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SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 14, Issue 639

Ex-Peekskill Officer Pleads Guilty to Sexually Abusing Woman

By Rick Pezzullo

A former Peekskill police officer is facing seven years in state prison after pleading guilty last week to sexually abusing a woman he threatened with arrest while he was on duty on multiple occasions.

Michael Agovino, 35, resigned from the Peekskill Police Department in 2021 after being arrested by the Westchester District Attorney's Office on Feb. 15, 2020, following an investigation in collaboration with Peekskill Police.

According to District Attorney Mimi Roach, on two occasions in July 2019, Agovino, while on duty as a police officer, unlawfully entered the victim's Peekskill home under the pretext that he was conducting an investigation where she was a suspect.

During the first visit, Agovino demanded the victim remove all of her clothing under the pretense of conducting a body search, and then sexually abused her. On the second visit, Agovino returned to the home, threatened the victim with arrest unless she

removed her clothing or performed a sex act on him, and again sexually abused her.

Over the next five months, on three separate occasions, while on duty, Agovino unlawfully entered or attempted to enter the victim's home for his own sexual gratification at the expense of the victim, and in one instance sexually abused her. On the last date, in January 2020, unbeknownst to Agovino, the victim audio recorded their interaction, and provided that recording to the District Attorney's Office.

"Michael Agovino disgracefully violated his oath of office and his responsibility to serve and protect the public as a police officer by repeatedly abusing his authority, and sexually abusing this woman," Roach

continued on page 2



Michael Agovino

Schumer Pushes for More Funding for Indian Pt. Municipalities

By Rick Pezzullo

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is making a push for municipalities surrounding the Indian Point nuclear power plants to receive federal assistance to help offset the loss of revenue following the plant's closure.

Earlier this month, Schumer announced his two-pronged plan for federal economic development investment, including making permanent the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Assistance to Nuclear Closure Communities (NCC) program.

The funding would directly benefit the Town of Cortlandt, Village of Buchanan, Hendrick Hudson School District and Westchester County.

"The closure of the Indian Point nuclear power plant has meant the loss of one of the area's largest employers, displacing 1,100 workers from their jobs and eliminating a revenue source for critical services in the impacted communities. This devastating loss, coupled with the added economic challenges brought on by the pandemic, has created a perfect storm that could impact the growth of these areas for generations," Schumer said.

In a letter to House and Senate Appropriators, Schumer explained that

Indian Point was one of the county's largest taxpayers, bringing in about \$32 million in annual property tax revenue to Buchanan, Cortlandt, the Hendrick Hudson School District, and Westchester.

"Permanent authorization and increased funding for the Nuclear Closure Communities program will be crucial for the Village of Buchanan as we look to upgrade our infrastructure and replace our tax base following Indian Point's shutdown," said Buchanan Mayor Theresa Knickerbocker. "Buchanan feels very strongly that we should be compensated for being a de facto storage facility of nuclear waste for the department of energy."

"The federal funds and assistance provided by the Nuclear Closures Communities program will be a lifeline for the Town of Cortlandt as we look to offset the lost jobs and tax revenue associated with Indian Point's shutdown. This will help Cortlandt by improving our infrastructure to attract new companies to the area and create jobs," said Cortlandt Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker.

In 2020, Schumer and former Congresswoman Nita Lowey successfully secured for Cortlandt a \$3.2 million grant through the NCC program for an economic diversification initiative in preparation for the closure of Indian Point on April 30, 2021.

Youth Art Month Marked in Hen Hud



Youth Art Month takes place every March throughout the country, highlighting the value of art education for all students and encouraging support for quality art programs in schools. Hendrick Hudson High School has been recognizing Youth Art Month with a contest, encouraging all students to bring in their favorite works of art for a chance to win a raffle basket of art supplies. At the end of the month, the entries will be displayed in the high school art gallery, as well as on the school's Artsonia website.

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Yorktown Trail Town Committee Awarded Grant for Trail Signs

By Rick Pezzullo

The Yorktown Trail Committee has been awarded a \$2,900 grant from the Hudson River Valley Greenway for the installation of signs designed to increase awareness of many of Yorktown’s underutilized trails. The project includes a combination of signs at the access point to the trails, known as trailhead signs, that will tell visitors where the trails lead to and what other trails they

link to, gateway-type signs at the Granite Knolls Sports Complex and Woodlands/Legacy Field that will help visitors find the trailheads within the complex, and signs on two town roads that will direct drivers to the parking areas for nearby trails. “Many of the trailheads are secluded and concealed and even knowledgeable hikers can pass them on roads or in parks without knowing of their existence,” explained Committee member Jonathan Nettelfield.

“Many of the visitors to the two sports complexes are there to participate in or watch sporting events and they’re not aware that the parks also have access to a network of over 20 miles of interconnected trails.” In addition to the signs at the town’s two sports complexes, the project includes signage for the Hunterbrook trail, the Yorktown Trailway and the Mohansic Avenue East extension of the Mohansic Trailway.

Before completing the project, the Yorktown Trail Town Committee will have to raise an additional \$2,000 to cover the full cost of designing and manufacturing the signs. The actual installation of the signs will be done by volunteers. The committee is accepting donations at its web site, www.yorktowntrailtown.org. All donations are tax deductible. The Committee can also be reached at yorktowntrailtown@gmail.com.

Knickerbocker Reelected Buchanan Mayor; Incumbent Trustees Fall

By Rick Pezzullo

Buchanan Mayor Theresa Knickerbocker was reelected to a fifth term last week as voters sent mixed messages at the polls. Knickerbocker, who served five years as a trustee before first being elected mayor in 2014, thwarted off a challenge from Trustee Sean Murray, by a count of 307 votes to 183. “Thank you to all who voted in the Buchanan elections,” Knickerbocker said. “Thank you for the opportunity to continue the good things we have in the works in

Buchanan like the upgrade of our sewer treatment plant through grant money but there is much more to do. Thank you for entrusting me for the next 2 years during these challenging times. It is my great honor to be the Mayor of the Village of Buchanan. I will continue to work hard and do my best for the village we all love.” However, Knickerbocker’s running mates, Richard Funchion and Nicholas Zachary, both of whom have served 12 years on the board, weren’t as fortunate. Instead, the two top vote getters were

political newcomers, Dan Stewart and Steve Laker. Stewart led the way with 265, while Laker was close behind with 260. Funchion finished third with 235, while Zachary was fourth with 223. “I look forward to working with the two new board members Dan Stewart and Steve Laker,” Knickerbocker said. Laker grew up in Montrose and has lived in Buchanan for the last 16 years. He said he has served in CEO & CFO roles within the retail energy, financial and construction industries. He has served as treasurer for

many years for both the Cortlandt National Little League and the Our Lady of Mt Carmel Society. Stewart is a lifelong resident of Buchanan and a licensed insurance broker and manager of Personal Lines Insurance Department. Murray served as mayor in Buchanan from 2010 to 2014. He was a trustee the two years prior and was returned to the board last year. He is also a former chairman of the village’s Planning Board.

Ex-Peekskill Police Officer Pleads Guilty to Sexually Abusing Woman

continued from page 1 said. “The victim in this case demonstrated great courage in her attempt to hold her abuser accountable during this emotionally distressing ordeal and we hope that today’s plea helps in the healing process. I commend the Peekskill Police Department for their cooperation in this investigation and prosecution.”

Last Thursday, Agovino pled guilty to three counts of Burglary in the Second Degree as a Sexually Motivated Felony, two counts of Burglary in the Second Degree, two counts of Sexual Abuse in the First Degree, Attempted Burglary in the Second Degree as a Sexually Motivated Felony, Attempted Burglary in the Second Degree, Stalking in the First Degree as a Sexually

Motivated Felony, and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, all felonies. He also pled guilty to four counts of Official Misconduct, three counts of Coercion in the Third Degree, and two counts of Forcible Touching, all misdemeanors. In exchange for his plea to each count in the indictment, the court promised Agovino a sentence of seven years in state prison,

with 15 years of post-release supervision. Agovino will also have to register as a sex offender upon his release from prison. Rocah said the District Attorney’s Office voiced to the court their strong objection to the agreement, as Agovino faced significantly more prison time if convicted after trial. Agovino is scheduled to be sentenced on June 23.



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County, Million Air Each Claim Victory in Federal Court Decision

By Martin Wilbur

A fixed-based operator at Westchester County Airport and the county have both claimed a legal victory in a recent federal district court decision related to a \$30 million lawsuit brought against Westchester last year.

In a Mar. 11 decision, the court denied the county's motion to dismiss Million Air's claim regarding the design and construction of a stormwater management system.

However, County Attorney John Nonna said Monday that the court sided with the county on its claim that it had a right to deny Million Air to construct an additional 78,000-square-foot hangar along with an expansion of an existing hangar to 50,000 square feet because it acted in accordance with the lease.

On the issue of the stormwater management system, according to Million Air, the county told the private aviation firm it should hold off on building the required stormwater management system until proposed improvements, such as renovation of its existing terminals and the building of a new hangar, were completed.

After Million Air followed the county's directive and completed the proposed improvements, Westchester County directed the company to then construct a stormwater system for the proposed improvements as a condition to the county amending its lease for a modified hangar.

That decision, Million Air contends, has forced it to rip up portions of the completed work costing it millions of dollars and serious business disruptions.

"We are gut-wrenched to think that we had to sue the county to provide the community with solutions to its long-term goals – less airplane noise by decreasing repositioning flights by over 1,000 flights per year, more high-paying jobs and work for our local unions and suppliers," Million Air CEO Roger Woolsey said in a statement. "We hope this development in the case brings the county one step closer to unlocking these much-needed benefits for so many who live in our community."

Nonna said Westchester was successful in convincing the court that it had the right to deny the 78,000-square-foot hangar to be built.

"The court recently ruled that the

county acted in accordance with its rights under the lease and not permitting the construction of that (larger) hangar and did not act in bad faith in not allowing the hangar to be built," Nonna said.

He also said the county will demonstrate that it acted in good faith in connection with the stormwater management system when it responds to the court.

One of the concerns the county has raised about construction of a second Million Air hangar is that it would increase noise by adding to the number of private aviation flights landing and departing at the airport.

Last June when the company brought the suit, its attorney, Russell Yankwitt, argued that more planes could be stored at the airport with an additional hangar thereby eliminating the need for "ferry flights," which would diminish air traffic.

An agreement for the second hangar was approved by the administration of former county executive Rob Astorino.

County Launches Suit

In a separate action, Westchester County is suing public charter operators that officials charged have been effectively acting as commercial airlines in violation of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

regulations.

Nonna said the county is seeking an order in state Supreme Court barring operators using aircraft with more than nine seats to sell flight tickets to the public.

Terminal use guidelines are binding related to public charters, a regulation that is in Section 712.463 of the county charter and approved by the FAA in 2004, Nonna said.

He said it had been discovered that some charter operators were selling plane tickets over the internet.

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Senator Proposes Gas Sales Tax Holiday, Rebate to Combat High Prices

By Martin Wilbur

A lower Hudson Valley state legislator has proposed suspending the state sales tax and to give every car owner a \$250 rebate to help ease consumers' pain at the pumps.

State Sen. Elijah Reichlin-Melnick (D-Nyack) appeared at the Briarcliff Manor Exxon station on Pleasantville Road last Wednesday afternoon where gas was nearly \$5 a gallon to pitch the urgency of his proposals. On Mar. 14, Reichlin-Melnick's proposed state gas tax holiday was included in the Senate's One House Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2023.

His plan would be to suspend the state sales tax from May 1 until the end of the year regardless where gas prices are headed. The senator estimated that it would save 17 cents a gallon, a likely \$2 to \$3 savings every time a motorist fills up.

"That makes a real difference," Reichlin-Melnick said. "We know that so much of the price of gas is outside of our control. It's determined at the international level and everything that's going on in the world today, but in New York State we can take action today to try and help at the margins and really try to chip away at the cost people are paying."

To supplement the suspension of the state sales tax for gas, the second part of Reichlin-Melnick's proposal would be to provide a \$250 rebate for every car owner. Owners of multiple cars would receive just one rebate, he said.

