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Putnam COVID-19 Breakdown:

Countywide: 3,671 (active 203)

Carmel: 1,329

Southeast: 832

Kent: 526

Putnam Valley: 387

Patterson: 380

Philipstown: 217

Hospitalized: 15

Total Deaths: 66 (new 2)

December 15 - December 21, 2020

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 12, Issue 612



Harckham Hosts Carmel Food Drive

New York State Senator Pete Harckham held a food drive Saturday in the parking lot of the Drew United Methodist Church in Carmel. Along with members of his team and a group of volunteers, Harckham collected food for the food pantries of the Gilead Presbyterian Church in Carmel Hamlet and of the Putnam Community Action Program, both of which will help feed some of the neediest members of the Carmel community, including many seniors. "With winter approaching and the COVID-19 pandemic spiking again in the area, economic uncertainty is causing more hunger insecurity here in New York and across the United States. The generosity of neighbors helping neighbors with donations helps fill the need in our communities," Harckham said.

Cuts, Layoffs Possible in Carmel Schools

By Anna Young

The Carmel Central School District could be forced to cut athletic programs, elective classes and staffing positions as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to place tough restraints on school budgets.

A roughly \$3.5 million loss during the school year due to the coronavirus has school officials concerned about how they will maintain the status quo while sustaining costs for the remainder of the school year. Since March, that loss has included \$321,000 in state aid and \$1.7 million in state transportation aid.

Roughly \$1.4 million has also been borrowed from the districts reserves to use on unanticipated costs due to the pandemic, including the salaries and benefits stemming from the hiring of additional substitutes and staff members, along with safety equipment and supplies.

While budgets aren't usually discussed until March or April in a school year, Interim Superintendent of Business James Reese said he wanted to inform the board of its financial woes before it was too late, adding how the state has already projected a \$63 billion loss

through 2024 as a direct consequence of COVID-19.

"Timing is horrible, it's very tough to even look at these things and talk about these kinds of issues," Reese said at Carmel's Dec. 8 Board of Education meeting. "I just wanted to get it out there so the board has an idea."

While the district has already instituted a spending freeze, Reese suggested layoffs, program reductions and tightening spending wherever possible could address the district's financial situation. Other proposals included eliminating non-mandated athletic programs and co-curricular activities for the remainder of the school year.

Additionally, Reese said the board could instead dip into its \$12.1 million fund balance to offset operating expenses. However, he said a fund balance is often used for one-shot expenses, not covering a district's operational costs.

Reese said if money is borrowed from reserves to cover expenses the state requires the district to pay that money back over a four-year term.

"Going forward, if we're anticipating four years of the state having a problem with rev-

continued on page 2

Project to Improve Putnam Valley Roads to Begin Next Spring

By Anna Young

A long-awaited construction project that will improve the safety of a few busy roadways in Putnam Valley is set to begin next spring.

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell announced last week that Peekskill Hollow Road, from Oscawana Lake Road to Lovers Lane, will be getting an upgrade. The project will also include the Putnam Valley High School intersection.

"This work will make the road safer for students going to school, for pedestrians in the business district and for drivers on Putnam Valley's busiest road," Odell said. "We've gotten a lot of input from the community and have come up with a plan that works for all."

Construction will include rehabilitating the two bridges that cross over Peekskill Hollow Creek, aligning the roadway, widening the lanes and shoulders, and improving drainage. Addi-

tionally, traffic signs and signals will be upgraded, with sidewalks improved and extended in the hamlet.

Putnam Valley Town Supervisor Sam Oliverio said the replacement of the bridges and substantial road improvements will make the route from Lovers Lane to Oregon Corners much safer and secure for all travelers, especially children.

Furthermore, he touted plans that will preserve the historical nature of the historic roadway

from Adams Corners to Rt. 301.

Federal grants will fund 80 percent of the project, officials said, with the remaining covered by the county. A contractor for the project has yet to be chosen with plans going out to bid this month.

This venture is just one of many roadway improvement projects in Putnam Valley the Putnam County Highway and Facilities Department has expended funding on over the years.

Rehabilitation efforts have

been made to Oscawana Lake Road, Church Street, and other areas of Peekskill Hollow Road. Most recently, Mill Street and the Mill Street Culvert were restored.

"This is the most significant infrastructure project on a county road in 20 years," said Fred Pena, Commissioner of the Putnam County Highway and Facilities Department. "It is all in the name of public safety, meeting today's standard, while fitting within the community's aesthetics."

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Carmel Schools' Financial Woes Could Cause Cuts, Layoffs

continued from page 1

enues, you can probably guarantee the state aid will be frozen or reduced over the four-year period, so you run into the problem of having to fund your budget as well as pay back any money you borrowed to make it through this year," Reese said. "So, there is a concern with borrowing from the reserves."

Trustees Eric Mittelstadt and Matt Vanacoro agreed the board should use the fund balance to supplement the budget in lieu of layoffs or cutting programs. They added any

course of action should be taken, explaining that terminating positions and eliminating electives and sports in the middle of school year isn't fair to the students or community.

Furthermore, Mittelstadt said residents will understand if next year's school budget is much higher if it can aid in providing students with a valued educational experience.

"I think under the circumstances here, using the fund balance to make sure people are employed and the programs are good, I think if our budget goes over the minimum next

year, I think that we have a fairly intelligent tax base that (will know) this is necessary and we have to pay it back," Mittelstadt said.

"I would never ever vote to lay anybody off if there was a way not to do it and I can see where this is headed."

He added that the fund balance is there for a reason and the district shouldn't worry about politics or money, just student needs. Vanacoro asserted if there was any time to use a rainy-day fund that it's now.

While board members discussed some

fundraising efforts that could be done to offset costs if cuts are needed, Interim Superintendent Eric Stark is hopeful that the district's financial situation will change with the new presidential administration.

"We're certainly hopeful that some of these financial issues will be turned around and be solved by either some help from the state or federal government," Stark said. "But we do have to be aware of what the worst-case scenario could be, and we don't want to be caught not having had a chance to discuss it."

Assemblyman Kevin Byrne Boasts of Record-Setting Election Win

By Rick Pezzullo

State Assemblyman Kevin Byrne boasted this week of receiving more votes in the November election than any Assembly candidate in the history of the 94th District.

Running on five party lines, Byrne, a registered Republican, was reelected to a third two-year term with 41,675 votes, defeating Democrat Stephanie Keegan, who received 30,005 votes.

District 94 includes Brewster, Carmel, Southeast, Putnam Val-

ley, Somers, and Yorktown.

"I am honored by the faith the people of Putnam and Westchester counties have placed in me," said Byrne, who lives in Carmel. "Since first being elected in 2016, I have dedicated myself to being an effective representative who serves and is unafraid to lead, take action, and get results for the people of this district. We have a strong record with a list of real meaningful accomplishments. This is in large part due to our ability to work collaboratively with colleagues from across the political spectrum, including

Democrats."

In Putnam, Byrne garnered 24,207 votes, to 14,769 for Keegan. In Westchester, Byrne received 17,468, while Keegan pulled in 15,236.

"This year, voters sent a clear message and rejected disinformation campaigns from extremist groups, the media, and special interests. Simply put, voters are tired of the petty partisan politics and want elected officials who are honest, work hard, and get things done," Byrne said. "They want a better New York, one with lower taxes, safer streets, and a strong economy.

I sincerely thank all those who voted for me and endorsed our campaign, including our amazing first responders, healthcare workers, labor unions, and small businesses. To those who decided not to vote for me this past election, I will continue to work to serve you and the best interests of our community at large. As always, the team and I at our district office work to serve everyone."

The previous vote count mark in the district was held by Assemblyman Will Stephens Jr., who received 36,626 votes in 2004 running unopposed.



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Carmel Board of Education Seeks Applicants to Fill Vacancy

The Carmel Central School District is in search of a community member to fill a vacant seat on the Board of Education.

The seat on the seven-member board was recently made vacant by Trustee John Cody, who resigned on Nov. 30. Officials said Cody has moved out of the district, therefore requiring appointment of an applicable Carmel resident to finish out his term.

Cody's term will expire on May 18, 2021. The board is currently seeking letters of interest from the community to fill the vacancy immediately.

To qualify, individuals must be able to read

and write, be a citizen of the United States, be at least 18 years old, and be a resident of the school district for at least one continuous year. Furthermore, applicants must be the only member of a family serving on the board of education during the term of office.

Interested individuals are asked to send a letter of intent to District Clerk Sue Dieck at sdieck@carmelschools.org by close of business on Monday. Those interested are also invited to speak to the board during a special board of education meeting on Dec. 15 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

A Zoom invitation for the meeting will be sent by Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

Brewster Man Sentenced to 14 Years in Prison for Rape

A Brewster man will spend the next 14 years in prison and will have to register as a sex offender after raping an unspecified number of children.

Martiliano Ramos-Miguel, 45, was sentenced Friday after pleading guilty on Oct. 21 to first-degree rape and endangering the welfare of a child, according to Putnam County District Attorney Robert Tendy.

Ramos-Miguel's 14-year prison sentence will be followed by 10 years post release supervision.

"The victims' voices were heard, and their abuser was brought to justice," said Chief Assistant District Attorney Chana Krauss. "While

no amount of prison time is sufficient when you abuse a child, this plea and sentence will keep this predator in jail for many years where he cannot cause any more harm."

Tendy said the case was resolved due to the bravery of the young victims' disclosure at the Putnam Child Advocacy Center. With the help of the CAC team, the New York State Police and the District Attorney's Office, officials were able to effectively investigate and prosecute Ramos-Miguel while ensuring the victims received support throughout the process.

"This was a tough case to work on. The abuse was heartbreaking," Tendy said.

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COVID-19 Vaccine Rolled Out as Local, State Virus Cases Mushroom

By Anna Young

An ICU nurse in Queens was the first person in the United States to receive the federally approved COVID-19 vaccine on Monday as the battle to defeat coronavirus has begun.

