



Peekskill Community Mourns Death of Police Officer Gregory Jones

By Rick Pezzullo

The Peekskill community is mourning the death of beloved city Police Officer Gregory Jones, who passed away unexpectedly November 24. He was 48.

Jones, a 24-year veteran of the Peekskill Police Department, was a school resource officer, D.A.R.E. instructor and member of the Community Policing Unit well-known for his infectious smile and passion for helping others.

"This is by far the most difficult news we have ever had to deliver," the Peekskill

Police Department stated in a Facebook post. "Above and beyond all, Greg Jones was a great friend who had a gift for putting a smile on your face and lifting your spirits."

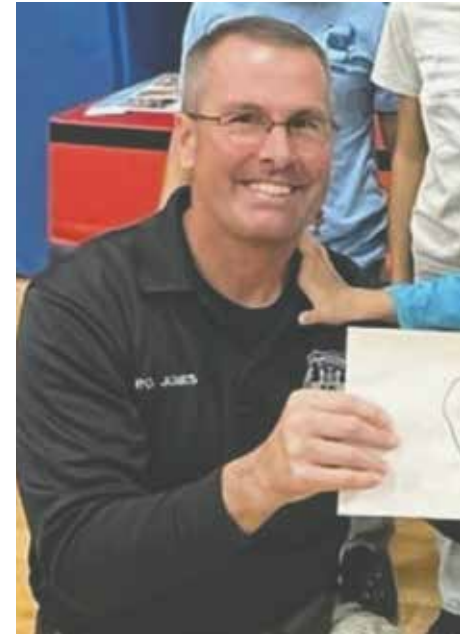
Jones was born June 30, 1974, in Middletown, NY to Joanne and Gary Jones. He earned his bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from St. Thomas Aquinas. He began his law enforcement career at Orange County Sheriff's Office working in the Mount Hope and Washingtonville Police Departments, before transferring to the Peekskill Police Department.

In Peekskill, he was known as "Jonzee."

Working with the youth was one of his focuses and biggest accomplishments, teaching D.A.R.E. to students in Peekskill and Hendrick Hudson. "He truly loved every single one of his students," his obituary stated.

Jones was also very involved with the Peekskill Fire Department, where he spent time with them on emergency scenes and community events. A common joke was that Jones was an "honorary" PFD-Local 2343 member.

"Officer Jones was loved and will forever be remembered for giving a warm smile, providing a helping hand, and empowering our Peekskill youth in many ways," Peekskill City Manager Matthew Alexander and the Common Council said in a joint statement. "We send love and light to his family, children, friends, and everyone whose lives were touched by Officer Jones. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Jones family, and hope they find comfort in knowing that the City of Peekskill is grieving with them."



Police Officer Gregory Jones

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Empty Supermarket on Rt. 6 in Cortlandt Attracting Interest

By Rick Pezzullo

A former ShopRite supermarket on Route 6 in Cortlandt that closed four years ago to move into a larger and more modern location nearby is attracting interest.

During a Hudson Valley Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting earlier this month, Cortlandt Economic Development Consultant George Oros disclosed German international discount retailer Lidl was close to moving into the 55,000-square-foot building recently, but walked away at the closing table.

Since then, Oros said other potential businesses have stepped forward.

"We've had a number of inquiries. One is very exciting. Others are pretty good," Oros remarked without providing specifics.

Oros did reveal that one of the large

vacant spaces at the Cortlandt Town Center will soon be filled. He said Ashley Furniture will be setting up shop where Office Max was located.

Meanwhile, the Town of Cortlandt has issued a Request Expressions of Interest (RFEI) for the redevelopment of the Cortlandt Quarry in Verplanck. Responses to the RFEI are due January 6, 2023.

The Cortlandt Quarry is a town-owned 99-acre parcel located on the Hudson River on the northwest side of Broadway, just north of 11th Street. The town is seeking responses from qualified developers for the re-use and redevelopment of the quarry for recreational, entertainment, cultural uses and other complementary accessory uses such as restaurants and shops.

Cortlandt intends to lease up to 11

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Collecting Food for the Needy



Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater's Youth Council recently concluded its inaugural project—a cereal collection drive that supports local food pantries. In partnership with the Yorktown Alliance for Safe Kids, the new youth council is a platform for young people to share their ideas and perspectives with the Town's leadership. The cereal drive concluded November 18, and it collected more than 100 boxes of cereal. The collection drive benefitted the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown Food Pantry and the Community Food Pantry at St Mary's Mohegan Lake. On the weekend of November 19, the two pantries served more than 500 families.

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Peekskill Man Charged with Attempted Murder in Shooting

By Rick Pezzullo

A 19-year-old Peekskill man was charged last week with attempted murder in connection with the shooting of a city resident in early November.

Dimitri Jones was arrested by Peekskill Police detectives and the FBI Safe Streets Task Force on Nov. 23 at approximately 9:45 a.m. at his residence on the 600 block of Roosevelt Ave. in Peekskill.

On Nov. 9, at about 11:50 a.m., police responded to reports of shots fired on Central Ave. near Washington St. Upon arrival, officers discovered a 31-year-old Peekskill man lying on the sidewalk with a gunshot wound to his upper leg. Officers performed life saving measures on the victim before he was transported to Westchester Medical Center.

At the scene, officers found a loaded firearm discarded in a nearby wooded area. Information obtained early in the investigation led detectives to believe the victim and suspect knew each other and it wasn't a random incident.

Jones was charged with multiple violent felony charges: Attempted Murder in the Second Degree, Assault in the First Degree,



Dimitri Jones

Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and Reckless Endangerment in the First Degree.

He was arraigned in Peekskill City Court. The victim is recovering from his injuries.

Empty Supermarket on Rt. 6 in Cortlandt Attracting Interest

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designated areas or "Pad Sites" within the property. Currently, there is an existing development proposal at Pad Site 3 for an indoor soccer facility.

"Hopefully we get some good responses," Oros said. "There are hidden gems throughout all of Cortlandt."

The quarry property was formerly owned by Con Edison and was also the site of a limestone quarry which ceased operation in the 1950s. Subsequently, a portion of the quarry site filled with natural spring waters

and now forms a 31-acre pond on the parcel, which is a defining feature of the property.

In 2019, Cortlandt received a \$3.2 million federal grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) with a \$3.2 million local match to help the town construct some of the infrastructure needed to prepare the site for investment and redevelopment. As part of the EDA grant, a 3,000 linear foot access road will be constructed connecting the inland portion of the site to the waterfront and providing access to a number of the leasable pad sites.

Hendrick Hudson High School Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2022 Announced

The Hendrick Hudson High School Athletic Hall of Fame Committee has announced its induction Class for 2022. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Title IX, which paved the way for female sports to be a part of interscholastic athletic programs across the nation. This year's class celebrates this anniversary and honors individuals from the 1972-73 athletic seasons who truly helped pave the way for female sports at Hendrick Hudson High School.

The Class of 2022 Hall of Fame Inductees are: Coach- Jim Ahrens; Coach- Sondra Levine; Coach- Jo LoCascio; Coach- Barbara Wright; Class of 1972 Athlete- Patricia Gallagher; Class of 1972 Athlete- Linda Kall; Class of 1972 Athlete- Lynne Kall; Class of 1972 Athlete- Linda Zoller; Class of 1973 Athlete- Norine Karst; and Class of 1973 Athlete- Susan Laird.

This year, the Hall of Fame class will

be honored prior to the championship game of the Hendrick Hudson Girls Basketball Tournament on Friday, December 16. The game is slated for a 6:30 p.m. tip. There will be a ceremony for the inductees at 5 p.m., followed by their presentation to the community prior to the game, at approximately 6:15 p.m.

"Our Hall of Fame induction ceremony is always a truly special occasion," said Athletic Director Tom Baker. "This year, celebrating the 50th anniversary of Title IX, by honoring coaches and athletes from 1972 and 1973 is really exciting. These individuals truly created a path for thousands of female athletes at Hendrick Hudson."

This is a press release provided by the organization. It has been lightly edited and is being published by Examiner Media as a public service.

Peekskill Community Mourns Death of Police Officer Gregory Jones

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The Peekskill Volunteer Ambulance Corps and Peekskill Walks also offered their condolences.

"Officer Jones was such a great advocate for our students and so supportive of efforts to make sure everyone makes it to school and home safely every day," Peekskill Walks stated. "Peekskill has lost an outstanding officer and person, and will miss seeing Officer Jones at community events, in our schools and around our city."

According to his obituary, Jones had three beautiful children from his first marriage, Matthew Jones, 24, Christopher Jones, 21, and Rachel Jones, 18. Later on in his life, he met Mary Greenan, a fellow City of Peekskill Police officer. They fell in love and had three wonderful children, Catherine Greenan-Jones, 7, Gregory Greenan-Jones, 3, and Colette Greenan-Jones, 1.

In addition to his children and Mary, Jones is survived by his mother, Joanne Jones, aunts, uncles, and cousins; many in-laws, nieces and nephews from the Greenan family, and his brothers and sisters from the Peekskill Police Department and the Peekskill Fire Department.

"Above all his amazing qualities, Greg was first and foremost a family man. He would do anything for his children and family," his obituary stated. "He coached a range of sports teams when Matt and Chris were little and enjoyed playing catch with his oldest daughter Rachel. Greg was very proud of the people that Matt, Chris, and Rachel had become. This included Matt joining the Air Force and his many accomplishments, Chris becoming a mature, kind, and hardworking son, whom Greg admired, and Rachel, starting college this year towards a

nursing degree, and for her sweetness and intelligence."

"Greg always found ways to show his devotion to Mary and deep love for his children. He was a deeply loving father to Catherine, Gregory, and their youngest, Collette. Catherine and her dad were early risers. She loved their morning snuggles on the couch; riding her scooter and going to Bounce with her dad. Little Gregory's favorite thing to do with his dad was to ride on his tractor with him, doing big boy work in the yard and riding his ATV together. Nothing brought a bigger smile to his face than when Greg would pick him up from school and give him hugs. Colette loved her late morning naps with her dad; she would always fall right asleep on him and felt so content in his arms. Their loss is incalculable."