Eliminating the sales tax on gas would cost



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

State Sen. Elijah Reichlin-Melnick unveils his plan last Wednesday to temporarily suspend the state gas sales tax and provide motorists with a \$250 rebate to offset the spiraling prices.

the state about \$650 million in revenue, the senator estimated. He projected it could cost as much as \$900 million to issue the rebates.

Reichlin-Melnick said the state would be able to trim from a variety of areas in the budget along with possibly putting less surplus money aside to give consumers a temporary break. Since so many New Yorkers on limited budgets are having to spend more

on gas, that's less money they're spending on other goods and services, he said.

"We know that we need to take steps, we know we need to take action because every dollar people are having to spend to get around, just to get where they need to go, to get to work or drop their kids at school or pick them up from soccer or anything like that, that's money they can't save, they can't use

for their college tuition, they can't use to buy goods at local businesses," Reichlin-Melnick said.

Steven Cebel, the owner of the Exxon service station where Reichlin-Melnick made his announcement, said his business has plummeted 40 to 45 percent since the spike in gas prices several weeks ago. That has a ripple effect for the station's convenience store with far fewer sales because of the loss of customers.

A gallon of regular gas sold for \$4.91 at the station last week.

Cebel said he supports the proposed sales tax holiday for gas to give consumers and him and his fellow gas station owners a break.

"People are more frugal buying gas and who can blame them," he said. "In the meantime, expenses are the same."

Ossining Town Supervisor Dana Levenberg, whose municipality is represented by Reichlin-Melnick in the state Senate, said she fears for strapped consumers who are being crushed by the escalating gas prices and as well as businesses who are also feeling the pinch.

"More than anything right now, peoples' pocketbooks are hurting, they are in very tough times, and anything we can do or can be done at the state level is incredibly appreciated here," Levenberg said.

Reichlin-Melnick said he is hopeful that the Assembly and Gov. Kathy Hochul will be receptive to both his proposals. There are also other measures related to easing the pain at the pumps that are being proposed by other legislators from around the state, he said.

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Mayer, Public Advocates Go on Offensive to Battle Con Ed Rates

By Abby Luby

Prohibitive increases in Con Edison utility bills have prompted state Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) and other officials to urge their colleagues and consumers to fight back.

Mayer, joined for a webinar last Wednesday by representatives from the nonprofit Public Utility Law Project (PULP), an organization dedicated to protecting consumers and utility affordability, and Sustainable Westchester Executive Director Nina Orville, said the out-of-control hikes demands action.

"We were inundated in late January by people who were outraged and crying about their energy bills from Con Ed," Mayer said. "One woman told me she had to live upstairs in the second floor of her house in a single room because she had to keep the downstairs cold enough in order to afford her February electric bill."

The state Public Service Commission (PSC) stated that electricity and gas customers in New York owed nearly \$1.8 billion as of January and were charged three times their normal utility rate. Utility charges were raised from six to 17 cents per kilowatt hour.

Along with Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-Yonkers), Mayer wrote to the PSC and Con Edison citing the swelling number of complaints from Westchester residents.

"We told them to pursue all options to

suspend their rate increase and to flatten out payments," Mayer said. "We want to reach out to all ratepayers to communicate the details of the situation and what relief is available."

Since January, Con Edison has responded by saying rate hikes were due to the colder than usual months of December and January, which increased the demand for power.

PULP Executive Director Richard Berkley explained that New York's deregulated energy markets show up under supply charges on a Con Ed bill.

"One is the delivery charges which is completely under the control of Con Edison," Berkley said. "The other part of your bill is for supply charges and that's for Con Ed's purchase of the deregulated price of electricity and natural gas which they purchase at auction."

He added that the cost of natural gas, which is used in New York State to generate electricity, and the cost of electricity have gone up, causing supply costs to spike.

Mayer said Con Edison was also guilty of hedging against the volatility in the price of natural gas.

"They messed up masterfully and hedged their price on what they thought it would be and they did it badly," she charged.

Berkley and Laurie Wheelock, PULP's deputy general counsel and deputy director, urged consumers to file a complaint with

the state Department of Public Service and to demand the agency investigate Con Edison.

In 2019, the PSC approved a three-year increase for the utility and the rates have risen every year. The most recent rate increase was between 4 and 7 percent in January.

"Back-to-back you have an increase in rates from a three-year-old rate increase and then the bill surge on top of that," Berkley said. "The PSC and Con Ed had a duty to protect you and warn you about these rate increases."

Con Edison has proposed another 17.6 percent hike for electricity (about \$1.2 billion) and a 28.1 percent increase for natural gas (about \$500 million) to three million households. If approved by the PSC later this year, those rates will go into effect Jan. 1, 2023.

Berkley urged Con Edison customers to lodge a complaint against the proposed rate hike by calling 800-342-3377 or visiting www.dps.ny.gov/complaints or <https://utilityproject.org>.

Wheelock said there are programs to help lower-income families apply for assistance through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), a federally-funded program/ Other programs that can help middle-income families are listed on the PULP website at <https://utilityproject.org/get-help>.

For those who have requested a credit on their Con Edison bill, Berkley said

consumers should look at the top lefthand corner of the bill under the adjustment section. Consumers can also contact PULP for help, he said.

"The Public Service Commission usually doesn't hear from the public or from ratepayers," Wheeler said. "Now is the time for customers and residents to talk to them and have these conversations."

PULP, along with other organizations, has called on Gov. Kathy Hochul to appropriate \$1.25 billion in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2023 state budget for unpaid energy bills. Lawmakers are scheduled to approve a budget by Apr. 1.

Orville spoke about Sustainable Westchester's program, Westchester Power, a community-based bulk energy purchasing effort aimed at controlling costs and increasing the use of renewable energy. The 24 municipalities in Westchester that have signed up for the program and are served by Con Edison are paying about 7.4 cents per kilowatt hour.

Upcoming public hearings on Con Edison's request for another rate hike are scheduled for Tuesdays, Mar. 22 and 29 and Thursday, Mar. 31 at 1 and 5 p.m. Anyone wishing to view the hearing or provide a public statement, can visit www.AskPSC.com. To provide a public statement, you must pre-register by 4:30 p.m. the day before each hearing.

For additional information, visit <https://www.coned.com/en/accounts-billing/your-bill/public-statement-hearings-notice>.

Supply and Demand

There are five active real estate listings in Pleasantville as I write this. In a normal spring market, there are over ten times that amount. Let that sink in. I do this for a living and I have trouble processing this information. One of the reasons is that houses that come on the market are going to contract within a week and are gone before you know it.

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Concern Over Going to Tax Cap in \$148.4M Bedford School Budget

By Martin Wilbur

Bedford School District officials grappled last week with whether they should trim the maximum allowable tax levy proposed in the administration's \$148.4 million budget for 2022-23 to provide relief to residents in a challenging economy.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joel Adelberg presented next year's budget to the Board of Education on Mar. 9 that increases spending by more than \$3.9 million, or 2.72

percent, while going to the limit of a 2.69 percent levy hike.

The proposed budget includes a new director of STEAM, innovation and digital learning and a K-5 math instructional coach and adds a .5 special education for Hillside, the district's alternative high school, and a full-time bilingual community liaison to communicate more effectively with Spanish speaking families. It also increases the role of the district's communications specialist and adds a benefits clerk. All current positions in

the district are maintained from the current year.

"I really believe that this budget this evening is student-centric," Adelberg said. "You'll see that the few adds – there are not many – but the few adds that I'm proposing for your consideration are all about our students and I really tried to propose a budget that places resources as close to the classroom and as close to our students as possible."

However, during last week's budget deliberations, there was robust discussion about whether board members should consider providing taxpayers with some relief this year. Board member Robert Mazurek also questioned how the district went to the tax cap ceiling to the dollar.

Adelberg explained that there were far more requests than what he included in the spending plan and many of those needed to be shelved to get to the cap.

One board member, Beth Staropoli, said during the last two budgets the district provided the public with some relief by coming in under the tax cap. She had also warned last year that by going under the cap the board impacted district revenue for years to come, although there had been concerns that state aid would be slashed by 20 percent and revenue from sales tax would crater.

"We have not gone to the tax cap the last two years and I'm in favor of going to the tax cap this year," Staropoli said. "My only concern is adding in quite a few ongoing commitments knowing that we're going to be losing our grant funding within a year or

two and to try and find the money to maintain some of these positions to keep class size low."

However, Board Member Steven Matlin said coming in under cap the last two budgets isn't a reason to reach the maximum now, especially since the district generated about \$6 million in surplus during that time. Matlin, who acknowledged that about \$3 million of the surplus was pandemic-related, mentioned that he was very concerned about asking taxpayers to pay more at a time of high inflation and nearly \$5-a-gallon gas.

"We tax our community what we need, not what we can," he said.

Board President John Boucher said the proposed budget uses \$755,000 in fund balance for one-time expenses.

Those items include \$500,000 for a new internal system that would put a phone in each classroom because there are areas of the district where cell service is poor; \$210,000 for new K-5 math materials, \$25,000 for new music lockers at the middle school and \$20,000 for lockdown strobes at the high school and middle school campus.

Mazurek responded that he thought it was ridiculous to support \$500,000 for a telephone system without specific information about what that entails.

"If we have to go through another \$148 million of these questions, in these (next) two meetings, it's impossible," he said. "We've got to get things done somewhere else."

The board will resume its budget review at its next meeting on Wednesday evening.

Welcome Aboard



The Bedford Board of Education formally appointed its next superintendent, Dr. Robert Glass, during its Mar. 16 meeting. Glass, who has been the superintendent in Eastchester, will take over for Dr. Joel Adelberg, who is retiring, on July 1. Pictured, from left, are board members Robert Mazurek, Beth Staropoli and Jessica Cambareri, student representative Liam Banks, Glass and his wife Dr. Cynthia Glass, board members John Boucher, Steve Matlin, Edward Reder and Alexandra White and student representative Ellie Crummy.

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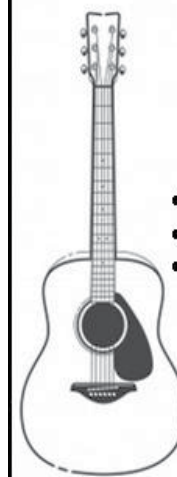
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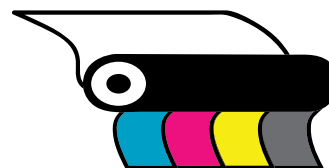


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GOP Hopeful Enters Assembly Race as Rainey, Smith Get Dem Backing

By Rick Pezzullo

The race for the 95th Assembly District seat being vacated by longtime incumbent Sandy Galef at the end of the year continues to take shape as the first Republican/Conservative candidate has stepped forward with four Democrats jockeying to get an upper hand.

Stacy Halper, a 29-year Briarcliff Manor resident and retired music teacher, is tossing her hat into the ring for the first time because she feels it's time for a change.

"I feel that there are many people in my district that disagree with state decisions like vaccine mandates, bail reform laws, (Critical Race Theory) taught in their schools and unconstitutional Second Amendment laws," Halper stated. "The Legislature, for whatever reason, is ignoring the wants and needs of their constituency. I am running to give people a real voice in their government."

"Sandy Galef has occupied this seat for 30 years, admirably. However, I believe people want a change. They see that their roads are falling apart, their businesses are in danger of closing due to unreasonable mandates; they are taxed to the brim without really seeing where their tax money is going," she continued.

"Parents are losing control over what our children are being taught in schools and they are very concerned. This is a climate where Republicans stand an excellent

chance of gaining seats and thereby giving many people a voice in their government. This will be the year; yes, I will win for the people."

Halper said when she first moved to Briarcliff Manor, Law Park was in need of refurbishing, so she volunteered on the Recreation Advisory Committee and was involved in creating a new pool area that included landscaping, lighting and a new pavilion.

"This showed me that even one person with a goal can make a difference working together with other people to accomplish great things for the community," she said.

Meanwhile, the four Democrats vying to succeed Galef – Ossining Supervisor Dana Levenberg, Westchester County Legislator Colin Smith (D-Peekskill), former Peekskill Mayor Andre Rainey and former Peekskill Councilman Vanessa Agudelo – participated in a forum before the Peekskill Democratic Committee last Thursday.

Following the forum, district leaders gathered to discuss possibly endorsing a candidate for the June 28 primary that appears to be looming.

Committee members expressed differing opinions.

"Let the people decide," Linda Weltman argued. "Why should we influence people? It's wrong to choose one over another."