Sandra Lindsay, who works at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, made history after the first trucks bearing about 2.9 million doses of Pfizer's vaccine left the medial corporation's Michigan facility on Sunday. Vaccines are expected to be delivered to 636 predetermined locations nationwide by the end of the week.

Lindsay, who has been on the front lines of the virus since March, said she felt hopeful after the vaccine was injected into her left arm, while instilling public confidence that the vaccine is safe.

"I feel hope today, relieved," she said. "I feel like healing is coming and this marks the beginning of the end of a very painful time in our history. We're in a pandemic and so we all need you to do your part to put an end to the pandemic, and not give up so soon."

While there is a light at the end of the tunnel, Lindsay pressed the need to wear masks and social distance as the nation is far from the vaccine reaching critical mass. The first phase of the state's vaccine distribution plan prioritizes health care workers, nursing home residents and staff and EMS workers.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said while the war to defeat COVID-19 is officially underway, there won't be mass inoculation until possibly June. Even then, he said health officials estimate 75 to 85 percent of Americans will need to take the vaccine for it to be effective.

"And the point about New Yorkers and Americans having to do their part and take the vaccine, because the vaccine only works if the American people take it," Cuomo said. "So, this is the light at the end of the tunnel, but it's a long tunnel, and we need people to continue to do the right thing and the smart thing all through the holiday season."

With coronavirus cases surging after Halloween and Thanksgiving, Cuomo stressed the importance of following safety guidelines. He said

while it was predicted the caseload would increase in the fall and winter months, contact tracing data shows roughly 74 percent of new cases stem from indoor home gatherings.

He said that while the problem last spring was going out, today the issue is staying home and inviting people over. Cuomo added that the state has taken every precaution to limit the spread of the virus, and now it's up to the public to be vigilant and disciplined during the holiday season.

Statewide there were 15,844 new positive cases on Sunday, with a daily positivity rate at 5.66 percent. The state recorded 83 additional COVID-19-related fatalities, bringing the



Gov. Andrew Cuomo urged the public to stay vigilant, and when available, take the COVID-19 vaccine. A Queens nurse was the first person in the United States to receive the shot on Monday.

death toll to 27,870 since March.

Total hospitalizations are at 5,712, an increase of 302 over the previous day. Across the state there have been 784,204 positive coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic.

As cases of coronavirus have steadily increased over the last eight weeks in Westchester, County Executive George

Latimer said the silver lining right now is that the hospitalization rate remains low compared to what it was in the spring when the area saw similar active cases to what's been reported in recent weeks.

As of Monday, there were about 360 virus patients in Westchester hospitals, a 309-patient increase since Nov. 3.

"It is encouraging that there are less people sick enough to be hospitalized based on the same amount of infection; however, the spread of the infection is concerning because we have basically shut down," Latimer said during his Monday afternoon briefing. "The disease is spreading more because of our interpersonal contacts outside of the public domain and in our private dealings."

In Westchester, coronavirus cases increased by 594 on Sunday, bringing the total number of positive cases to 59,431 since the start of the pandemic.

There are currently 8,738 active cases, with the daily test positivity rate at 6.40 percent. That percentage is based on 9,287 tests taken on Sunday. Overall, there have been more than 1.2 million COVID-19 tests administered in Westchester since March.

While active cases rise, Westchester's death toll has ballooned in recent weeks. The county reported six more coronavirus-related deaths from Sunday. There have been 1,568 fatalities since March, with 39 deaths recorded over the last week.

This time last month there were 1,490 COVID-19-related deaths in Westchester County.



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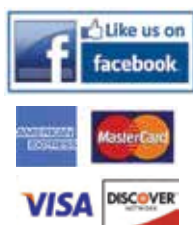
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North Castle Extends Permits for Tent Dining Through May

By Martin Wilbur

North Castle officials last week extended outdoor dining in tents through the end of May to help give the town's restaurateurs maximum opportunity to attract customers and help them stay in business.

The Town Board agreed last Wednesday to continue the temporary outdoor café dining permits for the maximum time period allowed by the state. Initially, the board allowed the permits for owners to erect tents for one month, but it was set to expire at the end of December without additional action.

"It's a big help for what we've done for them with the expanding of the outdoor seating and this is a big help to them to give them some breathing room through May and for us to reassess what's going on," said Supervisor Michael Schiliro.

In June, the board approved outdoor seating in hopes of assisting restaurant owners survive the pandemic since indoor dining was prohibited for several months. When the state allowed for indoor dining it was with limited capacity.

As the weather turned colder



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Outdoor dining tents such as the one pictured above will be permitted for an additional five months in North Castle.

many municipalities have opted for restaurants to have tents outside that would increase the number of patrons it can have at one time. The tents have heat and are generally located in a portion of a restaurant's parking lot or elsewhere on the property provided there's enough room.

Building Inspector Robert Melillo said the main consideration for the board to consider is that under the state building code a tent can not remain up for more

than six months. As a result, the extension will expire on May 31.

"This will hopefully get us to the springtime where it's warmer and the tents will come down on their own," Melillo said.

Councilman Jose Berra suggested the board extend the permits for two additional months so town officials can evaluate whether they should continue restaurant seating as COVID-19 cases continue to rise in Westchester and throughout

the region. On Saturday, there were 593 additional cases in Westchester from 11,188 tests administered for a 5.3 percent positivity rate, according to the state's coronavirus dashboard. The seven-day rolling average for the county stood at 5.9 percent.

However, the remainder of the board agreed that the permits to

allow tents should be extended for the full five months. If the virus continues to spread, state health officials would presumably take action and shut down indoor dining.

"I think it will be out of our hands if there is a crisis," said Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto.

Talk on the Role of Crisis in Humanity's Progress This Saturday

The public is invited to virtually attend the latest in a series of elevating and uplifting conversation on topics facing society in these challenging times. The challenges – economic, environmental, racial and religious – can be understood as symptoms of a deeper crisis. What lessons must humanity learn in order to overcome what is before us?

The talk, scheduled for this Saturday at 7:30 p.m. via

Zoom, will offer a perspective of the opportunities and needs for humanity to advance – from local action to global coherence. The speaker is Daniel Perell, a representative for Baha'i International Community's United Nations office.

To register to view this event, visit <http://www.westchester-cvc.org/talk-series.html>. For more information, visit www.westchester-cvc.org.



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Board of Legislators Approve Nearly \$2.1B Budget, Tax Levy Lowered

By Martin Wilbur

The Board of Legislators unanimously approved Westchester County's \$2.091 billion budget for 2021 on Monday that trims spending and the tax levy for next year and lowers child care contributions for income-eligible families.

Despite severe financial pressures caused by the pandemic, the county will see a \$15.7 million spending reduction and a tax levy that is \$1 million less than the current year.

Lawmakers also opted to diminish the parent child care contributions, which will fall from 25 to 23 percent.

Board Chairman Ben Boykin (D-White Plains) said the spending plan meets the values of the county by trying to assist the residents and business owners most impacted by the pandemic while also recognizing the challenges facing local, county and state governments.

"Given the unprecedented challenges we have faced this year with the pandemic and the economic crisis, this budget addresses the priorities of our residents," Boykin said.

In addition to budgeting \$52 million for child care, its earmarks \$32 million for domestic violence support, an additional \$5 million for housing assistance and another

\$2 million to address the growing food insecurity in the county, he said. There is also \$5 million for economic development.

The county's 2021 capital budget of \$230 million was also approved by the legislators. It will improve infrastructure needs such as roads, parks, transportation and sanitation systems.

The county, which was looking at a worst-case scenario deficit earlier this year in excess of \$200 million set aside a large portion of the more than \$165 million it received from the federal CARES Act to help balance the budget, Boykin said. The voluntary separation program instituted this summer that cut the workforce by 225 positions also helped.

Legislator Catherine Borgia (D-Ossining) said times of crisis is when county government is needed to step forward and ease the burdens for ordinary residents.

"These are the times when government matters the most and I'm very proud to be part of a process that increases our human services, not require any layoffs, not require any additional property tax levy as well as being able to partner with our not-for-profits so they can help people directly as our partner, and also subsidize child care so that our families can get back to work and know that their children are in

safe, healthy and educationally productive environments," Borgia said.

Legislator Margaret Cunzio (C-Mount Pleasant) said the 2021 budget focuses on help those most in need while holding the line on taxes.

"It helps those that are in their houses by not having that tax increase and it helps those that need services from the government," Cunzio said. "And this year many people who never thought they would need those services now rely on them."

Majority Leader MaryJane Shimsky (D-Hastings-on-Hudson) said the budget fully funds the agencies, departments and nonprofit organizations that provide the key services county residents rely on. But she provided a bit of sobering news, saying that unless there is assistance soon from the federal government, local, county and state governments across the nation will find themselves in dire fiscal straits.

"As masterful as this budget is, without the aid and appropriate assistance from Washington, ultimately we, like all other local governments, are going to be in a very, very bad way in subsequent years," Shimsky said.

The budget will now go to County Executive George Latimer for his signature.



Board of Legislators Chairman Ben Boykin announced a 2021 budget that lowers spending and the tax levy but keeps critical services intact. The budget was approved by lawmakers Monday morning.

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Letters to the Editor

Criminal Justice Reforms a Must to Helping All Communities Flourish

Now is the time to dismantle systems of criminalization and incarceration which target Black and brown community members, criminalize poverty and separate people from their families.

Almost two dozen groups throughout the Hudson Valley have joined together to form the Decarcerate the Hudson Valley Coalition. This coalition will build power with community-based organizations, formerly incarcerated and directly impacted people and faith leaders and advocates across the Hudson Valley to demand lawmakers pass legislation that will create alternatives that advance justice and liberation for all and build a

world where all of our communities have what they need to thrive.

We stand united in the belief that this is a critical moment in our country's history, one that requires moral clarity and bold action by our state's leaders. New York must act to ensure the basic human dignity for all and to create a world without cages.

