I was saving books and records well before the time of downloading audio files, never thinning out the collection. By the time I married, I went on to photography as a hobby, saving photographs well before the days of digital images. I documented every move my family and I made, starting with our honeymoon, and still have boxes of every picture ever taken.

Then my wife and I started collecting things together and, by the time we got into the antiques business part-time, the floodgates opened. We never got to the point of hoarding, and our house was always tidy, but we never really organized our storage of the things we didn't have room to display.

Perhaps as homes get downsized, efficient storage will be more important. Today, there are many resources for creative solutions to tucking things away.

Retailers such as The Container Store are rich with the tools needed to store things properly. Home Depot boasts closet kits, as well as a full assortment of containers for the garage or outdoor shed. The ones I like best



feature clear plastic sides and bottoms where you can actually see what's stored in them. Who remembers what's contained in a big cardboard box stored from 30 years ago without opening it to remind yourself?

And for those who need industrial strength help with storage, there is always the great PODS concept. While the company will deliver a POD to a private home for "temporary" storage during house renovation or preparing for a move, I have

seen them stay on properties seemingly indefinitely. There may be some local ordinances discouraging that.

If I were to dispense any advice about storage, it would be as simplistic as to suggest that we should all better manage what we collect in the first place. Now, if only I were able to accept that advice years ago.

Bill Primavera is a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate and founder of Primavera Public Relations, Inc., the longest-running public relations agency in Westchester (www.PrimaveraPR.com). To engage the services of The Home Guru and his team to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.

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Art Attack

A local COVID patient beats the odds, comes out of his coma, and suddenly becomes a prolific painter



By Sherrie
Dulworth

You are reading this week's excerpt of an article from our Examiner+ digital newsmagazine. To read the entire article and others like it, visit www.examiner-plus.com and join our community as a member.

In March 2020, Mr. Abraham (Abe) Miller, a Rockland County resident, was among the first COVID-19 patients admitted to Westchester Medical Center. For weeks, his condition was critical: He was on a ventilator, on ECMO (a type of lung bypass machine), and in a medically induced coma.

When he woke up, the 69-year-old entrepreneur, who had never studied art, announced that he wanted to become a painter. He has since painted more than 500 works of art and has written a book, "From COVID to Canvas," all of which can be seen on his website.

Last October, Mr. Miller donated

three pieces of his artwork to Westchester Medical Center in appreciation for their care. We spoke with Mr. Miller and Dr. Elliot (Avi) Levine, the physician who oversaw his ICU care.

Examiner+: What was your life like before you went into the hospital?

Mr. Abraham "Abe" Miller: I am a very, very active entrepreneur. Since I was 6 years old, I have been a wheeler-dealer. In my history, I opened retail stores many times, and then I went into the real estate business. I opened a silver store, selling precious silver pieces. I do many different things.

I am also a composer and have

written over 600 songs. I come from a musical family. I compose songs and sell CDs with my songs.

E+: Tell me about when you went to the hospital.

Miller: All day on Sunday, March 22, 2020, I didn't feel good. A friend of mine works for a private ambulance organization. He came to my home and checked my oxygen level. When he saw it was down to 75, he said, "You're going to the hospital this minute." I told him to take me to the nearest hospital, which is about 10 minutes from where I live, but he decided to go 45 minutes to Westchester Medical Center. And that was a God-sent miracle.

Examiner+ to Dr. Levine: Can you give me a snapshot of Mr. Miller's condition when he arrived at the hospital?

Dr. Levine: Mr. Miller came to us at Westchester Medical Center in the very first week when the COVID crisis started. He was the sickest of the sick. He was placed onto a breathing machine, a ventilator, within just a few minutes of being in the hospital.



WESTCHESTER MEDICAL CENTER PHOTO

Abe Miller (right) unveils the painting that he created and donated to Westchester Medical Center at a ceremony in October 2021 with WMC Health Network President and CEO Michael D. Israel.

When COVID started, every ICU attending, myself and the rest of the whole cardiology division, were all pulled in to help take care of COVID patients. He happened to end up in the Cardiac ICU, so that's how I got involved in his care.

Within a few hours, we knew that Mr. Miller needed more support than could be offered

by just a breathing machine. We connected him to an ECMO ...

To read the rest of this article, and others like it, visit examiner-plus.com and click subscribe. We hope you've enjoyed this week's excerpt from Examiner+. We love honest feedback. Tell us what you think: examinerplus@theexaminernews.com

Light Pollution Does More Damage Than Just Interfering With Astronomers

We often talk about the skies the ancients saw and about how those skies inspired them. We still use many of their lessons, even though the skies just don't look how we imagine they did ages ago.