However, Marina Ciotti-Hodges countered, "I think it is our duty and our role to make a choice."



Briarcliff Manor resident Stacy Halper will challenge for the 95th Assembly District seat this year on the Republican line. She will face one of four Democrats vying for the party's nomination, a process that is becoming increasingly contentious.

When district leaders were polled, Rainey was the only candidate to receive any votes with 17, but there were also 17 votes for no endorsement. Due to a "weighted" system, no endorsement

seemed to prevail.

It was later revealed that a mistake had been made in the calculations and Rainey apparently came out on top, an outcome Committee Chairman Steve Kollias confirmed Monday.

That result is not going unchallenged, though, as a spokesman for Smith said Monday they would be doing "a deep dive" into what transpired and see if any challenge would be warranted.

Smith scored a victory with the Cortlandt Democratic Committee last week, receiving 80 percent of first-place votes. With close to 13,000 registered Democrats, Cortlandt has the highest weighted vote in the Assembly primary race.

"I am both humbled and thrilled to have the support of Supervisor Richard Becker and the entire town council in this race, as well as the Town of Cortlandt Democratic Committee," Smith said. "Cortlandt is located in the heart of our Assembly district and I have had the pleasure of working with their local elected leadership for several years. Together, we've delivered real results for residents, and I look forward to continuing this partnership in Albany."

The 95th Assembly District includes Briarcliff Manor, Ossining, Cortlandt, Peekskill and part of Yorktown in Westchester and Philipstown in Putnam County.



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Police Blotter

County Police/Mount Kisco

Mar. 15: Officers responded at 12:50 p.m. to a Barker Street residence on a report of a domestic disturbance. A woman reported that she had been involved in an argument with her adult son and wanted him to leave the apartment. The son gathered some of his belongings and left.

Mar. 17: Police responded at 8:26 a.m. to Five Guys on North Bedford Road on a report of a burglary and attempted theft. Employees told officers that they found a shattered window when they arrived at 7:45 a.m. and then discovered that someone apparently attempted to pry open a store safe. Detectives

from the General Investigations and Forensic Investigations units have taken over the investigation.

Mar. 18: At 9:43 a.m., a man turned over a wallet to an officer that he said he had found at Starbucks on South Moger Avenue. The wallet contained only coupons and condoms but no personal paperwork of any kind to help identify its owner.

Mar. 18: An officer on patrol observed at 12:52 p.m. that a street sign had been knocked down on South Bedford Road and was partially in the roadway. The officer moved the sign from the road and advised the Department of Public Works that it needed to be replaced.

Mar. 18: A Spring Street resident reported

at 1:14 p.m. that her family has an ongoing problem with a neighbor regarding loud noise. The matter was turned over to the community resource officer for continued investigation.

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Mar. 14: An Eklof Court resident reported a sick or injured raccoon was in his backyard at 3:40 p.m. Patrols were dispatched and reported that the raccoon sauntered away prior to their arrival.

Kent Police Department

Mar. 10: Jose Ceden, 41, of Astoria, Queens, was arrested at about 9:10 p.m. and charged with aggravated DWI after officers were advised that a gray SUV was being operated erratically on Route 52. When police got close to the vehicle, which was located on Fair Street near Towners Road, it began traveling southbound in the northbound lane on Fair Street. After about a quarter-mile, the vehicle returned to the southbound lane. Ceden was transported by police for arrest processing. He was issued an appearance ticket to appear before Judge Douchkoff at a later date.

Mount Pleasant Police Department

Mar. 15: Police responded to the Thornwood ShopRite at 4 p.m. on a report of a larceny in progress. The first responding officer observed a female that matched the description of the person leaving the store. The female immediately abandoned the full shopping cart and began to run through the parking lot. She was apprehended without incident. Further investigation of store video confirmed the theft. The suspect was a 15-year-old Pleasantville juvenile, who was released with a juvenile Family Court appearance ticket.

Mar. 17: A 24-year-old Elmsford man was detained by the Loss Prevention Team at The Home Depot in Hawthorne at 1 p.m. The subject had left the store with about \$130 in merchandise without paying. Following an investigation by police, the man was arrested and charged with petty larceny. The suspect was processed and released with an appearance ticket to return to Mount Pleasant Justice Court.

Mar. 18: Police responded to the JCCA campus in Pleasantville at 2:30 p.m. following a report of a 16-year-old female attacking an 18-year-old female resident, hitting, kicking and pulling her hair. Staff intervened and removed the victim to a staff office for protection. The 16-year-old then entered the office and threw glass at the victim, further injuring her. The 16-year-old was then escorted from the cottage by staff while the older female received medical care. A juvenile Family Court appearance ticket was expected to be served. An investigation is continuing.

North Castle Police Department

Mar. 12: A party arrived at headquarters at 3:26 p.m. to report being a victim of a scam on Craigslist while attempting to rent an apartment for his sister on Washington Avenue.

Mar. 13: A caller stated at 9:25 p.m. that a friend came to his residence in Bedford reporting a domestic dispute. The friend lives on East Middle Patent Road in North Castle. The caller reported he and his friend are at the Bedford residence. The caller, who was advised that the Bedford Police Department would be contacted, did not provide a location of where the domestic dispute occurred. Bedford police called back and reported that they made contact with the friend and he is being transported to Northern Westchester Hospital for evaluation. A North Castle officer responded to the hospital's emergency room and advised the domestic incident occurred at the East Middle Patent Road location.

Mar. 14: A complainant arrived at headquarters at 1:53 p.m. to report that she was notified of apparent fraudulent charges on her T.J. Maxx credit card. When she went to see if her credit card was in her wallet, she discovered it to be missing.

Pleasantville Police Department

Mar. 13: An unwanted patron was in a Bedford Road store at 1:23 p.m. The person was removed from the premises.

Mar. 16: A truck backed into a corner of a commercial storefront on Wheeler Avenue at 4:58 p.m. causing damage. A report was filed.

Mar. 19: A vehicle on Memorial Plaza was impounded at 5 a.m. before the farmers market setup. The car was towed.

Putnam County Sheriff's Department

Mar. 11: A 33-year-old Mahopac man was arrested after members of the sheriff's Narcotics Enforcement Unit executed a search warrant at a Carmel residence. Three firearms were seized, including a "ghost gun," a personally made firearm. The suspect, who had a previous felony conviction for third-degree robbery, was charged with one count each of second- and third-degree criminal possession of a weapon and two counts of fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon. He was arraigned in the Town of Carmel Justice Court and released on electronic monitoring.

Yorktown Police Department

Mar. 15: Yordi Brito, 23, of New York City was charged with reckless driving and unlawful fleeing a police officer at 9:15 a.m. after traveling at a high rate of speed on Underhill Avenue.

Mar. 15: Bruce Finley Jr., 32, of Wingdale, N.Y. was charged with fourth-degree grand larceny at 9:16 p.m. after allegedly using a victim's credit card to charge \$2,250 worth of merchandise at Lowe's in Yorktown.

Mar. 17: Two 14-year-old Peekskill youths were charged with trespassing at Mildred E. Strang Middle School in Yorktown Heights at 10:09 a.m. One of the teens was also charged with resisting arrest.

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

Obituary

Caroline Loeb

It is with great heartbreak that we announce the passing of Caroline Cooley Loeb of Mount Kisco on Mar. 15 at the age of 64 after a courageous and selfless eight-year battle with metastatic breast cancer.

Caroline faced a terminal diagnosis head on with unwavering strength. She lived and thrived during the past years with more fun and compassion than many create in a lifetime.

Caroline was born on May 15, 1957, in New Haven, Conn. to Irwin and Helena Cooley, whose strong Jewish and Swedish heritages influenced Caroline throughout her life. She grew up in Troy, N.Y. and later attended St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., where she was lovingly given the nickname "Cools."

Caroline's commitment to advocacy and her boundless empathy led her to law school and later to a career as a public defender at The Legal Aid Society of Westchester County. After leaving the field of law, Caroline devoted herself to her local community through tireless volunteer work. She continued her service to the public by becoming the executive director of the Mount Kisco Chamber of Commerce.

Caroline was a trailblazer and a force of life. She was hilarious with infectious energy, and she made others feel special just for being themselves and nothing more. Her profound kindness for others is leaving an immeasurable loss – a life taken too soon but



Caroline Loeb

one lived so deeply.

Caroline is survived by her husband, Harvey; children Greg and Brita; and brothers Erik (Cathy) and Jack (Jenny). A service to celebrate Caroline's life was held at Temple Shaaray Tefila in Bedford Corners on Mar. 21. The family was to sit shiva at their home on Mar. 21 and Tuesday, Mar. 22 from 3 to 7 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Community Center of Northern Westchester (www.communitycenternw.org) or the Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry (www.mountkiscofoodpantry.org).



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Millwood Supply Property Owners Pitch Mixed-Use Plan for Site

By Martin Wilbur

The owners of the Millwood Supply property pitched a conceptual plan to the New Castle Town Board last week for a mixed-use development at the former lumberyard site.

Preliminary plans call for up to 50 units of housing over ground-floor retail at the 1.8-acre site near the North County Trailway on Millwood Road.

Paulette Beldotti, one of the owners of the property, said her grandfather started Millwood Lumber in the 1950s. The business ceased operations in December 2020. Her father, Leo Rotta, died nearly a decade ago.

"It became one of the top-producing lumberyards in the whole Northeast and we're very proud to develop the site," she said. "We've been wanting to do this for years."

Architect John Fry, of Nexus Creative Design in Tarrytown, said currently he and his clients are envisioning a mixture of carriage house-style townhomes in one structure and apartment units above small retail shops in another. The buildings holding the units would be consistent with the look of the residences across the street

on Station Road, Fry said.

Some of the parking would be out of view from the street under the larger building, he said.

A sewage facility is proposed to be tucked into a back corner of the property. Fry said the property's potential has been constrained over the years because of the lack of public sewers for the Millwood hamlet and its proximity to the New York City watershed. That has been a key obstacle in redeveloping properties in and around the commercial and industrial zones that would generate larger sewage flows.

"The site has been limited by its zoning, it's in IG industrial zoning, and clearly by its lack of municipal sanitary facilities," Fry said.

Specific details about the units' square footage, retail space and parking were not discussed at last week's Town Board work session, although Fry said most of the residences would likely be one- and two-bedroom units.

Dan Ciarcia, the engineer for the owners, said his clients are trying to figure out what to do with the property, but their choices have been limited by the sewage issue.

Ciarcia said given the town's vision in the hamlet centers for mixed-use development a plan like

this could work.

"We're seeing a lot of nice concepts but ultimately what it comes down to is sewage disposal," he said. "The issue is do you try and do something in the IG zone that doesn't generate as much sewage or do you realize some of these mixed-use visions that the town has been trying to promote with the Millwood hamlet."

A possibility that could be explored would be for the property owners to partner with New Castle in hopes of establishing what is called a transportation company, Ciarcia said. A provision in New York State law allows private corporations to build facilities such as sewage wastewater systems and treatment plants that would be regulated by the state Public Service Commission.

A large enough sanitary facility would not only benefit the residents and the businesses at the former lumberyard property but other property owners in the area could pay to share use of the facility, he said.

State funding of as much as 80 percent has been available for some projects, according to Ciarcia.

"We could go on our own but if we establish a transportation company then that becomes the



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The site of the old Millwood Supply on Millwood Road. Last week representatives for the property owners unveiled a conceptual plan that includes townhouses and retail spaces below apartments.

means to bring other people in and have them pay their fair share for benefitting from the district," Ciarcia said.

He said it would likely be best to pursue both options for sewer disposal, the smaller facility just for the property and a large one that could help a wider area.

Town Board members said they would be open to continuing the conversation with the property owners. Supervisor Lisa Katz said

issues such as impact on traffic and schools would have to be addressed.

Councilwoman Tara Kassal added this could represent a chance for development that could help the town.

"I have some concerns but I do think there's an opportunity to have some responsible development there," Kassal said. "So I think more conversation is definitely in order."

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3 Tips For A Higher Home Appraisal

Appraisers take into account many factors when determining the worth of a home. While some of these, such as location, can't be helped, there are things a homeowner can do to ensure that the home is appraised for maximum value. Here are some homeowner tips:

1. Information is King

- * Provide a packet of information to the appraiser including a fact sheet about the home with the address and a list of any improvements you've made.