Decarcerate the Hudson Valley is working on passing legislation focused on ending oppressive policing, decriminalizing drugs, reforming sentencing laws, connecting families, fixing the broken prison system and protecting incarcerated people. The coalition recognizes that these broad issues have manifested

themselves in many reprehensible and harmful ways. We have a collection of bills that when implemented will tackle our racist and unjust criminal legal system and immigration system.

Join us as we follow the lead of those impacted and call for bold action!

Vanessa Agudelo

**Hudson Valley Manager of Member
Engagement
New York Immigration Coalition
Peekskill**

Somers Officials Permitting What Makes Town Special to Slip Away

The Somers Town Board proves more and more that they are interested in taking away the quaint feeling of our town.

They pushed for development along Route 6 and now on Route 100. During a Town Board meeting, Supervisor Morrissey mentioned many times how the property on Route 100 near Froggy's Deli will have to have a zoning amendment in order for an apartment building to be constructed. He also had the zoning changed so Somers Crossing townhomes could be built on Route 100.

This validates the point that if sewers were to have come into the two lake communities, he would have changed the zoning so that McMansions could be built,

which would have raised property taxes. The whole sewer project was handled poorly, it was flawed with lots of dishonesty from the beginning, and they should all be embarrassed, including the engineers.

The Town Board is also considering having a 7-Eleven behind Town Hall, which is a terrible idea. The fact the board is considering it is appalling. Who in their right mind thinks this busy intersection is a place for such a business? Everyone knows that trucks and tractor-trailers are always stopping on the side of the road at the 7-Eleven on Route 100 to park. That is the perfect place for it – not here in the heart of the historic district.

Why isn't our supervisor worrying

about wires that have been down since Superstorm Sandy, trees falling, garbage on the roads, paving our roads, cleaning up things so they look better, residents who can't get mail delivered to their homes, bars that keep residents up until 3 a.m., notifying residents of projects and pushing for cable TV options? We all know it starts with him. What's he getting out of not letting other cable companies into our town? It's a shame that our little town has become so corrupt.

**Rich Jacobs
Somers**

Open Letter to Assemblyman Byrne: It's Time for You to Step Down

Given what I've been hearing from our President, I have come to the opinion that your recent re-election is invalid, or, as Trump would say, "stolen." As our President has so vigorously pointed out, over and over again, our elections are "rigged" and that "massive fraud" has been perpetrated on the American people. You are, therefore, obviously the beneficiary of a stolen election. And I'm sure you will agree.

I know that you are a big supporter of President Trump, and voted for him. You have said so publicly. And, in the face of the

President's repeated and frequent claims of massive election fraud and vote rigging, you have not said a word in opposition to his claims. Not a single peep from you. So, I can only conclude that you agree with him and you are then, therefore, an illegitimate office holder.

Therefore, I demand that you step down from your stolen office and relinquish your seat to your opponent, Stephanie Keegan, from whom you stole the election. This is the only logical thing for you to do. Unless, of course, you have the courage to come out publicly and

say that it is Donald Trump who is trying to steal an election that he has legitimately lost. To further vindicate yourself you also need to say that Trump's criminality and irresponsible behaviors are a threat to democracy.

You are either naïve, a fool or a complicit coward. Which is it? If you don't speak out, we can only conclude that you agree that you are the beneficiary of fraud, and need to step down.

**Nicholas Kuvach
Putnam Valley**

It's Time Village of Ossining Changes the Image on its Seal

In 2005, attempting to eradicate flagrant racism toward American Indians, the American Psychological Association (APA) wrote a resolution calling for the retirement of American Indian "mascots, symbols, images and personalities" in all academic institutions. This resolution was consistent with the growing body of literature that revealed the harmful effects of racial stereotyping. The APA responded by acknowledging that this was a teachable moment in all halls of academia; the stories told of this seemingly patriotic symbolism were grossly inaccurate.

Fifteen years later – at a time when the appreciation for diversity, equity and inclusion efforts are being made in more places than not, and where calls for acknowledging and

ending racism are rightfully being made – it's time for the Village of Ossining to retire a misunderstood symbol of honor: a generic Indian head. (Not even that of the Lenape Indians who made Ossining their home.)

Native Americans had their land and future violently taken from them. That is our American history and will continue to be as we perpetuate the disrespect for tribal lands and Native Americans by decimating any value one could place on their quality of life leaving generations impoverished and destitute, all for the want of fossil fuel pipelines, for example.

It is understandable how some in our community may want to hang on to or celebrate a nostalgic past where memories of community pride were once naively associated

with that symbol, a symbol that we have come to learn is quite offensive. I ask: is there a single Native American living in Ossining that feels honored by this? We do not need a mascot of a generic Indian head to instill pride in our community; how each of us participates in our community's well-being is a show of pride.

While we are living in unprecedented times, times of great change for all of us, let's use this as another teachable moment. I vote for honoring our unique double arch as the Village of Ossining's seal.

**Suzie Ross
Ossining**

Guest Column

There is Still Much Work to Be Done Powering Down Indian Point

By Marilyn Elie

We can all breathe a sigh of relief next spring when the last working reactor at Indian Point powers down. Twenty million people in the 50-mile radius of the 40-year-old nuclear generator can sleep more soundly and future generations will thank us for no longer producing high-level radioactive waste that will bedevil the country and our community for years to come.

Not Clean or Carbon Free

Anything that is manufactured has a carbon footprint. Nuclear power is low carbon, not carbon free. When calculating the true carbon footprint of any fuel, you must look at the entire fuel cycle from cradle to grave or for nuclear power from mining uranium to disposing of the high-level radioactive waste.

Sustainable energy is the goal. The best definition of that is from Harlem Brundtland, a former Norwegian Prime Minister who stated that “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Decommissioning and Holtec

What is next for Indian Point? Decommissioning! This means cleaning up the property in a prompt, safe manner and returning it to a greenfield that can be safely reused. Rapid decommissioning could take from 12 to 15 years but must be done securely.

The AIM gas pipeline that runs next to the spent fuel building presents one important obstacle to this massive deconstruction process. The threat of a possible rupture and explosion engulfing the spent fuel pool must be taken into account. For more information on this, visit www.senrg.org.

It is important to note that the Nuclear Regulator Commission (NRC) does not have authority over the complete process. They will only supervise anything that is radioactive. Holtec is the company that is in line to do the decommissioning, and therein lies yet another problem. It is a big international corporation based in New Jersey and their unsavory business reputation follows them from New Jersey. The company was embroiled in a well-documented bribery conviction, with

representatives later lying about it under oath while seeking a \$260 million tax break from the state of New Jersey.

Holtec's Canadian partner, SNC-Lavalin, has been previously barred for a decade from World Bank contracts for similar malfeasance. Despite the fact that Holtec is lobbying hard in Congress for centralized interim storage in New Mexico, the irradiated fuel rods will remain on site for an indefinite period of time as current law requires.

Entergy estimates that when all of the fuel rods are in dry casks, they will take up the area of about two football fields. Moving this high-level radioactive waste to contaminate another community that does not want it is undemocratic at best and some would say immoral.

Our Future

New York is poised to make great strides in decarbonizing the economy of our state through the recently passed Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. New York now has laws in place and will soon have maps of the carbon footprints of our communities so that we can work to reduce them. People in different regions of

our state are meeting now and figuring out how to meet the high goals set by this law.

You will be hearing more about this as these groups reach out to others in their communities. Hopefully many New Yorkers will look for an opportunity to participate. Fossil fuels and uranium must remain in the ground in order to avoid ever worst aspects of climate change. Things must change. We cannot continue on our regular path using uranium and fossil fuels if we are to hand over a livable planet to future generations.

To hear the voices of people from other reactor communities as well as that of New York experts on the problems and solutions we are all facing at Indian Point, see the 2020 Virtual Regional Decommissioning Forum: Forum video on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/cLOvoABmVJAR> or visit the Clearwater website for the Fall 2020 Virtual Indian Point Decommissioning Forum: <https://www.clearwater.org/ea/fall-2020-regional-nuclear-decommissioning-forum/>.

Marilyn Elie is a co-founder of Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition and has tracked events at Indian Point over the past 25 years.

Letters to the Editor

Carmel School Board Has Been Deceitful Informing Taxpayers of True Costs

The Carmel Board of Education, in its annual budget presentation to voters, promised a tax increase in Fiscal Year 2020-21 of 2.6 percent. My new school tax bill shows that their claim was dishonest because the actual increase is 46 percent higher than promised, finally arriving at

3.8 percent and not the 2.6 percent as advertised. This is deceit number 1.

The board reserves unto themselves the right to lie and to deceive in order to further its own agenda and they do it all in the name of “what’s best for the kids.” In reality, it is what serves their own big-

spending, tax-hiking ideas.

Deceit Number 2: The Carmel Board of Education, in jamming through the school bus garage bond referendum along with the property purchase, claimed that the tax increase would be as little as \$11 a year per household. We get our school tax bill and find that for the second consecutive year the tax increase is in the hundreds of dollars. How did that work out for Carmel School District taxpayers?

Deceit Number 3: In official meeting records, the board reported that its unsuccessful attempt to remove a junior member of the board cost the taxpayers \$6,810. This amount was also reported by The Journal News Tax Watch Columnist David McKay Wilson on June 28, 2018. In truth, the total cost was nearly \$20,000. This was due to officials conveniently omitting the nearly \$12,000 fee charged by the hearing officer, the cost of the stenographer and others.

Deceit Number 4: Beware Carmel School District residents of this one. The board, in all its wisdom, never thoroughly researched to confirm if the land purchased with the bond money was properly zoned for the construction of a school bus garage. Incompetency to the highest degree. Do not be surprised when this school board decides that it can ignore various town zoning and building codes because it believes, and have stated, that these rules do not apply to them. The result of this will certainly be costly litigation, the burden of which will once again be covered by district taxpayers. The board does not care how much of our hard-earned money

it wastes to fulfill its agenda.