Visitation will be held at Joseph F. Nardone Funeral Home; 414 Washington Street, in Peekskill, on Wednesday, November 30, from 3 to 7 p.m. A Funeral Mass will be held at the Church of the Assumption on Thursday, December 1, at 11:30 a.m.

"Greg would not want us to dwell in sadness or 'what-ifs.' Let us remember Greg for his selflessness, his willingness to help others in any way, his infectious smile and humor, and his deep love for his family," his obituary read. "Greg 'Jonzee' Jones will be deeply missed by all who knew him. It is our hope that his smile finds its way to your face when you think of him, and any sadness is turned into good deeds. It is the best way we can honor him and show gratitude for having known him."

Memorial Donations can be made to a GoFundMe page created to benefit his three youngest children.

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\$57M Lakeland Capital Projects Vote Set for December 6

By Rick Pezzullo

Voters in the Lakeland School District will have the opportunity on Dec. 6 to decide if the district should proceed with \$57 million of capital projects planned in all eight district schools.

Officials have labeled the project “tax neutral” based on the 64.8 percent state aid the district would receive for the projects. Of the estimated \$57 million expense, \$20 million would come from the capital reserve fund. The remaining \$37 million would be reimbursed through the state Education Department Building Aid funding.

“The Capital Project is part of a long-range plan to address capital improvements across the district,” Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen Gagliardi and Board of Education President Adam Kaufman stated in a joint newsletter to residents. “The Capital Project is directly aligned with the district’s mission, as it will provide all Lakeland students with the modern learning spaces they deserve and that will help shape their successes for many years to come.”

The main thrust of the projects, according to district officials, is updated technology in common learning spaces, such as library media centers, to help students in science,

technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) subjects in all five elementary schools, Lakeland Copper Beech Middle School and Lakeland and Walter Panas high schools.

Enhancements to infrastructure in every school is also envisioned. Those improvements include HVAC and fire alarm systems upgrades, bathroom renovations and roof reconstruction.

“The district’s strategic financial planning and vision have brought us to the important and exciting endeavor,” Gagliardi and Kaufman’s newsletter stated. “The Capital Project is truly an investment in the future of all Lakeland

children. We believe that now is the time to shape the future for all Lakeland students and provide them with the learning spaces they deserve.”

If the referendum is approved by voters, the district would begin a design phase to determine the final scope of the project. The expected date to put the project out to bid would be September or October 2024. Anticipated start of construction would be November 2024 with the target date for completion in 2026.

The vote will take place on Tuesday, Dec. 6 from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. at Van Cortlandville Elementary School on Route 6.

Santa is Coming to Town!

The Lake Carmel Park District Advisory Board’s annual Winter Holiday Tree Lighting and Menorah Lighting will be held this Sunday, Dec. 4 at 5 p.m. on Champlain Road in the Town of Kent. Santa is expected to arrive on his sleigh a few minutes after five o’clock to greet kids of all ages. Residents are invited to join for holiday cheer, refreshments and music to celebrate the season.



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Mt. Pleasant Ponders Two More Warehouses Near Route 9A Corridor

By Martin Wilbur

The owner of a Hawthorne corporate park is proposing to build a pair of new warehouses on the last remaining parcel at the site in the vicinity of a busy stretch of Route 9A.

Similarly sized one-story warehouses totaling just over 70,000 square feet are planned for 14 and 16 Skyline Drive, representatives for the applicant, RMD 14-16 Skyline LLC, told the Mount Pleasant Planning Board last week. The building at 14 Skyline is proposed to be 34,738 square feet while a 36,360-square-foot structure has been proposed for 16 Skyline. Ten percent of each building would be set aside for office space.

Rocco Spandorio, one of the representatives for the applicant, said when the 1988 master plan for the property was approved by the Town of Mount Pleasant, seven buildings were proposed for the site, five of which have been built.

Four loading docks and 109 parking spaces are proposed between the two buildings, each rising to 35 feet in height. The vacant parcel is a little over eight acres of the 21-acre Skyline Drive properties.

Spandorio said the applicant is prepared to work with the state Department of Transportation (DOT) to add a traffic signal near the southern end of Skyline Drive.

"We did submit a traffic study as part of our application and it was recommended that a traffic signal be installed at the junction of Skyline Drive and (Route) 9A at the south end, and we intend to follow that through if the application is approved," he said.

Route 9A is one of the areas in town that has been a concern for Mount Pleasant officials, residents and motorists, particularly in the vicinity of the new Amazon facility near Belmont Road. Skyline Drive is south of the Amazon warehouse that is expected to be completed sometime next year.

James Collins, the chairman of the Planning Board, which declared itself lead agency for the upcoming site plan review, asked the applicant to consider installing rooftop solar panels. The town has hoped to increase the amount of renewable energy it generates without having an excessive number of ground-mounted arrays in open spaces or in parking lots.

The town's Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) Chairman Steven Kavee said one of the chief concerns for the council is the potential for traffic generation and intensity, which needs to be closely scrutinized. He also supported any effort to increase solar energy production.

"I think it would be very beneficial and work toward how the review is considered under SEQRA, frankly," Kavee said.

Spandorio said his team would work with town planning consultant Patrick Cleary and town staff on the specifics of the plan.

In addition to declaring itself lead agency, the Planning Board also referred the matter to the town's Architectural Review Board.

Change of Use Proposal

Another proposal on the Route 9A corridor is a request for the property owner at 40 Saw Mill River Rd. to expand surface parking by 116 spaces to accommodate conversion of the

building to be exclusively for medical uses.

Project engineer Diego Villareale said the current mixed use of roughly 40 percent medical and 60 percent traditional office space isn't working well given the changing market conditions.

Villareale said increasing the number of parking spaces at the property is not required by Mount Pleasant's zoning code, but as a practical matter, the change in building occupants will require more room for vehicles. The additional spaces would bring

the number of spaces at the site to 350, he said.

"The parking is being constructed in anticipation of the tenants that are going to be in the building itself," said Villareale, who added that it might take up to five years before all tenants provide medical services.

Additional parking will be installed on the western side of the building and a connection to parking in the rear will also be made, he said. All the parking will be within the confines of the property line.

Welcome to Town

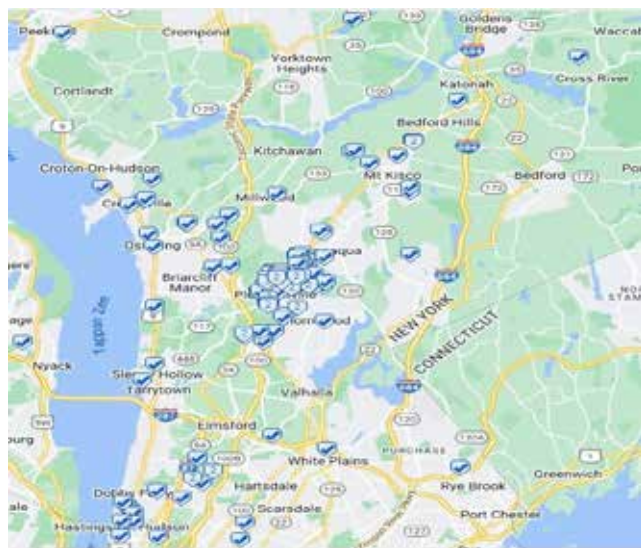
The Town of Mount Pleasant welcomed its newest police officer, Charles Klaus, third from left, who was hired last week as a result of an opening that was created because of the appointment of a school resource officer. Klaus, who had worked in the NYPD's 52nd Precinct the past two years, becomes the latest member of his family to serve the Mount Pleasant Police Department. He had a great-uncle who served in the 1950s and his grandfather was a former chief of the department. Pictured with Klaus are members of the Town Board, Chief Paul Oliva, center, and Town Clerk Emily Costanza, right.



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Volunteer-Driven Transport Service a Lifeline for Many in Westchester

By Martin Wilbur

When Sheila Harvey was in a car accident close to 10 years ago and had no way to get to and from work, she turned to RideConnect of Family Services of Westchester for help.

Each day, Harvey was transported from Chappaqua Transportation, where she worked as a bus monitor at the time, to her residence in Bedford Hills.

Eventually forced from work due to lumbar stenosis, she has continued to call RideConnect, which provides free transportation to people throughout Westchester, for her twice-a-week doctors' appointments. For Harvey, the service has been a godsend.

"I would be calling taxis, spending a whole bunch of money that I don't have and stuff like that," she said.

Harvey is one of hundreds of clients around the county that has availed themselves of RideConnect, which picks up and drops off anywhere within Westchester's borders. Marietta Manoni, the service's mobility manager, said now that more people are leaving their homes with the pandemic having apparently abated, the demand for rides is stronger than ever.

In September alone, RideConnect volunteer drivers transported 175 different clients on 1,024 rides,

a more than 35 percent increase compared to September 2019, according to Manoni. The service had effectively shut down during the onslaught of the pandemic.

"It works out really, really well for a lot of people, and we've had a lot of people who couldn't get ground transportation or who would be paying several hundred dollars a week for rides, especially the dialysis people, and they go three to four times a week," Manoni said. "So we have been lifesavers to them. People are very, very happy with us."

However, the demand for transportation has begun to outpace the supply of volunteers. While RideConnect looks to find a ride for every requested call, it sometimes might require at least two days advance notice to line up a driver, Manoni said. People should be aware that the service isn't a taxi company but a volunteer effort, she said.

RideConnect is always looking for more drivers, even if it's for one or two rides a week. Currently, it has a roster of more than 300 volunteers, although Manoni estimated that there is a core group of about 50 to 75 drivers.

The shortage is particularly acute in southern Westchester, which has a larger population and the need is greater.

"Our biggest challenge is trying to find rides for people in the lower portion of the county, places like New Rochelle, Mount Vernon, Yonkers. Those are very, very hard for sure," Manoni said. "We're always looking for volunteers and it's extremely hard to get them, but we do the best we can, and the few that we have down there are really great."