2. If it's Broken, Fix it

- * Fix anything that will age the home in the eyes of the appraiser.

3. Give the Home a Quick Clean

- * A clean house gives the illusion that the home has been well-maintained.
- * Things like overgrown landscaping, soiled carpeting, marks on walls do affect value and are part of the property's overall condition rating.

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Letters to the Editor

Have Your Voice Heard on Ossining Comprehensive Plan Update

The most significant planning project we've undertaken in recent years, our Comprehensive Plan process, is nearly finished. The plan is called Sustainable Ossining, and was funded in part by a grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. It evaluates sustainability through what we refer to as the "three Es" – environment, economy and equity. The sections of the plan dealing with land use are specific to the unincorporated area of the Town of Ossining.

This is the product of more than two years of work; we started in January 2020. Though we were constrained at times by pandemic restrictions, we pushed through with virtual and in-person engagement where possible, with hundreds of participants in Zoom meetings, surveys, pop-up events, posters and more. The draft plan has been available for public review since Feb. 1. A huge thanks to our Steering Committee – comprised of residents, business owners and other stakeholders – for their careful review and input throughout the process.

We opened a public hearing on the plan at our Mar. 8 Town Board meeting, and will continue it during the Mar. 22 Town Board meeting. It will likely be extended to at least the Apr. 12 meeting. Both of those meetings will be hybrid meetings – via Zoom and in person at the Ossining Municipal Building, located at 16 Croton Ave. Zoom information will be posted to www.TownofOssining.com the Friday before those hearings for those who prefer not to attend in person.

Public hearings are always at the top of our agenda at 7:30 p.m., so if you would like to speak, please be sure to come on time. If that timing is challenging for you, you can always provide written comments as part of the public record in between meetings (or in addition to meetings, if you have more to contribute) by e-mailing the town clerk at sdonnely@townofossining.com.

We anticipate having a revised draft of the Comprehensive Plan by the end of March for public review prior to the Apr. 12 Town Board legislative session.

Once the plan has been approved by the Town Board, we will turn our focus to a review of our town code, policies and procedures to bring this plan to life. We are already planning to undertake an open space preservation plan, as we have heard from the community and the town Environmental Advisory Committee throughout the Comprehensive Plan process that open space, for both recreation and preservation, is extremely important.

You can review the draft plan by visiting the project website, www.SustainableOssining.com. Summaries of all public engagement efforts and interim reports developed throughout the process are also available on the project website. If you would like to receive e-mail updates about the plan, visit our website and click the button that says "Subscribe to Sustainable Ossining" and enter your e-mail address and name.

In advance, thank you for contributing to the sustainable future of Ossining.

Dana Levenberg
Supervisor, Town of Ossining

Mt. Kisco Officials' Cell Tower Decision Fails to Protect Leonard Park

At the Mar. 7 Mount Kisco Village Board meeting, the majority of the board, without sufficient public notice or input, voted to allow the installation of a 130-foot cell tower and the construction of a 550-foot-long, 12-foot-wide access road through a frequently utilized wooded portion of Leonard Park. This project, if allowed to proceed, would cause irreversible damage to an environmentally sensitive area of the park.

The proposed roadway and cell tower would traverse through the historic 18-hole disc golf course and scenic hiking trails, all of which are utilized daily. This project would create a major impediment to those activities and thereby infringe upon the ability of residents to continue to use and enjoy the most serene portion of the park.

The radiation-emitting cell tower would also loom large over the park's many ball fields and sleigh riding hill, and would also be located in close proximity to the Memorial Pool complex, summer camps and playground areas.

This pristine area of the park was generously donated to the people of Mount Kisco by the Leonard family. Both the proposed cell tower and access roadway clearly violate several sections of the park deed as well as the long-established principle of the public trust doctrine.

The unilateral action taken by the Village Board was not only done without a public hearing but also without involving either the Leonard Park Committee or the Recreation Commission, as is required. This rushed process has completely lacked any semblance of transparency.

A public hearing must be held on this matter so that the voices of village residents can be heard on a decision that will negatively impact the future use of our park.

I encourage all village residents to stand up and speak out to help prevent this project from going forward. Leonard Park is the wrong place for this cell tower.

The Village Board should respect and honor the wishes of the families who so generously gifted this beautiful park for the enjoyment of all village residents.

I'm calling on all members of the Mount Kisco Village Board to listen to the residents and immediately take any and all necessary steps in order to protect our park!

Louis Terlizzi
Mount Kisco

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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Column

Casualty of the Pandemic: A Frightening Rise in Substance Abuse

A sometimes-unrecognized casualty of the pandemic in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties, and frankly all over, is an increase in substance abuse.

Use of marijuana, opioids, alcohol and other drugs in the region have all increased during the pandemic, leaving more scars on residents and their families.

"Isolation, increased stress and fear of the unknown all played a major role in the rise of substance abuse during the pandemic, among all age groups and demographics," stated Jana Wu, program manager for outpatient services at Mountainside Treatment Center in Chappaqua.

"So many people went from having a routine of being social in some way (work, going to the grocery store, gym, seeing family, school, etc.) and all that stopped pretty much overnight," Wu wrote in an e-mail.

Wu said she has seen more people coming in who are using marijuana and THC, which is the chemical in marijuana that alters and impairs your brain activity.

"The pandemic is the busiest (time) in my life," Wu said in an interview. "We've seen a steady increase in people really needing and asking for help. The pandemic has been stressful for so long. People are really uncomfortable."

"There's an increase in everything (types of drugs) because of stresses, like economic dislocation," said state Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro), chair of



By Michael Gold

the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse. "People are self-medicating all over their communities, at home, in their car, in bathrooms in fast food restaurants. It's in the shadows, people suffering in silence. It's a hidden problem."

Also, marijuana traffickers are mixing fentanyl and other ingredients with their products, which increases its toxicity and causes unwanted side effects, Wu said. She calls it "a scary experience."

"Fentanyl and other things are mixed in (with marijuana), from labs in Mexico and Colombia," Wu explained. "There is no safe recreational drug use now. You really don't know where this drug is coming from."

"People are seeing or hearing things when they're high," she said. "They're having audio and visual hallucinations."

Another threat is that some are experiencing psychotic episodes. Additionally, teens are vaping marijuana more frequently.

"Lots of kids under 21 years old are buying weed cartridges online," Wu said.

Pleasantville Police Detective Joseph Zane reported in an e-mail that the village had five drug overdose incidents in 2021, with one of those resulting in a fatality. In 2019, the village had three overdoses, with one fatality.

"We do live in a small jurisdiction, but it does appear that 2020-21 did have a higher number of incidents," Zane stated. "The majority of incidents included opiate abuse,

but luckily, with the use of Narcan, officers were able to treat these patients quickly on scene to avoid fatalities."

"I also believe drinking became more socially normalized at the start of the pandemic," Wu added. "Many people were having cocktail hours via Zoom."

A Rand Corporation study, published in September 2020, found that American adults had sharply increased their alcohol consumption during the shutdown.

The "overall frequency of alcohol consumption increased by 14 percent among adults over age 30, compared to the same time last year," the research stated. The same study found that women have increased "heavy drinking episodes (four or more drinks within a couple of hours) by 41 percent."

People are drinking more wine, Wu said, thinking it's not that damaging, when it's toxic to your liver and can harm brain activity. Some of the people she's seen walking into Mountainside have consumed two bottles of wine over a weekend.

Wu said she sees a slight increase in the use of LSD and even nitrous oxide (laughing gas), which is addictive and can harm your brain and physical functions. Abuse of Xanax, a prescription drug for anxiety, has also increased, she said.

"People are self-medicating," Harckham explained. "It's bad in our area."

There's an increase in abuse of all substances, Harckham said. Fentanyl is worsening the situation, he said.

"Fentanyl is poisoning the drug supply," Harckham stated. "We see fentanyl-laced pot. It's in cocaine."

Fentanyl was a major contributor to overdose deaths in 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). More than 100,000 Americans died from overdose deaths, from April 2020 to April 2021, the CDC reported. New York suffered more than 3,600 overdose deaths in that period, the fifth highest of any state.

"Families are impacted. It doesn't matter how much money you have," Harckham said. "People have trauma and trauma doesn't go away just because the pandemic seems to be ebbing."

Harckham is helping to get substance abusers in treatment, through legislation and increased state funding for prevention, treatment, harm reduction and recovery.

"It (substance use disorder) is a disease," Harckham said. "Everybody is susceptible. There's a lot of shame about reaching out for help. Our priority is to save lives. We want to focus on recovery, with peer support.

We want to get folks the support they need to get treatment."

Wu emphasized the importance for people with substance use disorders to get help.

"I really believe in this work, to get people to live their lives better. Families are suffering the most. They can talk about this and not suppress it," she said.

"People are struggling, but they are coming for help. I get to work on the healing."

Pleasantville resident Michael Gold has had 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

Letters to the Editor

Ossining Task Force Renewing Efforts to Battle Racism in Community

Though many would like to pretend that racism is a relic of the past, recent events make clear that it is a very contemporary concern.

As members of the Ossining Community Equity Task Force, we are particularly appalled at bias incidents exposing youth to racist hatred, such as the recent discovery of a hate symbol on one of our playgrounds and taunts from fans at sporting events. These incidents evoke a long history of resistance to school and community integration, and we are dismayed to conclude that today's children are now just the latest generation that must struggle against the scourge of hate.

We applaud the steps taken by the Ossining schools and the Ossining police to investigate these incidents and support those who have been harmed. However, we cannot continue to address harms after they have occurred. These incidents underscore the need for proactive and sustained commitment to racial equity work, both in and outside of schools.

Our Community Equity Task Force invites the public to join in this work.

For those who do not already know, this task force is comprised of leaders from municipal government, the library, local schools, faith communities, student groups and the community at large, and is intended to address issues of inequity that persist despite our best efforts.

We want to continue to look at how we can better serve all residents and ensure that our diverse community also enjoys equity, inclusion and justice. To that end, we are planning a new series of events to spark shared learning and renewed action among the community and its leaders.

To learn more and get involved, go to the Email Alerts signup page of the Town of Ossining website (www.townofossining.com), enter your name and e-mail address, and then click "Manage Subscriptions" to add yourself to the Community Equity Task Force list.

The Ossining Community Equity Task Force

Hymn to Pocantico Lake

The breeze sings with delight across the lake's surface.
Rippling water dancing to the soft sounds.
As with so much of our natural world
The lake gives, holds true to its reservoir roots.
Nurturing, watering us, the land, the flowing Hudson.
So much touching the body, the soul.

What clear waters etch the curved banks, the hanging green boughs.
Leaping fish, turtles sunning, hawks stalking, water and land alive.
Trees grow cleansing the air, struggle, decay as they always have
Feeding the land, vegetation and animals that call this sacred place home.

Precious the rocky promontory edging the clear water
Curved like a large turtle's back, trees standing innocent and proud
Perhaps at attention, most likely watchful like priests of old.

It is a holy place, as most simple places are holy.
It is a pleasant place, as most holy places are pleasant.
It is a serene place, giving freely, only expecting reverence in return.

Our native ancestors understood what we risk losing,
Living in a world alive with wonder, open, ever changing.
So we worship on your trails and banks, thankful, asking for your blessings
As we give you ours in silent everlasting wonder.

**Malcolm Netburn
Briarcliff Manor**

Student Uses Life-Altering Injury to Help Others Change the World

By Martin Wilbur

Zoe Gellert's life-altering experience happened in sixth grade.

In February 2016, while outside Seven Bridges Middle School in Chappaqua that she attended at the time, another student somehow kicked a 40-pound concrete paver onto her right foot.

Despite not suffering any broken bones, Gellert felt excruciating pain.

"I had sprained an ankle, I had a broken toe in the past, but it was not pain I ever felt before," Gellert recalled of the incident. "I instantly couldn't walk. I was in so much pain my foot started to change colors. It took three, three-and-half months to get a doctor to be like, 'Oh, maybe this isn't something like a regular hurt ankle.'"

After her foot didn't improve and physical therapy proved too painful, Gellert, now a Horace Greeley High School senior, was eventually diagnosed with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS), persistent and excessive pain and inflammation that is disproportionate to the extent of a person's injury or illness.

