



FREE

February 15 - February 21, 2022

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 14, Issue 634

Residents Escorted Out of Lakeland Meeting for Unruly Behavior

By Rick Pezzullo

Several residents who clashed with members of the Lakeland Board of Education during a budget meeting at Lakeland High School Feb. 10 were escorted out by police for unruly behavior after refusing to follow repeated requests to calm down.

The situation got so out of hand that the board walked off stage for a necessary break in the action and interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen Gagliardi needed to be shielded by police at the end of the tense

encounter.

"I have been to a number of these (Board of Education) meetings now in both Lakeland and Yorktown, and this past week was one of the worst displays I have experienced yet," stated Joseph Ascanio, who said he was in attendance to hear a district update from Gagliardi. "Many 'concerned parents' are seemingly emboldened enough to simply spew hateful, racist rhetoric out in the open without concern for truth, decency or decorum."

The mood at the meeting quickly turned

ugly when the public was permitted to speak following a presentation of the technology, benefits and debt service line items in the proposed 2022-23 budget, which residents will vote on May 17.

One speaker lambasted the board over the continuing mask mandate for students, while Heather Conway of Cortlandt alleged there was an influx of "illegal" students that was becoming a costly burden for taxpayers.

"Whose paying for the illegals?" she remarked. "Where are we getting the money for the illegal students, or is there no money and we have to absorb that? We are absorbing everything. Who pays for the long-term damage to our students? We

are."

Civility deteriorated further after Paul Edwards, who noted he had three children who were educated in the district, advocated for an instructional program of diversity.

"Where is diversity in the budget?" said Edwards. "What are the plans to teach people who don't know?"

The comment from Edwards, who is Black, triggered a reaction in the audience with such remarks as "This isn't Harlem!" and "The way you end racism is you stop talking about it!" could be heard.

One woman who declined to listen to board President Adam Kaufman was

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OVAC Honored by Latimer



Westchester County Executive George Latimer presented a proclamation to the Ossining Volunteer Ambulance Corps (OVAC) for its efforts in helping to keep the community safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ossining Volunteer Ambulance Corp Chief Nick Franzoso said, "I am so proud of the dedication of our career and volunteer members who went beyond the call of duty to provide critical vaccines and testing to the community. Without them — our work is truly not possible. We are honored to be a key partner with Westchester County in keeping people safe as we look toward turning the page on this pandemic."

Mayes to be Appointed Councilman on Cortlandt Town Board

By Rick Pezzullo

A Lakeland Board of Education trustee has been chosen to fill a vacancy on the Cortlandt Town Board.

The current four Town Board members are expected Tuesday (Feb. 15) to appoint Robert Mayes to fill a seat that has been empty since Jan. 1 when Cortlandt Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker was sworn-in after being elected in Nov. to succeed the retiring Linda Puglisi.

Mayes, a fifth-generation town resident, is now serving his second term on the Lakeland Board of Education and is also an alternate member of Cortlandt's Planning Board. His term as a school trustee ends in May.

"I would like to thank Supervisor Becker and the Town Board for entrusting me with the responsibility of serving Cortlandt in this capacity. I am looking forward to getting to work on behalf of our community," Mayes stated. We have a phenomenal town government, and I am looking forward to this next chapter of my service to our community."

Fifteen candidates were interviewed by a preliminary committee after submitting resumes and four individuals were

interviewed by the all-Democratic Town Board.

"We met an excellent group of individuals during this process and many of them we will be asked to join us in the town government on various committees. We thank them for their interest in serving our community and government," Becker said. "We welcome Mr. Mayes to the board and are excited to see how his knowledge and experience will enhance the work of the board for our community and government."

Mayes is an attorney working at the New York State Department of Corrections. Previously he was an Assistant District Attorney in the Office of the Westchester County District Attorney's Office. Mayes is married with young children and resides in the Crompond section of Cortlandt.

He has been involved in a number of civic organizations, including as a coach for Cortlandt American Little League, a Cub Scout leader, a board member of the Mt. Pleasant Blythedale Foundation, and a member of the Westchester Black Bar Association.

Since Becker had two years remaining on his council term, Mayes will have to run in the next General Election in Nov. to retain his seat and again in Nov. 2023.

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Somers Resident Found Guilty in Fatal Wrong-Way Drunk Driving Crash

By Rick Pezzullo

A Somers man could face up to 25 years in prison after being found guilty last week for his actions in a wrong-way, head-on collision two years ago that resulted in the death of two Ardsley residents.

After a four-week bench trial, Jaime Paucar, 52, was found guilty Feb. 7 of two counts of aggravated vehicular homicide, two counts of manslaughter in the second degree, and assault in the second degree, all felonies.

He was also found guilty of assault in the third degree, aggravated driving while intoxicated, driving while intoxicated, reckless driving, leaving the scene of an incident without reporting property damage and leaving the scene of an incident without

reporting personal injury, all misdemeanors.

Acquitted of two counts of second-degree murder, Paucar faces a sentence ranging from one to 25 years in state prison when he is set to return to court March 28.

“Jaime Paucar’s behavior blazed a path of devastation and destruction that caused two families to suffer immeasurable heartache,” said Westchester District Attorney Miriam Rocah. “For the first time in Westchester, my office determined that the facts of this case warranted murder charges for the deaths caused by a drunk driver. While we are disappointed that the court did not render a guilty verdict for those charges, we respect the court’s decision. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families, and we hope that the multiple guilty verdicts will provide them with some degree of justice.”

According to Rocah, on Jan. 30, 2020, at approximately 8:30 p.m., Paucar drove westbound in the eastbound lanes of I-287 in Harrison when he crashed head-on into the car driven by 57-year-old Jordan Wachtell, of Ardsley, whose 17-year-old son and two teenage friends were passengers. A Westchester County toxicologist determined Paucar had a blood alcohol content of .24 at the time of the collision.

Wachtell died at the scene. One of the passengers, Eric Goldberg, 17, was transported to Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, where he died that night. Wachtell’s son and the other surviving passenger were also transported to Westchester Medical Center, where they were treated for their injuries.

As detailed during the trial, prior to the

fatal collision, Paucar was driving in the correct direction on I-287 when he crashed into a vehicle, fled the scene, exited the highway and retreated to a parking lot in Port Chester. Then, while attempting to drive home, Paucar missed the entrance for I-287 and drove on several side streets before using an exit ramp to enter I-287, ignoring signage and at least three motorists warning him he was driving the wrong way. The defendant then drove westbound in the eastbound lanes for more than two miles, sideswiping three additional vehicles before the final fatal crash.

New York State Police arrested Paucar in March 2020 following a thorough investigation. The case was heard by Judge George Fufidio in Westchester County Court.

Residents Escorted Out of Lakeland Meeting for Unruly Behavior

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removed from the auditorium.

“This is turning into something we don’t want it to be,” Kaufman said.

Kaufman then took offense to a remark about Germany directed his way. “Don’t even go there, sir,” he said before leading an abrupt recess.

The five-minute recess did little to defuse the toxic atmosphere as a few more audience members were escorted out.

Melvyn Tanzman later asked where funding for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) could be found in the budget.

“There’s no way to tell if Lakeland has

made a good faith effort to reach its goals,” Tanzman said, adding he was “disturbed” by some of the behavior of attendees at the meeting.

Gagliardi also experienced a few interruptions from shouting parents during her presentation.

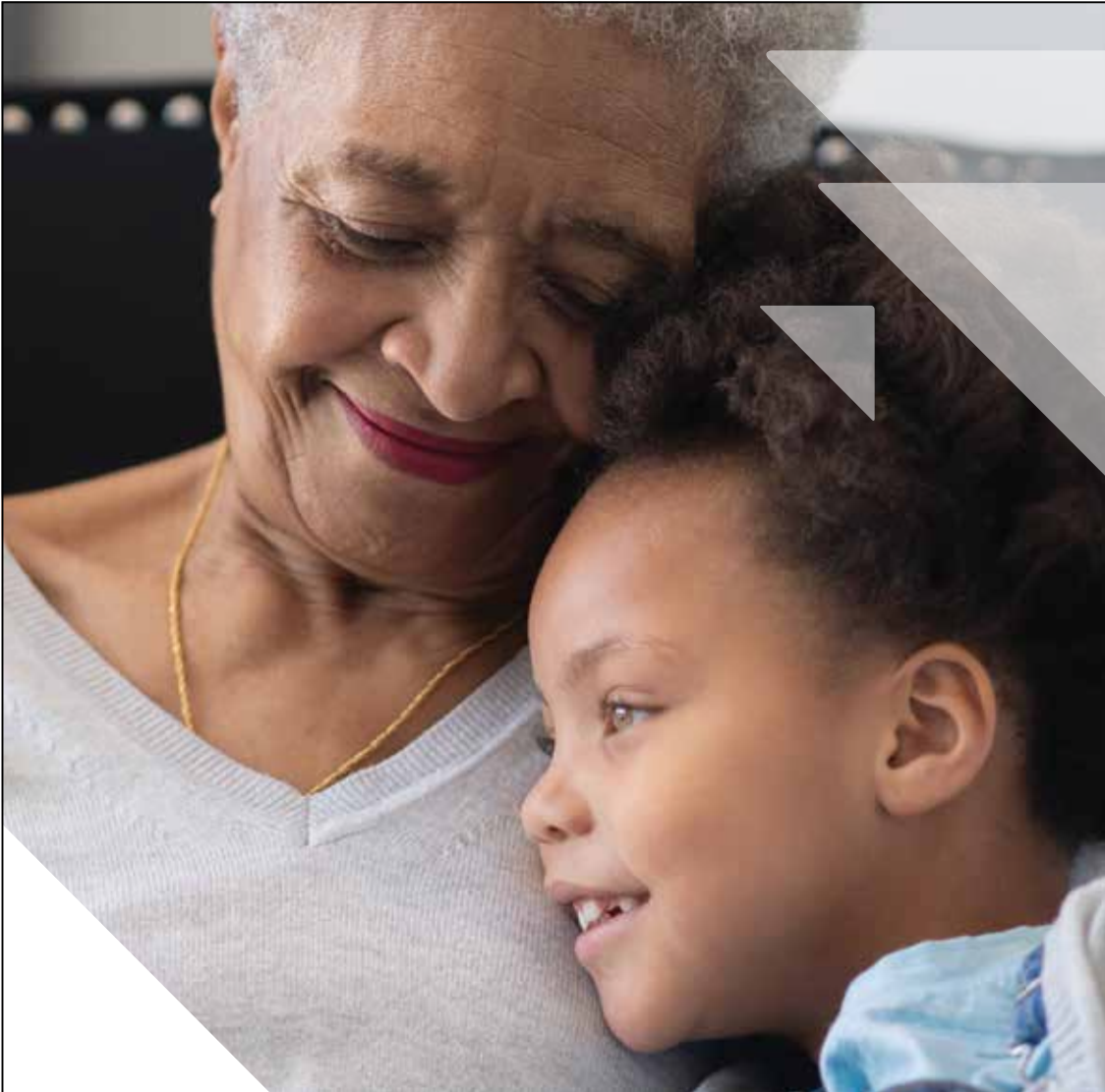
“I’ve been patient. I’ve been listening with all my might. I can’t take it anymore,” Kaufman said as another individual was booted from the meeting.

The next scheduled Lakeland Board of Education meeting is this Thursday, Feb. 17 at 7 p.m. at Lakeland High School. Kaufman told Examiner Media no changes

are planned to the current format for public speaking.

“We believe strongly in supporting community members who wish to address the board during the public comment session. We will continue to support speakers by removing disruptive audience members and reminding the community at large to be respectful to their neighbors, administrators, and board members. We have security and local law enforcement present at all meetings and will continue to work together to ensure that everyone feels safe to share their concerns and opinions at our meetings,” Kaufman stated.