Some volunteer drivers are retirees, while others find time to pitch in when they are off, or in the case of some soccer moms, when their children are at school, she said.

One of the regular volunteers for about the last five years is Anne Golden of Briarcliff Manor. A retired employment attorney, Golden said she came across an item in a newspaper asking for drivers. For someone who enjoys driving, she said she receives "immense satisfaction" by helping others in the community.

"I enjoy it so much. I have met wonderful people, wonderful seniors – some of them are younger than me – but it doesn't matter, and I've made some very close friends among the people that I drive," said Golden, who has driven about four days a week. "I love to see them, and when I couldn't drive during the pandemic, I missed my people



so much I had to start again."

For Harvey, she feels safer with RideConnect's volunteers than with some livery services. Regularly transported by Golden, she's also made a close friend.

"She is, as far as I'm concerned, one of the best people I have ever, ever met in my entire life," Harvey said.

Manoni said RideConnect conducts a background check for each prospective volunteer. They must have a sound, reliable car, enjoy driving, like the demographics of the people that they would serve, like to be in the company of older adults, who are the predominant number of clients, and be able to

exhibit empathy.

The service also helps seniors socialize, she said.

"Our program is great because we don't just do medical rides, we do everything within reason," Manoni said. "We don't go outside of Westchester, we don't go to the five boroughs, but we do grocery shopping, social events, hairdressers, which is a huge thing for people, for women in their 70s and 80s."

For questions or more information, either about volunteering or utilizing, call 914-864-2036 or visit www.rideconnectwestchester.org.



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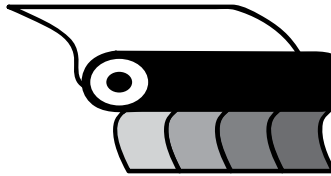
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Westchester's Fiscal Outlook on the Upswing: Ratings Agencies

By Martin Wilbur

Westchester's financial picture received a strong boost last week as the three ratings agencies all deemed the county to have a positive outlook.

County Executive George Latimer said Monday that Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor each gave Westchester their second highest rating after the agencies completed an extensive review of the county's finances within the past two weeks. The evaluation includes examination of factors such as fund balance, staffing and overall fiscal policy.

Fitch has upgraded the county to an AA+ rating, its second highest rating, which bumps up the county's overall outlook from stable to positive, he said.

Meanwhile, both Moody's and Standard & Poor have maintained their ratings at AA1 and AA+, respectively, both the second highest as well.

Latimer pointed out that when he took office nearly five years ago, the county had a negative fiscal outlook, which has been turned around.

"We've made some progress along these lines," Latimer said. "Fitch has recognized that with an upgrade to a positive outlook."

The improving ratings and outlook allow the county to borrow money, typically done for larger expenditures, at a lower interest rate, helping to save Westchester and its residents money.

Latimer said the improved outlooks



Westchester County Executive George Latimer addressed the county's continually improving fiscal outlook this week.

helps place the county in a stronger financial position and he pledged to make sure that there will be no borrowing for most expenses.

"This will make it less expensive to do some of the work we need to do in capital projects," he said of the ratings. "We'll pay

less interest on the money that we borrow because we have a higher bond rating, and also the higher the bond rating, the more likely the offerings we're making will be picked up out of the marketplace."

In its eight-page report, Standard & Poor gave the county high marks for managing

its finances conservatively while balancing the budget without the use of fund balance or one-time revenues. Furthermore, the county was able to increase fund balance while able to decrease the property tax levy for the fourth consecutive years in the proposed 2023 budget.

"Overall, we believe the county's budget adequately reflects potential budgetary pressures from lower growth and higher inflation and we expect Westchester will maintain its very strong reserves," the report stated. "In fiscal 2022, the county did not have to borrow for cash flow purposes, given its very strong liquidity cushion."



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Obituaries

Joyce Robichaud

Joyce Robichaud passed away peacefully on Nov. 21 with her two daughters by her side at Meadow Ridge in Redding, Conn. after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

Robichaud was born in Hawthorne on Aug. 19, 1933, to Albert and Josephine Bevacqua. She graduated from Briarcliff High School and attended Wood Business School in New York City. Joyce married Roger Robichaud in 1955 and moved to Pleasantville, where they raised two daughters, Renee Brown and Monique Devine Robichaud. During that time, Joyce was active in Mount Pleasant politics and ran for councilwoman in 1977.

In 1979, the family moved to Ridgefield, Conn. when her husband, Roger, became the president of The Village Bank & Trust. They were Silver Spring Country Club members for 40 years, where she enjoyed many friends, golf and her passion sport, swimming. Joyce was a member of the Joan MacDonald dancers for 14 years and sang in Our Lady of Fatima Church choir in Wilton, Conn. She was the original owner of the Tag Sale Shoppe in Georgetown, Conn. All who knew Joyce will remember her easy smile, love of entertaining friends and her courageous battle with Parkinson's. Joyce always had a positive outlook and persevered through difficult times with determination.

In addition to her daughters, Joyce is survived by five grandchildren: Amy Weber (Andrew Weber), Kimberly Brown (Megan Larkin), Molly Brown (Shanna Snow), Tyler



Joyce Robichaud

Devine and Samantha Roy (Brandon Roy) and two great-grandchildren, Calvin and Elinor Weber. In addition to her parents, Joyce was predeceased by her husband, Roger, brother Albert Bevacqua and son-in-law Charlie Brown.

The family received friends on Nov. 28 at Beecher Flocks Funeral Home. A Mass of Christian Burial was scheduled to be celebrated at Holy Innocents R.C. Church in Pleasantville on Tuesday, Nov. 29 at 10 a.m. Interment will follow at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Joyce's name to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research at www.michaeljfox.org.

Angelo Chupungco

Angelo Santos Chupungco, known as "Mikey" amongst his closest family, died on Sunday, Nov. 20 at home in Pleasantville.

He was born on Apr. 20, 1975, in Pasig, Manila, Philippines to Aida Chupungco, who preceded him in death (2011). He is survived by his wife, Susan Chupungco, and his children, Ruby, Chloe and Grayson; his brother, Robert (Jaymee) Chupungco; and sisters Grace (Michael) Scutro and Maria (Tom Potoeski) Chupungco.

Angelo graduated from Hofstra University and was a lifelong public servant. He was the owner and operator of Public Safety Training Institute, LLC and a member of the Essex County Sheriff's Department.

His commitment to serving others began long before his professional career. As the oldest of four children, he was a

devoted big brother, being the "strength" for his younger siblings and respected grandmother (Nanay), particularly after his mother's passing. He was an entrepreneur, liked fishing, cooking (especially large pieces of meat) and cigars and whiskey. Be it a good meal at home with family, drinks with friends around the fire pit or playing poker at the cigar lounge, Angelo always chose to find joy in the small things in life. Though he will be missed, his friends and family will always cherish and remember his spirit and bright smile that lit up our lives.

Everyone is invited to Beecher Flocks Funeral Home on Dec. 1 from 4 to 7 p.m. A mass of the Christian Burial will be celebrated on Dec. 2 at 10 a.m. at Holy Innocents Church. Interment will follow at Nassau Knolls Cemetery.

Joseph Lucie

Joseph Ralph Lucie died on Nov. 18. He was 41 years old.

Born May 27, 1981, Joseph was a son to Grace, brother to Jodie, with her husband William, and boyfriend to Danielle. As a little boy he was your quintessential child of the '80s – he loved Ninjas, He-Man and Star Wars. He was excellent at being a pain to his big sister. He loved going to the movies and Pizza & Brew to play video games. At home he could be easily found in front of the TV playing Nintendo for hours.

He went to Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx, and even though not

fulfilled, he was able to receive a scholarship to Iona College. Joseph loved watching anime and movies; he was a savant when it came to recalling any line from a movie or just reciting the entire movie. He could recall any memory from his past on cue and loved to talk about them with family.

He was always there with his mother, and when meeting Danielle, he found a soulmate who helped both him and Grace. Joseph was always kind, funny and respectful to anyone he encountered. He will be sorely missed by all his friends and family, both close and extended.

Westchester Diversion Program Celebrates One-Year Milestone

One year after launching the pre-arraignment diversion program "Fresh Start," Westchester County District Attorney Mimi Rocah and Westchester County Executive George Latimer announced that 192 participants have completed the program, following its countywide expansion, contributing to safer outcomes for Westchester communities.

"I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved in the first year of Fresh Start, a forward-thinking program that helps foster our goals for sustainable, safe communities," Rocah said. "Through our successful partnership with county government and law enforcement, this program allows non-violent individuals facing low-level charges an opportunity to reset their course before becoming embedded in the cycle of recidivism."

Intended to address the root causes of crime and to improve public safety, Fresh Start, launched in October 2021, offers social services, counseling and rehabilitation as an alternative to fines, conviction and incarceration for certain non-violent, first-time, low-level offenders in Westchester County.

A partnership between the Westchester County District Attorney's Office and the Westchester County Executive's Office, in collaboration with the Westchester County

Department of Community Mental Health and the Legal Aid Society of Westchester, Fresh Start began as a pilot program with cases originating in the Greenburgh and White Plains police departments before expanding to all 42 police departments in the county.

Michael Orth, commissioner of the Department of Community Mental Health, co-facilitates the one-time, three-hour program with trained mental health peers with lived incarceration experience from the Mental Health Empowerment Project.

With Fresh Start, the District Attorney's office refers to the Department of Community Mental Health eligible first-time defendants who have committed offenses such as petty larceny, disorderly conduct and trespassing, among others.

Upon completion of the program, the DA's office declines to prosecute. Offenders who do not participate or fail to complete the program, are required to appear in court as originally scheduled and face criminal prosecution by the DA's office.

This is a press release provided by Westchester County. It has been lightly edited and is being published by Examiner Media as a public service.

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Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center Offers Middle School Program

The Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center (HHREC) hosted its eighth annual Human Rights Institute for Middle School Student Leaders on Nov. 15-17 at Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester in Rye.