Seeking relief and with nowhere else to turn, Gellert's parents placed her in the Chronic Pain Management Program at Children's Specialized Hospital in New Brunswick, N.J. That spring she spent four weeks at the hospital, essentially to learn how to walk again, she said.

"Then I lived my life, tried sports again," Gellert said. "(But) the CRPS spread throughout my body and then just this past

summer I went into Children's Specialized Hospital for 20 days to rehabilitate again. I pushed myself, got some strength back, all of that before I went into my senior year getting ready for college."

Dr. Katherine Bentley, a pediatric psychiatrist and director of the Chronic Pain Management Program at the hospital, said the pain can come from nerve or tissue damage or from an illness that amplifies the discomfort and prevents a person from properly functioning.

The syndrome is not lingering discomfort that can be reasonably associated with an injury or illness but a debilitating pain where a person can't complete basic tasks. Its causes are not fully understood. Bentley said an estimated 15 to 20 percent of adolescents live in some sort of pain that is greater to what any CAT scan or MRI reveals.

The program at Children's Specialized Hospital, which caters to children, teens and young adults from babies to 22 years old, requires a two- to six-week stay, Bentley said. Therapy includes aquatic, occupational, recreational and physical therapy, psychology, child life therapy and parent education and support.

"We're finding that people with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, and especially we're dealing with children now, too, if we teach them about their pain and the way that their brain is like on overdrive and they understand why their pain is happening, they improve a lot more," Bentley said.



Horace Greeley High School senior Zoe Gellert presents a \$7,000 check last fall to Children's Specialized Hospital in New Brunswick, N.J., money she raised from making bracelets. Gellert has had two stays at the hospital as a result of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome.

Gellert said she voluntarily returned to the program last August so she could enjoy her senior year, make decisions about college and enjoy sports again. In the fall, Gellert played on her school's varsity tennis team and will attend Tulane University next year.

During last year's three-week stay, she underwent a rigorous schedule almost every day. She would start with a half-hour of swimming, then 30 or 60 minutes of yoga or meditation, two hours each of physical and occupational therapy and an hour of cognitive therapy.

Gellert said the first three days were probably "the worst three days of my life." Despite the therapies, there is never

a day where she doesn't hurt. Pain is not confined to the injured foot but radiates up and down her legs and into her back.

"There are no days when I'm not in discomfort," Gellert said. "There are days when it's a much milder sensation, but then there are days, and everyone has them, when I can't do it, where I can barely get out of bed. I'm in so much pain I just need a break."

After her initial stay at the hospital in 2016, Gellert found comfort in making jewelry by beading bracelets, each with one of four messages – Courage, Fearless, Strength or Be Your Own Hero.

Gellert was encouraged by family and friends to start her own business, which she did, donating a portion of each month's proceeds to a designated charity. From her August beading at the hospital, she donated all of the \$7,000 she brought earned to the Children's Specialized Hospital's Chronic Pain Program.

Bentley said that Gellert channeling her energies and focus on helping others has been an outstanding outlet, which has helped effectively connect her to her treatment. The hospital is grateful for her generosity, Bentley said.

"Zoe used that connection in such a great, bright, helpful way, which we would encourage all kids to do because she was able to do something for the world because of this," Bentley said.

The public can visit Gellert's jewelry-making endeavors at www.bygstyle.org or at [byg.style](https://www.instagram.com/bygstyle) on Instagram.

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A Dozen Tips to Clean Everything in the House

Disclaimer: The author of this article on cleaning around the house has little expertise on the subject. For that, I turned to Mrs. Home Guru, my wife Margaret, and other reliable sources.

Oh, wait, I do have some experience with cleaning from the time I was six years old and small enough to fit under the dining room table to dust the stretchers between the legs, as directed by my mom. I can still remember being so proud to contribute to the weekly dusting routine.

For the short time I lasted as a bachelor after I left home, the chore mostly didn't get done. (I rejoiced when I read in The New York Times the profile of an eccentric artist who never dusted and claimed that, after two years, you can't tell the difference.) Then, after marriage, and since that time, we've been lucky to have a cleaning person or service do the job. It was my wife's one wish when we married.

In researching the easiest and best ways to clean the house, I found the most concise yet complete guide suggested by Nationwide Insurance, which I share in outline form with readers.

1. Clean the entire house, not one room at time. Nationwide says that cleaning is much more efficient if done one task at a time (dusting, vacuuming, mopping). Cleaning is much more efficient if



By Bill Primavera

one task at a time is done in every room in the house, rather than cleaning the kitchen, the bathrooms and then the bedrooms in their entirety. Completing a specific task throughout the house prevents the homeowner from feeling stuck in an endless cleaning cycle, starting the same task over and over again.

2. Gather all the needed cleaning tools in a caddy. Whether it's a caddy, bucket or tote, having everything needed to clean in one portable place makes it much easier to get the job done. There is no time wasted looking for tools when cleaning or worrying about gathering them before the next scheduled go-round.

3. Clear the clutter. Before starting the cleaning process, go room to room and pick up the clutter. As each item is gathered – magazines, well-read paperbacks, etc. – consider whether it should be put away, tossed or donated.

4. Dust and vacuum. Concentrate dusting the tops of furniture and the undersides of shelves, handrails, picture frames, knick-knacks and TV and computer screens. For hard-to-reach areas, like blinds and upper shelves, tie a microfiber cloth to the end of a mop or broom.

5. Wipe mirrors and glass. Use one damp microfiber cloth, followed by one dry cloth in wiping clean all mirrors and glass



surfaces.

6. Disinfect countertops and surface areas. Wipe down the hard surfaces – from countertops, appliances and cabinets to doorknobs, light switches, TV remotes and telephones. Those surfaces should be disinfected, particularly the ones that might deliver germs to people's fingers and faces. A good nontoxic disinfection solution can be made by a quarter to a half cup of white or apple cider vinegar with a cup of water.

7. The best formula for cleaning kitchen appliances. The simplest method of all? Fill a spray bottle with undiluted white vinegar, spray the appliance, then wipe.

8. Focus on tubs, sinks and toilets. Spray the cleaner on the kitchen sink then on bathroom sinks, tubs and toilets. Let it sit for a few minutes to dissolve dirt and stains. Then return to the kitchen and

start scrubbing. Wipe down the inside of the microwave. Clean toilets last.

9. Sweep, then mop. Sweep the kitchen and bathroom floors. Start mopping from the farthest corner of the room and move backwards toward the doorway. (It should be obvious, but don't mop yourself into a corner.) Rinse the mop every time you complete a four-by-four-foot area.

10. Some tasks don't need to be done each week. These include waxing the furniture, cleaning the windows and washing area rugs and bathmats. Inspect these accessories and use your own judgment.

11. Don't forget to routinely wash your cleaning tools. An often-overlooked part of cleaning the house is maintaining cleaning tools. Using a dirty mop or a vacuum with a full bag is much less effective.

12. Make cleaning a group activity. Making cleaning a team effort is one of the best ways to clean a house fast. Schedule a time in advance with your family and assign tasks to each person. Working together can add some fun to cleaning, and your house will be gleaming in no time.

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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A Rao of Sunshine

Westchester's beloved weatherman discusses everything from ageism to climate change while retaining his trademark sunny disposition



By Sherrie Dulworth

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

For more than two decades, Joe Rao was a Westchester on-air news presence as chief meteorologist on News 12 Westchester for 21 years, then later on Verizon's FIOS 1 News. In 2019, FIOS 1 News consolidated with News 12 Westchester and shut down their broadcast. E+ recently talked with Rao about many things under the sun — past, present, and future.

Examiner+: You were in broadcasting for more than 40 years,

Visit examiner-plus.com and join our digital newsmagazine community as a member to read the full version of this article and others like it! Examiner+ is delivering the smartest, most insightful news and lifestyle journalism in Westchester and the broader Hudson Valley so you can live your most intelligent local life.



first on radio, then on television until late 2019. What has been on your plate since then?

Joe Rao: In late 2020, I started approaching libraries in the Hudson Valley and offered to give virtual talks on meteorology and astronomy. Libraries said, "We would love to have you talk to our patrons." It started out with 10 to 20 libraries, then I did a mass mailing to libraries in the tri-state area and got a great response — I gave 90 library lectures in 2021.

E+: Tell us about your lecture topics and how can our readers find out about upcoming events?

Rao: I have been affiliated with the Hayden Planetarium since 1986 and most

of these talks are about astronomy. There's going to be a total eclipse of the moon this May 15. When the moon goes into total eclipse, it changes to a reddish color. Since everybody's interested in eclipses, I titled that talk, "The Night of the Red Moon."

I wrote a technical research paper in 2020 and predicted a possible never-before-seen meteor shower at the end of this May. Based on that, I put together another lecture, "The Night of the Shooting Stars." A less technical

version of that paper will be in the popular hobbyist magazine, Sky & Telescope, in May.

I post about upcoming lectures on my Facebook page on Joe Rao Weather, so people can follow me there to learn more.

E+: Do you miss broadcasting?

Rao: I originally said to myself, "I'm not going to have any problem getting a job, at least part-time work, with another TV station. I have all kinds of awards, eight Emmy nominations, and in 2015, I was voted by

the AP as the #1 weathercaster in the New York area.

But I found my mistake was I got old. I'm 65 and I do not fall anymore into the favored 25-54-year-old demographic. Maybe if I was a little prettier or if I didn't have grey hair, but then again, if that was the case, I probably wouldn't have anywhere near the experience that I built up over a 40-plus year career in both radio and TV. I am told that the term is "ageism," and I am told that it's not just television and broadcasting, but in all sorts of different things.

I recently had a guest appearance on CBS2 News First Alert Weather with their chief weather forecaster Lonnie Quinn. We met at Central Park's Belvedere Castle where the weather has been recorded for over a century and talked about some of New York's historic weather events ...

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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North Castle Library Unveils New Elevator to Increase Accessibility

By Martin Wilbur

The public library should arguably be the most accessible facility in a community, open to anyone who visits.

Last week, the North Castle Public Library increased its accessibility after a long sought-after improvement years in the making was unveiled last Wednesday.

The Friends of the North Castle Public Library cut the ribbon on its new elevator to bring patrons up and down between the first and second floors, which will assist seniors, many of whom visit the library, as well as community members with disabilities.

Friends President Scott Sifton said the project, which cost roughly \$215,000, had been talked about for years. Work was completed during the past two to three years, as the town worked with its state lawmakers to secure its portion of the money.

"I'm just very glad we were able to get this done," Sifton said. "For so many years people didn't know whether it was going to happen."

Library supporters, including

the Friends and the town's local and state representatives made sure to honor longtime Armonk resident Vivien Cord who made a \$100,000 donation toward the cost of the project, according to Sifton.

Cord said she wanted to help the library and the community that she loves so much, although she admitted she was embarrassed to be receiving the accolades and attention. After a few remarks, Cord performed the ceremonial ribbon cutting and took the first ride on the lift.

"It's a privilege beyond anything I can tell you to be able to do this," she said.

Assemblyman Chris Burdick (D-Bedford) said Albany needs to provide more money for its public libraries throughout the state. In the proposed budget, Burdick said Gov. Kathy Hochul had cut library construction fund money from \$34 million to \$10 million before the legislature reinstated the money.

Despite support among lawmakers for restoration, he said it's still not enough given how valuable libraries are to their communities.

Burdick also lauded the

community for its stick-to-itiveness to see the project completed.

"None of this is possible, not only without Vivien, but with the support of a community that cares so deeply about libraries, and gives the support to its director and its staff and its Town Board to say we are going to make sure that the library not only survives but provides what it needs through the pandemic," Burdick said.

Library Director Edie Martimucci, who will be retiring at the end of the month, said when she arrived at the North Castle Public Library nearly a quarter-century ago, the elevator was something that was talked about as a priority. She said the issue has been on the to-do lists for probably at least 30 years.

"I'm so happy I was able to see it through," Martimucci said.

County Executive George Latimer was on hand for last week's event, stressing that when he was growing up on the south side of Mount Vernon the library served as his gateway to the world when his family couldn't afford to travel. With its materials and programs, it is



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Armonk resident Vivien Cord is ready to take her first ride on the North Castle Public Library's new elevator. Cord made a major donation that helped pay for the project.

as important to a community as ever.