In summary, the Carmel Board of Education is incompetent, dishonest and engages in unethical and borderline illegal conduct. Despite the fact that we are experiencing a severe economic downturn due to the coronavirus pandemic, the board has once again kept to its decades-long practice of imposing never-ending tax increases on its residents, while surrounding school districts were able to hold the line on taxes. It is time that the residents of the Carmel School District rise up and say enough is enough and replace these tax-and-spend liberals.

Richard Arzon
Lake Carmel

Greater Consideration for School Faculty, Staff is Needed During Pandemic

Some attention is being paid to COVID-19 in the schools, but not enough attention is being paid to the actual feelings and treatment of people working in the schools and the effect it is having on them, their families and their work.

Those of us in Fox Lane High School in the Bedford Central School District often see deserted hallways. On any given day dozens of teachers and staff are out and substitutes have become essential workers.

I've been sent home and quarantined twice; that will be a total of 28 days. As a substitute that means no pay, no health care, no protections. I know we choose to work in the schools, but we do so with the understanding it will be as safe as possible. We don't do it in anticipation of catching a deadly disease and we don't select our assignments.

If the school puts us in harm's way, through no fault of our own, if the schools continue seeing more cases but don't inform school workers of the risks, and if the protocols in place are not effective in slowing and or eliminating the risks,

schools should be closed. Those impacted by decisions made by others should be compensated for forced time off and increased risk. In addition, medical costs incurred because of a school-based incident should be covered.

Teachers and staff are deeply concerned about their health. The district needs to address these concerns as it considers how to meet the needs of parents, and most importantly, students. Right now, many feel compromised and treated less than fairly.

Those of us sent home this week will soon know if we are infected. If we are, even more people will be forced into quarantine and the school will move closer to full-time virtual schooling as the only ethical option. Better to be proactive than reactive and put more people at risk. People in leadership positions at every level must make difficult decisions today so families are not confronted with end-of-life decisions later.

Robert Kesten
Lewisboro

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Obituaries

Matthew Ferri

Matthew Joseph Ferri, 31, passed away on Nov. 29 at his residence in Yorktown Heights.

Matthew was born on July 17, 1989, and lived in Cortlandt Manor his entire life until recently when he moved to Yorktown Heights.

Matthew earned his bachelor's degree in allied health sciences with a concentration in health sciences and a minor in biological sciences from the University of Connecticut in 2012. While in school he interned at Mount Sinai Center for eosinophilic disorders, completing 264 hours of shadowing doctors during endoscopic procedures and helping with research projects.

After graduating from the University of Connecticut, Matthew worked for TransCare EMS as a full-time emergency medical

technician while performing more than 300 hours of clinical rotations with paramedics. Matthew was most proud of his various certifications including NREMT nationally certified EMT, New York State certified EMT-B, Connecticut state certified EMT, NHA certified EKG/EEG technician, NHA certified phlebotomy technician and AHA BLS provider (CPR and AED).

Recently, he worked for CareMount in the Neurology Department while being a volunteer at the Yorktown Ambulance Corps.

Matthew had a passion for helping others, which contributed to him pursuing a career in the medical field. He had a thirst for medical knowledge and aspirations to become a physician assistant. He cared for his grandparents whom he loved and adored. He enjoyed challenging himself by building computers even if that meant pulling all-nighters. He also loved working on his car.

Matthew is survived by his loving parents, Kathy and Angelo Ferri, of Cortlandt Manor; his twin sister, Lia Ferri (Philip Honovich), of Rye; his younger sister, Danielle Ferri, of Mineola, N.Y.; his beautiful niece, Sofia Honovich, of Rye; his maternal grandparents and his dearest paternal grandmother, Anna Ferri; and many aunts, uncles and cousins.

Services were held on Dec. 6. A funeral mass was held at St. Patrick's Church on Dec. 7. Matthew was laid to rest at Rose Hill Memorial Park in Putnam Valley.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that in honor of Matthew J. Ferri donations be made to the following charities: Mount Sinai Center for Eosinophilic Disorders (<https://giving.mountsinai.org>) and SPCA of Westchester, Inc. (<https://spca914.org/>)

This obituary, which published last week, is reprinted to include the accompanying photo and also to reflect style changes within the text.



Matthew Ferri

Michael Sena

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Michael Sena of Ossining, a loving husband, father and friend on Dec. 7. He was 92.

Gifted with creative imagination, persistence and an optimistic attitude, Michael was known for sharing his interesting life stories and outlook on life with his many friends and family.

Sena was born on Oct. 22, 1928, in Brooklyn to Anthony and Josephine Serini Sena. He graduated from Baruch College in New York City and served in the U.S. Army, 2nd Infantry Division, during the Korean Conflict. He worked for more than 35 years as a top producing wine salesman for Gallo Wine Distributors.

Sena married Joan Dolores Johnson on Nov. 12, 1960. The couple settled in Pleasantville where he became an active member of the community, serving in the Rotary and the Dad's Club. He loved to swim, ski and spend time with his family. He was an avid member of the tennis team at Club Fit in Briarcliff Manor. After 32 years of happy marriage, Joan Sena passed away on May 24, 1992.

Michael found love again, marrying Jean Marie Blackman on Oct. 19, 2002. They shared many adventures traveling together in retirement and enjoyed their riverside



Michael Sena

home at Scarborough Manor in Ossining.

Sena is survived by his loving wife, Jean Marie; his son, Michael J Sena, of Portland, Ore., his daughter, Susan J. Sena, of Scarsdale and his son, Christopher Sena, of Ossining. He is grandfather to Delfina and Mia Sena of Portland.

Mike was beloved by his many nieces, nephews and stepchildren who loved to share in his wisdom, laughter and love of life.

Hedy McCloskey

Hedy McCloskey, a Carmel resident, died Nov. 29 at Putnam Hospital Center. She was 71.

McCloskey was born to William and Elsie McCloskey. She was a registered nurse and the director of nursing supervisor at Putnam Hospital Center. She enjoyed music, reading and the simplicities of life. She was a kind

and compassionate person who strove to help and mentor others.

She is survived by her daughter, Moriah, and her siblings, Kevin, Maureen (Mark), Katherine (Patrick), Patricia (Wayne) and Bill John (Liz) and many nieces, nephews and extended family.

State DOT Opens New Pudding St. Interchange in PV Along Taconic

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez announced Monday the opening of the newly-constructed Pudding Street bridge over the Taconic State Parkway in Putnam Valley.

The bridge's opening, along with the four interchange ramps, comes months ahead of schedule and will temporarily eliminate the need for detours, benefiting commuters, residents, school buses and emergency service providers. The early opening will enable motorists to better navigate the interchange during the winter months.

In the spring, a temporary closure of the bridge and ramps will occur for about 60 days to tie in the approaches, replace a culvert

and conduct paving operations. All work is expected to be completed by summer.

"I'd like to thank all of our essential workers for their efforts to complete this project, allowing for this bridge to open before winter weather sets in, which will enable communities on each side of Pudding Street to utilize the bridge without a detour," Dominguez said.

The \$28.9 million project eliminates the at-grade crossing and realigns the parkway to increase sight distance and make the crossing easier to navigate. Consistent with the Taconic State Parkway's historic status, the project includes a modern bridge with aesthetic features that replicate the architectural appearance of other parkway bridges.



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No. Castle Resident Continues Legal Fight in Term Limits Case

By Martin Wilbur

A North Castle resident who for three years has unsuccessfully tried to place a town term limits referendum on the ballot is going back to court to continue his fight.

Anthony Futia, of North White Plains, last month submitted an application to the New York Court of Appeals to have the case heard. It follows the Appellate Division's decision that petitions to request term limits of elected municipal office holders are not allowed in towns, only in cities and villages.

In 2017, Futia collected 401 signatures on a petition asking the Town Board to

place a referendum on that year's general election ballot to ask the town's voters to decide whether there should be eight-year term limits for the supervisor and board members.

However, the board at its Sept. 13, 2017, meeting, acknowledged receipt of the petition but declined to take action because state consolidated government law doesn't allow for a citizen's petition requesting a term limits referendum. At the time, Town Attorney Roland Baroni said that the board would need to draft and pass local legislation to put term limits on the ballot. The only matters that a citizen may petition a Town Board to place a referendum on the ballot is to change the number of board members or the length of the terms or establishing or abolishing the ward system.

Futia said last week that he has pressed for term limits in North Castle because the town has a history of uncontested elections where the Republican and Democratic committees either cross-endorse each other's candidates or agree not to run a candidate against the other party.

He continued to argue that residents in towns should have the same rights to initiate a municipal term limits proposition as residents of villages and cities.

"I want term limits," Futia said. "I want people to have a choice."

His application to the Court of Appeals, written and submitted by Albany attorney Lewis B. Oliver Jr., stated that "the



North Castle resident Anthony Futia will take his case to the state's Court of Appeals, asking to petition for a referendum for term limits for town office holders.

petition should be granted because the issue is of public importance to residents in towns throughout the State of New York as evidenced by existing term limit laws on local elected positions. Finally, the petition should be granted because the Appellate Divisions and lower courts are conflicted and confused and continue to apply erroneous and outmoded holdings to questions concerning term limit legislation and need guidance from the Court of Appeals to establish the law with regard to term limits."

Last week, the Town Board approved retaining the law firm Silverman & Associates for \$5,000 to represent the

seven defendants – each board member, Town Clerk Alison Simon and Baroni – in the latest court episode.

While board members reiterated that people have a right to petition their government and to seek redress in court, the cost incurred by the town in the legal battles has been wasteful when the law is clear.

"It's wasting the town's time and money and that's something we should all feel responsibility for," said Councilman Jose Berra.

Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said responsibility also falls on citizens who should educate themselves about the issue they may sign for on a petition and whether it's feasible.

"People really need to think long and hard about what they're signing with a petition because it can be a petition, in this case, that is groundless, yet it has cost the town thousands of dollars, and so to me that is a word of caution," she said.