Students and teachers from 30 public and private middle schools in the Lower Hudson-Westchester region attended. HHREC staff and area middle school teachers facilitated a breakout session on the themes of "Respecting the Individual" and "How to Be an Upstander," and students met within groups to develop activities to implement in their schools.

High School students from Byram Hills, Dobbs Ferry, John Jay (Katonah-Lewisboro) and Somers helped to facilitate the breakout sessions.

The institute began with a keynote presentation by Sheila Arnold, CEO and Lead Performer of History's Alive! Arnold has also performed as a regional storyteller at Colonial Williamsburg, the Valley Forge Teacher Institute and at conferences across the U.S.

The program was developed to further the mission of the HHREC by laying the foundation to encourage students to become "upstanders rather than bystanders." Participating schools included Albert Leonard (New Rochelle); Benjamin Turner (Mount Vernon); Denzel Washington School of the Arts (Mount Vernon); Dobbs Ferry; Eastchester; Fieldstone (North Rockland); Fox Lane (Bedford); French American School; German International School; H.H. Wells (Brewster); Highlands (White Plains); Hommocks (Mamaroneck); Isaac E. Young (New Rochelle); Mahopac; Newburgh (Heritage Middle School, Meadow Hill Gem, South Middle School and Temple Academy); North Salem; Pierre Van Cortlandt (Croton-on-Hudson); Pleasantville; Port Chester; Rye Country Day School; Rye Neck; Scarsdale; Seven Bridges (Chappaqua); Somers; Westlake (Mount Pleasant); and Woodlands

(Greenburgh) middle schools.

"We are very pleased to continue offering this program to area middle schools this year," said Julie Scallero, HHREC co-director of education. "We really appreciate the support from their teachers to help us connect with their students as we work together to help them learn about these important contemporary issues."

Sheila Arnold, CEO and lead performer of History's Alive! speaks to students at the recent Human Rights Institute for Middle School Student Leaders presented by the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center.



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Town of Cortlandt

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5:00 PM- 6:30 PM

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Police Blotter

County Police/Mount Kisco

Nov. 20: A Croton Avenue resident called police at 11:40 a.m. to report that he feared a tree on his property was in danger of falling onto the Saw Mill River Parkway. An officer responded and while on scene the tree did fall, landing on adjacent wooded property but not on the parkway.

Nov. 20: The owner of a Lexington Avenue business reported at 1:02 p.m. that someone threw an empty White Claw can on to his property from a car that was driving by.

Nov. 20: An officer responded at 6:52 p.m. to the laundry room of a building on Barker Street on a report of a loud verbal dispute between two tenants. One tenant said an argument broke out after the other tenant removed his clothing from a dryer even though he asked the man not to do so, pointing out that two other dryers were free.

Nov. 21: A resident reported at 12:31 p.m. that someone used her identify to obtain cable TV service in Hartford, Conn. The woman learned of this after receiving a bill for the service. She notified the cable company of the fraud and was directed to also notify police while the company continues to investigate.

Nov. 21: Employees at a fast-food

establishment on North Bedford Road reported at 2:14 p.m. that a man in a white van stole used cooking oil that was being stored outside. Officers canvassed the area but could not locate the van. The matter was turned over to a detective for additional investigation.

Nov. 22: Officers responded to New Castle Drive at 10:05 a.m. due to a landlord-tenant dispute. The landlord produced court-issued paperwork authorizing an inspection of the premises, which the tenant was disputing. The two parties agreed that the landlord would inspect the exterior of the home and conduct a cleanup but not enter the premises until he had court paperwork specifically authorizing an interior inspection.

North Castle Police Department

Nov. 21: A caller from Fox Run reported at 10:10 a.m. that he threw fire embers into the woods, which caught fire. The call was successfully transferred to 60 Control. The responding officer reported that the fire was extinguished. Matter adjusted.

Nov. 22: A caller reported at 8:50 a.m. that there was a deceased raccoon in the roadway on Route 22 creating a driving hazard for motorists. The responding officer reported moving the animal to the

side of the road. The state Department of Transportation (DOT) was notified for cleanup.

Nov. 22: Report of a dresser left on the sidewalk on North Broadway at 5:08 p.m. The state DOT was notified.

Pleasantville Police Department

Nov. 23: At 9:39 a.m., there was a report that one of the planters outside Jean-Jacques on Bedford Road and Marble Avenue had a small amount graffiti on it at 9:39 a.m. The planter was repainted.

Nov. 25: A house on Great Oak Lane was reported to have been egged at 10:52 a.m.

Nov. 25: A Pleasantville woman reported at 5:01 p.m. that she has received numerous annoying phone calls.

Nov. 27: Report of a possible harassment at Foley's on Bedford Road at 1:38 a.m. It was reported the woman tried bumming a cigarette from a couple of men. She then got into an argument with one of the men, who called her a fat pig. It was determined not to be an incident of harassment and the parties were sent on their way.

State Police/Cortlandt

Nov. 10: Police are attempting to identify an individual wearing a mask who used

stolen credit cards to purchase multiple items at various locations within Ossining, Cortlandt and Peekskill totaling \$1,173. The individual is described as wearing a Blue Jays baseball hat, black Carhartt zip-up jacket with tan Carhartt lettering down the left sleeve, black sweatpants and what appears to be white and black Nike Air Max Plus sneakers. Anyone with information regarding the identity or location of the individual is asked to contact state police at 914-769-2600. Please reference case #11142797.

Yorktown Police Department

Nov. 19: A 19-year-old Manhattan man was charged with petty larceny at 4:40 p.m. for stealing \$100 worth of cooking oil from a storage container at Little Sorrento on Route 202.

Nov. 21: Julia Branda, 33, of Yorktown, was charged at 4:38 p.m. with three counts of aggravated driving while intoxicated with a child in the car, a Class E felony, several misdemeanors and traffic infractions following a one-car accident on Route 6 in the area of the Taconic State Parkway. All three children in the car were under the age of 15.

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Weather Curtails Frosty Day; Parade, Tree Lighting Pushed to Saturday

By Martin Wilbur

For the second time in four years, weather impacted North Castle's annual Frosty Day celebration.

The town announced late Saturday that the Frosty Day parade through downtown Armonk and the tree lighting ceremony at Wampus Brook Park were postponed until this Saturday, Dec. 3 as weather forecasts called for a near 100 percent chance of significant rain throughout Sunday afternoon and into the evening.

Some of the activities leading up to the time of the parade, which was scheduled to step off at 4 p.m., continued as scheduled.

Robby Morris, president of the Friends of Frosty, the volunteer nonprofit group that takes the lead in organizing the day, said they met on Saturday morning with police and town officials to determine the best course of action given the weather forecast. The heaviest rain was projected to overspread the area in the afternoon but they tried to get as many of the pre-parade activities in as possible, particularly those that were held indoors, from 12 to 4 p.m., Morris said.

"For us, we had to make the call because you're not going to have anybody watching the parade in the rain, you're not going to have anybody marching in the parade in the rain, so that part of it would have been killed anyhow," Morris said. "We were hoping to get this in, even with it being just a light rain, so we ended up doing that today."

Sunday's turn of events was the second



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The a cappella quartet Heartfelt performed around the downtown for those who decided to brave the rainfall and come to the activities that were held during 2022 Frosty Day Sunday in Armonk.

time since 2019 that the parade and tree lighting had to be called off. Three years ago, there was a snowfall during the afternoon, with numerous accidents in town, forcing officials to cancel the parade and postpone the tree lighting. Frosty Day in 2020 was canceled because of the pandemic.

Despite the disappointment, Frosty didn't melt from the afternoon rain. The famous snowman that Armonk has claimed as his

own was in downtown greeting children and families.

The activities, which included arts and crafts at the nearby Hergenhan Recreation Center, a continuous loop of the animated movie "Frosty the Snowman" at the North Castle Public Library and promotions in many of the stores that opened on Sunday, drew a decent turnout to downtown with parents toting their young children. One of

the musical groups, Heartfelt, an a cappella quartet, sang in front of stores and in the plaza of Armonk Square.

Daniel Kokoszka of Scarsdale said he and his family are Frosty Day regulars, and even if Sunday's activities had to be limited, they are prepared to return for the parade.

"We'll be back next (Saturday) if it's still on," Kokoszka said. "We're here every year and it's fun."

Michelle Curchack of Armonk, who was waiting in a line for hot chocolate and cookies with her husband Jonas and their children, said they weren't disappointed and also vowed to return on Saturday.

"I think it's great," she said. "They're having a great time and we're enjoying all the activities."

Morris said if there's a silver lining to the inclement weather this year it's that extra people will be attracted to downtown for a portion of two weekends. Plus, Main Street and Maple Avenue, which would have been closed the entire afternoon, will only have to be shut for about an hour on Saturday.

Judy Willsey, the owner of Framings in the downtown and also part of Friends of Frosty, chalked up the circumstances to being outside of anyone's control.

"What the heck, you've got to make the best of it, right?" she said.

For more information about Saturday's rescheduled parade and tree lighting, visit www.armonkfrosty.com.

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Is What We Desire Really What We Need? Ask Old King Midas

"Our life always expresses the result of our dominant thoughts"
-Soren Kierkegaard

Desire is a double-edge sword we are all forced to wield sometime during our life.

To make the point, let's use old King Midas of the Greco-Roman philosophy to assist us in addressing this existential conundrum. I will need to note, that existentialism was a term coined in the mid-20th century, though its workings go as far back as Socrates.

Now, back to old King Midas, who many of us are familiar with to some degree. King Midas was a rich and powerful king who was consumed with the desire for gold and greed. The king

was granted a wish by the god Dionysus for his kindness. He took the bait without thinking, and wished that everything he touched would turn to gold.

Well, all went well at first, as the king went on a touching spree turning everything into gold. Then, when he was hungry, he touched some fruit and was unable to eat it since it was now gold and inedible.