"The library serves the entire

panoply of people in this society," Latimer said. "There's something for everybody."

Blues Legend Ready to Help Honor the Genre's Greatest at the Paramount

By Martin Wilbur

Joe Louis Walker has been on a fascinating, circuitous musical journey since childhood in northern California.

Years before the Blues Hall of Fame inductee released his first solo album, "Cold is the Night" in 1986, he had been a successful and highly sought-after session musician, having appeared on albums or played alongside the likes of Sly Stone, Buddy Miles, Thelonus Monk, The Soul Stirrers, Steve Miller and Jimi Hendrix.

Walker has toured extensively since he came of musical age in the 1960s San Francisco music scene, and later playing concerts and festivals throughout North and South American, Europe, Australia and Asia over the decades.

That musical journey brings Walker to Peekskill's Paramount Hudson Valley this Saturday night, returning to the historic 92-year-old venue to be one of the featured performers in Professor Louie's Century of the Blues concert, a tribute to history's greatest blues artists.

The evening will also feature Guy Davis and Professor Louie & The Crowmatix. Walker said the program is the brainchild of Professor Louie, who is considered the torchbearer of the true spirit of American Roots Music. The multi-instrumentalist is also an award-winning producer and engineer.

"I think we connected to our electric blues, piano blues, which he does, and acoustic blues, which Guy does very, very well. He was nominated for a Grammy," Walker said. "He loved what he's doing. Louie came from a very historical Black family, to be quite



Joe Louis Walker, a member of the Blues Hall of Fame, will be one of the performers to honor a century of great blues artists at the Paramount Hudson Valley in Peekskill Saturday night.

honest about it. I think (the concert) is a great idea that Louie had and I'm honored that he wanted to include me and Guy along with it."

While Walker may be best known for playing the blues, his musical influences are as wide and varied as the San Francisco clubs and musicians he met in his youth. His parents moved to California from the deep South looking for better opportunities and took their music with them, he said. Walker's mother made sure he went to church regularly and gospel music became his early influence.

Add that to living in a neighborhood that was a cultural and musical melting pot, mainly comprised of African American, Jewish and Japanese families. The city's music scene was just as rich and also attracted musicians for

all over the United States, such as his friend and roommate Michael Bloomfield, who came from Chicago, fueling amazing creativity.

"I joined the musicians union at 14. I think I was 15-and-a-half, 16 (and) these guys from around the corner, they played all day and that was the Grateful Dead. To this day, me and (Dead drummer) Bobby Weir are still friends. He was born in the same hospital I was born in."

The teenage Walker traveled throughout California performing in all types of venues from motorcycle clubs to eventually the Whiskey a Go Go, the famed West Hollywood night hotspot.

As Walker described it, he and his fellow musicians were living like grownups playing

night and day. It didn't seem to impress his father.

"My dad got tired of me not going to school," Walker said. "(He said) 'You're 16 now, you can go out and be a man.' I said, 'Well, I guess I can.' But I didn't realize how hard it was going to be."

As Walker, now 72, matured into adulthood, he became increasingly known among some of the biggest acts in music in the late '60s and early '70s and appeared on numerous albums. He also worked hard to get a recording contract of his own, but until that time, had no takers.

In 1975, Walker left the scene and devoted himself to gospel music for the next decade.

"I named all those people to you...a lot of them ended up dead and I would have been right there with them on the cutting room floor, and I'm not going to lie about it," Walker revealed. "So in a way, that saved my life."

After a performance at the 1985 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, Walker was inspired to return to the blues, signed by HighTone Records for his debut album. Walker would release another two dozen albums over the next 35 years, while keeping up an extensive touring schedule.

He's collaborating on his next album while working with Weir on another effort – and looking forward to Saturday night at the Paramount.

"It'll be an interesting show," Walker said. "I think Louie had a little bit of vision there, so it's going to be sort of an amalgamation of my musical mind."

Tickets are on sale from \$25 to \$40 each and can be bought by visiting www.paramounthudsonvalley.com.

Mayer Announces State Efforts to Plan 250th Anniversary Events

By Martin Wilbur

State Sen. Shelley Mayer announced last week the formation of a 21-member state commission that will help plan a series of special events for the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026.

Joined by Revolutionary War re-enactors and other dignitaries at Kings Point in Verplanck overlooking the Hudson River last Thursday, Mayer said the Feb. 24 signing of the 250th Commemoration Act by Gov. Kathy Hochul will also provide state money to help fund some of the celebrations that will take place.

"It's a unique opportunity to educate and inspire New Yorkers about our state's leading role in the American Revolution, subsequent civil rights struggles and the state and nation's complex history," Mayer said. "But New York played an immense role in the lead-up and execution of the American Revolution during the period of 1774 to 1783 and was the site of several important battles."

The commission that will be formed will include a wide range of stakeholders from throughout the state.

The first \$50,000 toward the

effort was secured in the 2021-22 state budget that will be set aside in a fund that would be used toward paying for various commemorations, Mayer said. That fund can also accept and hold federal money, private donations and grants.

Revolutionary Westchester 250 President Constance Kehoe, whose organization will work with local and state organizations in scheduling special events over the next four years, said she has been pleased to see that there is a growing level of interest in Westchester County's role in the American Revolution and the founding of the nation.

On July 9, 1776, for example, five days after the colonies declared their independence, representatives of the Fourth Provincial Congress of New York met in White Plains to receive and approve the Declaration of Independence, Kehoe said. That vote in White Plains resulted in the Declaration of Independence being unanimously approved by all 13 colonies.

Westchester was home to the Battle of White Plains, which started the last week of October in 1776. The site of last week's press conference at King's Point is where patriots and French troops crossed

the Hudson River.

"I'm sometimes overwhelmed by how much people are so hungry for this history," Kehoe said. "It's an amazing history."

One focus of the celebrations for the semiquincentennial will be the crucial role that the French played in assisting the Americans win their independence. Janet Lee Burnet, president of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historical Trail Association, said the assistance received from the French is a critical chapter that is often overlooked and will be brought to life during the celebrations.

The historic route, which started in Massachusetts, cut through Westchester on its way to Yorktown, Va.

"Without the help of our friends, the French, we believe we might not have won this wonderful victory for our independence throughout the world and become the icon of democracy," Burnet said.

Since Congress enacted legislation to create a federal semiquincentennial commission in 2016, many other states have adopted similar programs.

Officials in Westchester are hopeful the 250th year



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Revolutionary Westchester 250 President Constance Kehoe, at podium, with state Sen. Shelley Mayer and other dignitaries, announced that a state commission and the dedication of state funding will help locales around New York celebrate the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding.

commemoration will spark local and widespread interest in the events in the county during the Revolution and lead to increased tourism interest that will also highlight lesser-known stories of women, African Americans and Native Americans who did not immediately benefit from the country's independence.

Celebrations by local municipalities are also expected to be scheduled. About two weeks ago, the North Castle Historical Society announced it hopes to partner with the town and county and state groups to highlight historic Revolutionary War events that occurred within its borders.

Previewing the Contenders and Pretenders at the Academy Awards

By Rick M. Pezzullo

The 94th Academy Awards will be held this Sunday, Mar. 27. Here is a look at the 10 films nominated for Best Picture, and some of my predicted winners in the key categories.

Don't Look Up

Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence star in this dark comedy in what could plausibly be real-life events. Kate Dibiasky (Lawrence) discovers a previously unknown comet that is confirmed by her professor, Dr. Randall Mindy (DiCaprio), to be an extinction-level threat and is set to hit Earth in six months. Dibiasky and Mindy attempt to warn the world's powers of this threat, but it largely falls on deaf ears as the economy, politics and social media buzz take priority in a society that has lost sense of what is important and what is clickbait. The analogies to current society (i.e., COVID) are glaringly obvious, but are done in a way that conveys intelligence and wit in the storytelling.

The star-studded cast that also included Meryl Streep, Jonah Hill, Mark Rylance and Timothee Chalamet played their respective roles well and had me laughing harder than I have in a while watching a film. While the ending may not please all viewers, the film did a masterful job of balancing humor and stark reality. "Don't Look Up" provides meaningful social commentary while also producing well-written humor and will be a dark horse contender.

Rick's Flicks: 9/10

Where to Watch: Netflix

Licorice Pizza

Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, "Licorice Pizza" is a coming-of-age film set in the 1970s that stars two characters with a relatively significant age discrepancy. Gary Valentine (Cooper Hoffman), a high school student, falls in love with Alana Kane (Alana Haim), who is 10 years his senior who is working at his high school picture day. They end up becoming friends and collaborate on various life endeavors, but their underlying feelings for each other create wedges between them.

While the film has an indie/Sundance vibe that critics salivate over, it was difficult to take away a message from the movie. Haim and Hoffman were both excellent and seem to have strong futures ahead of them, but it was difficult to overlook the obvious elephant in the room – a 25-year-old woman and a 15-year-old boy engaging in a romantic relationship. It was off-putting and certainly awkward.

Bradley Cooper and Sean Penn both make appearances, which seemed out of place, and frankly, unnecessary. If you're looking for a '70s-era film that gives a nod to the Valley in California, then you'll probably enjoy "Licorice Pizza." Despite the accolades it has accumulated, I don't expect the film to come away with many awards on Sunday.

Rick's Flicks: 6.5/10

Where to Watch: In theaters or major streaming services (for a fee)

Belfast

"Belfast," directed and written by Kenneth Branagh, is a drama surrounding the events of the 1969 riots involving Northern Ireland Protestant radicals attacking Catholic homes and businesses through the lens of nine-year-old Buddy (Jude Hill). Buddy's family is Protestant, but his father and family get harassed by the radicals to join their effort despite refusing numerous times. This creates an unsafe environment for Buddy and his family and forces them to think about their long-term future in Belfast.

Hill is exceptional and an undeniably likeable character taking home best young actor awards from multiple organizations. Judi Dench and Ciarán Hinds deliver outstanding performances as Buddy's supportive grandparents as he navigates the problems of an elementary school child mixed in with political and sectarian violence. The black-and-white film seemed to fit the dreariness and hopelessness of the community at the time.

While I enjoyed the film and many moments were touching, "Belfast" left me wanting something more regarding a long-term resolution to the overarching conflict. The film is expected to do well with its seven nominations and I would expect a win for Original Screenplay.

Rick's Flicks: 7.5/10

Where to watch: In theaters or major streaming services (for a fee)

The Power of the Dog

Directed and written by Jane Campion, "The Power of the Dog" is a western drama set in early 20th century Montana. Phil (Benedict Cumberbatch) and George (Jesse Plemons) are brothers who own a cattle ranch and whose relationship becomes strained as Phil vehemently disapproves of George's new wife, Rose (Kirsten Dunst). Rose has a son, Peter (Kodit Smit-McPhee), who Phil taunts and ridicules for not being tough or masculine. Phil tries to make amends with Peter and takes him under his wing to learn horseback riding and other skills, which depresses Rose and drives her further into despair.

While I understand the themes of toxic masculinity and jealousy that are readily apparent in the film, I could not help but be terribly bored. The first hour revolves mainly around Phil insulting and demeaning Rose. While not all movies need to be "feel-good," the ends don't justify the means of what the viewer must endure.

The acting is certainly a strong point of the film as it received four Oscar nominations in acting categories and 11 nominations overall. Cumberbatch does his best to be unlikeable and Smit-McPhee does well to play an awkward but intelligent young male out of his element.

Despite my critical opinion, "The Power of the Dog" is expected to be a frontrunner for Best Picture and Best Director on Sunday.

Rick's Flicks: 4/10

Where to watch: Netflix

CODA

Sundance film festival darling "CODA" is a coming-of-age film directed by Sian Heder surrounding the life of Ruby Rossi (Emilia Jones), the only member of her family who can hear. Ruby's passion is singing and she is very talented, unbeknownst to her family. However, Ruby finds herself feeling obligated to help her family on their fishing boat because they don't have anyone else to interpret and communicate business transactions and endeavors.

Ruby's choir teacher takes her under his wing and pushes for her to apply to the prestigious Berklee College of Music, but Ruby's family implores her to stay and help with the business, which makes her feel as though she cannot live her own life. The film shines a light on a lesser-known problem of families with multiple members who are deaf and the burden that comes with being a CODA (child of deaf adults).