Toward the end of 2021, the city of Pittsburgh announced that it would soon take steps to reduce light pollution. Other American cities have done this before. For instance, Flagstaff, Ariz. first adopted laws addressing light pollution in 1958.

Like Flagstaff, most of these places are in the western part of our country. Pittsburgh, though, will become the first city in the denser, eastern

U.S. to take steps to reduce light pollution and encourage darker nights.

Light pollution is the wasteful use of artificial light, primarily at night, which then brightens skies. All the lights you see as you drive past or fly over a city is light going somewhere it's not useful. Many people see this as a joke, but it is a serious problem, far beyond the beauty of dark skies.

Along with interfering with astronomy, light pollution affects the well-being and life cycles of plants and animals. It causes illness, injury and trouble with animals' reproduction and migration.

It's bad for people, too. Studies link the

loss of dark skies to some types of cancers, particularly breast and prostate cancer. It contributes to stress, burn-out, loneliness and disconnection from other people.

More light doesn't equal more safety, either. Statistics suggest crime in over-lighted areas actually increases. This could be because they give free, steady, consistent light to criminals, no flashlight needed. The same is true for using bright lights to ward off raccoons and other wild animals.

Who of us in Westchester and Putnam hasn't been blinded by painfully bright streetlights

while driving?

Most important to some, light pollution wastes money. These lights don't run for free. This means we, nearby businesses and our local governments spend money

turning night into day just to light trash bins and empty parking lots.

According to a Sky & Telescope article from Oct. 21, 2021, Pittsburgh's ordinance requires these changes only in public places at first. Over the next 18 months, 35,000 old high-pressure sodium lights will be replaced with LED streetlights designed to encourage darker skies.

These new laws will also require Pittsburgh to replace thousands of new LED streetlights – the blindingly bright type we see popping up all over Westchester – with softer, warmer-colored lights that are easier on the eyes and healthier to live with.

No one is suggesting we live in darkness,



By Scott Levine

but we can all take part in changing and improving this. We can turn off unnecessary lights. We can redirect and shield our outdoor lighting so it goes only where it's needed and we can switch to warmer-colored bulbs. We can also join the International Dark-Sky Association (www.darksky.org).

But it shouldn't all be on us. If a dense city like Pittsburgh can make these changes, why not the municipalities in Westchester? I

call on our local governments to enact and enforce laws to protect dark skies. I hope you'll reach out to your local government and demand changes, too.

We need dark skies. They're part of who we are and they are where we're going. Let's do this together.

Scott Levine (astroscott@yahoo.com) is an astronomy writer and speaker from Croton-on-Hudson. He is also a member of the Westchester Amateur Astronomers, who are dedicated to astronomy outreach in our area. For information about the club including membership, newsletters, upcoming meetings and lectures at Pace University and star parties at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, visit westchesterastronomers.org.



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The phases of the moon chart for February.

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When to Drink That Bottle and When (and How Long) to Hold it



By Nick Antonaccio

There are a number of issues to consider when purchasing and opening a bottle of wine.

Foremost is what wine to purchase that is drinkable within my timetable for consumption?

There are several decision points I consider. If I'm purchasing for an informal gathering of friends, I'll select wines that I know they will enjoy – young and full-bodied, which I refer to as quaffing wines.

For dinner parties, I tend to serve wines with a bit of age. They tend to be more complex, more balanced and more adaptable to various foods.

For these aged wines, I reach my next decision point. Do I purchase wines that winemakers have aged at the winery, saving me the time and effort to

age the wines myself? Or do I descend to my wine cellar to select a wine I purchased several years or decades ago?

As I'm once again, very cautiously, beginning to share meals with extended family and friends during these tenuous COVID times, I've resumed my role as the go-to person for selecting the wine for meals.

Of course, there may be an ulterior motive for my friends and family: I have a wine cellar that is approaching the anniversary of its fourth decade.

If red wines are being served from my cellar, I will typically decant the bottles in a broad-bottomed decanter several hours before serving. This allows oxygen to penetrate the wine over a large surface area, accelerating the breathing of the wine and more quickly opening its bouquet and flavors.

When pressed for time, I may revert to a device I purchased that permits me to extract wine from a bottle one glass at a time, without uncorking it. The Coravin product siphons wine from a bottle without introducing oxygen into the now empty space in the bottle. This is ideal for my wife and I or a guest enjoying one of my decades-old wines without finishing the bottle contents.

But my wine cellar can also create its own dilemmas and disappointments. One such

situation occurred as I was retrieving one of my favorite 1997 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignons (an excellent vintage that warranted aging). Glancing down, I noticed several bottles in the far bottom corner of a shelf that I had overlooked for several years.

Pulling the four bottles, I realized they were a 1990 Chianti Classico Riserva from

a highly regarded producer (and one of the finest vintages of the last 30 years). I had set them aside in 1995 for future consumption. To my dismay, I realized these wines, with a shelf life of approximately 10 to 15 years, had likely approached the end of their drinkable life.