So much for being a wise king. This really destroyed his essence of life. Now despondent and realizing the folly of his decision, he petitioned Dionysus who granted his wish to relieve him of his self-imposed curse.

This story does reinforce the old axiom: Be careful for what you wish for, it may come true. Achieving a desire

does not always translate into happiness and finding one's essence in life.

To place this in perspective, one should avoid the equally radical opposite view of having no practical desire. Of note, Buddhism has a lot to say about desire, though well beyond the scope of this column. In simple terms, we should never be aloof with our desires and spend our lives blowing bubbles as a guide for our future.

It is commonly accepted that existentialism is a philosophy about the concrete individual – complete with its glory and its shame – whose supreme value is having the primary virtue of



By Richard Cirulli

authenticity. It is achieved by taking responsibility for our actions, as illustrated in the King Midas mythology.

We can learn much about ourselves by revisiting these moral lessons from time to time. It brings balance, reason and moderation into our desires to help attain our essence of life – and to avoid reckless delusions.

Be well. Be safe. Be happy. Be nice! Amor fati!

Dr. Richard Cirulli is a published author, playwright and retired professor. His body of works can be viewed at www.demitasseplayers.com. He looks forward to your comments and can be reached at profcirulli@optonline.net.

Existentially Speaking

Letters to the Editor

Traffic Cameras, Enforcement Badly Needed for Pedestrians on Saw Mill Parkway

Well, here we go again. I read Michael Gold's column ("Crossing Guards Face Unruly Rush of Vehicles to Keep Kids, Adults Safe," November 8-14)

and he hit the nail right on the head. Crossing guards take their lives in their hands every day. No one seems to care.

I would like to know why cameras

have not been installed at Death Valley – Grant Street and the Saw Mill Parkway in Pleasantville. This should have been done years ago. Cameras installed at the traffic lights, signs put up north and south, east and west. Cameras should be in operation and there should be fines for violators. Running a red light, \$200; illegal right or left turn, \$100; jumping in when people are in the crosswalk, \$200. The cameras will take a picture of your license plates and send it to the Department of Motor

Vehicles. They will send you a summons in the mail. When you get it, you won't like it, but this will stop you from speeding and going through red lights and making bad turns.

The state spent millions of dollars of taxpayer money over the past two years to upgrade the Saw Mill Parkway. Where is the money for the cameras? The governor gave Croton-on-Hudson \$3 million for affordable housing and millions more have been spend on other pet projects. All well

and good, but where is the money for the cameras?

Traffic is getting worse every day. More and more drivers are speeding through red lights. If you think that's bad, wait until the new apartments get rented on Depew Street. Traffic will be a nightmare.

How would you like a police officer to knock on your door to tell you your son or daughter or another relative got hit by a care and is badly injured or dead? This would be devastating.

Oh, by the way, my name is Don. I'm the crossing guard at Death Valley, so I know what I'm talking about. Let's not wait for someone to get killed or injured. Do something – soon!

Don Rosafort
Mount Kisco

Correction

In an article last week about Horace Greeley High School students urging district officials to make changes to enable students of color to feel more comfortable, the school's BSU was incorrectly referred to as the Black Student Union. That was its former name. The organization is now called the BIPOC Student Union. The Examiner regrets the error.

Calendar Submissions

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One Man's Passion for Memorabilia Leads to History Channel Feature

By Abby Luby

When Dan Herzner was a child, he remembers being in the car with his mom and how she couldn't pass up a church rummage sale, a flea market or a tag sale without stopping.

"My mom was always into memorabilia and antiques and I would browse along with her," Herzner said. "The passion came from her."

Herzner, who grew up on Bear Ridge Road in Pleasantville, pursued his interest in unique, collectible items as a livelihood, and for the last 25 years has owned Tri-State Treasure Hunt, a state liquidation company located in White Plains, where he now lives.

Known as an avid collector, Herzner is always ready to check for potential rare finds hidden in attics or basements or to view estate sales. Word-of-mouth advertising keeps him busy as does buying and selling on eBay, Craig's List and at auctions.

Last month, Herzner was approached by the History Channel, which proposed featuring him in the premiere episode of the new reality series "Secret Restoration" that began earlier this month. The show is based on secretly repairing precious items and special family heirlooms to surprise friends or family with the finished product. Restoration and repairs are done in the show's old tool factory in New England by specialists and craftsmen who are filmed in action.

Herzner told the show's restoration expert he had an idea he was sure would interest them.

"I remembered that my younger brother



HISTORY CHANNEL PHOTO

Pictured, left to right, are Dan Herzner, PJ Burchett and Dan's younger brother Mark Herzner at the History Channel's restoration factory with the newly-restored 1980 Honda Dual Sport Motorcycle. The bike was featured on the channel's new series "Secret Restoration."

Mark had a 1980 Honda Dual Sport Motorcycle that hadn't been run in years and was in the corner of his garage covered by moving blankets," he said.

History Channel producers loved the story and helped Herzner sneak the cycle out of his brother's garage.

"They took care of everything. They bought

new parts, including blinkers and headlights," Herzner recalled. "The value of the bike before it was restored was \$525. After restoration it was worth \$4,000."

The show's lively host is automotive expert PJ Burchett, known to build one-of-a-kind custom cars at his shop in Knoxville, Tenn. Herzner's story was shown as bookends of

the premiere episode, which included other surprise renovation projects. The opening documented retrieving, repairing and renovating the motorcycle. On a false premise, Herzner asked his brother to come with him to the old tool factory.

"I told Mark I wanted him to help me decide if I should purchase a three-wheeler and asked him to bring his pick-up truck in case I needed help getting the vehicle home," Herzner said.

Once Herzner and his brother arrived at the factory, they were met by Burchett who invited them to come inside where he revealed the motorcycle.

"When Mark saw the restored bike, he was totally surprised and I was as excited," said Herzner. "Until I watched the premiere, I didn't know how the show would end but the conclusion was the big reveal part."

Herzner said it was an honor to work with the show's crew.

"The entire process was quite a whirlwind but a great deal of fun. I plan to reach out to the show again with items that are of interest," he said.

Finding special items is as much treasure hunt for Herzner as it is business.

"I've been at it for 25 years and I've come across just about everything you can think of over the past quarter-century," Herzner said. "I believe restoration is a very interesting topic to an aging population eager to retain youthful connections."

The first season of "Secret Restoration," including the episode that features Herzner, can be streamed online at <https://www.history.com/shows/secret-restoration>.

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The Taghkanic Chorale Sings Baroque in Croton This Weekend

The Taghkanic Chorale will perform its annual fall concert, "A Baroque Bouquet," on Dec. 3 and 4 in Croton-on-Hudson.

The program features J.S. Bach's "Christmas Oratorio BWV 248" (Cantatas IV and V) and Marc-Antoine Charpentier's "Messe de Minuit pour Noël," accompanied by the MidAtlantic Chamber Orchestra and renowned vocal soloists. Also on the program are John Rutter's stunning "A Ukrainian Prayer" and Michael Trotta's "Veni, Veni Emmanuel."

"This is exhilarating music intended to inspire and uplift our audiences as we approach the holiday season," said The Taghkanic Chorale's Maestro Jason

Tramm, now in his fifth season as music director.

The two performances are Saturday, Dec. 3 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 4 at 4 p.m. at The Holy Name of Mary Church, located at 114 Grand St. in Croton-on-Hudson.

Admission is \$25 for adults, \$22 for seniors, \$12 for students and free for children under 12 with an adult. Tickets are available from chorale members, on the chorale's website at www.taghkanicchorale.org or at the door. Audiences are invited to a wine and snack reception following each performance.

Masks are optional for both singers and



C. WILDEY PHOTO

The Taghkanic Chorale led by Music Director Jason Tramm will be performing its annual fall concert, "A Baroque Bouquet" this Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon in Croton-on-Hudson.

audience.

Originally based in Mount Kisco and now in Yorktown and Croton, The Taghkanic Chorale has been sharing great choral masterworks with Westchester and Putnam audiences for 55 years. It

is a nonprofit, non-sectarian group that rehearses Tuesday evenings and performs in spring and fall.

Information about concert tickets, live-streaming and membership is available on the website.

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What's More Important: The House or its Location?

Real estate experts will tell you that the single most important factor to homebuyers is location, over and above the home itself. And logic will tell you that you can change anything about a house, but its location can't be changed.

There are dramatic exceptions to the last statement. For instance, when the Croton Dam and Reservoir were built at the turn of the 20th century, all of Katonah was moved, every house to every municipal building. Also, I have visited some historic sites where homes have been moved from their original locations to historic villages, like Old Deerfield, Mass.

But for most of us, it's not a possibility. Homes stay put where they're built.

With the help of moving.com, I've assembled some information of interest to those who may be considering the purchase of a home they've fallen in love with but have doubts about its location.

Even if a house doesn't have all the best features a buyer seeks, improvements can be made through renovations and upgrades. But the location remains constant and should be considered carefully by the buyer.

So, what makes for a good location? Here are five important factors for homebuyers to consider when assessing a



By Bill Primavera

home's location.

Nearby schools

Of utmost importance to parents is the quality of the local school district. Even if the buyers don't have school-age children, the quality of the schools remains an important consideration. Owning a home in a good school district is one of the best ways to retain and grow a home's value.

Low crime rates

Public safety should be top of mind when evaluating a home's location. After all, no one wants to live in a neighborhood where crime and danger are rampant. It's fairly easy to find local crime rates on the internet. Here in

northern Westchester and Putnam County, we're lucky to be fairly protected from serious crime.

Amenities, transportation options

One of the reasons why location is so important in real estate is that buyers often want and need close access to amenities and transportation. This means relatively close proximity to grocery stores, restaurants, dry cleaners, shopping and entertainment. It could also mean a home situated near major roads and public transportation options. When looking at a home, a buyer should be sure to assess how close the home is to these important amenities, which typically improves a home's value.

The neighbors

For better or for worse, you can't change your neighbors. If you have less-than-desirable neighbors, such as a fraternity house or neighbors with loud dogs, this could negatively affect the resale value of a home, not to mention the buyer's experience while living there.