The acting is sensational and features three deaf actors in leading roles. Troy Kotsur has received numerous accolades and will be a leading contender for Best Supporting Actor. Emilia Jones delivers a breakout performance in a way that her character seems both genuine and relatable. I appreciated that "CODA" portrayed the hearing impaired in a light that showed that they are able to live normal lives and have families, but can have difficulty interacting with society.

While "CODA" is a tad predictable, it was refreshing to see an Oscar-nominated film that was able to tackle a complex issue and not be elitist, boring and a chore to get through. "CODA" has momentum after its win at the Screen Actors Guild awards for Outstanding Performance by a Cast and has a chance to be a well-deserved dark horse for Best Picture on Oscar Sunday.

Rick's Flicks: 9/10

Where to watch: Apple TV+

West Side Story

Directed by Steven Spielberg, "West Side Story" is the most recent adaptation of the 1957 Broadway musical and 1961 film. Inspired by "Romeo and Juliet," the film involves two young lovers, Maria (Rachel Zegler) and Tony (Ansel Elgort), who come from opposite sides of a gang war between Puerto Rican and white members of the Upper West Side in New York City. Complexities arise as Maria's brother, Bernardo (David Alvarez), is overprotective and doesn't like the idea of Tony, who is on parole, dating his sister.

The first thing that stood out in the film was the excellent cinematography and lighting that brings the movie to life. The colors were vivid, which made the costumes and set pop off the screen.



By Rick M. Pezzullo

The choreography, to my untrained eye, seemed top-notch and the film was able to capture this achievement from all angles. Zegler and Elgort do well and seem to have chemistry, but I wouldn't say they are deserving of any acting accolades despite their vocal talent. Ariana DeBose is the true star of the film as Bernardo's girlfriend, showing acting range and personality that should garner an award for Best Supporting Actress.

My real issue with the film is the outrageous fanaticism of love that can be expected in any work based on Shakespeare. I found myself with no real emotional attachment to the characters because their circumstances seemed so wildly unrealistic. "West Side Story" was entertaining and a treat for fans of musicals. It should be in contention for Best Production Design, Costume Design and Sound.

Rick's Flicks: 8/10

Where to watch: Disney+

Nightmare Alley

Guillermo Del Toro's latest film is a psychological thriller set in the 1940s telling the tale of Stan Carlisle (Bradley Cooper). Carlisle joins a carnival crew and learns the tricks of the trade of being a mentalist. He then takes his deception on the road with his love interest, Molly (Rooney Mara), and faces peril as he attempts to dupe higher profile clients.

The film's strength lies in the character development, and Cooper delivers another exceptional performance that may have been overlooked. The blurred lines of good and evil are explored and the movie keeps you wondering from start to finish. Cate Blanchett is also at her best playing a psychologist who looks to expose Carlisle for who he really is. There's standout production design as the film oozes the darkness of a neo-noir thriller. The cinematography and shadowy scenes maintain the ominous mood and keep the film teetering on the edge of the horror genre.

"Nightmare Alley" may not take home many awards, but is certainly worthy of viewing for those seeking an intriguing character analysis.

Rick's Flicks: 8.5/10

Where to watch: HBO Max

Drive My Car

Written and directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi, "Drive My Car" is a drama involving Yusuke Kafuku (Hidetoshi Nishijima), an actor and director whose wife passes away. He gets invited to put on his play and is assigned Misaki Watari (Toko Miura) as his personal driver. Yusuke develops a close relationship to Misaki as they both share stories of their personal regret and sorrow.

If you're looking for a film with action and suspense, this is not your type of movie.

continued on next page

Beer-Wine: Another Alcoholic Beverage to Tantalize Our Palates



By Nick Antonaccio

The world is shrinking every day. We're hurtling down the path toward monolithic world citizenry, each of us dipping into the deep well of global browsers, internet databases and social media, blurring the distinctions among

us.

The traditional distinctions of ethnicity and cultural uniqueness have morphed into a mosaic of popular cultures and a new awareness of alternate political and religious ideologies.

It is also evident in lesser venues, the basics of day-to-day lifestyles. From haute couture to the newest "in" jeans, from haute cuisine to the latest street food, our nationalities and our personalities have become blurred. A blending of the old and new, the contraposed becoming the juxtaposed, is the new reality.

I now consider myself somewhat of a global citizen, adapting to and even embracing cross-cultural discoveries. For example, I've discovered domestic craft beers that have converted the American "Budweiser" palate to a new sensibility with avant-garde recipes and ingredients from foreign shores.

**You Heard It
Through the
Grapevine**

'artisanal brewers are producing beers utilizing fermented wine grape juice in the same vats as their malts.'

I've also discovered Blaufränkisch wine at my neighborhood wine shop, a fine Austrian wine that was little known, or available, until recently.

How does this relate to this week's column?

Friends of ours, Bernie and Jan, just returned from a Southern road trip bearing a gift. It was a gift-wrapped four-pack of a craft beer made in Wilson, N.C. But it isn't a traditional beer. Rather it is a beer-wine, which is a burgeoning trend in the craft beer market. American artisanal brewers are producing beers utilizing fermented wine grape juice in the same vats as their malts.

Beer-wine? It's not as outlandish as it may seem at first blush. I've enjoyed beers produced from other fruits, primarily Belgian Lambics, such as Framboise (raspberry), but nary a wine grape.

The gift, from the Casita Brewing Company, is cleverly labeled "Drawing a Blanc - Saison" and is produced from Hallertau Blanc hops and Sauvignon Blanc grapes.

On the surface, it would seem to be a stretch to consider such a unique blend for my wine column. However, on further consideration, a certain logic to this marriage of hops and grapes surfaces:

1. The primary ingredients of beer are grains (barley and wheat) and hops. Each crop is a reflection of the soil and climate in which it is grown. Barley from the Northwest is unique and distinct from that grown in upstate New York. Each type of hop has different levels of bitterness that will affect the flavor of the end product. So, too, with different varieties of grapes and the locales where they are harvested.

2. Both achieve their alcohol content via yeast fermentation of the natural sugars present in the grains and grapes. The end product is influenced by the type of yeast utilized and its life cycle. In beer, certain yeasts produce a richer style (ale), while others a milder one (lager). Ales are similar to complex and robust red wines; lagers are more similar to crisp and mellow white wines.

Anxious to introduce this new product to my palate, which I've judiciously trained over the years to form opinions on each of these

beverages in various forms and blends, I sat with beer glass and Casita at table.

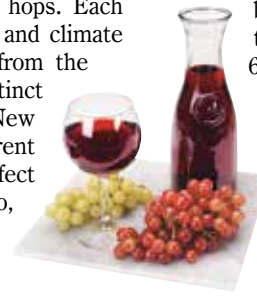
I was surprised at my palate's reaction. It isolated the aromatics of the yeasty aromas of the hops and the citrus bouquet of the wine. In my mouth, the refreshing combination of the light spiciness of the beer components and the distinct minerality and citrus fruit overtones combined to create a unique flavor profile – a lighter style coupled with an amazing freshness.

I thoroughly enjoyed it, while visions of quaffing a few at a summer barbeque danced in my head. And the alcohol level is reasonable at 6.5 percent ABV.

My further research discovered other breweries crafting beer-wines (or is it wine-beers?). Look for those made with Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, even Viognier grapes.

Are you ready to cross the line to beer-wine? If you do, drop me a line with your thoughts. A random submission will be sent a representative sampler package.

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.



Previewing the Contenders and Pretenders at the Academy Awards

continued from previous page

While "Drive My Car" explores complex emotional themes, it does not lend itself to a three-hour runtime. I appreciated the depth to which the main characters were developed, but I found myself wondering where the climax was and if I cared to get there.

"Drive My Car" will take home top prize for Best Foreign Language Film, but do not expect a treasure trove of awards.

Rick's Flicks: 6.5/10

Where to watch: HBO Max

Dune

Based on the iconic 1965 novel written by Frank Herbert, "Dune" is a science fiction film that centers around Paul Atreides who is in line to become Duke. House Atreides is in constant conflict with House Harkonnen and is sent to rule over the desert planet of Arrakis. Devoid of abundant water supply, Arrakis is vital to the galaxy's economy due to its abundance of "spice." This spice gives people heightened awareness and consciousness, but also makes them dependent on its use. It is also valuable for navigation and interstellar travel.

Complex political intricacies become apparent and House Atreides tries to

broker a diplomatic relationship with the indigenous people, known as the Fremen. Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet) discovers he has heightened abilities along with his mother, Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson).

Keep in mind that this movie is only a part one and covers half of the novel. It is long, but visually stunning. Much of the film lays the foundation and character development in preparation for the epic part two.

The cast does well, but there are moments of subpar writing. Chalamet and Ferguson are standouts as well as Oscar Isaac and Jason Momoa, who seem to fit nicely in whatever film they're involved in.

As someone who read the novel, I enjoyed the film, but I wasn't blown away. For science fiction fans, it is a film worth investing the time, but don't expect it to reach a pinnacle.

Rating: 7.5/10

Where to watch: Coming soon to HBO Max (included), Amazon Prime Video, Youtube, Apple TV, Google Play (All for a fee)

King Richard

Based on the father who raised Venus and Serena Williams, "King Richard"

is a triumph of a sports drama. Richard Williams, played by Will Smith, defied all the odds by raising two of tennis' greatest stars while overcoming financial hurdles, societal stigma and the streets of crime-ridden Compton.

Smith, in what might be the finest performance of his career, perfectly encapsulates Richard's mannerisms, determination and character flaws. Aunjanue Ellis is exceptional in her own right as Richard's wife, Brandy. She perfectly portrays an example of a parent who sacrificed her own happiness for the betterment of her children. Saniyya Sydney and Demi Singleton put in solid performances as well in their roles as young Venus and Serena.

The film is compelling and suspenseful despite everyone knowing the end result. Expect Smith to be the frontrunner for Best Actor, an award he's never captured. Even if you are not a tennis fan, "King Richard" is a must-see and is a representation of the American Dream.

Rating: 9.5/10

Where to watch: In theaters, coming to HBO Max after theatrical release

Best Actor

Who should win: Will Smith ("King Richard")

Who will win: Will Smith ("King Richard")

Best Actress

Who should win: Nicole Kidman ("Being the Ricardos")

Who will win: Jessica Chastain ("The Eyes of Tammy Faye")

Best Supporting Actor

Who should win: Troy Kotsur ("CODA")

Who will win: Troy Kotsur ("CODA")

Best Supporting Actress

Who should win: Ariana DeBose ("West Side Story")

Who will win: Ariana DeBose ("West Side Story")

Best Director

Who should win: Steven Spielberg ("West Side Story")

Who will win: Jane Campion ("The Power of the Dog")

Best Picture

Who should win: "King Richard"

Who will win: "The Power of the Dog"

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Should I Go on Vacation and Where Should That Be?

For more than two years most of us have not taken a real vacation. We've been locked up in our houses endlessly watching Netflix, isolated from the real world we used to know and love.

We've been masked, boosted and treading lightly as we start coming out of our COVID cocoon nightmare. We've somehow successfully avoided COVID-19 or ended up on a ventilator waving goodbye to family on a cell phone. We all deserve a huge "mazel tov."

With COVID now ebbing, the coast looks clear to take our first real vacation. My advice is to splurge. You deserve to be rewarded and pampered and go. Consider flying business class on your outbound flight. Book a luxury hotel, eat in the best restaurants and buy yourself a decadent present you don't really need.

But where should you consider taking that unforgettable trip? Some places have poor vaccination rates; in some countries COVID-19 cases are beginning to rise again, and thanks to Vladimir Putin, I would avoid going to eastern Europe.

So where should you go to have



By Richard Levy

a fabulous, stress-free vacation without having to look over your shoulder? A total-escape vacation where you can totally relax, let your hair down and release two years of built-up anxiety and craziness?

My suggestions include Portugal, an amazingly beautiful country, rich in heritage, tradition, delicious food, wine and, of course, their captivating port. They've managed COVID-19 well, unlike many of their European

neighbors. It's inexpensive and not overflowing with tourists.

Greece also has the same fabulous reasons to go as Portugal and has so many spectacular islands to choose from. Avoid the most popular ones such as Santorini. Greece is safe, welcoming and has also managed COVID exceptionally.