Futia, who said he has spent \$50,000 of his own money on this issue, said he is confident that there's a strong case despite the prior defeats in state Supreme Court and the Appellate Division. He predicted that if the Court of Appeals takes the case it will be a precedent-setting decision.

"I wouldn't spend that kind of money if I didn't know what I was doing," Futia said.

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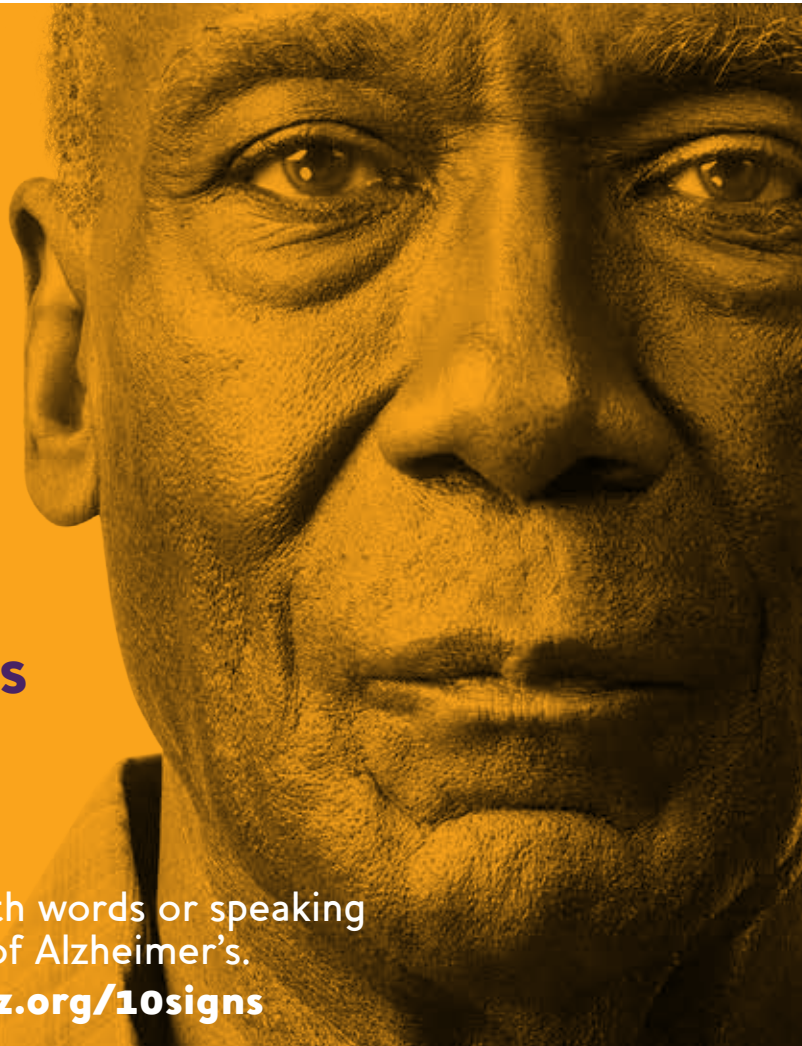
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Westchester Teens Help Boost Morale at Area Hospital ERs

By Samantha Schnupp

A handful of local Westchester teens are helping to support the community by providing meals for frontline health care workers during their shifts.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline workers have had to adapt to long hours with little time for breaks. Many have found it hard to find time to prepare themselves meals while working.

Five local teen-age boys – Christopher Barnaby, Shane Daughtry, John Prince, Laurence Brady Jr. and Anderson Brady – formed the group Friends4Frontlines to help provide meals for health care workers on the night shift, arranging for food donations to local hospitals, including White Plains Hospital, Westchester Medical Center, Phelps, Blythedale Children's Hospital and Burke Rehabilitation Hospital.

On Apr. 11, Friends4Frontlines created a GoFundMe page to collect donations. The group raised money in the spring to have nearly 2,000 meals delivered to health care workers. The food purchases, totaling about \$11,000, also helped restaurants in Greenburgh, Ardsley, Elmsford, White Plains and Valhalla survive during the pandemic.

"My favorite part is how thankful the health care workers are when they see us with the donations," said Daughtry, a Chappaqua resident who is a junior at Fordham Preparatory School. "They send us pictures and messages of how appreciative they are and what it means to them. It makes me feel good knowing that I can also make a difference



Three of the five members of Friends4Frontlines making a delivery to staff members at White Plains Hospital. Friends4Frontlines formed in April to bring the night shift who staff local emergency rooms meals from local restaurants from money they have raised.

during these troubling times."

With the recent surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, Friends4Frontlines decided this fall that their deliveries were once again sorely needed to help those staffing emergency rooms fortify themselves and to

boost morale.

Because of social distancing, the group cannot deliver together. Instead, each member contacts various hospitals to find out if they accept food donations. They contact local delis and restaurants to order the food and pick it up

and deliver it to the hospitals at 10 p.m. with the help of their parents.

Most of the hospitals do not allow long visitations, so Friends4Frontlines hand-delivers the food while wearing gloves and masks. Their deliveries also include a thank you note to the workers.

"I think it is important what we do because it shows how our efforts can also inspire other communities to do the same thing and help," said Laurence Brady Jr., a junior at Canterbury School in New Milford, Conn.

He also has the perspective of having an uncle, Randy Taylor, who is an emergency room doctor.

Friends4Frontlines last month re-started its fundraising efforts that is expected to last until at least New Year's.

Prince said he had the experience of having his grandparents need attention at local hospitals this year and is grateful for the sacrifices medical staff are making across the area.

"I know that (the) work they do is essential, and they are risking their own health and that of their families every time they go to work," he said. "Giving them some good food is a small token of appreciation we can give them. Plus knowing that Friends4Frontlines is helping to support local restaurants and delis who have been hit hard financially from (the coronavirus) as well."

To consider donating to Friends4Frontline's efforts to help emergency room staff and local restaurants, visit its GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/Friends4Frontlines>.

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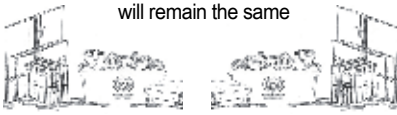
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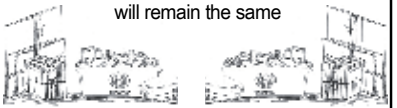
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KITCHEN TRASH COLLECTIONS

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Boosting Holiday Cheer at Home During a Socially Distant Season

Unfortunately, many Americans will be unable to celebrate the holidays with their extended family and friends in person this year, making it all the more important to boost holiday cheer at home. Here are a few festive ideas for getting into the holiday spirit during this socially distant season.



Don't skip out on the decorations. You may not be hosting any houseguests, gatherings or big meals, but this shouldn't be the year to skip out on the full-scale decorating you typically enjoy. Lights, trees, garlands, stockings and wreaths can evoke favorite memories of past seasons and invite hope for future ones all season long. You can even set up a video conference to enjoy the camaraderie of decorating with far-off loved ones.

Deck the halls with music. Add a digital piano to your holiday-scape to help elevate the mood with Christmas carols and other seasonal tunes. Consider Casio's line of PX-S console digital pianos, which have a striking design that fit any room, décor and mood. A glossy top panel and unibody case evoke a luxurious acoustic grand in a sleek case that's barely larger than the keys themselves. Integrated Bluetooth audio lets you connect your device wirelessly to the musical keyboard, so you can play all your favorite

holiday music through its powerful stereo amplification system.

Add favorite aromas. Now that you have the sights and sounds of the season covered, don't forget its delicious scents. Your nose will know the holidays have arrived when you bake that first batch of gingerbread cookies or light candles in scents like evergreen and peppermint. You can even try simmering a pot of water and add aromatic ingredients to it such as cloves, cinnamon sticks and rosemary.

Send season's greetings/ Set aside an afternoon to compose and send holiday cards. This end-of-year tradition allows you to reconnect with the people you care about most and can help lend the season a touch of normalcy.

While you may not be making your usual visit to relatives or throwing your annual bash, there are many creative ways to make the most of the season and create happy memories for years to come.

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When Buyers and Sellers Want Realtors to Be Blabbermouths

You'd never know it to meet me today but I was born with some kind of neurological condition that resulted in my reaching the age of five without speaking a word. That was in the days before autism spectrum disorder had been diagnosed and certainly there was no treatment available for kids like me who were non-social, withdrawn and didn't verbalize.

But from what my mother told me, I recovered from whatever that condition was completely, and miraculously on the final day of a nine-week novena she made at St. Donato's Roman Catholic Church in West Philadelphia. After hearing this story, I never questioned reports of miracles, because I haven't shut up since.

While I was able to speak, I still had to challenge myself to become more socially interactive in school. I debated, I wrote for the school newspaper, then once out of college, my first job was as a newspaper reporter and, after that, a public relations practitioner, all requiring verbal communication.

But only when I ventured into real estate, did I find myself talking all the time. From what industry pundits say, that's a good thing.

At a real estate convention I attended a



By Bill Primavera

while back, one of the keynote speakers identified the chief "irk" that sellers and buyers have with realtors, and it's all about communication. She said that the most common real estate situation that negatively impacts realtors' clients is inadequate disclosure. She went on to paint scenarios which might convince potential home buyers and sellers to have frequent heart-to-hearts with their realtors to know as much as they can about the whole process, particularly what is likely to happen next.

In defense of myself and my fellow real estate practitioners, I would say that out of self-preservation, we're way ahead

of the game. I've never heard any group of people who talk as much as realtors do in their mission to inform their clients. Whenever I was in my office (prior to COVID-19), there was a cacophony of many voices on the phone, all explaining to clients what is happening and what to expect. We sometimes had to ask each other to quiet down.

But the real estate purchase or sale process is so complex and so all-encompassing a discipline that the totally unexpected or unknown can happen at any time. And it's the realtor who can get blamed for lack of disclosure on the matter.