“The majority of our community members understand and respect the board and our processes,” he continued. “We have received numerous emails from community members who are deeply discouraged by the behavior of their neighbors and want to move forward in a civil and respectful manner. While the public comment session of our meetings has received more attention recently, it is not the sole purpose of Board of Education meetings. We meet to conduct the business of the district and will continue to do so despite the efforts to reduce our productivity.”



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Dan's Wine of the Year

2014 Casa Santos Lima Reserva



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

\$11⁹⁷

Jason's Wine of the Year

2019 Oak Farm Tievoli Cabernet Sauvignon



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

\$14⁹⁷

Suburban's Sparkling Wine of the Year

NV Isotta Manzoni Prosecco Rose



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

\$13⁹⁷

Tom's Wine of the Year

2018 Laurent Combier Crozes Hermitage



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

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Westchester Drops Mask Mandate for County Buildings

School Requirement Remains in Effect

By Martin Wilbur

Westchester County removed its mask requirement for entry into most county buildings on Monday as statewide COVID-19 infection levels have fallen to their lowest points in more than three months.

County Executive George Latimer announced the change as active cases in Westchester declined to just over 2,000 as of Sunday, a more than 90 percent drop from the Omicron variant high of about 36,000 five weeks ago.

Hospitalizations continue to nosedive as well, down to 180, nearly 500 less than a month ago.

"We're not ideologically committed to a strategy," Latimer said. "We look and see if

what we're doing is working and if we don't need these mandates, then we lift these restrictions. At this stage of the game, in terms of the mandate that we put in place for county office buildings, our policies worked. There was no spread of cases of COVID that we were concerned about (among) our workforce."

Latimer's decision came five days after Gov. Kathy Hochul announced last Wednesday that she lifted the local mask mandate for businesses effective Feb. 10.

However, she continued the mask mandate for schools at least until the first week in March. Public health officials will re-evaluate after most districts return from the Presidents' week break on Feb. 28.

Hochul said she will leave it up to individual businesses and local and county governments whether they want to continue having a more stringent policy.

"I'm looking at data, looking at trends, looking at everything that's out there but I

also want to deal in the reality that we have a very good picture that has been painted over the last few weeks as we are approaching the expiration date for this emergency measure that's been in place for literally two months," Hochul explained.

Despite sharp declines in COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations in recent weeks, the governor said that masks will still be mandated for the time being in certain settings, including schools. It remains in effect for all state regulated health care facilities, nursing homes, correctional facilities, child care centers, homeless and domestic violence shelters and mass transportation.

On Sunday, the statewide infection rate was 2.96 percent, the fourth consecutive day the infection rate was under 3 percent. There were just 2,348 new positive cases on Sunday, the lowest level since Oct. 25. On Jan. 7, there were 90,000 new cases statewide, the peak of the Omicron variant.

The governor put the mask mandate in effect on Dec. 13.

Hochul said that she spoke with education leaders across the state last week and held off making a decision until the first week in March because many families use next week off from school to travel.

Each student and staff member will receive COVID-19 test kits so they can test themselves the day they return and again three days later. A determination may be made on Friday, Mar. 4 about whether the requirement will remain in schools, Hochul said.

She mentioned that there's "a very strong possibility" it could be lifted for the following week or soon after.

"These children, students sit together all day long in close proximity to each other, they go to lunch together, they're involved in gym together, whereas in the workplace people have the ability for movement," Hochul said of the difference between requirements for schools and businesses. "Kids are in a very restricted setting, and also adults can make their own decisions. Children need adults to look out for their health. This is all about safety and the health of our children."

Last week, Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont announced the mask requirement will end for schools in his state on Feb. 28, and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy is discontinuing the same mandate a week later.

Hochul said her directive is in the same time frame but will also take in additional data such as pediatric cases, vaccination rates among school-age children and global trends to help guide her administration.

Groups of parents in districts throughout the area and across the state have been pressuring school officials to relax mask mandates. However, Hochul said Wednesday that unlike other areas of the country that needed to return to remote around the holidays, that was nearly avoided entirely in New York.

"We decided the safest way for the students, the teachers, the administrators and everyone who is part of the school is to have a mask requirement," Hochul said.

Harckham, Blood Center to Host Blood Drive This Saturday

State Sen. Peter Harckham, in partnership with the New York Blood Center, will host his next blood drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. this Saturday, Feb. 19, at the Millwood Fire Company stationhouse, located at 100 Millwood Rd. in Millwood. Donated blood can

help accident victims, those undergoing cancer treatment, certain surgeries and treatment for certain blood disorders.

To schedule an appointment, visit www.donate.nybc.org, click on "schedule an appointment" and enter the Millwood zip code of 10546.

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Local Officials, Gubernatorial Hopeful Assail Accessory Dwelling Plan

By Martin Wilbur

A bipartisan group of Westchester municipal leaders joined congressman and Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Tom Suozzi in Chappaqua Saturday morning to resist two pieces of legislation that they argue would drastically change the character of communities across the state.

Suozzi, along with supervisors Lisa Katz of New Castle, Michael Schiliro of North Castle, Matt Slater of Yorktown, Warren Lucas of North Salem and Mount Kisco Mayor Gina Picinich blasted the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) law and Transit-Oriented Development legislation.

They blasted its inclusion in Gov. Kathy Hochul's 2023 Fiscal Year budget, contending it would obliterate home rule and jeopardize environmental protections across the state.

"The idea of the state of New York, taking the long arm of the state government, reaching down and taking away local control from local officials, from mayors and town supervisors and local officials, the way it's been since the founding of New York State, is undemocratic, is inappropriate, undermines local rule and will destroy the quality of life in many neighborhoods," said Suozzi, a former Nassau County Executive who is planning to force a primary against Hochul.

The ADU law would allow most residential property owners to have an accessory apartment dwelling with many of the traditional local zoning protections relaxed. A Transit Oriented Development law allows



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Long Island Congressman Tom Suozzi with a group of Westchester municipal officials in Chappaqua last Saturday to protest proposed legislation that would allow for accessory dwelling units in most residential areas across the state.

for 25 units per acre within a half-mile radius of a train station.

Critics have argued it would overwhelm residential communities with unsustainable density, causing parking headaches in some neighborhoods and potential environmental nightmares.

"This is not about opposing ADUs, it's not about opposing affordables," Schiliro said. "This is opposing Albany coming down and telling all of the towns and villages and cities what's good for them. They don't know anything about our communities, our

sewers, our water. In our town, we're almost 90 percent septic and well. They don't know anything about these aquifers, but they know more about our zoning? It doesn't make sense."

Local officials pointed out that they have had accessory dwelling unit and/or affordable housing laws on the books for years. In New Castle, Katz said the area near the Chappaqua train station that would be eligible for the 25-unit-per-acre development would severely impact schools, infrastructure, parking and emergency services.

"That means every single single-family housing in this town is in danger, on their one-acre zoning, potentially to have a 25-unit minimum," Katz said. "So to me, that's going to cause significant issues."

Opposition has been gaining momentum locally. After the North Castle Town Board initially approved a resolution strenuously objecting to the ADU legislation on Jan. 26, last week Mount Pleasant, Yorktown and Somers followed suit. Many other municipalities in Westchester and Putnam counties are also soon expected to pass resolutions.

State Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro) introduced the ADU legislation last year in the Senate. However, municipal officials became alarmed to learn in January that the legislation had been included in Hochul's proposed state budget for the next fiscal year.

On Saturday, Harckham didn't appear to be backing down. Calling Suozzi's opposition "regrettable" and predicting he'd be "on the wrong side of history," the senator said tens of thousands of working-class New Yorkers' search for an affordable place to live is out of reach.

Under his plan, housing stock would be increased while also providing homeowners with an additional revenue stream should they choose to add an accessory unit, he said.

"Sadly, our inability to meet regional housing needs is the result of the strict

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TOWN OF YORKTOWN REVISED SOLID WASTE COLLECTION SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 21-25 *NO COLLECTIONS ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21st PRESIDENTS DAY

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Tuesday

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Tuesday

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Mt. Kisco Establishes Community Resource Officer for Trial Period

By Martin Wilbur

The Mount Kisco Village Board last week narrowly approved establishing a community resource officer (CRO) from the Westchester County Department of Public Safety for a three-month trial run starting next month.

Mayor Gina Picinich said the officer will begin the role on Mar. 1, and over the next three months the board will evaluate the services provided and decide whether to fund the position for the full 2022-23 fiscal year, which starts in June.

Police Officer Eddie Ramirez, who served in a similar capacity for the old Mount Kisco Police Department before the village contracted with Westchester County police

service in 2015, will be the CRO. He will address quality-of-life matters, enhance interaction with residents and work with the school and business communities. Programs such as Hopes Not Handcuffs may also be introduced.

Ramirez will report to the board monthly as part of the evaluation process, Picinich said.

"If we feel that it's heading in the appropriate direction and if, in fact, it adds value, then we can include it in next year's budget," she said. "If we don't feel as though goals were met and objectives are achieved or that it's not heading in the right direction, we could not add it in the next budget."

The village will set aside \$55,776.82 to fund the officer for the next three months.

That money will come from an extra \$15,000 as a result of the official elimination of the village department, which occurred following a referendum last November, and another \$20,000 each from workers compensation fund money and additional sales tax revenue.

Trustee Karine Patino, who worked with Ramirez when he was with the village police force, said there should be a good transition because many in the community are familiar with him. His presence in the role could also help encourage members of the village's large Latino community to consider a career in law enforcement.

"Right now, the police are reactive; this is an opportunity for the police to be proactive, and though all officers should and do receive cultural competency training and implicit

bias training, a CRO would receive additional training to that effect that will further help them carry out all of the activities and all of the programs that we saw in the power point that (the police) showed us," said Patino, who served on the county's Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative last year.

Trustee Anne Bianchi supported the trial run, saying she was curious to see how it would unfold and that it could be beneficial.

However, Deputy Mayor Lisa Abzun and Trustee Karen Schleimer voted against the added expense. Abzun said that it appeared that there was likely overlap with some of the goals of Project Alliance, a new county program that is also set to start on Mar. 1, where mental health professionals and social workers in certain crisis situations.

Abzun said she would have preferred to see how the CRO works in Cortlandt before the village funds the initiative. A few weeks ago, the Cortlandt Town Board approved an officer for the remainder of 2022.

"We haven't received any empirical data about whether this program works because it is a new program," Abzun said. "There was a lot of people who say that it works in different ways when we had the Mount Kisco police force, but when I asked for that data, I was told that there was none or that it was lost."

Picinich said she supports a trial period.

"I think if we want to see a change in policing then we have to invest it in and I think the CRO position will be the catalyst for change," she said.

Local Officials, Gubernatorial Hopeful Assail Accessory Dwelling Plan

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zoning laws that too many municipalities have enacted, which is why a state plan for ADUs is required," Harkham said. "I am ready to work collaboratively with anyone to ensure local governments can craft their own ADU laws – that's in the legislation. But turning the discussion on ADUs away from the need for affordable housing is simply wrong."

Lucas, who is president of the Westchester-Putnam Association of Town Supervisors, said municipal leaders were scheduled to meet with Harkham on Monday to discuss the legislation.

Meanwhile, the most immediate goal is to

convince state officials to remove the laws from the budget, he said. Should the budget be approved with it remaining, then it would become law.

"There's no legislative process," Lucas said. "This is policy and it should be debated."

To address the lack of affordable housing, Suozzi said the state should be offering various incentives. He also stressed his support for the federal Build Back Better initiative that's stalled in Congress, which would provide the state with billions of dollars for affordable housing.

New Castle Councilman Jeremy Saland,

who attended the press conference but was not part of the group of officials denouncing the legislation, agreed the proposals should be removed from the budget and criticized certain portions of it such as a four-foot setback. However, he chastised those for turning Saturday's press conference into what he described as "a political rally."