You could also take a river cruise. It's a relaxing vacation escape where you're on a small, luxurious riverboat with about 120 other people, the antithesis of taking one of those gigantic cruise ships with thousands of people aboard.

River cruises have lovely, cozy rooms all with private balconies, gourmet

food and vintage wines. It's almost like being on a luxurious private yacht. You completely unwind as you elegantly glide down the rivers of the world with picturesque villages, castles and panoramic landscapes moving past you on both sides, as if in slow motion.

My favorite river cruise was from Cambodia to Vietnam down the incredible Mekong River with daily free excursions to remote villages. I also loved my Budapest-to-Munich cruise on the magnificent Danube. Budapest is a spectacular city. I found the best river cruise company is AmaWaterways, not the highly advertised Viking.

A few other safe places to consider for your getaway are the Amalfi Coast in Italy, any Scandinavian country or Colombia, the most beautiful nation in South

America and one of my favorite countries.

Before you take off, there are a few smart steps to take. If you're a senior, you should think about getting your second COVID booster two weeks before you go if it's been more than six months since your last one. Just walk into a local pharmacy, such as Rite Aid in Ardsley, and they'll give you your second booster shot if that amount of time has elapsed.

Also, make sure your passport does not expire six months before or after your return date or you will be turned away at the airport. Really!

You should let your personal doctor know that you're going away and where you're going. Some doctors will prescribe COVID antibody pills if you should contract the virus while you're away. That will help reduce the side effects and severity and help you recover quickly.

So as that sneaker company used to implore "just do it." It's now safe to go to most places and you deserve it. Start planning your trip today because airlines,

hotels and river cruises are booking up quickly. Be sure to book your hotels with Booking.com because you don't have to pay until check-out and you can cancel at any time.

Here's wishing you a bon voyage. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Hastings-on-Hudson resident Richard Levy is a former advertising "Mad Man" creative director and now a travel writer. He's also an inventor of innovative new products and is writing and illustrating a new children's book. You can contact him at RichardLevyTravelWriter@gmail.com.

The Travel Maven

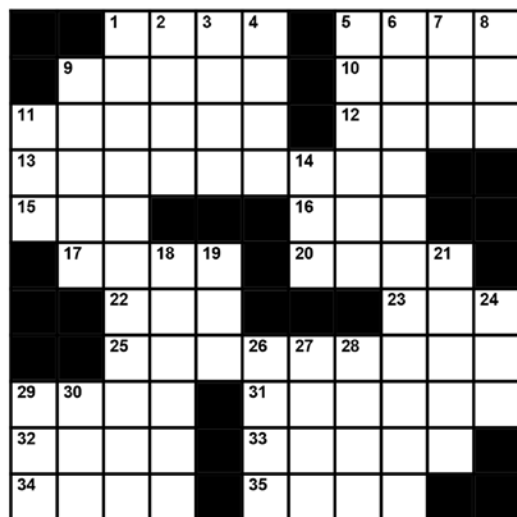
Crossword

Across

1. Limits
5. First-place medal
9. 80's singer, Brannigan
10. Darwin's interest
11. One who drags toward himself
12. Fire
13. Robert Browning poem that takes place in Hamelin, Germany or Yorktown preschool
15. Fig. in identity theft
16. Case studier's org.
17. Mideast's Gulf of ____
20. Army training group
22. Bogie's "Barefoot Contessa" co-star
23. Land in la mer
25. Predatory
29. Camelot character
31. Belonging to actor Griffen, or White Plains pub
32. Ancient alphabetic character
33. Ocean predators
34. Locomotive boss, for short
35. Navy commando

Down

1. Scheduling
2. First word in a celebratory song title
3. Cram for a test
4. It's a wrap!
5. Park feature



6. Working
7. Untilled tract
8. High-speed Internet inits.
9. Verdi's "____ Miller"
11. Second letter addendum
14. Golfers goal
18. One who escapes by trickery
19. Down time
21. Hints
24. Tricky curve
26. Huge fusses
27. Medical breakthrough
28. S.A. ancient
29. Before, once
30. Convent dweller

Answers on page 23

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continued from page 20

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New Parking Pattern Planned for Pleasantville Farmers Market

By Abby Luby

It will be the same Pleasantville Farmers Market but with a slightly different location in the Memorial Plaza parking lot when the spring-to-fall version of the popular weekly market opens next month.

Effective Apr. 2, the vendors will move to the south end of the parking lot close to Bedford Road in preparation for construction that will remove the slip lane to Manville Road as part of the planned streetscape project. That project is expected to begin in the next few months.

Farmers market parking on Saturdays in the Memorial Plaza lot will be on the Manville Road side of the plaza, north of the gazebo. A one-way entrance for drivers near the gazebo off of Memorial Plaza will allow visitors attending the market to park. Exiting the lot can be done by going onto Memorial Plaza or through the slip lane heading onto Manville Road until the slip lane is closed off once construction begins.

Steven Bates, the market's executive director of operations, said there will be signage and volunteers to help customers navigate the new parking pattern.

Bates and Peter Rogovin, president of Foodchester, Inc. which runs the market, raised concerns to the Pleasantville Village Board last week that the free overnight

parking in the Memorial Plaza lot would take up spaces otherwise available for shoppers. They asked the village to be more proactive in limiting overnight parking.

"The group that parks at the lower end of the lot, they know exactly what they are doing," Bates said. "They are regulars and if they park during market hours when construction starts that will impact the parking capacity in the summer and those overnight cars might be a problem."

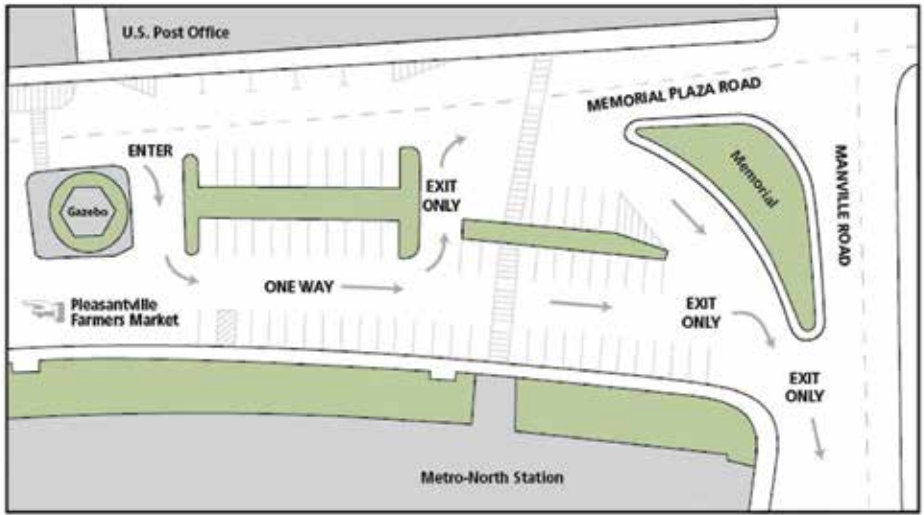
Rogovin said the market is trying to manage turnover.

"When you have 10 cars parked there for the entirety of the market when a typical visit to the market is about a half-hour, we're talking about 40 to 50 people who can't get in and out."

"They have the right to do that," Mayor Peter Scherer responded, referring to the free overnight parking. "But in the bigger picture, it's not helping the market, the merchants or the turnover."

Scherer said potential solutions to that problem will be discussed at the next Village Board meeting on Mar. 28.

The village is about to implement a new 75-cents-an-hour parking fee on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Village officials said that could dissuade car owners from parking for free overnight from Friday



A diagram of the new parking configuration at the Pleasantville Farmers Market starting Apr. 2.

and into Saturday. Memorial Plaza permit holders will be able to park on Saturday for free.

The village is currently waiting for new pay stations to be installed before the new regulation goes into effect. There will be a grace period to allow the public to adjust to the new rules.

Rogovin acknowledged that most shoppers want to park in the Memorial

Plaza lot. "But there are plenty of other choices for parking in Pleasantville," he said. "There are eight other lots that help comprise over 400 spots within a five-minute walk. Six of those lots offer free parking. We encourage everyone to take advantage of these other lots."

For a map of all nearby lots and other information about the market, visit www.pleasantvillefarmersmarket.org.

Owners of New Carmel Commercial Building Holding Art Competition

Promenade on 6, an artisanal shopping destination at 1875 Route 6 in Carmel, is holding a competition to promote the art community in the Hudson Valley and celebrate the creations of local artists.

All participants will have their artwork displayed at an art exhibition at Promenade on 6 this summer, and the winner will have their artistic creation permanently displayed in the building. All residents of the Hudson Valley, including Westchester and Putnam counties are eligible to submit work.

"We are thrilled to be holding this art competition and providing an opportunity for local artists to showcase their many talents," said Jennifer Maher, chief operating officer of J. Philip Commercial Group, who along with colleagues Olivia Diaz and Keri Kenny are the project and property managers representing Promenade on 6. "The Hudson Valley has a rich history as a center of artistic creativity,

and we can't wait to see and share the imaginative creations of our local artists at Promenade on 6."

Starting immediately, participants are encouraged to submit one piece of artwork in any medium that reflects their vision of the Hudson Valley; however, if they wish to submit a three-dimensional or larger piece of art, the dimensions will need to be approved first.

Interested participants must e-mail promenadeon6@jphilipcommercial.com to register and then send photos of artwork to the same e-mail address prior to June 1. A few weeks prior to the exhibition, artists will be

asked to bring their submissions in person to Promenade on 6. The winner will be chosen at the art exhibition this summer on a date to be determined.

Promenade on 6 is a stately, 6,000-square-foot brick building with eight stores and five kiosk opportunities, pop-up and event space, including a prep kitchen, and an abundance of parking. Construction is almost complete. J. Philip Real Estate is currently accepting tenant applications. The building is set to open in May.

"Promenade on 6 is an exciting, one-of-its kind retail destination in Putnam County, a special place where business owners can

showcase their products in an inviting setting and locals can purchase and enjoy them," said Promenade on 6 owners Edward Santalone and Dariseln Sonera. "This art competition is a wonderful way to display the extraordinary talents of our local artists while introducing the community to all Promenade on 6 has to offer. It promises to be a spectacular exhibition and celebration of our local artists."

For additional information about Promenade on 6, visit www.Promenadeon6.com. Questions can be directed to 914-338-8218 or by e-mailing promenadeon6@jphilipcommercial.com.

LWV of North East Westchester Seeks New Board Members

You see them every spring and fall: the women and men of the League of Women Voters of North East Westchester (LWVNEW). They run candidate forums, register voters and publish the handy Voters Guide that so many people find invaluable.

Unfortunately, these familiar scenes are in danger of becoming a thing of the past due to a decline in active members. LWVNEW is seeking civic-minded local residents interested in joining its Board of Directors and/or actively participating in some other way.

"There has been a local league in some form in our area since 1966," said Katherine Dering, LWVNEW co-president. "We are a nonpartisan organization serving Bedford, Lewisboro, Mount Kisco, North Salem and Pound Ridge. If you live in one of our towns, you have probably been impacted by us.

Whether it's visible work like our candidate forums and registration drives or our behind-the-scenes efforts such as contacting candidates for the Voters Guide, we do a lot to serve and educate area voters. Our student outreach includes high school voter registration and the Students Inside Albany program."

"Sometimes people are not aware of how thinly-stretched a visible organization can be," added Lisa Pizzurro, LWVNEW co-president. "We manage to keep getting it done year after year, but we need more active members. We're sure there are people out there who want to help."

Deng said LWVNEW hopes to expand its board and bring in new people. The current board has more than 100 years of league experience, she said. The organization is also looking to infuse the board with new faces

and perspectives and welcome Republicans, Democrats and independents.

"We want to be a reflection of the communities we serve," she said.

Pizzurro said that LWVNEW's focus is the voter.

"We want to connect people with their candidates and elected officials, get people registered and make sure people know when and where to vote, etc.," Pizzurro said.

Any resident of Bedford, Lewisboro, Mount Kisco, North Salem or Pound Ridge who is interested in serving on the LWVNEW Board of Directors should contact the group at its e-mail address, LWVNEW@gmail.com. The public may also visit www.LWVNEW.org, the organization's Facebook page (League of Women Voters of North East Westchester) or Twitter (@LWVNEW).

Crossword Answers



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