There are the standard disclosures that sellers and realtors sign when taking a listing: the disclosure of agency that identifies the relationship of the realtor to the seller; a lead disclosure if the house was built before 1978, and the affiliated business disclosure, so that sellers can be aware of the other businesses which the realtor's company owns.

The big disclosure that most buyers and sellers relate to is the property condition disclosure in which the seller identifies all the known defects of a house to its buyer. While it is required in many states, such as California where the code is particularly stringent, in New York, the seller may choose not to issue such a disclosure, but rather pay \$500 at closing to the buyer. The overwhelming majority of sellers choose this option, rather than risk being liable for serious house defects.

Above and beyond these expected disclosures are those that require a simple explanation before the fact, rather than after. Nobody likes surprises or hearing, "oh by the way," when it may be too late to be informed. It is suggested that this is best accomplished by the realtor preparing a list of frequently asked questions, such as: Do I need a lawyer, and who pays the commission?

Besides asking such questions, it is suggested that realtors also present a list of what sellers or buyers can expect along the way. Those include realtors who make

appointments to show your home will sometimes be late or not show up; know that the HGTV shows are scripted; expect that the closing date will be delayed; and, expect that you won't know until the last moment how much money you must bring to the closing.

The more realtors paint a futuristic picture, especially accompanied by stories of personal experience, the better sellers and buyers will feel empowered to make informed decisions. That kind of clear and open communication is what helps avoid problems such as misunderstandings, missteps and/or unlawful acts.

Recently I was in Philadelphia and happened to pass the church where my mother told me I was miraculously granted my ability to speak. I looked at the granite steps leading to the church's impressive doors and could recall walking up and down them, holding my mother's hand, all those years ago.

It brought a lump to my throat, nudging alongside my voice box that has had a lot of practice in recent years as a realtor who blabs on and on to clients about what's going on.

Bill Primavera, while a writer and public relations practitioner, is also a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate. To engage the talents and services of The Home Guru to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.

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Chappaqua School District to Press Forward With Subdivision of Parcel

By Martin Wilbur

The Chappaqua Board of Education approved relisting a vacant 20-acre property last week that it hopes to subdivide and sell for \$2.5 million.

District officials have decided to press forward with the subdivision and sale of the Zauderer property off of Garey Drive in Chappaqua despite the likelihood of having to spend more money to complete the process. Thus far, the district has spent \$548,169 on various professional services and will have to pay an additional \$256,051 in charges that initially hadn't been authorized but related to the work.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Christine Ackerman said she will be holding biweekly

project management meetings until the outstanding paperwork is submitted to the New Castle Planning Board for approval.

"It's complicated in a lot of ways but it makes sense for us to move forward because of the value of the property," Ackerman said. "When you approve what it would be listed as, and subdivided versus not, and that I think will determine whether we move forward with the approval process."

The district has periodically appeared before the Planning Board for the past five years and had received a preliminary approval. Ackerman said the remaining work should be less expensive than what had been accomplished previously.

In 1973, the Chappaqua School District bought the property for \$125,000 in case it needed to expand and build another school building. However, once the district decided to construct Seven Bridges Middle School at a different location, the parcel hasn't been needed.

Ackerman said the district is going through the effort and expense to subdivide for a residential developer because the property has significantly more value once that process is completed.

Despite some hesitancy, the board last Tuesday approved listing the property for \$2.5 million with William Raveis.

"I think at this point we need to take that

leap of faith that this is the last step," said board Vice President Holly McCall.

President Victoria Tipp said it's unclear what the district even expects to occur.

While it may not seem prudent to commit to the additional expenditure of money, Ackerman noted that it will be worth the effort if the district can finish the subdivision.

"It just doesn't feel right because we have spent so much money to get to this place," she said. "But to not move forward because we have spent so much money doesn't make sense based on the value of the property if we can complete the subdivision process."

Coldwell Banker to Host Holiday Benefit for St. Jude Children's Hospital

Coldwell Banker Realty in Connecticut and Westchester is hosting a virtual "Home for the Holidays Extravaganza" Facebook Premier on Wednesday, Dec. 16 at 6 p.m. to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The event will be accessible through www.facebook.com/CBRealtyCTWC.

The more attendees that join in, the more Coldwell Banker Realty will donate to St. Jude via Coldwell Banker Cares, the real estate company's philanthropic arm. If viewership exceeds 1,000, Coldwell Banker Cares will donate \$25,000. If the broadcast surpasses 2,000 attendees, the donation will be \$35,000. If viewership exceeds 3,000, St. Jude will receive \$50,000.

The Coldwell Banker Realty "Home for the Holidays Extravaganza" will feature a virtual tour of the Connecticut and Westchester communities that affiliated agents serve, selections from the Fairfield County Children's Choir and a cooking class that will guide viewers in baking a sweet breakfast treat for holiday mornings. There is no cost to join the Facebook premier; attendees just need to log on to enjoy the show and feel good knowing that their involvement is helping to increase Coldwell Banker Realty's donation to St. Jude.

"I'm excited to extend this invitation to join our Coldwell Banker family for these joyous holiday festivities as we support the important work of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital," said Joe Valvano, president of Coldwell Banker Realty in Connecticut and Westchester County.

The CB Supports St. Jude partnership helps St. Jude Children's Research Hospital treat more than 8,500 children a year from across the United States and around the globe who are being treated for cancer and other life-threatening diseases, providing many patient families a home away from home when they need it most. Learn more at www.coldwellbanker.com/stjude.



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Christmas and the Celtic Winter Solstice: Roots Entwined

Many religious traditions and observances have their roots in pre-Christian beliefs, and Christmas is no exception. Bear in mind that sacred scripture says nothing definitive about when Jesus was born.

It wasn't until the 4th century A.D. that church leaders superimposed the birth of Christ on an already existing celebration, the winter solstice. A brilliant stroke!

The winter solstice, which can occur anywhere between Dec. 18 and 23, marks when the sun has reached its lowest point on the horizon in the Northern Hemisphere. The darkness of night is at its longest, and daylight at its shortest. The sun on these days appears to rise in the same spot, and set in the same spot. In fact, the meaning of the word solstice is just that – "sun stand still."

The ancient Celts and their priests, the Druids, celebrated this event in many ways, ranging from festive to somber. Putting the somber first, it is on this day at Neolithic tombs such as Newgrange in Ireland and others throughout the nations of the "Celtic Fringe," are aligned to carry the sun's light through long passageways

into the very heart of tombs, illuminating burial chambers in a fleeting period of absolutely blazing light – but only on these days of the solstice, and no other.

For the Celts, this ushered in a 12-day period of celebration, running from Dec. 25 and ending on Jan. 6. By the 8th century A.D., the church adopted the entire 12 days as part of the Christmas observance, and the Twelve Days of Christmas was born. In Ireland, the 25th is called Nollaig Mór, or Big Christmas. Jan. 6 is called Nollaig Beag, or Little Christmas, a term I recall being used in my

own family many years ago. A present or two was always reserved for this "end-of-season" milestone.

A key ingredient of Celtic celebrations was mistletoe, a revered healing and fertility plant found mainly on oak, ash and apple trees. Long before the Germanic-influenced Christmas tree made its way indoors, a bough of mistletoe would be placed inside the front entrance of a dwelling, there to garb the inhabitants with its protective magic. Oak and ash were particularly sacred to the Druids, as was the holly tree. Small

wonder many of these have survived as Christian traditions.

In fact, the genius of early church leaders is that they recognized that the easiest path to acceptance of a new religion would be to layer it on top of older, established themes and celebrations, rather than start anew. The newly-converted could easily re-associate a festival honoring the annual conquest of darkness by light with a new belief centered on Jesus as "the light of the world."

Of course, adherents to the new also remembered the old ways, and frequently needed reminding that it was the new religion they were now devotees of, and not the old. Traces of the old abound. The Celts celebrated with fire for the 12 days of the solstice festival. An Irish tradition is to place a lighted candle in the window for the 12 days of Christmas. Evergreen branches, holly, mistletoe and yew all have their roots in pre-Christian times.

Now, for a libation on those cold "changing-of-the-year nights," you may consider a glass of mulled wine, a favored beverage of clan chieftains of old during the solstice/Christmas



By Brian McGowan

celebrations. Be warned, this recipe will quench more than a few thirsts.

Ingredients: 1 magnum of good quality red wine; 1 ½ tsp. freshly ground nutmeg; ½ tsp. ground ginger; ½ tsp. ground cinnamon; 1 tsp. whole allspice; 1 tsp. whole cloves; and 1 cinnamon stick.

Simmer gently in a large saucepan for one hour, being careful not to boil. Strain through a cheesecloth. Serve warm. Sweeten with honey or sugar to taste.

Whatever slant colors one's beliefs, the point is the same: banish darkness and welcome light. As the Irish say in their native tongue: "Nollaig Shona Duit!" Pronounced "no-leg show-na ditch." It means "Happy Christmas to you!"

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



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continued on page 26



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Police Blotter

North Castle Police Department

Dec. 6: An E-911 caller reported observing a male party running in the middle of Route 22 at 4:24 p.m. The caller stated that she stopped her vehicle and assisted the party to the side of the roadway, and that she believes he may suffer from a mental disorder. The responding officers also assisted and an ambulance was requested to evaluate the party. Calls were made to surrounding jurisdictions to inquire about any missing person reports, with negative results. Police said the subject's mother arrived on the scene and he was reunited with his family, from whom he had become separated while hiking at Cranberry Lake Preserve.

Peekskill Police Department

Dec. 6: A domestic dispute resulted in the arrest of Jacob Ruffin, 19, who was found in possession of a handgun. He was also in violation of his probation. At about 3:45 p.m., police responded to reports of a domestic dispute involving Ruffin and his girlfriend. The suspect was later spotted on the 1300 block of Howard Street and a foot pursuit with officers ensued. With the assistance of multiple law enforcement agencies, a perimeter was established and he was found hiding on the porch of a house on the 1400 block of Main Street. The girlfriend and child were unharmed.