When I first moved to Westchester, unwittingly I bought my home without realizing that there was a serious noise issue with a seeing eye dog training facility directly across the street, which featured loud barking eight to 10 hours a day while as many as 70 dogs at a time "socialized" outside. It took years of neighborhood organization and action to have the facility be a better neighbor and build sound-proof kennels.

When I helped organize this effort, I was criticized for not realizing that this would be a negative factor to the value of my home before I purchased it. But by chance, every time I visited the home prior to my purchase, the dogs had been tucked in and were quiet for the night. So, before buying any home, the buyer should spend ample time in the neighborhood at different times during the day and night.

I also had a testy case where a buyer wanted me to find a house with neighbors who were the same religion as she, something a realtor obviously can't do. I dropped that client but later learned that, after each of our house-hunting forays, she visited every house on her own on the blocks we considered to ask the

neighbors' religion. I can't imagine what their reactions were.

Future appreciation

Location is key when it comes to a property's value and future appreciation potential. If the home is located in a desirable neighborhood, the buyer can expect the home's value to stand the test of time – and even appreciate – through the years. I have rejoiced when pioneers have purchased homes in so-called bad neighborhoods only to renovate them and as a consequence start a movement to improve the entire neighborhood.

That was the case of my friend Bill who bought a home on the Upper West Side of Manhattan when it was a "bad" neighborhood. The home, badly in need of renovation, was purchased in the late 1960s for only \$18,000. Bill did all the needed work and sat on the property while the rest of the block followed suit with home renovations, improving the whole neighborhood as a consequence.

Just recently I read in The New York Times that his home sold for \$5 million. So maybe patience is another ingredient to add to location.

Bill Primavera is a licensed realtor affiliated with William Raveis Realty's Yorktown Heights office and a marketing practitioner. For questions or comments about the housing market or selling or buying a home, Bill can be reached directly at 914-522-2076.

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Putnam Pilot Program Offers Free Meals to Local Seniors

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Putnam County (CCEPC) kicked off Bountiful Meals, an innovative pilot program in coordination with Putnam County Office for Senior Resources offering free, nutrient-dense, frozen meals at senior centers across the county throughout the winter.

The meals are available for free in community freezers for any senior to take home and enjoy, filling the gaps when fresh food is difficult to access.

The initiative came out of the Putnam County Food System Coalition Food Systems Needs Assessment, funded by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The Needs Assessment identified two primary barriers to accessing food: inadequate income and a lack of reliable transportation to nearby grocery stores and food pantries.

With food pantries across the nation facing higher demands due to decreased donations, supply chain delays and inflation, free senior meals can lessen demands on strained emergency food providers.

"My ambitions as a grower are to continually improve my ability to grow the highest quality produce I am capable of, and to lower the barriers of access to that produce," said Adam Mahon, of SPACE on

Ryder Farm, one of the produce providers.

Additionally, Hudson Valley Mushrooms and Bluestone Farms are some of the local Putnam County farms receiving a stipend to participate in the program, growing heart healthy produce like butternut squash, tomatoes and earthy shiitakes.

Second Chance Foods, a local nonprofit that recovers produce and meat from local grocery stores and farms before it is wasted, prepares the fresh produce to create delicious, nutrient-dense meals for the pilot. Meal options rotate regularly, with offerings such as vegetable and chicken stir-fry and Sicilian white bean and escarole soup.

The pilot program is funded generously in part by The Field Hall Foundation, with

additional financial support from United Way of Westchester and Putnam. This new community freezer pilot program provides free, nutritious meals for senior citizens at a convenient location, financially supports local farmers and improves health-related impacts of food insecurity.

Currently, freezers are located at the Friendship Center in Philipstown and Putnam County Friendship Center at Putnam Valley, and will move to the William Koehler Memorial Senior Center and Carmel Friendship Center after Jan. 1.

For information about the Office for Senior Resources' programs and services, visit its website at <https://www.putnamcountyny.com/osr/> or call 845-808-1700 or visit the Putnam County Office for

Senior Resources on Facebook.

For information about Cornell Cooperative Extension of Putnam County's community programs and events, visit www.putnam.cce.cornell.edu.

Stay connected to the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Putnam County on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Putnam County provides equal program and employment opportunities. Call 845-278-6738 if someone has special needs.

This is a press release provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension/Putnam County. It has been lightly edited and is being published by Examiner Media as a public service.



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Best-selling Author Brings Coaching Platform to Realtors, Business Owners

A decade of focused self-care, deep introspection and personal growth led Jennifer Maher, powerhouse realtor and recent best-selling author, to an epiphany – if you lead with your strengths, find your niche and work with a team, the lifestyle you seek is within reach.

With this in mind, Maher has launched Grit Assist, a consultancy that combines real estate and small business coaching with virtual assistance, team building, leadership training, sales management and staffing solutions.

“So many people feel stuck in place and

frustrated. They know what they want and what they are capable of doing, yet they struggle with implementation,” Maher said. “Grit Assist provides clients with the tools and coaching they need, so they can leverage their strengths and have more time for personal and family development and happiness.”

Maher seemingly had insurmountable hurdles. Pregnant and single at age 27, she was pressed to find a fruitful career that would allow her to balance work and motherhood. Real estate was the answer.

After a stint in residential real estate, she leveraged her relationships with her sphere of influence and focused on commercial real estate. In time, she joined J. Philip Real Estate, where she launched a residential real estate office, as well as a separate commercial company as a partner, and helped the company grow to over 100 agents and reach nearly \$300 million in sales volume by 2021.

After serving as COO at J. Philip Real Estate, she eventually stepped down and joined EXP Commercial. Throughout this journey, Maher was fighting her own professional battles while trying to find life balance.

“I know how hard it is to push through the countless challenges and doubts one has as a realtor and small business owner. I’ve lived them,” Maher said. “There is a spot for everybody in the real estate industry as well as other small businesses. Every person – whatever his or her strengths or weaknesses – can benefit from a team leader,

a coach or someone who knows how to place them in their strengths. I can be that person elevating them to the next level of success, but it takes grit.”

Maher’s journey of career struggles and ultimate success is now serving as a guide for others. Advice from Maher can be found in the new best-selling book, “Women Who Boss Up in Real Estate,” a collection of interviews with brokers, agent, and owners who are breaking the mold in real estate and ready to inspire the next generation of women seeking to find success in this fast-paced, competitive industry.

For more information, visit www.GritAssist.com, @GritAssistcoach on Instagram or Grit Assist on Facebook.

About the ‘Women Who Boss Up’ Book Series

Whether you’ve been bossing up for a while or you’re looking for support on your boss-up journey, the “Women Who Boss Up” book series offers inspiration and advice from women just like you. These women come from varied backgrounds, walks of life and disciplines – STEM, health care, finance, real estate, coaching, nonprofits, to name some.

The book includes insights from women who left Corporate America to pursue their dreams of business ownership; those who faced seemingly insurmountable challenges but learned how to move forward; and some who followed their intuition to create lives of fulfillment and financial success and more. For more information, visit www.bossupbestseller.com.



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

High Honor

The Town of Mount Pleasant received the Public Works Project of the Year by the New York Metropolitan Chapter of the American Public Works Association for the rehabilitation of Carroll Park, above. The town won the highly selective award as a result of the work at the park, which was completed last summer.

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Peaker Power Plants: Inefficiency, Injustice and Insights

By Lauren Kroell

On Thursday, Nov. 10, Sustainable Westchester hosted a webinar looking at the environmental and social justice impacts of peaker power plants, with guest speakers from the Clean Energy Group (CEG), UPROSE, The Point CDC and GridRewards by Logical Buildings.

New Rochelle Councilwoman Yadira Ramos-Herbert offered opening remarks, setting the stage for an insightful discussion on how more mindful energy usage can advance environmental justice.

Peaker power plants – known informally as “peakers” – operate during periods of high energy demand to generate enough electricity to supply the energy grid. Often several decades old and infrequently used, these fossil fuel-powered plants are being seen as an increasingly expensive and inefficient source of energy.

Shelley Robbins of CEG explained that this is the case in terms of not only the excessive emissions produced and the cost of operation, but also the infrequent use; the average U.S. peaker plant is on less than 5 percent of the time in a given year.

Speakers also discussed how the close proximity of these peakers to low-income populations and communities of color has been a major environmental justice concern, particularly in New York City, which has one of the highest concentrations of peakers nationwide.

Victor Davila from The Point CDC noted that exposure to pollutants such as nitrous oxide (NOX) – which contributes to the buildup of particulate matter – can weaken cognitive development and increase the rate of cardiovascular disease, both of which are seen in peaker-populated communities. Davila noted that young people in particular “are being given an immediate handicap by being forced to grow up in these conditions.”

To capture this, Robbins explained this injustice through CEG’s Peaker Power Plant Mapping Tool, which offers emissions, operating and demographic data on peaker plants nationwide. Such a tool offers accessible, empirical evidence of the disproportionate impacts of peaker power plants on marginalized communities.

In breaking down how to address peaker plants, speakers highlighted how past successful movements can offer insightful solutions.

Lovinia Reynolds from UPROSE explained how a case study in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where the organization successfully halted repowering plans for one of these peakers, instead replaced it with a battery storage system. Lovinia said there are several other projects currently underway to advance climate resiliency in Sunset Park – including community solar, offshore wind projects and more.

During the webinar, Westchester residents also learned about how to



take action by becoming more mindful energy users. As Lauren Brois, director of EnergySmart Homes, pointed out, electricity usage during high-demand times directly contributes to the environmental and social justice impacts associated with peakers. These impacts can be minimized by using GridRewards, an app that offers personalized energy insights to help reduce utility costs and energy waste.

Sylvie Binder, a smart buildings account

executive at Logical Buildings, explained that reducing electricity consumption during peak times is the least expensive way to manage energy demand – and offers a benefit to participants, as they can be paid for their energy savings.