"To say to our state senator, we find this is a deplorable piece of legislation, this is terrible, all these horrible things and then say come and work with us, it doesn't make sense," Saland said. "Let's work together. Just work together."

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Officials, Residents Fume Over Con Ed Rate Hikes at Protest

By Abby Luby

More than 80 people gathered last Friday on a Yorktown cul-de-sac waving their latest electric bills in protest over prohibitive rate hikes imposed by Con Edison over the past month.

The demonstration at Jefferson Village, a 1,000-unit age-restricted condominium community, was organized by Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater, fellow Town Board members and Assembly members Kevin Byrne (R-Mahopac) and Colin Schmitt (R-New Windsor).

"The fact is New York State has led us into an energy crisis that is creating a financial emergency for families with back-breaking electric bills for seniors on fixed incomes and small businesses," Slater told the crowd, which included many Jefferson Village residents. "The state is out of touch and insane."

Slater held up the one-month electric bill for \$6,538 received by Mario Mancini, the owner of A&S Pork Store & Fine Foods on nearby Hill Boulevard, about a \$2,000 increase from the previous month.

"A bill like this is a big strain on small business owners like Mario here," Slater said. "We have to go after them. We can't let this happen."

Westchester residents have seen their electricity bills triple going from about six cents per kilowatt hour to 17 cents, said Con Edison spokesman Jamie McShane.

"The increased costs in January had to do with the weather; (natural gas) supply and consumption," McShane said. "People used a

lot more energy at a time when the price for natural gas went up, which is far beyond the scope of our control."

About two-thirds of New York's electricity is generated by five of the state's 10 largest power plants, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

Natural gas prices are directly linked to electricity charges in New York.

Con Edison's electricity prices are among the highest of any major utility company in the continental U.S., the EIA stated. The utility charges for supplying and delivering the electricity and taxes.

McShane added that consumer rate hikes are due in part to Con Ed's \$2.5 billion New York City property tax.

"They're passing on the cost of energy to our consumers," Byrne said at the protest. "That's always been the answer from the utility companies."

Byrne said when Indian Point was shut down last year, promises were made to replace the power with natural gas, a promise that is now costing consumers money.

"The price of natural gas is a very big reason why the cost of energy has gotten so high," he said. "Washington needs to do better."

Agreeing with Byrne was Yorktown Councilman Tom Diana who blamed Indian Point's closure for the rate hikes.

"This was the doing of the extreme left environmentalists who pushed to get the plant closed," Diana said.

According to the 2017 expiration contract between the New York Power Authority, Con Edison and Indian Point owner Entergy,



ABBY LUBY PHOTOS

Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater, center, with Assemblyman Kevin Byrne, right, and other officials and angry Jefferson Village residents protesting sharply rising electricity costs. Right: Mario Mancini shows his latest monthly electric bill – \$6,538 – for his A&S Pork Store & Fine Foods during last week's protest against rising electricity costs in Yorktown.



the twin nuclear power plants were only contributing 5 percent of the region's electricity.

The Yorktown Town Board has sent letters to the Public Service Commission (PSC) requesting the New York State Special Counsel for Ratepayer Protection to investigate the massive rate hikes and oppose Con Edison's request for an 11.2 percent electric rate increase as well as an 18.2 percent hike for gas, both proposed for 2023.

An additional request was made for the PSC to hold a public hearing at Yorktown Town Hall so ratepayers in northern Westchester can confront representatives from the utility.

Last week, Gov. Kathy Hochul and the PSC urged Con Edison to review its billing practices and be more transparent with New Yorkers.

"The extreme utility bill increases we are seeing across the state come at a time when New Yorkers are already struggling financially following the COVID-19 pandemic," Hochul said.

At the protest last Friday was 17-year Jefferson Valley resident Louise Bartoli who has seen her electric bill triple.

"It's outrageous," she said.

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Police Blotter

County Police/Mount Kisco

Feb. 10: Norberto Lopez-Mendez, 47, of East Hyatt Avenue was charged at 7:49 p.m. with driving while intoxicated, a misdemeanor, after he struck a parked car while driving on Woodland Street. He was booked at the Green Street precinct and released pending a future appearance in Mount Kisco Justice Court.

Feb. 10: The staff of an East Main Street restaurant reported at 10:06 p.m. that they had concern for a woman who was highly intoxicated. The woman was unable to provide officers with the name of a friend or relative who might pick her up and get her home safely. The Mount Kisco Volunteer Ambulance Corps responded and took the woman to Northern Westchester Hospital.

Feb. 11: The manager of a Kisco Avenue business reported at 10:51 a.m. that an irate customer issued threats over the phone about harming an employee. An investigation is continuing.

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Feb. 2: A caller requested a welfare check on his ex-wife on Whelan Avenue at 10:26

P'ville Man Busted for Supplying Weed, Alcohol, Vape Products to Minor

A 21-year-old Pleasantville man who worked at a village vape shop was arrested recently for providing an underage girl with marijuana, alcohol and nicotine vape products, police said.

Mohamed T. Elganzory was arrested on Feb. 3 following a month-long investigation by the Westchester County District Attorney's office, the Children's Advocacy Center at the Westchester Institute for Human Development and the Pleasantville Police Department. He faces multiple charges including first- and second-degree unlawful dealing with a child and endangering the welfare of a child.

Police said that in early January the girl reported to the Pleasantville Police Department that over a few months she had become friendly with Elganzory, who worked at the Raw Cloud House Smoke Shop at 12 Marble Ave.

In addition to supplying the girl with the products on multiple occasions, he attempted to establish a physical relationship with her, kissing and touching her inappropriately at various locations – including in the store – and visiting her at school.

Pleasantville Police Chief Erik Grutzner said that police are reaching out to the public to see if there may be any additional victims. Given the nature of the offense, police are considering the possibility he may have sought to victimize other youths as well.

"We know that the shop was visited by people from throughout the county and so we want to just make sure we give other victims the opportunity to know that we're

a.m. He stated that his children and her parents have not heard from her in a week. Patrols were dispatched to the residence and made contact with the ex-wife who would not open the door but did speak to officers through a glass door. She stated that she is fine and was made aware of her family's concern.

Feb. 2: A Lexington Drive resident reported at 1:46 p.m. driving his car through a snowbank, a fence and into a pool on his property. He stated he is uninjured and his air bags did not deploy. Patrol was dispatched to the scene and reported that a 2015 white Toyota will need to be pulled out of an in-ground swimming pool. A tow service responded.

Feb. 6: A Half Moon Bay Drive resident reported at 12:46 p.m. receiving packages that she believed to be illegal drugs sent to her deceased father. The caller previously reported a similar incident. She did not open these packages but stated that they match the same ones previously received. Patrol was dispatched and reported obtaining the items from the caller and placed them into an evidence locker at headquarters. An investigation is continuing.



Mohamed Elganzory

here to listen to them speak if they have concerns about any interactions that went on with him at the store or anywhere else," Grutzner said.

It is unclear how the girl became friendly with Elganzory. The girl's age, town of residence and all other potentially identifying information is being withheld by police, he said.

Anyone with information regarding any similar interactions with Elganzory is asked to call the Pleasantville Police Department at 914-769-1500 or speak with Detective James Chiarlitti at 914-769-1684. All information received will be kept confidential.

Kent Police Department

Feb. 3: Officers were dispatched to Route 52 for a one-car accident at about 4:30 p.m. Upon arrival, the responding officers located the vehicle operator, James Storms, 51, of Carmel. His vehicle left the roadway and damaged property at a Route 52 residence. While speaking with officers, Storms began to nod off, lose his balance and speak incoherently, appearing to be under the influence of narcotics. Officers secured a hypodermic needle and what appeared to be white and blue electric wires used for a tie off. Storms refused a chemical test but fresh track marks consistent with intravenous drug use were observed on his arm. Storms was arrested and charged with DWI and issued an appearance ticket to appear at a later date in town justice court.

North Castle Police Department

Feb. 7: Report of a Stop & Shop employee having slipped, fell and hit her head at the store on North Broadway at 10:33 a.m. The caller stated the employee was conscious and alert, but has a large welt on her head and is bleeding. The call was successfully transferred to 60 Control. The responding officer reported that the party was transported to White Plains Hospital.

Feb. 7: A complainant reported at headquarters at 3:16 p.m. that she believes that two checks were stolen from her mailbox, altered and cashed without her permission. She has since reported the issue to her bank.

Pleasantville Police Department

Feb. 6: Report of criminal mischief on North Place. A resident reported that his house was egged sometime overnight. The matter is under investigation.

Feb. 7: A larceny was reported at the United Methodist Church on Bedford Road. A box of clothing was reported stolen from

the premises. Police are investigating the matter.

Feb. 9: A hazardous condition was reported on Broadway due to large potholes. The DPW was notified. Since Broadway is a state road, the state Department of Transportation was also notified.

White Plains Police Department

Feb. 6: James Young was arrested for second-degree attempted robbery at 176 S. Lexington Ave.

Feb. 8: Erica Ayana Walker was arrested for second-degree assault at Martine and Mamaroneck avenues.

Yorktown Police Department

Feb. 3: Modesto Naulaguari, 36, of Elmsford, was charged at 10:57 a.m. with driving with a suspended registration and operating a vehicle without an interlock device following a traffic stop on Stony Street.

Feb. 4: A 17-year-old Yorktown male was charged with attempted assault at 4:45 p.m. following a report of a fight that occurred earlier in the day between two juveniles in the Downing ballfields and commuter parking lot. A video of the incident was circulated on social media. During the fight it was alleged that one of the juveniles removed a knife from his pocket and began to chase the other juvenile through the parking lot with the intent to cause physical injury.

Feb. 7: Pavel Lopez, 43, of New Rochelle, was charged with criminal mischief and harassment after police were assigned to investigate a report of a domestic incident at 6:28 p.m. It is alleged Lopez struck the victim in the face with an open hand and damaged a cell phone by throwing it to the ground.

Officers Apprehend Four Suspects in Pleasantville After Car Chase

By Martin Wilbur

Four people were arrested last Tuesday night after the stolen car they were traveling in led police on a chase from Bedford to Pleasantville.

Once the four suspects, whose identities were not released by police, were involved in a minor collision on the Saw Mill Parkway in Pleasantville, they tried to elude police on foot through a residential neighborhood before being apprehended.

Three of the four suspects were men from the Bronx while the fourth suspect is a 17-year-old, also a Bronx resident, police said. They were all charged with fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, a felony.

Westchester County police said the incident began at about 6 p.m. on Feb. 8 when the Real Time Crime Center broadcast an alert that a stolen car was traveling on Route 35 in Lewisboro. A county police officer in an unmarked car located the stolen vehicle in Bedford and followed it onto the Saw Mill

Parkway. After marked patrol vehicles and the Aviation Unit arrived, a traffic stop was attempted at Roaring Brook Road in New Castle, police said.

The driver refused to pull over and continued heading southbound on the Saw Mill. In Pleasantville, the vehicle was involved in a minor car accident, prompting the stolen car's four occupants to jump out of the vehicle and run off. The Aviation Unit located several individuals hiding in a backyard on Sarles Lane and directed officers on the ground to the location. Three suspects were taken into custody at that point, police said.

Officers, including members from the Aviation Unit and a county police officer with a tracking canine, continued the search for the fourth suspect. He was taken into custody on Wheeler Avenue in Pleasantville about a half-hour later.

County police were assisted by officers from the Pleasantville, Mount Pleasant and New Castle police departments.

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Parents Angrily Protest Ongoing School Mask Mandates

By Martin Wilbur

As COVID-19 cases continue their sharp descent, the pressure on state and education officials to drop mask mandates in schools continues to grow.