Yorktown Police Department

Dec. 5: Two Yorktown residents were charged with third-degree grand larceny stemming from a complaint filed in October. Yosef Brodsky, 35, and Todd Woodward, 22, were arrested following an investigation where it is alleged that between July and September multiple checks totaling more than \$30,000 belonging to a victim had been stolen and deposited in someone else's account. Police said Brodsky stole the checks and forged the female victim's signature and Woodward deposited the checks into an account. Both defendants are due to appear in Yorktown Town Court Jan. 14.

Dec. 7: Steven Wojtusiak, 52, of Yorktown, was charged with attempted assault and criminal mischief following a report of a domestic dispute. Wojtusiak allegedly threw a piece of furniture at the victim in an attempt to cause physical injury. It is also alleged he disabled and broke a telephone to prevent the victim from calling 911. A temporary order of protection was served. He is due in Yorktown Town Court Jan. 14.

Dec. 7: Victoria Vukel, 31, of Mohegan Lake, was charged with robbery, burglary and assault in connection with a Nov. 1 incident during which she is suspected of unlawfully entering a Yorktown residence, forcibly stole property and caused physical injury to the victim. She was apprehended on an arrest warrant Dec. 7 following a traffic stop on East Main Street. She was remanded to Westchester County Jail in lieu of \$25,000 bail or \$50,000 bond.

A Spiritual View

By Fr. Nils Chittenden

The most important step in healing is in acknowledging there's a problem. Countless people in 12-step programs and therapy will tell you it's often the most difficult step, too.

How can you address anything other than the symptoms if you won't admit to the insidious corrosion inside of you as their source?

An alcoholic, for instance, may have a subconscious feeling they're not living their life like they should be; something feels wrong. Then may come the conscious realization that there's actually a serious problem. Admitting that can be really hard. But harder still is admitting it to others, to the point where it no longer seems shameful to say, "Hi, I'm Johnny, and I'm an alcoholic."

An early step in AA is for sobriety-seekers to take a "fearless moral inventory" of themselves and how their previous behavior hurt not only themselves but others. Crucially, part of this process is to then seek to make amends with those they have wounded over the years.

Twelve-steps grew from faith traditions; it's easy to see areas of overlap. What might surprise you though, in my view, is that nowadays those 12-step groups, do a much better job of acknowledging the role of wrongdoing and how it has to be addressed

and amended before healing can truly come about. Many churches, in my experience, gloss over the confession of sinfulness and our deep need for forgiveness because (wrongly, as it happens) they think it all sounds a bit of a downer when they're trying to be all peppy to attract people.

Faith communities' job is to help us become the people that God yearns for us to be, which is enjoying life in all its fullness. But we'll never get to that point without healing, and we'll never find that healing if we don't admit that there's a problem – a problem with its roots in wrongdoing. And, trust me, that's true for all of us.

Christmas is the time when God is born in human form to offer us healing. But we need to acknowledge we need that healing. This is why Christmas is preceded by the season of Advent – when Christians are supposed to take afresh that fearless moral inventory of themselves, so that they understand what it is in them that needs to be healed.

These days, you'd be hard-pushed to know that Advent exists at all. But without it, Christmas is not what it should be, and neither are we.

Fr. Nils Chittenden is rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Armonk and is part of the Armonk Faith Alliance. The alliance also comprises Congregation B'nai Yisrael, Hillside Church, St. Patrick's RC Church and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

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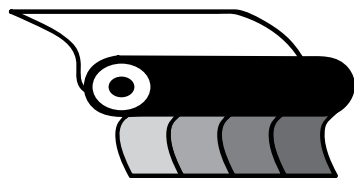
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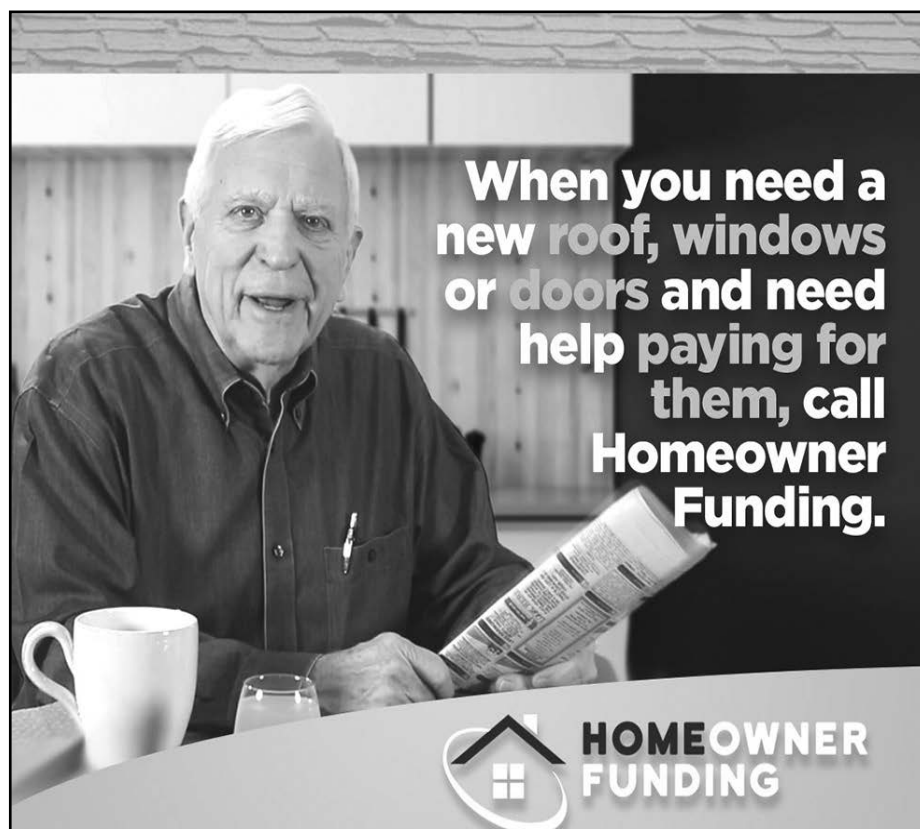
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County Approves Ambulance Deal With Westchester Med Center Operator

The Board of Legislators unanimously approved a new agreement with the Westchester County Health Care Corporation, owner of the Westchester Medical Center, to provide ambulance services to five nearby facilities on the county's Valhalla campus, including the 149-bed Volunteers of America Grasslands Homeless Shelter.

The new arrangement will relieve stress on the Valhalla Volunteer Ambulance Corps, which has been providing services to the facilities since a prior agreement with the medical center expired years ago.

Westchester will pay \$200,000 a year for five years for the service. The money is a fully reimbursable Medicaid expense; therefore, the contract comes at no net cost to county taxpayers.

"This is a wonderful solution for everyone," said County Legislator Margaret Cunzio (C-Mount Pleasant). "There were around 350 ambulance calls at the Valhalla

campus last year. The Valhalla Volunteer Corps, and Westchester EMS, have done amazing work responding to the need, but for a local volunteer corps, the number of calls to serve these facilities is challenging."

The agreement renews a relationship for ambulance services with the medical center, which had expired nearly a decade ago. The county has been searching for a new contractor to avoid overtaxing the local volunteer corps, but offers from other vendors were as much as four times more expensive.

The new deal covers ambulance services for the Volunteers of America Grasslands Homeless Shelter, the largest facility covered under the contract, as well as the Children's Village Sanctuary Shelter, Woodfield Cottage detention center and the TLP Training Center. It will also cover services at the Volunteers of America Valhalla residence, though at the moment that facility is unused.

Westchester Breaks Ground on County Compost and Education Center

By Martin Wilbur

Ground was broken last Wednesday on Westchester County's compost and education center on the Grasslands campus in Valhalla that will accept scraps of food from municipalities that don't have their own composting programs.

County Executive George Latimer was joined by officials from the Department of Environmental Facilities (DEF) to help publicize the center, which will be named CompostED, that is expected to open sometime next spring. It will be built by R. Pagni and Sons, Inc. of Thornwood.

In addition to being a facility to compost, it will also service as an education center to help residents, students and municipal officials from around the county to learn how to recycle food scraps.

"All of this is part of a multiyear effort, which is trying to take food out of the waste stream, properly disposed of and one more step toward the kind of environment we need to have," Latimer said.

Westchester is already recycling roughly half of its waste, well above the national average, and the facility is expected to increase that total, said DEF Commissioner Vincent Kopicki.

Deputy Commissioner Louis Vetrone said the county has been moving forward with education efforts to increase composting and recycling, which have increased since the start of the pandemic.



County Executive George Latimer, right, and officials from the Department of Environmental Facilities, hold a ceremonial groundbreaking last Wednesday for the compost and education center in Valhalla. The facility is scheduled to open sometime in the spring.

"We can't wait for this facility to be up and running," Vetrone said. "It furthers our mission of offering environmental education programs to the county's students and residents."

Last winter when Latimer announced that the facility would be built as part of a larger composting effort in the county, it was estimated that the cost to build CompostED would be about \$450,000. At that time, county officials said about 125,000 tons of commercial food waste and more than 85,000 tons of residential food waste are generated each year in Westchester.

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Need to Find a Holiday Gift? Some Great Local Places to Try

By Nancy Sorbella

If there is one thing we could all use as 2020 comes to a close, it is some genuine joy, some hint of what we are used to this time of year.

The pandemic has me all mixed up – hoping for better days, wishing we could be celebrating the season in the ways we have been accustomed to, being especially grateful for what we do have and concerned for those who now have so much less. What do I even do with all that mental energy as the holidays approach?

I think we end up carving out a new space for December 2020, and crafting a new plan for how to make it meaningful. I'm no expert, but I think I am finding my way.

December has always been my favorite month, or "season" as it really is. Is it because I was born on Christmas Eve? Not sure, but I've tried to make each day festive and meaningful even in small ways.