The webinar saw engagement from both participants and presenters about how these discussions connect to current political and economic trends. Funds distributed as part of the newly-passed New York Environmental Bond Act and the mobilization of the Inflation Reduction Act will create clear incentives for the market to invest in renewable energy, thereby reducing dependence on aging fossil fuel infrastructure like peaker plants.

As a result of the innovation in the world of clean energy and electrification, it was pointed out during the webinar that these are actions that can be taken immediately and are currently being deployed.

“Nothing we do is aspirational, everything is operational...All of this is happening now,” Reynolds said. “If it moves slowly, it’s because it’s never been done before.”

Watch the full webinar at <https://bit.ly/SWPeakerPlantWebinar>.

Lauren Kroell is a clean energy associate at Sustainable Westchester, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Mount Kisco. To learn more about GridRewards, call 914-242-4725 or visit www.SustainableWestchester.org.

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JCC Mid-Westchester Announces Return of its Holiday Master Ballet Class

JCC Mid-Westchester (JCCMW) has announced that New York City Ballet principal dancer Daniel Ulbricht is returning to its dance school for the 11th time to teach an intermediate-level Holiday Master Ballet Class.

He will be accompanied by accomplished pianist Miles Fusco.

The class will take place on Monday, Dec. 19 from 11 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and is open to all intermediate-level dancers for a \$40 fee. Pre-registration is required to attend. Interested dance students can contact the Dance School at JCCMW online at <https://jccmw.org/dance-school>.

A principal dancer with New York City Ballet since 2007, Ulbricht's dancing was once described by a critic as "a combination soaring eagle in flight and bowling ball thrown for a strike." Last month, he received rave reviews for his performance of Twyla Tharp's "In the Upper Room" and "Nine Sinatra Songs" at New York City Center.

Currently, Ulbricht is the artistic adviser of Manhattan Youth Ballet and co-artistic director of the New York State Summer School for the Arts in Saratoga Springs. He serves as a consultant to a number of schools, is a guest teacher at the School of American Ballet and Ballet Academy East and teaches at well-known national dance schools, private schools and universities throughout the United States.

He directs Stars of American Ballet, a chamber-sized group of top-level ballet dancers celebrating the work of



choreographer Jerome Robbins touring the world as an outreach program. The dynamic Ulbricht also co-founded Dance Against Cancer in 2010 to bring the dance community together to support cancer research. Through his annual Dance Against Cancer gala events, Ulbricht, who lost his mother to uterine cancer, has raised over \$2 million for the American Cancer Society.

Fusco, who is on faculty at the Dance School at JCCMW as a pianist, holds two degrees from Juilliard. He has worked with such luminaries as Alvin Ailey, Mikhail

Baryshnikov, Erik Bruhn, Fernando Bujones, Margot Fonteyn, Carla Fracci, Cynthia Gregory, Susan Jaffe, Rudolph Nureyev, Twyla Tharp, Wendy Whelan, Cheryl Yaeger and many others.

The Dance School at JCCMW, one of Westchester's most respected dance programs, provides all levels of dance training by professional faculty for pre-school, teen and adult students. Classes include ballet, pointe, hip-hop and tap. Most adult ballet classes feature live piano accompaniment.

Dance School students have gone on to professional careers in dance including with such companies as American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, New York City Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, Carolina Ballet, Norwegian National Ballet, Ephrat Asherie Dance as well as on Broadway.

The JCC Mid-Westchester is a multigenerational center in Westchester. The community is supported through an offering of human services, educational, cultural and recreational programs within and beyond its walls. Its programs are grounded in core Jewish values but all are welcome. JCCMW enriches families, connects friends and strengthens community.

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Mount Kisco Optometrist Celebrates New Chapter in Practice

By Jessica Jafet

Andrew Golden held a passion for science as a boy growing up in Brooklyn. How to apply that passion can take a science-loving kid in so many directions.

Feet? Gross. Teeth? Bloody. Surgery? Just no.

How about helping people see?

"The podiatrist had to touch feet, then there was a dentist, and since I don't like blood, I didn't want to become a physician, so it left me with optometry," recalled Golden.

That young kid is now a veteran optometrist, practicing his craft since 1989.

And he has news.

The good doctor is now welcoming both longtime patients and new customers to a new Mount Kisco location – Professional Eye Care at 69 S. Moger Ave. The Briarcliff Manor resident said he is happy his practice



Andrew Golden at the office of his optometry practice in Mount Kisco.

is now consolidated in a business-friendly area that is accessible to patients from wherever they come.

Many who know him from the former Golden Vision clinic, which had been a local fixture in Yorktown for years, continue to visit Golden in order to take care of their family's eye health.

"I am an optometrist who offers full-scope optometric care, with a specialty in complex contact lens fittings," he said.

With a patient population whose ages span a lifetime, the doctor sees children as young as five and seniors as old as 100, and serves as their primary health care provider for the eyes.

Golden recommends that people come in at least once a year to get a comprehensive exam and evaluation, a routine that is important for maintaining good eye health for life. Taking the time to assess any issues at their earliest stages is the key to the prevention and mitigation of vision loss and other systemic conditions that affect the eye.

"It's not like other places where people are rushed and there are three people waiting outside the door," Golden explained of his practice. "My wife tells me I spend too much time with everyone, but that is not the case; it's that I listen to my patients very carefully and then do what I feel is the right thing for them. I tailor everything for each individual."

For Golden, the rewards of his calling are crystal clear.

"It is an immediate gratification," he explained, "because you see their vision improve right in front of your eyes."

Professional Eye Care is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 914-666-5870 or visit www.proeyecaremk.com.

Experience Chappaqua's Holiday Stroll This Saturday

It's the most magical time of year again and the annual Holiday Stroll is back in Chappaqua.

This year's event will feature a meet-and-greet with Santa Claus bringing cheer to all and posing for pictures with the little ones from 2 to 4 p.m.

Experience a live ice sculpting presentation in front of Desires By Mikolay at 3 p.m. where you can watch master carvers create two holiday-themed carvings out of giant blocks of ice using nothing but chainsaws. This

is a decade-long tradition you have to see for yourself.

Festivities continue at 4:30 p.m. at the New Castle Historical Society where you can enjoy the sounds of Christmas carols by Horace Greenly Encords and witness the Christmas tree lighting with thousands of twinkling lights.

Enjoy the charm of downtown Chappaqua as you pop into local shops, discover new merchants, check out the latest fashions, shop local for holiday gifts and pick up all

the necessary essentials this gift-giving season.

If you are worried about the cold, there's no need to worry. There will be a complementary food truck from the Chappaqua-Millwood Chamber of Commerce serving up hot cocoa and apple cider donuts to make sure everyone is warm and toasty.

Chappaqua's Holiday Stroll will be this Saturday, Dec. 3 from 2 to 6 p.m. throughout downtown Chappaqua.



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Additives, Adulterations and Even Fraud in the World of Wine



By Nick Antonaccio

Last week I presented the ongoing practice of certain winemakers who add water to their wines to reduce alcohol and/or increase volume.

While not an ethical way of producing wines, this is not an illegal

practice. Several readers inquired if there are any additional additives in wines, or perhaps wines that may have been found to be adulterated by other means. Even worse, taking this argument to an extreme, have there been instances of illegally created wines sold to unsuspecting consumers?

This week, in the limited space allotted to my column, I'm focusing on (brief) insights into these three darker, even nefarious, sides of winemaking.

1. Additional additives.

Ever notice an exceptionally vivid, dark hue to a red wine? Ever wonder why the same grape varietal from the same region can produce different hues of red or purple coloring? The answer may be the additive Mega Purple. Used as a color enhancer, this additive is natural, sold commercially and, at times, applied generously.

'focusing on (brief) insights into these three darker, even nefarious, sides of winemaking.'

Ironically, federal law permits the use in winemaking of a number of chemicals, including pesticides, herbicides, equipment cleaning chemicals and sulphite preservatives.

2. Adulteration. If a particular appellation is not noted on an American wine label, it indicates that the required minimum percentage of grapes from that area may have been from other regions – domestic or foreign. There have been reports of ocean-going tankers traveling up the Pacific Coast laden with large stainless-steel tanks of grape juice from South America, notably Chile. The fruit-forward West Coast Cabernet Sauvignon you've recently enjoyed may have truly been an international wine.

At mega wine factories, massive quantities of grapes are harvested by industrial-size machines that suck in rotten grapes, leaves, twigs and unlucky

insects. These can cause chemical reactions in wines that trigger a number of adverse reactions in humans, such as headaches and digestive problems.

Industrial wines may also legally include sugar, acetaldehyde, dimethyl dicarbonate and ethyl acetate, further adulterating the wines.

You Heard It Through the Grapevine

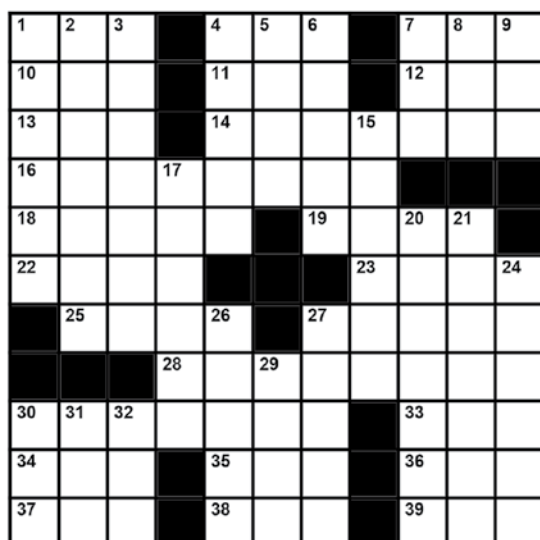
Crossword

Across

1. Damage
4. Word on a Valentine candy heart
7. Middle grade
10. Hot blood
11. I found out!
12. Brit. top politicians, abbr.
13. Compass point, abbr.
14. The sun always shines on this Yorktown sports club
16. Chinese ancient practice, literally, "wind and water"
18. Preface
19. Cupid, to the Greeks
22. Firestone or Goodyear
23. NYSE banner events
25. Hearing in court
27. "Honest Abe" might grab a beer at this Hawthorne bar, _____ Tavern
28. Follow too closely
30. Sing without singing
33. No ordinary
34. Good works ad, abbr.
35. Lyrical lines
36. One engaged in, suffix
37. Juice
38. Neither fish ___ fowl
39. Like some wine

Down

1. Nonconformist
2. Talk-show host Hall
3. Come back into the earth's orbit
4. Roundup need
5. "Looks like trouble!"



6. Relative worth
7. Lifesaving technique, abbr.
8. Former record label of the Beatles
9. Feminine ending
15. Ventilating
17. Hails
20. Drugged
21. Aloe Vera acts as one
24. Derisive
26. Semi-synthetic textile
27. Digestive tract condition
29. Prefix for China
30. Vinyl records
31. "Life ___ cabaret ..."
32. Twaddle

Answers on page 26

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were nonplussed.