On Saturday afternoon more than 200 Mount Pleasant School District parents, community members and children held a boisterous demonstration at the Four Corners in Thornwood, demanding that parents and district official be allowed to make their own decisions on the issue.

The protest came three days after Gov. Kathy Hochul lifted the mask mandate for businesses but left them in place for schools and other congregate settings at least until the first week in March. It also was held as statewide infection rates on Thursday and Friday plummeted to 2.6 and 2.5 percent, respectively, according to the state's COVID tracker, the lowest level since the first week in November.

Westchester County and the entire Mid-Hudson region each had a 2.6 percent reading on Friday and just over 3 percent on the seven-day rolling average, down from an early January high of more than 20 percent.

"I believe rules need to be followed but I also need to believe that at a given point that once we have information, we're allowed to make a decision that's best for us," said parent Mario Prosperino. "I think that two years into this now, there's been enough collected data that said that we can move on now."

Prosperino stressed that those families that still want their children to wear masks should be free to choose what's best for their children and be respected for that decision.

Some of the parents and Mount Pleasant teachers who participated in Saturday's protest said there is irreparable harm being done to children, particularly the youngest students and those with learning disabilities or language or auditory challenges.

Parent Christina Fiasconaro, whose preschool-aged son has a disability, said her child has been unable to receive proper services the past two years because his friends and his therapist wear masks, making it more difficult to learn the language.

"He's entering kindergarten next year at a severe disadvantage to other children who are typically abled," Fiasconaro said. "His therapist and his peers still wear a mask. He is not able to understand the language as he should as his age."

Hawthorne Elementary School reading specialist Karen Griffin, who works with children in grades K-2, said when trying to help students she sometimes can't understand them and they have difficult understanding her. As someone who believes in following the science, Griffin said that the past several weeks has shown that the data supports removal of masks in schools.

"I just feel like we're not getting the whole child out of them with these masks," she said. "They're more inclined not to speak and we're not getting as much, I think, as we can out of them."

Last Wednesday, Hochul said there will be testing done when most districts return from the one-week holiday break on Feb. 28, and an assessment will be done before the end of that week. She said there was "a strong possibility" the school mask mandate could end shortly

after that if current trends continue.

Anger at state officials and to a lesser extent school officials have boiled over during recent school boards meetings in the area. A virtual forum hosted jointly last Thursday evening by the Mount Pleasant and Valhalla school districts featured an assortment of harshly negative comments to elected officials in the chat room.

One of those officials who participated in that forum, state Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers), chair of the Senate's Education Committee, said she understands the frustration and has been pressing the governor's office for objective standards to be established for the past two months.

"I believe the time has come for metrics to be openly shared that give guidance to districts and give guidance to parents," Mayer said.

However, she added that there are many parents with children with special needs or who are immunocompromised not in a rush to have masks removed.

The area's state senator, Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro), said he understands that it's been a difficult two years but by exercising personal responsibility, which includes vaccines and mask wearing when appropriate, schools and other portions of society could soon rid themselves of the mandates.

"So if we all take personal responsibility we can be beyond the mandates and hopefully soon we'll be out of this and we can hopefully



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Some of the more than 200 parents, children and other community members who turned out in Thornwood Saturday afternoon to demand that in-school mask mandates end, arguing that children are being hurt by wearing them.

bring back some normalcy to the kids who have been so traumatized by this," Harckham said.

Mount Pleasant Councilman Jerry Schulman, who attended Saturday's rally and spent the last 23 years of his education career as a principal or assistant principal in Mount Pleasant until his 2015 retirement,

said the data supports taking the masks off. He believes that will come shortly after the upcoming vacation break.

"I think it's time," Schulman said. "Kids are falling way behind. It's hurting kids, it's hurting kids with special needs, the ESL, the English as Second Language kids, the parents that are trying to work."

Pleasantville School District Revises Mask Policy

By Abby Luby

The Pleasantville School District enacted a revised health and safety policy last week that will allow a transition period to a mask-optional school environment.

Based on an existing policy that was established to provide guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the changes relax certain rules. Health check forms are no longer required and taking one's temperature upon arrival is optional.

Wearing masks outside but on school grounds was removed as were the references to mask breaks being required by law, which they no longer are.

Also, indoor mask breaks no longer require students or faculty to be six feet apart and barriers are no longer used.

At last week's Pleasantville Board of Education meeting, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tina DeSa explained the policy change.

"Right now, we are not required to contact trace," she said. "Not being required to contract trace in a world where it is mask-optional, does not well inform our community about what's going on in terms of exposure."

The revised policy, which still requires students and faculty to wear masks indoors in compliance with the state mandate, is seen by the district as a stop-gap measure until whenever the state decides that masking in schools is optional.

"This would allow time for people to understand and think through what this (optional mask policy) means," DeSa said. "They will be able to understand their kids' exposure and their own personal exposure in the workplace. What they will know and what

they will not know will inform their decision. The time for preparation is definitely needed for thinking through that."

Parents commented on the proposed revision during the Feb. 1 special policy meeting and at last Tuesday's regular board meeting. Many were critical that the district was carving out its own policy that didn't reflect parents' concerns.

On Feb. 1, 26 people commented publicly, including a handful of students. Many pointed out negative impacts on students and how masks strain a healthy learning environment, especially for younger students who have been wearing masks five hours a day, which makes learning to read and socializing difficult.

Other districts have also felt parental pressure to unmask students. At a virtual forum featuring local legislators hosted jointly by the Mount Pleasant and Valhalla school districts last Thursday evening, Mount Pleasant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Peter Giarrizzo said parents and educators have been struggling with myriad pandemic-related issues for the last two years. Wherever one stands on masking or any other matter, policymakers must return local control to the communities, he said.

"I will advocate for off ramps to masking. I will advocate for local control and in good decision-making," Giarrizzo said. "That's where we are as a community, that's where, I think, our community deserves us to be and I think what you are seeing tonight is some frustration about what has occurred in the past couple of weeks in getting some clarity around how do we get to an off ramp for this."

Valhalla Superintendent Kevin McLeod

said his district would comply with the current state guidelines requiring masks to be worn in all school buildings.

"Until a change in mask-wearing guidance is confirmed at the state level, the Valhalla Union Free School District will continue to adhere to the laws and regulations pertaining to public schools," McLeod said.

If the mask mandate is lifted, then the district will adopt a mask-optional policy.

"This will mean that masks will be encouraged but not mandatory while indoors," he said. "Our school district is built on respect and we will always respect our community members' personal choices."

Last week Gov. Kathy Hochul left the school mask mandate in place until it can be reassessed after the Presidents' Week break. Many parents have been frustrated, particularly since a Jan. 25 ruling by state Supreme Court Justice Thomas Rademaker in Nassau County declaring the mask mandate was unconstitutional and enacted without approval by the state legislature.

The next day Attorney General Letitia James files a motion to stay the ruling, which was granted.

Pleasantville Board of Education President Shane McGaffey said everyone wants students to be unmasked as soon as possible.

"The health and safety of students is first and foremost but we don't really know what's going to happen between the court case and possible new regulations," McGaffey said. "When the governor lays out a plan with good metrics that are understandable and that we all can use, this policy will give us time to prepare while protecting our students from a sudden change."

Letters to the Editor

State Overreach Goes Too Far With Accessory Dwelling Law

For over two years, federal and state governments have directed us all on health mandates, concerns and requirements. We have watched government force the closure of businesses and the eventual loss of so many.

Many employees were mandated to work remotely and many lost their jobs.

Schools were instructed to teach remotely, and then the mask and vaccine requirements on teachers, parents and the most affected, the students. Parental choice and direction were all but ignored.

We in local government were directed to restrict the number of employees allowed in our offices, alternate employees and have others work remotely while

restricting the services we needed to provide to our residents.

Town revenues were challenged and budgets strained as normal programs could not be held.

Now state government wants to tell local governments how to zone their properties, that they know better how to handle local zoning better than those that live there and worked so hard to hold on to what little they have, their most precious investment.

There was a time when the people ran government; now the governments run the people. There was a time when government respected the will of the people and helped protect and provide

for the needs of their constituents not overreaching their authority. Once the federal and state governments start mandating how local governments run, we have lost home rule and control by us residents.

We have had accessory apartment zoning in Mount Pleasant for many years; we have tweaked it over the years as our residents' needs were recognized, and have made it work without changing the character or our communities. We have made it work where practical, safe and reasonable.

Our community has been working on a master plan for over four years, answering the needs of the community, not the needs

of any Town Board member. The final product will be one formulated by the people, as it must be.

I have witnessed that the farther you go up the ladder in government the farther you get away from truly understanding and representing the real needs of those you are entrusted to serve.

I ask our federal and state governments to not lose sight of their responsibility to all the people, do not lose sight of who you represent, to those who you must eventually answer to.

Carl Fulgenzi
Supervisor, Town of Mount Pleasant

Lack of Leadership in Lakeland Has Allowed Bigotry to Fester in District

Last week, a reprehensible display of bigotry took place at a budget hearing for the Lakeland Central School District. A group of parents, who exist far outside the mainstream of this community, demonstrated just how critical it is that the school board and administration take more seriously their obligation to put in place a comprehensive districtwide diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) program.

For those who were not in attendance or have not seen clips from the meeting, these are a just a few of the most egregious

moments. An African American parent spoke of the need for the budget to include funds for districtwide DEI work and a man from the audience yelled at him "This isn't Harlem."

A woman took to the podium and screamed for several minutes at the school board, wanting to know how much Lakeland was spending for "the illegal children."

Another man in the audience shouted out to the school board president, a Jewish man, that he was acting like the Germans.

This is the Lakeland Central School District. This is Yorktown and Cortlandt.

The people who said these things are the parents of children who attend our schools and whose children are in classes with our own. It belies reason to think what is learned at home doesn't make its way into the hallways and classrooms of our schools. I cannot imagine a more compelling moment for the school board to finally recognize its responsibility to get serious about DEI work and not engage in half measures that perpetuate false equivalencies designed to please "all sides."

There is no excuse for what occurred at the budget meeting. Zero. That said, the Lakeland Board of Education has created a climate whereby this behavior has been tolerated and allowed to fester. The equivocation on the part of the school board and the administration around issues of diversity, equity and inclusion has been nothing but fuel for this fire. The start, stop, silence, and then half measures around district DEI efforts; the attempts to mollify

individuals who articulate white grievance at these meetings by putting the brakes on past DEI efforts; and the sacking of the former superintendent – for which these individuals proudly claim credit – have contributed to a climate where fringe parents have no qualms throwing around racist language at a public meeting.

Leadership requires doing what is right and good for the district and our students, not folding to the loudest voices in the room. Leadership requires taking strong stances and holding to them, even when a fringe minority attack, deride and create headaches for the board.

There is no leadership right now in the Lakeland Central School District. The school board and the administration are failing our community and our children.

Mike and Christina Morey
Cortlandt Manor

Calendar Submissions

We're happy to help spread the word about your community event. Please submit your information at least three weeks prior to your event and include the words "Calendar Submission" in your email subject line. Entries should be sent to Abby Luby at aluby@theexaminernews.com.

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Guest Column

Why Are Vape Shops Selling This Dangerous Substance?

Kratom sounds like something from an alien world, like Superman's home planet.

Unfortunately, here on Earth it's a potentially dangerous, but strangely, still legal substance in the United States.

Kratom is sold in a Carmel vape and smoke shop and throughout the Hudson Valley. It comes from Thailand, Indonesia and other southeast Asian countries, and it's illegal in all of them.

An employee at the Happy Habits Vape & Smoke Shop (it seems unlikely they were trying to be ironic with the name) in Carmel told me on the phone that the shop sells kratom in capsule and powder form, and even as liquid shots. A 30-capsule bag costs under \$10.