With great trepidation, I opened the first bottle, expecting the worst: a brownish color, devoid of any vibrancy, not remotely palatable.

I was correct.

Pouring this once-prized wine down the drain, I was now confronted with my next decision point. Send the remaining bottles to the same fate as the first or sample them? Annoyed at myself for allowing these wines to sit too long, I pulled the cork from the second and third bottles and immediately purged their contents.

As I opened the fourth bottle to meet a similar fate, I hesitated. Should I try one fond farewell sip of the wine I had looked forward to enjoying but missed the window of opportunity? Surely, one can never be unequivocally certain of a wine's life span, even after sampling it a few minutes earlier?



With the certainty of the outcome ingrained in my mind, I poured myself a few drops.

Surprise of surprises! Wonder of wonders! A refined, balanced wine that still embodied several of its original characteristics. Past its peak, yes, but nevertheless quite enjoyable, with persistent aromatic hints of black fruit and tobacco, traces of acidity and soft tannins.

And likely the last such bottle I will ever own.

Wines are living, breathing organisms. As with humans, some defy expectations as they age. Hope for the best, be prepared for the worst and savor the unexpected.

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 or on Twitter @sharingwine.

**You Heard It
Through the
Grapevine**

Keep April 9 Open for the New York City Tartan Parade

Everyone knows the greatest parade in the world is New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade. While unfortunately a casualty of COVID-19 restrictions for the past two years, New York's annual homage to Ireland's patron saint, and that of the Archdiocese of New York as well, will step off in full form on Thursday, Mar. 17.

The two-year hiatus, however, had no effect on the parade's distinction of being the longest-running parade in the world. In both 2020 and 2021, a token force of dedicated marchers braved winter's weather in a gallant effort to keep up appearances and continue an annual New York City tradition that has been in place since before our country was born.

There is another parade held just a few weeks later that should bear equal attention, and that is the New York City Tartan Day Parade. Sanctioned by Congress in 1998, Tartan Day and Tartan Week are designed to honor all things Scottish in the U.S.

The contribution of Scottish-Americans to this country should never be minimized. Artist Alexander Calder, inventor Alexander Graham Bell, businessman and

later philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, actor Steve McQueen, explorer George Rogers Clark, naval hero John Paul Jones, Gen. Douglas MacArthur and President Ulysses Grant are just a few who have brought pride to the Saltire, Scotland's distinctive blue and white flag featuring the diagonal St. Andrew's Cross.



The Cross of St. Andrew

While the St. Patrick's Day Parade clearly has a predominantly Irish focus, and the Tartan Parade is steeped in Scottish culture, both traditions are firmly rooted in a common Celtic identity and reflect

the often-ignored but inarguable fact that whether one identifies as Irish or Scottish, the underlying character is the same. We're all Celts.

I have had the pleasure of marching in both parades – and I will not be goaded into saying which I prefer. But if you are looking for a more composed crowd of onlookers, a shorter parade route, warmer weather and far more bagpipe bands, don't miss the Tartan Parade, scheduled to stride up Sixth Avenue this year on Saturday, Apr. 9.

Inverness-born actress Karen Gillan is the Tartan Parade's grand marshal this

year, presiding over an event first held in 1999. It has had celebrities such as Sean Connery as grand marshal in 2002, the fourth year for the parade, and the first year my wife and I learned of the event. We have been fans ever since.

The Tartan Parade, which also fell victim to COVID-19 the past two years, has grown far beyond its initial scope. In its inaugural year, the parade comprised two pipe bands and a small but dedicated group of supporters, led by Grand Marshal Cliff Robertson. They marched from the British Consulate to the United Nations, a distance of several blocks.

How things have changed! In more recent years, more than 3,000 marchers have kept pace up Sixth Avenue to the swirl of countless pipe and drum bands, while tens of thousands of spectators have cheered them on.

Saint Patrick's, by comparison, has held sway in New York since 1762. While it certainly boasts more marchers (150,000) and spectators (2 million), it also has more than its fair share of the unruly. (No further comment necessary.) The grand marshal this year will be



By Brian McGowan

James T. Callahan.

But you can't just "join the crowd" and step up Fifth Avenue on your own. You must be part of one of the many "associated" agencies allowed a place that day in the line of march. The Tartan Parade offers admission to all. Advance registration can be easily accomplished at www.nyctartanweek.org, the parade's website.

Registration for the 2022 New York City Tartan Parade is now open. Groups and individuals are invited to march for free by visiting the website. That's right, it's all free. And in addition, there are a host of other Scottish cultural events throughout the city that week, which is officially dubbed "Tartan Week." For more details, visit the website.

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.

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