Here's what investigators uncovered: Through a vast and underground international network, hundreds of tanker trucks brought Spanish wines across the Pyrenees to a warehouse company in southern France. False documents were created, representing the wines as from France, allowing them to be legally shipped in-country.

Next, a négociant (a wine merchant/broker) in the Medoc region of Bordeaux accepted the now-French wines, and over two years, bottled and labeled over one million wines as Bordeaux chateaux, including several prestigious sub regions.

The lesson to be learned from these nefarious operators? Lesson number one: Is your favorite wine truly a naturally produced wine? How do you know?

Lesson number two: Only buy from reputable producers, distributors and importers. They hold the trust of the public and are not about to break the tacit code of integrity and authenticity between consumers and producers.

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.

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The Wonders of the Current Golden Age of Space Exploration

On Nov. 16, after months of delays, NASA launched its Artemis I rocket from Cape Canaveral, carrying the uncrewed Orion spacecraft.

Artemis looks like a Frankenstein's mix of leftovers from the towering Saturn V rocket that brought the Apollo missions to the moon decades ago and the space shuttles, with their rust-colored fuel tank and side-mounted solid rocket boosters. As it rose on its tower of flames and arced over the Atlantic, the American space program was on its way back to the moon for the first time since Apollo 17 headed home 50 years ago next month.

Orion will orbit the moon until mid-December. One day, it will carry astronauts, not just to the moon, but to Mars or even beyond. I'm too young to remember Apollo but as I watched the Artemis launch, it reminded me of the story of Apollo 8, which launched just before Christmas

1968. That was the first crewed mission to the moon, the first time humans saw our nearest neighbor up close, the first time we saw the moon's far side. Apollo 8 didn't land on the moon, but orbited 10 times before heading home.

Apollo 8, just like Artemis, came at a moment when America was going through some difficult times. It was so inspiring that people wrote letters to NASA telling them that they saved the holidays, and saved 1968.

This holiday season, while we're still here on the ground, we can look into our own future. Let's head out and track down the full moon and Mars on the night of Dec. 7. For much of North America, Europe and parts of North Africa, the moon will completely block, or occult, Mars for part of the night. We fall just outside that occultation area, but as the candles flicker and the lights twinkle, the pair will be close enough to look as though

they're almost touching. We'll be able to block out the gap between them with just our pinky stretched at arm's length.

While uncrewed missions don't bring the excitement of sending astronauts all that way, it's amazing to think of what the engineers, scientists and other workers have accomplished here on the ground. We have robots exploring distant corners of the solar system, some of them speeding away from us toward parts unknown.

Every one of these explorers is a small slice of the good, the forward-thinking parts of humanity, the parts most of us are proud to share with the galaxy. Observatories that were unimaginable at the time of Apollo now let us see neighborhoods of the universe that are almost as old as time itself. It is undoubtedly a golden age of space exploration.

In that one view as we look toward the skies on Dec. 7, with the orbiting Orion and the legacy of Apollo hidden by that distance, we can see where we've been and where we're going. The things we've learned from these missions have been immeasurable, and we can only dream what we'll learn tomorrow. Who knows? Maybe one of the kids looking up will grow



By Scott Levine

up to send the rest of us to the stars.

Happy holidays, whatever you're celebrating, and clear skies, everyone!

Scott Levine (astroscott@yahoo.com) is an astronomy writer and speaker from Croton-on-Hudson. He is also a member of Westchester Amateur Astronomers, a group 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 www.westchesterastronomers.org.

Clear Skies



Full Moon
December 8



Last Quarter
December 16



New Moon
December 23



First Quarter
December 30

The phases of the moon for December.

Crossword Answers

1	M	2	A	3	R	4	L	5	U	6	V	7	C	8	E	9	E	
10	I	R	E			11	A	H	A			12	P	M	S			
13	S	S	E			14	S	O	L	A	R	I	S					
16	F	E	N	G	S	H	U	I										
18	I	N	T	R	O			19	E	R	O	S		20		21		
22	T	I	R	E						23	I	P	O	S		24		
		25	O	Y	E	R				27	U	N	I	O	N			
					28	T	A	I	L	G	A	T	E					
30	L	I	P	S	Y	N	C					33	T	H	E			
34	P	S	A					35	O	D	E				36	E	E	R
37	S	A	P					38	N	O	R				39	D	R	Y

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Fox Lane Softball Seeks Equity; District Says Progress Already Underway

By Adam Stone

Half a century ago, when Indiana Senator Birch Bayh helped shepherd Title IX into existence, he noted in a statement the limitations of federal legislation — gender equity written in the law books wouldn't be enough.

"While the impact of this amendment would be far-reaching," Bayh concluded on the Senate floor, "it is not a panacea."

Although Title IX, enacted during the Nixon Administration in 1972, revolutionized the girls' sports scene in the United States and is widely responsible for the breathtaking advances of the past 50 years, the senator knew the law would only achieve as much as advocates were willing to fight to accomplish.

Even as our early 1970s legislators banned gender-based discrimination in any educational program that gets federal funding with the landmark policy, lawmaking and law enforcement are two very different ballgames.

The remnants of that fight are still playing out in school boards and on ballfields across the country to this day, as activists try to hold districts to account when real-world application of the law falls short of the law's loftiest ideals. Or even just when inertia sets in over plain-to-see and entirely legal unfairness.

Sometimes the culprit is following the path of least resistance.

The legislation was designed to create a level playing field. Beyond that, laws are just a means to an end, and even when the letter of the law is being followed, the spirit isn't always. It's up to people to strive to achieve the ambitious goals that motivated the law in the first place.

In gender equity debates, it's critical to keep your eye on the ball, or at least on the key question: does the status quo generate a fair outcome for boys and girls?

FOX FIGHT

Here locally, a related movement is growing around Fox Lane girls' softball in the Bedford Central School District.

"We are petitioning for the immediate improvement to safety and inadequacies of the Fox Lane Softball program and facilities," Fox Lane softball parents wrote in a Nov. 7 letter to the district.



By Adam Stone

"The unsafe, inadequate, and unequal conditions of Fox Lane Softball compared to the equivalent Fox Lane Baseball program are unacceptable and unlawful," the statement continued. "The disparate treatment of our softball athletes evidences an intolerable level of gender bias in our schools." (If you want a more detailed description of the complaints beyond what my column can summarize, read the full

letter and other related documents in the more detailed online version of this piece).

Also, don't be surprised to discover the softball community rallying for its cause at this Wednesday night's (Nov. 30) Board of Education meeting.

"The selected speakers will be addressing the inequities noticed, by our parents and athletes alike, when comparing the FLHS Baseball program and facilities and that of the FLHS Softball program and facilities," a mass email sent to softball parents on Saturday night stated, also noting that many answers given by the district at an earlier Zoom meeting "still do not adequately meet the requirements of the standard for Title IX."

"Our players have been frustrated on many issues for a long time, and many of the requests from parents have gone unanswered and unaddressed," the message continued.

But it's worth stressing how, at least in my view, Bedford's powers-that-be appear to be strong supporters of girls' sports, from the superintendent and athletic director to school board leadership. Yet that doesn't mean the status quo is at all sufficient or that more focus can't be directed at the problem.

Efforts to achieve transformative reform, whether gender-related or not, are sometimes battling historical discrepancies more than resistant authorities.

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Athletic Director Adam Lodewick, for his part, articulated his commitment to equality.

"Making sure all of our teams and programs are treated equally and are provided with the best environment, and the best opportunities for a positive and successful experience has been and always



ANDY JACOBS PHOTO

Fox Lane sophomore Gabriela Naar said maintenance issues, large rocks on the field, and worry about safety without a proper dugout were among a list of concerns. Naar also wanted to emphasize how a current bond plan could help advance the girls toward the equity they're seeking. She said the status quo makes her and her teammates feel like the district does not care about them as much as the boys.

will be my number one priority," Lodewick told me. "There is an absolute need for the softball field to be upgraded and renovated. I am confident all the current issues will be addressed with the new upcoming bond project and give the coaches and student-

athletes a state-of-the-art facility and one they can be proud of."

At the same time, the central figures of this story are the girls themselves.

"Inequality in girls' sports isn't just providing boys with a better field and equipment — it's providing them with more opportunities to get better as a player, which leads to a better college and a better future," said Gabriela Naar, a talented Fox Lane High School outfielder who started for the varsity team as a freshman last spring and spoke at a recent Zoom meeting with softball parents, giving voice to various player concerns.

"It's not only the game you are hurting, but also the opportunities that will impact us in the long run," Naar also remarked.

Naar did note how she and many others in the softball community favor a natural surface — a natural surface is featured in a current school district bond upgrade plan — because "turf gets hot and is harder to play on." (Some softball parents seeking equity are asking for turf).

"I will keep fighting so that future generations of female athletes won't have to," Naar said, while also providing unsolicited emphasis on the fact that the upcoming bond helps advance the girls toward the equity they're seeking.

Before I delve deeper, let me first get a personal piece out of the way.

For a news reporter, if the subjects of a potential story are...

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