The product is supposed to give the user a relaxing, uplifting feeling. It can be used as a substitute for opioids, the employee said. The shop "sells a lot of kratom," he told me.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted lab tests on 30 Kratom products and found that they contain "significant levels of lead and nickel" that "exceed safe exposure."

"Based on these test results," the FDA's website states, "the typical long-term kratom user could potentially develop heavy metal poisoning, which could include nervous system or kidney damage, anemia, high blood pressure, and/or increased risk of certain cancers."

The American Kratom Association (AKA) claims kratom is a safe herbal supplement that can be used to manage chronic pain or boost your energy. The AKA also promotes it to help withdraw



By Michael Gold

from opioid addiction and claims the substance can be used to treat migraine headaches, anxiety, depression, arthritis, insomnia, ADHD and ADD.

The FDA declares that kratom is "a health fraud scam. These products have not been demonstrated to be safe or effective for any use."

"The biggest driver for me is that it (kratom) is not something to be sold over the counter," said Paul Lavella, founder and director of the Florham

Park, N.J.-based NJ Recovery & Wellness, which treats people for substance abuse disorders.

Kratom has opiate-like properties, Lavella explained. In small amounts, users can become more alert. In higher doses, the user might feel euphoria, achieving "a bliss point, where nothing else in the world is mattering."

"This substance has potential for addiction,"

he said.

The more you take the drug, the more you need to consume to achieve the same feeling. The user will suffer withdrawal if they don't get enough, including edginess, sleeplessness and moodiness, Lavella stated.

"I don't think it's too safe," said Nelson Hadler, an alcohol and drug addiction counselor with 30 years of experience in New Jersey and now Florida.

"Kratom is not well-understood. People can make money off it and we don't know the effects. We don't know what's in it," Hadler also mentioned.

In Florida, you can buy it in gas stations and head shops. Not only can kratom contain heavy metals, but also fentanyl,



It is common to find kratom at vape shops throughout the Hudson Valley.

Hadler explained, because sellers mix other substances into it. Fentanyl can increase the rate of respiratory failure and death, he said.

Multiple bills to restrict the sale of kratom have been introduced in the New York State legislature, but there has been no action on them yet. One would ban its sale to people under age 21, another under age 18.

Pleasantville Police Lt. Jesse Wollman explained that "in the village, we have not seen it. We are going to monitor it."

"It's one of those things that's sold as benign, but it could be dangerous to public health," Wollman said. "You have to be cautious about what you ingest,

because you don't know if that substance could have an adverse effect on you," he explained.

"Poison control centers in the United States received about 1,800 reports involving use of kratom from 2011 to 2017, including reports of death," the Mayo Clinic states on its website. "About half of these exposures resulted in serious negative outcomes such as seizures and high blood pressure."

When it comes to product claims for kratom, it helps to examine the motivations of the parties involved. The FDA's mission is to keep people safe, so consumers know that when they are ingesting drugs or food or using other products, they're doing so without fear of harm. That is the agency's only motivation – to keep people from getting hurt.

The people selling kratom have one motivation – to sell more kratom, to make more money. So, any claims vendors make about kratom should be taken with a million grains of salt. Likewise, when kratom sellers minimize the dangers of this substance, their statements should be treated with extreme skepticism.

Multiple calls to the American Kratom Association for comment went unanswered.

We need to question why such a potentially hazardous product can be sold to anyone who walks into a vape shop.

Michael Gold has had op-ed articles published in the New York Daily News, the Albany Times-Union, The Virginian-Pilot, The Palm Beach Post and other newspapers.

On the Street

Free Tax Preparation Services at Hart Library

The John C. Hart Memorial Library in Shrub Oak will offer free tax form-preparation assistance with preference for senior citizens through Apr. 11.

Certified volunteers from AARP will provide tax-preparation services on Mondays between 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. The tax-preparation sessions are by appointment only; walk-ins will not be accepted.

No visit is required if patrons are able to scan their documents at home and e-mail them to the volunteers. However, this season volunteers can

also prepare tax returns offsite if patrons come to the library one time for scanning documents and return a week or two later for completing the process and picking up a copy of the finished return.

Same-day service is also possible as long as patrons meet with volunteers for an intake interview in the morning, leave their documents with the volunteers for a few hours and return later in the day to finish the process.

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Couple Donates Carpets to Help Resettled Afghans Feel at Home

By Martin Wilbur

For more than 40 years, Mike and Mary Lynn McRee loved being in the Oriental carpet business.

Last Thursday, they walked out of their Bedford Hills store, Caravan Connection, for the last time, headed for semi-retirement, as Mike McCree described it. But before they left, they are likely to have helped make dozens of Afghan refugees coming to the area feel better about being newcomers in a strange land.

The Chappaqua residents donated about 100 of their rugs to various refugee resettlement organizations, including the Mount Kisco-based ReSET Westchester, Ossining for Refugees and the Refugee Resettlement Committee at Congregation Sons of Israel in Briarcliff Manor.

Instead of unloading all of them for a fraction of their retail cost, the McRees decided to try and make some families feel at home.

"We're trying to do what we can to make their acculturation here in the United States as easy as possible, and in their culture having Oriental carpets on the floor is part of what they want and expect here," Mike McCree said. "This is our means of giving back, if you will."

The area rugs range in size from eight feet by 10 feet to 10 by 14, and would sell for between \$2,500 and \$7,000 apiece, he said.

The couple's warm feeling toward people in the Middle East and the Mediterranean stemmed from their two years living in Turkey in the early 1970s. McCree had graduated West Point in 1971, and they moved to Izmir, Turkey, a place that he



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO
Mike McCree, who co-owned Caravan Connection with his wife, Mary Lynn in Bedford Hills, stands with some of his remaining carpets last week. The couple donated about 100 area rugs to Afghan refugees.

described as "a garden spot" while working at NATO headquarters for southeastern Europe. It also gave the McRees an opportunity to travel throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Europe.

"The Turks were just fabulous hosts," McCree said. "They were so genuine and it gave me an insight to people in the Middle East. The feeling was that with so many

blessings we received from living in Turkey for two years, we're trying to go through and return the favor for people in Afghanistan. These people didn't deserve all the obvious things here."

Mary Refling of ReSET Westchester said there is cultural significance for Oriental carpeting for Afghans. When an Afghan couple plans to marry, they will commission

a carpet to be made by hand for them, similar to a dowry, she said.

While many eat at a dining room table with chairs, there are still those who prefer to place pillows on their carpet and enjoy their family meals that way, she said.

With refugees having to flee their homeland on short notice late last summer, many arrived with little to nothing.

"A lot of the refugees that were evacuated in August were people who had good, solid lives and jobs," Refling said. "Some worked for the government, some worked for the military, some worked for NGOs. They had lives, homes, families, etc., and they left with nothing but the clothes on their backs."

Among the work that the local resettlement groups have undertaken is helping to find housing for the refugees and to help them become independent within the first year. When arriving at their new home, being treated to a culturally appropriate food supplied by the organizations or a beautiful new rug is a special touch, Refling said.

Linda Kingsbury, who has volunteered with the Congregation Sons of Israel group, said when the congregation formed the resettlement group last year, she felt compelled to volunteer because so many of today's Americans have similar family stories but generations earlier.

"It's the kind of story that makes everyone feel good and inspires people to do more and to help each other," Kingsbury said.

Mike McCree downplayed he and his wife's efforts and simply wanted to help others in need.

"We just want to go through and do what we can to give back," he said. "That's it."

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Valuable Lessons Learned From a Good Friend

That call that I had been dreading came the other day, and I've been somewhat sad since. I learned from a mutual friend that my former colleague Patricia had died.

I sensed that something was wrong because I hadn't been able to reach her for some months. Our mutual friend had told me at one point that she was in a nursing home near Poughkeepsie, but when I called they refused to disclose any information about patients, even whether she was there.

But then I learned from Pat's sister that indeed she had been there, but had passed away late last fall. I was greatly disappointed in myself that I had not paid closer attention to her situation with failing health.

Pat and I had several things in common. We had both been born in the same month and year and we both had professional careers in the culinary field, she as a caterer and I as a publicist for restaurants and celebrity chefs. Also, we both enjoyed a somewhat off-kilter sense of humor, always succeeding in making each other laugh over everyday situations. We had



By Bill Primavera

met years ago when she was a student at The Culinary Institute of America and I was its director of public relations.

I find that the news of Pat's death has affected me in several ways. Besides regretting that she and I had lost touch through the years, I found myself contemplating my own mortality and questioning whether I was enjoying life to the fullest each day. Never before have I been so aware that our days on Earth are finite. The death of a good friend can do that.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, just like everyone else, I have been somewhat isolated at home and restricted in my activities when outside the home. Because of that, it hasn't been the most joyful period in my life. But this death of a good friend really drove home the message of the inevitable in my consciousness.

It has also made me more aware of the simple pleasures I derive from my home where I now spend most of my time. I must confess, perhaps somewhat immodestly, that I consider my home a great place, combining antique furnishings, paintings

and accessories with the comfort of modern accommodations for seating and dining.

From the very outset of my living independently from my parents, I strove to surround myself with comfort and beauty, both as a bachelor and later with my wife, whose interest in collecting nice furnishings, art and accessories for our home immediately surpassed mine.

But back to Pat. A year ago, she contacted me and asked that I represent her as a realtor for the sale of her home. I was more than happy to oblige.

But when I visited her home to conduct a comparative market analysis, I was stunned to find that my dear friend had developed a problem during the years we had lost touch – she had become a hoarder. In fact, of the several cases of hoarding that I had encountered since becoming a realtor, hers was the most severe case I had ever seen, and probably equal to any of the outrageous case histories you might see on that sad television show about the problem.

When entering her home, I had to be careful in wending my way through the piles of items clogging each room I entered.

But the amazing thing about Pat was that she was joyful to be with, always bright

and cheerful, seeming blissfully unaware of the seriousness, even the dangers, of her surroundings. Her happy outlook managed to downplay her problem with letting things go and to put her visitors at ease.

Well, I thought, if she can look at the world through rose-colored glasses and not be deterred in any way with the plight of her living conditions, certainly I can appreciate my home without the regret that I am stuck there day to day.

Before I sat down to write this piece, I walked through my home and really saw each of its special features, appreciating each piece of furniture and décor for their beauty and their history of adding joy and interest to my life. It's a good thing to be more keenly aware of our surroundings at home, especially when our time there has been expanded considerably.

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

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Teen Singer Recounts Her Life's Challenging Times in Debut Single

By Abby Luby

When you hear Giuliana Calandrucci's debut single, "Be Alright," it's not just the clarity of her voice but the growing beat of this heartfelt ballad that pulls the listener in.

The single will be released this Friday, Feb. 18, the first song the 17-year-old Calandrucci has ever written. A Somers High School senior, Calandrucci's voice is well-known among her fellow students, regularly singing the national anthem at the school's sporting events.

Calandrucci co-wrote the song with her close friend and fellow musician, Sean Kennedy, also a Somers senior.

"This is the first song I have written and it's a new experience for me," she said. "Sean figured out the melody line but he also helped me get my emotions out and down on paper."

Early on, Calandrucci said she shared the song's lyrics with a few friends.

"They told me it was so beautiful and they could relate to it," recalled Calandrucci, who lives with her parents, older brother and younger sister. "It made me feel I wasn't alone."

The song looks at overcoming fear and anxiety by staying positive. Calandrucci tapped into those unpleasant memories from 2016, after moving to Somers from



Somers High School senior Giuliana Calandrucci will have her debut single, "Be Alright," released this week.

Mount Pleasant and finding it difficult to make friends.

"Middle school girls can be rough," she recalled. "Part of the song is about that experience and it's also about wanting to slowly get back to my lost faith, getting back to Christianity."

Reflecting those feelings are in the lines "I'm feeling alone/Their faces of stone/ And I cry out loud to heaven."