I love to experience every seasonal event, taste and scent that the Hudson Valley has to offer. It is no secret that I love to shop and having an excuse such as a holiday gift list replaces that tinge of guilt with the spirit of giving.

This year, too, I am acutely aware of how our local small businesses (in this case shops and boutiques) have been impacted by the pandemic and, without them, the tapestry of each community would become frayed to the point of no return. If we need



Wishes in Yorktown Heights, left, and Fantastic Finds, the thrift gift shop in Chappaqua that is operated by Support Connection, are two of the places to visit if you're looking for a gift for a special someone this holiday season.

anything right now, it is a connection, a social, emotional and physical sense of security, of support and of purpose.

Holiday shopping might not be the panacea needed to change the world, but it could matter, if all of us who can, patronized our local merchants this month more than ever. For my gift list I am all into shop local



NANCY SORBELLA PHOTOS

and share my finds with you. My shopping detours saw me crisscrossing two counties over two days in pursuit of the perfect pandemic presents.

Wishes, 1811 Commerce St., Yorktown Heights

Wishes was the perfect spot to start the day. It is always a treat – sparkly, bright

and chock full of treasures. For the holiday season it does not disappoint. There is something for everyone, every budget – hostess, teacher, friend, family, baby, pet and more. Friendly, personal service, and during the pandemic orders can be called in and picked up curbside.

What not to miss: Full disclosure, I have never come out of Wishes empty-handed. This visit I was able to check off more than a few gifts including red plaid tartan fireplace matches, a red plaid 'Tis the Season pillow and a stocking stuffer Melting Snowman. Bonus. There's free gift wrapping.

What I wanted to buy: faux fur fingerless gloves, a cozy buffalo plaid wrap, a crushed candy cane candle and a So Merry banner. If no one I know takes that hint I'll just have to go back to Wishes myself.

Info: Visit www.wishesboutique.com.

Croton Running Company, 119 Grand St., Croton-on-Hudson

Don't let the name fool you. Westchester's newest running store, while being all things to all runners, is so much more than that. It is a running club, a running community, a source for local events and most every type of footwear, sock, flare or apparel needed to be a runner. It also happens to be a great spot for holiday gifts for any athlete.

There is exceptional customer service and the owner has been known to personally home deliver orders during the

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Ballard-Durand Honors and Pays Tribute to Families and First Responders Affected by COVID-19

WHITE PLAINS, NY, December 4, 2020 –As a tribute and memorial to those whose lives have been affected by the pandemic, we present the Ballard Hope Tree; a living symbol of hope and will.

"Adorned with 15,000 shimmering green lights and flying dove ornaments we designed the Ballard Hope Tree to provide a feeling of calm, reflection and encouragement to those who need it." – Owner, Matthew Fiorillo

Our desire is for the community, families, and individuals to view the Hope Tree as a beacon of peace and renewal in the midst of their heaviness and to experience comfort and healing.

"The Ballard Hope Tree will let our communities know that they are not alone, that their families and loved ones will not be forgotten, and that we greatly appreciate our community members who put their lives at great risk to assist others during the height of the pandemic."

Together, may we continue to support each other with the hope and will to move forward to a brighter future.

The Ballard Hope Tree will be displayed outside Ballard-Durand's White Plains location on Maple Avenue at the corner of South Broadway.

For more information, contact
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Need to Find a Holiday Gift? Some Great Local Places to Try

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pandemic.

What not to miss: That personalized attention to detail when it comes to the right fit, the right shoe. They have all the extras like sunglasses, hats, t-shirts, locking shoelaces but my favorite is the breathable running masks! One of these should be in every athlete's stocking this year. A special plus is you can find out where the regional 5Ks are, both virtual and in-person.

Info: Visit www.crotonrunningcompany.com.

The Village Bookstore, 10 Washington Ave., Pleasantville

The name says it all. The Village Bookstore is the quintessential hometown hub with an extensive collection of titles, great gifts for bookworms. It's cozy and friendly with a helpful staff. The space is welcoming and encourages lingering (socially distanced and with a mask), there is a kid's space and their featured selections have something for every interest and reading level. They will order anything, gift wrap and offer curbside pickup.

What not to miss: Those personal recommendations for each reader on your gift list. Who isn't journaling or documenting 2020? The Village Bookstore has a beautiful journal or blank composition

book that will encourage even the "glass half full" folks to write creatively. A little reminiscent of The Shop Around the Corner, especially at this time of year.

Info: Visit www.thevillagebookstore.net

Fantastic Finds, 400 King St., Chappaqua

Fantastic Finds was my last stop for this recent shopping trip but certainly not the least. There was a holiday sale but go anytime, the selection is incredible and the prices are always good. I follow many designers who mix their thrift finds with high-end decor and that is exactly what you can do here. They carry clean, organized,

gently-worn apparel and accessories and fabulous jewelry as well. My gift list shrank here and my own personal treasure hunt was a success as well.

Checked off the gift list: sterling silver chain, chinoiserie cachepot (perfect for filling with seasonal paperwhite bulbs), several brand new chinoiserie ginger jar ornaments and a vintage cameo clasp set of pearls. Did I mention every purchase benefits the mission of the Support Connection?

What not to miss: The jewelry. The table-scape possibilities, from small gifts to repurposed vintage serving pieces, scarves and accessories. If you're like me, you will enjoy the fine fur selection (no judgment, they're vintage), the quality menswear for young men entering the workforce, ginger jars, planters and lighting. If you are just doing holiday shopping, there is a treat for everyone on the list and you'll feel good while doing it.

Info: Visit www.supportconnection.org (click on Our Store: Fantastic Finds).

Art\$WChallenge to Raise Money for the Arts Open Until Dec. 31

The Art\$WChallenge, a unique public/private partnership between ArtsWestchester, Westchester County Executive George Latimer and the County Board of Legislators, has made available \$300,000 in matching grant money to benefit arts and cultural groups in the county through Dec. 31.

More than 120 arts organizations are eligible for \$1,500 to \$7,500 in matching funds based on their ability to raise private funds before the year's end.

"Community support has enabled us to keep the arts alive and vital in Westchester in good times – and in not so good times," said ArtsWestchester CEO Janet Langsam. "Right now is one of those not so good times."

In a recent ArtsWestchester study of Westchester cultural organizations, 87 percent of organizations reported they were not faring well during the pandemic.

Fifty-five groups have already made their Art\$WChallenge match, together raising \$485,000 in new private donations, of which \$237,000 were eligible for the match.

Through Dec. 31, new or increased donations made to any eligible Westchester arts group and will be matched by ArtsWestchester with support from county government.

For more info or to donation, visit <https://artswestchester.org/grants/artswchallenge/>.

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Observing the Couple at the Next Dinner Table



By Nick Antonaccio

I have a few favorite columns that I've penned over the course of my years writing for The Examiner. They span technical, educational, news and personal opinion topics. This week I'm reprising one of the more humorous

stories.

Over the course of my travels to wine country destinations, intermingled with professional conferences at highly rated hotels and resort properties, I have witnessed, and been a party to, a number of memorable meals and wines.

A recent dining experience reminded me of an incident my wife and I witnessed at an expensive restaurant on a visit to a high-end, exclusive resort (for business, not personal). It was one of those restaurants with a wine list that resembled a book and was as thick as the Manhattan Yellow Pages. (Remember that tome?)

Sitting at our table enjoying a half-bottle of a rare Burgundy available at such restaurants, we noticed a couple on

a date being seated at the next table and determined that this must be a special evening. When the sommelier came to their table, the boyfriend (I'll refer to him as "The Gusher") deferred to his girlfriend ("Easily Impressed") to select the wine. She quickly asked for her favorite wine – Merlot. The Gusher, knowing that her Merlot of choice was Cupcake (such a cute name), usually on sale for \$7.99, in a loud voice quickly interjected:

"Bring the most expensive Merlot you have."

After all, this seemed to be a special occasion, he was clearly trying to impress his date and besides, how much could an "expensive" Merlot cost? \$50? \$100?

This proclamation made the sommelier very uncomfortable. He asked in a calm but deliberate voice, "Sir, as you can tell from our vast wine list, we have a broad and deep selection of Merlots in several price ranges. Allow me to review them with you for your consideration."

"No, no, nothing's too good for my baby," gushed The Gusher.

"But sir . . ."

"What's wrong, do I have to speak to the Maître d'?"

We could see the look of glee in The Gusher's eyes as the sommelier was



playing perfectly into his plan to impress Easily Impressed. At a cost of up to \$100 it might be expensive, but certainly a worthwhile investment.

"No sir, I'll bring the wine to you post haste."

The sommelier, never one to upset a patron and seeing no compromise, retreats to the vast wine cellar that holds a number of the world's most highly respected wines.

As we watch, mesmerized by what is unfolding before us, the sommelier decorously (resignedly?) presents the wine to The Gusher. He notices the label is in French, is written in fancy Old World calligraphy, has the name of a producer and locale he has never heard of and is an older vintage. He realizes he has no idea what he is ordering, hesitates for a second, but the label has all of the obscure elements necessary to impress Easily Impressed. Again, the sommelier hesitates.

"Sir, would you care to consider an

alternative wine that I think the lady might enjoy?"

"No, please open the bottle."

Easily Impressed notices the older vintage.

"I like my wines as fresh as possible; I hope this 2005 wine is good."

She sips the wine. "I like it," she proclaims.

Immediately The Gusher begins to gush profusely. "Nothing's too good for my baby."

Fast forward: The Gusher and Easily Impressed are pawing each other and whispering sweet nothings in each other's ear as they enjoy their meal.

The check arrives. The Gusher's eyes bulge and his face becomes flushed. The wine he insisted on ordering was a Chateau Petrus – the second most expensive wine in the world. The 2005 vintage served to them was listed on the wine list for \$4,500.

We concluded that their dining experience was likely more memorable for The Gusher than for Easily Impressed. Fair warning to the rest of us: rely on professional advice for your selections, not your emotions.

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 antonaccio@theexaminernews.com or on Twitter @sharingwine.

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