Other lines in the song that reference a bad accident Calandrucci was in, which resulted in a broken leg and ankle, requiring extensive surgery.

"Could I end up just fine? Will I find my old self again?"

It was an emotional and trying time for her and the idea of putting her feelings into words and music started to percolate.

Kennedy masterfully arranged the background music, which slowly becomes a major component of the song. Starting softly, a simple piano line accompanies Calandrucci's expressive voice. As her words grow more self-reflective, a harmonically rich orchestral background seamlessly joins together with a strong rhythm section, matching Calandrucci's voice as she sings out forcibly with great

emotion.

When she graduates high school this June, Calandrucci will enroll in culinary school, although she hasn't yet decided which one she'll attend. She is inspired by her father, Tommy, the co-owner and chef of Stone Fire, an Italian restaurant and pizzeria in Mount Kisco.

Inspired by music by Demi Lovato and Adele, Calandrucci said she plans to continue writing music, but it's likely new songs would be different from "Be Alright."

"I'd like to try more musical variety in the new songs," she said. "I want to have some rock and more upbeat songs that are fun."

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Obituaries

Miracle Sniffen

Miracle A. Sniffen, a Lake Peekskill resident, passed away on Feb. 5. She was 63.

Miracle was born on Apr. 27, 1958, in North Tarrytown to the late Donald and Georgina (Beardsley) Sniffen. She recently retired from her job as a CNA for the Montrose VA, where she was extremely proud to work as a caretaker to countless veterans over the years.

Miracle was a beautiful person inside and out. She was outgoing and witty. She had a great sense of humor and was a fan of standup comedy; George Carlin was her absolute favorite. She liked a good pun and loved a bad one. She enjoyed watching her Jets every Sunday. She loved the outdoors and would spend countless hours at Croton Dam and Croton Point Park. She loved observing wildlife, such as the many species of birds that would come to bathe and eat at her birdhouses and bath. She loved music as well, especially the Eagles and Elton John. She also enjoyed classic television such as "The Honeymooners" and "I Love Lucy." Most of all she loved spending time with her family, especially her children and her beloved granddaughter Izzy.

She is survived by her children, Aaron Cassese (Kirsty) and Amy Masopust (David); granddaughter Isabella; siblings Donald, Frances, Alfred (Barbara), Robert (Mary) and Charles (Marie) Sniffen; and many nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by



Miracle Sniffen

her husband, Arthur Spring; sisters Holly Rodriguez, Rosemary Underwood and Geraldine Sniffen; and her brother, Joseph Sniffen.

A memorial Mass was held on Feb. 12 at Holy Name of Mary Church in Croton-on-Hudson. Flowers are accepted, or in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Wounded Warrior Project (www.woundedwarriorproject.org).

Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared for the Sniffen family at www.efcarterfuneralhome.com.

Matthew Larkin

Matthew Joseph Larkin, a Mohegan Lake resident, died Feb. 5. He was 24.

He was born Feb. 8, 1997, to Kevin and Nancy Larkin. He was a graduate of Walter Panas High School and spent the last few years traveling, meeting new friends and finding a love of hiking the mountains in Colorado and California while employed out there. Upon returning home, he began working at Air Professional Associates in Brewster.

As much as he enjoyed the work and travel, Larkin recently decided to return to school full-time to pursue an environmental science degree with the intent of heading back out west upon completion.

As cliché as it may sound, he never met a stranger who did not become a friend. His contagious and captivating smile, outgoing personality and ability to live life on his own terms made his reach far and wide.

He is survived by his older brother, Brian; his maternal grandparents, John and Marian;



Matthew Larkin

his paternal grandmother, Carol; aunts and uncles (Laura and Eddie, MaryEllen and Chris, Karen and Rob); cousins Emma, Jack, Amanda, Kellie, Gregory and Kristina; and many friends, who to him, were his extended family. He was predeceased by his paternal grandfather, James.

Gerard Giardina

Jerry, to those who knew him, of Bedford passed away peacefully, surrounded by his loved ones on Feb. 10 after a herculean battle with cancer. He was 64.

Jerry is survived by his loving wife of 38 years, Heidi, his three children, Andrew, Daniel and Emma and daughter-in-law Alexandra. He was the adored son of Alfred and Josephine (deceased) Giardina and beloved brother of Al Giardina.

Jerry was born in Brooklyn on Jan. 5, 1958. He graduated from Queens College and then New England School of Law in 1982, where he received his J.D. He was an exceptional partner and trial attorney, practicing for 39 years. His colleagues knew him for his hands-on, client-centric approach and extensive litigation experience and knowledge.

Jerry will be forever remembered for his kindness, selflessness and warmth. Those who were lucky enough to get to know him were better because of it. He deeply touched many people through both his professional and personal life, and those people became a loving community for his family. He cherished his family and friends, and lived his life to the fullest. During his three-and-



Gerard Giardina

a-half-year battle, he always made the most of every moment. Whether he was spending time with his friends or celebrating love with his family, every memory was cherished. Just as Jerry's presence was felt every time you shared a room with him. His spirit and legacy will remain with those who knew him and his family forever.

Family and friends are invited to Pleasant Manor Funeral Home, Inc., located at 575 Columbus Ave. in Thornwood, on Tuesday, Feb. 15 from 4 to 8 p.m. for visitation. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated for Jerry at St. Patrick's Church in Armonk on Wednesday, Feb. 16 at 10 a.m. Jerry will be laid to rest at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne.

Two charities that the family hold dear for donations are DKMS, 100 Broadway, sixth floor, New York, N.Y. 10005 (<https://www.dkms.org>) and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (<https://www.lls.org>). Kindly make a contribution in Jerry's honor.

To send flowers to the family or plant a tree in memory of Jerry Giardina, visit the floral store at <https://www.pleasantmanorfh.com/obituary/Jerry-Giardina/sympathy>.

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New Development Team Pledges to Work With No. Castle on Mariani Site

By Martin Wilbur

The new development team for a residential project at Mariani Gardens in Armonk introduced themselves to the North Castle Town Board last week, signaling they are prepared to work with the town.

A conciliatory tone struck by representatives from the Brooklyn-based Workable City Development was a bit of a contrast to a month earlier after the Town Board rejected their attorney's request for another extension of a special use permit.

"This is an important property in town, one of the gateways to the community, and they'll approach this development as such and taking very seriously what we're going to put there," said their attorney, Kory Salomone.

Partnership squabbles and the bankruptcy of one of the former development partners, Mark Mariani, stalled the project for more than two years. At the Jan. 12 meeting, Salomone requested that the new six-member partnership, NCD Acquisitions, receive an extension of the special use permit so his client could head to the Planning Board to start site plan review for the 43-unit residential rental project on Bedford Road.

The old partnership, 45 Bedford Road LLC, obtained its zoning change and special use permit in 2019.

While they did not divulge last week what, if any, elements of the plan may change,



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Representatives from Workable City Development speak at last week's North Castle Town Board work session about their hopes to find an acceptable residential proposal for the former Mariani Gardens site in Armonk.

professionals from Workable City said they have had recent experience navigating development within a historic district. The company is converting a landmarked church, St. Gregory's, formerly a Catholic School, into a 40-unit residential project that sits within the Crown Heights North Historic District in Brooklyn.

The same efforts to work with the community there will be made in Armonk, the representatives promised.

"We'd really welcome the opportunity and (we're) excited about it, to work with the Town Board, the Planning Board to come up with a really great site plan based on what was previously approved and move forward," said Workable City co-founder Adam Heller.

The 4.1-acre property sits directly across the street from St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and is adjacent to the Bedford Road Historic District.

Matthew Klein, a partner and principal at

the company, said he and his colleagues were prepared to discuss with the board what is concerning to them and try to present a project that is acceptable to everyone.

"We don't have anything to present today," he said. "We're in the process of finalizing that plan again for something now that was proposed to you guys that I think you will see takes some of these comments that we heard to heart, but also still affords us the opportunity to build what was there."

Heller and Klein also introduced Anthony Sullivan of Blue Water Construction Advisors or Yonkers, who has some experience in developing in Westchester.

Last month concerns were raised by town officials that the pandemic has created a greater number of commercial vacancies in and around downtown Armonk and that traffic patterns have changed, putting greater pressure on the Maple Avenue-Bedford Road intersection, particularly during peak hours.

The board had expressed concern that owners of some of the vacant commercial properties had been inquiring about converting to residential uses.

Salomone asked the board that his clients would like to establish an escrow account and to meet with Director of Planning Adam Kaufman and other officials.

While some board members initially stated that setting up an escrow account seemed premature, Town Attorney Roland Baroni said it was fine because it didn't obligate the town to anything.

No. Castle Approves New Playground Equipment at Four Town Parks

By Martin Wilbur

By later this year, the Town of North Castle will have new playground equipment installed at four parks, updating important features that haven't been replaced on a large scale in close to 30 years.

The Town Board approved authorization to sign an agreement with GameTime/MRC Recreation to buy the new equipment for Winkler Park, Lombardi Park, Clove Road Community Park and IMB Community Park.

There will be an expenditure of about \$612,000, including \$458,690 for the equipment. The balance of the cost will pay

for the removal of the current equipment, excavation, putting in the new pour-in-place surface, which will replace the old wood chips, and installing the new features.

"The existing playgrounds have been around for 25 or 30 years or so and were showing significant wear and tear," said Matt Trainor, the town's superintendent of parks and recreation. "It's time to replace them."

It is expected that recreation subdivision fees will pay for the project and likely last for a similar length of time, Trainor said.

A key feature for the new playground equipment is its accommodations for children with special needs, he said. There

had been feedback from the public and the Recreation Advisory Committee to not only make the playgrounds ADA compliant but provide ADA inclusivity.

Trainor said nearly all new equipment produced today is ADA complaint but making them includes musical elements such as bongo drums and chimes will be available.

It was originally hoped that the new equipment can be in place before the end of the summer, although unpredictable supply chain issues may delay it being ready for use until later on in the year.

"I think what you have here is very representative of the needs of the town,"

said Councilman Saleem Hussain. "To me, playgrounds are really important and signal for what people look at. Is this a place where I can come here and a place I can enjoy and my family can enjoy being here? But I think what you're proposing would really help us in that way as well."

In another action last week, in North White Plains the town will also be upgrading the Clove Road field third base dugout on the field closest to the parking lot and both dugouts on the far field, Trainor said. The dugouts have been weather-beaten and should be replaced.

The first base dugout at the near field was replaced in 2016 for \$14,900.

Registration to Open for Westchester Parks' Nature and Muscote Camps

If the freezing temperatures have you thinking about summer plans, look no further than Westchester County Parks' Nature and Muscote Camps for children entering grades 1-9 next year.

Muscote Young Farmers Camp registration opens Wednesday, Feb. 16 at noon and Nature Camp registration opens Wednesday, Feb. 23 at noon.

Campers can explore and discover the natural environment of Westchester County with fun, hands-on experiences at our nature centers and Muscote Farm. Each camp will focus on different aspects of nature and teach youngsters about animals, insects, plants and more with a new theme each week.

The program runs from Monday, June 27 through Friday, Aug. 19, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Fees are \$350 per camper per week.

Camps will operate outdoors under applicable state guidelines in place at the time camp is in session.

Locations include Cranberry Lake Preserve, North White Plains, 914-428-1005; Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary, Rye, 914-967-8720; Lenoir Nature Preserve, Yonkers, 914-968-5851; Marshlands Conservancy, Rye, 914-835-4466; Trailside Nature Museum at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, Cross River, 914-864-7322; and Muscote Farm, Katonah, 914-864-7282.

For information and to register, visit <https://parks.westchestergov.com/children-camps/muscote-young-farmers-camp> and <https://parks.westchestergov.com/children-camps/nature-camps>.

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Pinning Her Hopes on Change

As Pleasantville high school freshman Adriana Palumbo becomes the first female wrestler in her school's history, acceptance of females in the sport is slowly taking root across Westchester.



By Martin Wilbur

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

All eyes are on Adriana Palumbo every time she heads out to represent her team at Pleasantville High School.

It's not just that she's a freshman, often competing against older rivals, or even that she's the principal's daughter. This season Palumbo became the first female varsity wrestler in the school's history.

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Matching up mostly against boys, Palumbo understands she carries a bit of a burden if other girls are to follow.

"I'm the one making that path, so it's definitely a lot of pressure, but I'm happy to do it because if that means that other girls do it, I'm more than happy to because I don't want people to feel like they can't do what they want to do," Palumbo says.

Making history is fine but as a competitor, Palumbo also wants to win. During the second weekend in December, she did just that, notching her first varsity victory at the Yorktown Dual Meet Tournament. For the season, Palumbo has collected seven wins in 17 matches through Feb. 4, according to the website TrackWrestling.

Her participation didn't come without plenty of preparation. After starting out in gymnastics like many young girls, about five years ago she was intrigued by the jiu-jitsu training facility next door to the gymnastics studio. That was a fortuitous happenstance because as Palumbo began maturing, she grew taller and more muscular than a typical gymnast.

When she moved to Pleasantville for seventh grade, her father, Joe Palumbo, suggested that she consider



Adriana Palumbo

"Part of him, I think, was like kidding because he probably didn't think I'd actually want to do it," Palumbo says of her father's query. "But I compared it to jiu-jitsu and [it's] like the same thing, except I get to do something I love in school."

While there had been plenty of other girls involved in jiu-jitsu, including at least one training facility she knew of that offered girls-only classes, that wasn't going to be the case representing her school on the wrestling mat. For seventh grade, Adriana was on Pleasantville Middle School's modified team. She didn't wrestle last year because of the pandemic but has once again immersed herself in the sport this year as a high school freshman.

Her father, who had been a high school wrestler himself, was pleasantly surprised at her interest. Joe Palumbo says he didn't want to push her because he enjoyed the sport or make it seem he was living vicariously ...

competitive wrestling. Adriana had been searching for a winter sport and since she acknowledged she was awful at basketball, there weren't many other options open to her.

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

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THERE'S A WORD FOR IT

A vocabulary-building quiz

By Edward Goralski

Geography Quiz. This week the words in the quiz come from the Travel Trivia article, "16 Interesting Geography Terms You Should Know." Do be warned, Travel Trivia does say that these are "geography features you've probably never heard of before." So, you'll get some latitude if you don't do that well on the quiz this week.

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. isthmus (n.) | A) low-lying tract of land | B) narrow strip of land | C) a collection of islands |
| 2. oxbow (n.) | A) U-shaped bend in a river | B) a dome-shaped hill | C) a natural sinkhole |
| 3. bight (n.) | A) an ocean trench | B) a shallow sandbar | C) curved coastline recess |
| 4. taiga (n.) | A) forest in the subarctic zone | B) an elevated region | C) a grassy plain |
| 5. skerries (n.) | A) a dry riverbed | B) a steep slope | C) uninhabited rocky islands |
| 6. tarn (n.) | A) a thin ridge line | B) small mountain lake | C) an outcrop of limestone |
| 7. bocage (n.) | A) mix of woodland and pasture | B) a type of wetland | C) a coastal cave |
| 8. calanque (n.) | A) a pair of mountain summits | B) a deep gully | C) a narrow inlet |

- ANSWERS:**
- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. B. A narrow strip of land that connects two larger landmasses, separating two large bodies of water in the process. | 5. C. From the old Norse word, sker, which translates to "rock in the sea," skerries are uninhabited rocky islands |
| 2. A. A U-shaped or bow-shaped bend in a river. | 6. B. A small mountain lake that was formed by a glacier |
| 3. C. A curved recess on a coastline. Derived from an old English term that translates to "bend." | 7. A. A mix of woodland and pasture found in rural landscapes, especially the French countryside |
| 4. A. A forest located in the subarctic zone. Also called a boreal forest. | 8. C. Specific to the Mediterranean Sea, a calanque refers to a narrow inlet, surrounded by steep limestone cliffs. |
| 5. C. From the old Norse word, sker, which translates to "rock in the sea," skerries are uninhabited rocky islands | |

Briarcliff Manor to Buy Wells Fargo Site in Village's Downtown

The Village of Briarcliff Manor announced last Friday that it reached an agreement to purchase the site of the former Wells Fargo Bank at 1050 Pleasantville Rd. opposite Village Hall.

The \$2 million purchase price for the 2.64-acre lot in the Central Business District will be augmented with an additional \$450,000 for the cost of demolishing the bank building, temporary site reconfiguration, land use planning services and other related costs.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Mayor Steven Vescio. "The Village Board has carefully considered various scenarios for the future of this prominent location. We have unanimously concluded that moving on it while we have the chance is in the best interest of the community. Acquiring the property gives us the time to fully consider possible uses and gives our residents the opportunity to play a key role in visioning its future."

Village officials expect to take title to the property in 90 to 120 days.

An adjacent three acres of undeveloped village-owned land abuts the site to the south and west, further enhancing the site's strategic importance for the downtown business district. It is expected that implementing a re-imagining of the property will unfold over two to five years.

In the short term, the village will gain substantial additional parking, including in

the northern most lot abutting Chase bank. In the long term, a portion of the site will be retained for municipal uses, while public-private partnership uses will be considered for the remainder of the property.

Village Manager Josh Ringel said the municipality will explore the best uses for the property.

"With operations at village facilities at full capacity or outgrown, gaining some additional space that is directly across the

street may make sense. The timing was also right as we are currently considering plans to redesign the downtown traffic patterns, adding new sidewalks and making other aesthetic and safety improvements. Securing this property provides tremendous flexibility in what we can do."

The parcel was originally developed in the 1970s, and for several decades that followed, the 5,200-square-foot building was a major branch of Peoples Westchester

Savings. In recent years, a series of bank mergers and consolidations saw different owners occupy the branch with Wells Fargo arriving in 2008.

The building is much larger than what is typically needed for a suburban bank branch today. Once the transaction for the land is finalized, the village will commence public input sessions to help determine the future use of the land.

LOOK What Opened

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Feb. 10 to mark the official opening of LOOK Dine-In Cinemas in the Rivertowns Square shopping center in Dobbs Ferry. The eight-auditorium, full-service theater is located in the same facility where the former iPic Theaters-Westchester entertained moviegoers before closing in 2019 when the company filed for bankruptcy. The theater will employ about 55 people. It offers a sizeable menu of appetizers, main dishes and desserts and a full bar.



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Healthy Heart Tips for the Whole Family to Try and Hopefully Enjoy

To highlight the importance of a healthy heart for February’s American Heart Month, registered dietitian Amy Rosenfeld, community outreach program manager at Northern Westchester Hospital, has some simple eating suggestions to get the whole family on a heart healthy track.

“Getting healthy can be a family affair,” Rosenfeld said. “And by getting your entire family involved and making small, manageable changes, everyone in the family can enjoy better health.”

Here are some small changes that can make a big difference:

- Eat the rainbow every week. Eating fresh fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors is the best way to get all the vitamins and minerals we need. Make it a game to get all the colors of the rainbow every week. Create a sticker chart for all family members, and take note when everyone reaches their goal. Try doing this every day, and make it a contest to see who can get to the end of the rainbow first
- Try one new veggie per week. Take the challenge to try a new vegetable every week. Pick it out together at the grocery store or let the kids choose.
- Give fish a try. If your family (or your children) aren’t into seafood, try introductory fish options. Try using firmer less fishy tasting options like tilapia or sea bass. Try preparing grilled fish tacos or baked homemade breaded fish fillets for everyone to enjoy.
- Cook meals together. Resolve to cook at least one meal a week instead of eating out or ordering in. Cooking together in the kitchen is a great way



to eat healthier, learn new things and bond.

- Try to be more plant-forward. Plant-forward is a style of eating that emphasizes plant-based foods as the focus of the meal, with animal products as a side dish or not included at all. Aim for at least one plant-based meal per week to start.
- Put down the devices at the dinner table. Enjoy a mindful meal together – one where you can relax and chat like the good old days. The connections you make at the dinner table, as well as the nutritional benefits of a distraction-free meal, are endless.
- Exercise together as a family. Exercising together doesn’t have to mean a family trip to the gym. Go for a family hike or snow-shoe adventure. Go ice skating or do yoga together. Even a simple family walk is a great start.

- Start an herb garden. Grow herbs indoors this winter to freshen up your meals and show your kids the wonder of healthy foods. Research shows that kids are more likely to try new foods when they are involved in gardening.
- Start with a fresh pantry. Look through the pantry and clean out the unhealthiest choices. The best food choices are items that contain whole foods as ingredients and as few additives as possible.
- Pack up healthy snacks ahead of time. Healthy choices can be derailed by poor planning. On Sunday nights, pack individual bags of healthy snack choices and set them up in the fridge so they are ready to go for the busy week ahead. Some good choices are hummus cups with baby carrots, pre-portioned bags of trail mix or whole-grain crackers and cheese.
- Cook extras at dinners for healthy lunches. After dinner, pack up leftovers in containers for healthy lunches the next day. Or take the extra step and make meals just for lunch, such as a large pot of chili or a stir fry dish with the kids’ favorite veggies and protein. This will save money and get everyone eating fresher all day long.
- Lighten up your restaurant order: Eat family style to lighten the portions. Choose options that are grilled, baked and roasted rather than fried and creamy. Ask for modifications, such as extra veggies with Asian dishes and pizza, or whole-grain options when possible.

Aum- LF 2021-00764
FCA § 1035(b), 1036
[NOTE: May be served outside New York State]

FAMILY COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

.....
In the Matter of a Proceeding Under Article 10 of
the Family Court Act

MARIE ERLANDE DE FRANC (dob
09/25/2004), MARIE ANGE DE FRANC (dob
02/01/2009)

Child(ren) under Eighteen Years of Age
Alleged to be Severely Abused, Abused
And/or Neglected by

ARNOUS DE FRANC,

Respondent.

.....

Form 10-7a
(Summons-Child Abuse Case)
(8/2010)

NA-07846-21
NA-07847-21

Docket Nos.: NA-03853-21/21-
NA-04363-21/21-

F/U No.: 163931

SUMMONS
(Child Abuse Case)

NOTICE: PLACEMENT OF YOUR CHILD(REN) IN FOSTER CARE MAY RESULT IN YOUR LOSS OF YOUR RIGHTS TO YOUR CHILD(REN). IF YOUR CHILD(REN) STAYS IN FOSTER CARE FOR 15 OF THE MOST RECENT 22 MONTHS, THE AGENCY MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW TO FILE A PETITION(S) TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS AND TO COMMIT GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY OF YOUR CHILD(REN) TO THE AGENCY FOR THE PURPOSES OF ADOPTION. IN SOME CASES, THE AGENCY MAY FILE BEFORE THE END OF THE 15-MONTH PERIOD. IF SEVERE OR REPEATED CHILD ABUSE IS PROVEN BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE, THIS FINDING MAY CONSTITUTE THE BASIS TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS AND TO COMMIT GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY OF YOUR CHILD(REN) TO THE AGENCY FOR THE PURPOSES OF ADOPTION.

UPON GOOD CAUSE, THE COURT MAY ORDER AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE NON-RESPONDENT PARENT(S) SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A RESPONDENT; IF THE COURT DETERMINES THE CHILD(REN) SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM HIS/HER HOME, THE COURT MAY ORDER AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE NON-RESPONDENT PARENT(S) SHOULD BE SUITABLE CUSTODIANS FOR THE CHILD(REN); IF THE CHILD(REN) IS PLACED AND REMAINS IN FOSTER CARE FOR FIFTEEN OF THE MOST RECENT TWENTY-TWO MONTHS, THE

AGENCY MAY BE REQUIRED TO FILE A PETITION(S) FOR TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THE PARENT(S) AND COMMITMENT OF GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY OF THE CHILD(REN) FOR THE PURPOSES OF ADOPTION, EVEN IF THE PARENT(S) WERE NOT NAMED AS RESPONDENTS IN THE CHILD NEGLECT OR ABUSE PROCEEDING.

A NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT HAS THE RIGHT TO REQUEST TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT CUSTODY OF THE CHILD(REN) AND TO SEEK ENFORCEMENT OF VISITATION RIGHTS WITH THE CHILD(REN).

BY ORDER OF THE FAMILY COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
TO THE ABOVE-NAMED RESPONDENT(S) WHO RESIDE(S) OR IS FOUND AT [specify address(es)]:

Last known address:

ARNOUS DE FRANC (Father)
36 White Plains Ave
Elmsford, NY 10523

and to [specify name(s) and address(es) and relationship to child(ren)]: N/A

A Petition under Article 10 of the Family Court Act having been filed with this Court, and annexed hereto
YOU AND EACH OF YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to appear before this Court Virtually by Video Conferencing and/or Telephone*, on MARCH 30, 2022, at 2:30 o'clock in the ☐ morning ☒ afternoon of that day to answer the petitions and to be dealt with in accordance with Article 10 of the Family Court Act.

Upon your failure to appear as herein directed, a warrant may be issued for your arrest and/or the Court may proceed to Inquest and hear and determine the petitions as provided by law.

*Please contact your attorney and/or the Court by telephone (914-824-5501) or by email (VirtualWestchesterFamilyCourt@nycourts.gov) for further instructions on how to appear via video and/or telephone.

Dated: FEBRUARY 3, 2022.

/s/ William Curry
Clerk of Court

Where to Go for Mardi Gras Reveling on Fat Tuesday

Proprietor Peter Van Cott of **The Bayou Restaurant**, 580 Gramatan Ave. in Mount Vernon, has been serving up the spirited sounds and flavors of Cajun country since 1991, and the place is still funky and enjoyable.

So, if you can't make it to New Orleans, this is the spot to revel to authentic blues and zydeco music while hunkering down to an overstuffed po' boy or house specialties such as voodoo wings; muffedlettas; Southern fried chicken; grilled peppered catfish; tender pork ribs smothered in barbecue sauce; and the Jazzy Jumpin' Jambalaya served with Louisiana andouille sausage, alligator sausage and crawfish tails smothered in rich creole gravy. Its 32nd annual Mardi Gras Bash will be held on Fat Tuesday, Mar. 1 featuring live entertainment.

Reservations are suggested. Info: 914-668-2634 or visit www.bayourestaurantny.com.

Owner Nick Fusco at **Freebird Kitchen and Bar**, 161 Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains, serves a Southern-themed menu that includes pimiento cheeseballs served with pecans and Ritz crackers; fried green tomatoes; Cajun pasta; shrimp and grits; and chicken fried steak. Look for a swarm of artsy birds hanging from the ceiling.

Open for dinner on Monday through Thursday at 4 p.m. and Fridays at 2 p.m. and for lunch starting at 11 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Happy hours are from 4 to 7 p.m. A weekend brunch is available.

Info: 914-607-2476 or visit www.freebirdkitchenandbar.com.

Artist, model, actor and consummate host Alvin Clayton of **Alvin & Friends**, 14 Memorial Highway in New Rochelle, has been marking his 10th year with solid doses of American soul food, a taste of the Caribbean, spirited jazz sessions and



By Morris Gut

art. Alvin & Friends has a sophisticated Manhattan vibe.

Check out the classic jambalaya, shrimp and grits, fried chicken and bourbon-glazed pork chops. There are burgers and mac and cheese, too. Combine your visit with some live music. I love their Friday night jazz featuring local talent. They have music on Saturdays, too. The Sunday Jazz Brunch is a winner as well.

Info: 914-654-6549 or visit www.alvinandfriendsrestaurant.com.

Owner Spiros Chagares of **Artie's Steak & Seafood**, 394 City Island Ave., City Island in the Bronx, does a wonderful job with his American shellfish jambalaya. It's loaded with the flavors of New Orleans. It can be easily shared, like so many of their other big combo platters. Good craft beer selection and cocktails.

Info: 718-885-9885 or visit www.artiescityisland.com.

Owners Greg and Jon DeMarco and Kevin Campbell of **Rye Roadhouse**, 12 High St. in Rye, will be marking Fat Tuesday all day. The fun starts with specialty cocktails, authentic New Orleans dishes and traditional zydeco music. Try their tasty shrimp po' boy or mixed bowl of jambalaya with meat and seafood including andouille sausage and crawfish tails. The sweet potato fries served with remoulade are great. Beads and giveaways are also promised.

Reservations are a must. Info: 914-925-2668 or visit www.ryeroadhouse.com.

Hook & Reel, 2375 Central Park Ave. in Yonkers, is part of a 70-store Cajun-style restaurant chain espousing the delights of Southern seafood. There are crayfish boils and po' boys. The menu allows you to select your favorite meat, seafood and vegetables and they will prepare a New Orleans-style meal.

Info: 914-355-7739 or visit www.hookreel.com.

Holy Crab, 32 Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains, serves fresh Cajun-style seafood as you would see in New Orleans. It is a long, sprawling space with a bustling bar and lounge. Open daily from 1 to 9:30 p.m. Check out such specialties as the lobster mac and cheese, po' boys, gumbo, snow crab legs and jambalaya shrimp.

Info: 914-948-3888 or visit www.holycrabny.com.

Southern Table Kitchen & Bar, 39 Marble Ave. in Pleasantville, offers a big dose of Southern hospitality along with house specialties such as fried green tomatoes, cheddar biscuits, grit bowls, Cajun-style seafood boils and chicken and waffles. There's good fried chicken, too. Open daily.



The hearty mixed jambalaya bowl and the shrimp po' boy, right, with sweet potato fries and coleslaw are two of the delicious selections at the Rye Roadhouse.

Info: 914-618-3355 or visit www.southern-table.com.

Winter Farmers Markets

So, you've had enough of winter, and you miss visiting your favorite farmers market? Well, some of our most popular markets operate all winter, and while you may not get the bountiful produce of the other seasons, it still is a good place to pick up a variety of artisanal meat, cheese, jam, bread and more.

Here are some area markets to choose from. Check ahead for any late changes. Happy winter foraging!

Ossining Farmers Market. Corner of Spring and Main streets, Ossining. Year-round. Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Info: Visit www.downtoearthmarkets.com.

Pleasantville Farmers Market. 10 Memorial Plaza, Pleasantville. Winter market operations on Saturdays from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. through Mar. 26. Info: Visit www.pleasantvillefarmersmarket.org.

Larchmont Winter Farmers Market. Metro-North upper lot, Chatsworth Avenue and Myrtle Boulevard, Larchmont. Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. through Apr. 16. Info: Visit www.downtoearthmarkets.com.

Irvington Winter Farmers Market. Main Street School parking lot, 101 Main St., Irvington. Second and fourth Sundays from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. through May 22. Info: Visit www.irvingtonfarmersmarket.org.

Hastings-on-Hudson Winter Farmers Market. Commuter parking lot at 134 Southside Ave. (across from the Metro-North station), Hastings-on-Hudson. First and third Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. through May 21. Info: Visit www.hastingsfarmersmarket.org.

Gossett's Farmers Market. Gossett



The crawfish boil at The Bayou Restaurant in Mount Vernon. The Bayou is one of a growing selection of restaurants throughout Westchester that serves Cajun and Southern-style cooking, just in time for Fat Tuesday.

Brothers Nursery, 1202 Old Post Rd. (Route 35), South Salem. Operates year-round. Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Info: Visit www.gossettbrothers.com.

Cold Spring Farmers Market. Boscobel House and Gardens, 1601 Route 9D, Garrison. Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Info: Visit www.csfarmmarket.org.

Hudson Valley Regional Farmers Market. Hudson Valley Cerebral Palsy Association, 15 Mount Ebo Rd. South, Brewster. Year-round on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info: Visit www.hudsonvalleyfarmersmarket.org.

Westport Winter Farmers Market. Gilbertie's Herb Gardens, 7 Sylvan Lane, Westport, Conn. Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. through Mar. 10. Info: Visit www.westportfarmersmarket.com.

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



The Creole seafood stew would be a great choice for a meal on Mardi Gras, celebrated this year on Mar. 1.

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Exploring the Drinking Habits of Great Leaders



By Nick Antonaccio

16th leaders, I found the landscape highly polarized.

George Washington brewed his own beer, of which he consumed copious amounts at dinners in his home and at various venues when crafting the Constitution with his fellow Founding Fathers. He was also fond of the fine wines purchased by Thomas Jefferson on his governmental boondoggles to French wineries. And George was a fan of the wine rage of colonial times: Portuguese Madeira fortified wines.

President Lincoln was the extreme opposite. A self-proclaimed teetotaler, he once pronounced his attitude toward tipping: the problem with alcohol was not that it was a bad thing, but a good thing abused by bad people.

With Lincoln's statement in mind, I began to ponder the drinking habits of other world leaders, and the influence on the

It was in the spirit of the upcoming Presidents' weekend – and in my insatiable search to relate events around me to a wine-centricity – that I penned this week's column.

Seeking references to any imbibing habits by our first and

course of world events.

The proclivities of many leaders came to mind, both indulgers and abstainers, including Napoleon, Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt and George W. Bush. But the one leader, in my mind, that history attributes an indomitable combination of military prowess and political acumen, equally intermeshed with conspicuous consumption, is Winston Churchill.

Churchill served his country nearly continuously over a span of 64 years, from 1900 to 1964. Such a long timeline provided many opportunities to inspire, sustain, even cajole his fellow citizens through a period that would try the mettle of the country.

With this overall background as inspiration for furthering this week's wine-centric theme,

I researched the numerous links between Churchill's exploits in Parliament and at the dinner table within 10 Downing Street.

As British prime minister from 1940 to 1945, Churchill led his country from the brink of defeat to victory during

World War II. With his vow of "blood, toil, tears and sweat" to Parliament upon taking office, his constituents considered him their savior – and forgave him for his many excesses.

His excesses?

1. It is well-documented that his typical alcohol consumption consisted of two or three Scotches, several glasses of

Champagne, at least two brandies and a highball – each day.

2. At a banquet at the home of the Saudi king, where, for religious reasons, no alcohol or cigars were served, Churchill protested: "My religion prescribes, as an absolute sacred ritual, smoking cigars and drinking alcohol before, after, and, if need be, during all meals and the intervals between them."

3. Of all libations, he favored Champagne. He once admitted: "In victory I deserve it, in defeat I need it."

4. During the war, Churchill visited the White House for weeks at a time, engaging in his smoking and drinking habits into the wee hours of the morning with his drinking buddy. An aide to President Roosevelt admitted that after Churchill's visits, FDR slept for 10 hours a night for three consecutive days.

These excesses were encapsulated in his ability to inspire his constituents. Here are a few tidbits I gleaned from various sources:

1. "You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life."
2. "This is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of



honour and good sense."

3. "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing has happened."

4. "He has all of the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire."

5. Dialogue at a dinner with British politician Bessie Braddock: "Winston, you are drunk, and what's more you are disgustingly drunk." "Bessie, my dear, you are

ugly, and what's more, you are disgustingly ugly. But tomorrow I shall be sober and you will still be disgustingly ugly."

6. "Don't interrupt me while I'm interrupting."

As we remember the accomplishments of these leaders this month, consider President Lincoln's words on drinking. I guess there are exceptions to every maxim.

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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