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December 14 - December 20, 2021

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 13, Issue 664

Odell Declares Putnam Won't Enforce 'Unrealistic' Mask Mandate

By Rick Pezzullo

Gov. Kathy Hochul's statewide mandate that individuals 12 years and older wear masks or show proof of vaccination to enter all public spaces went into effect Monday, but Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell declared Putnam will not be enforcing what she called an "unrealistic" edict.

Odell, a Republican, said neither the Putnam County Health Department nor law enforcement officials will step in to admonish anyone who doesn't follow the Democratic governor's mandate.

"Our Main Street businesses have followed all the rules, from recommendations and guidelines to shutdowns throughout this pandemic in order to keep the public and their customers safe and healthy," Odell said. "Now, in the midst of the holiday season,

business owners are facing numerous operating issues including supply chain and hiring difficulties. We cannot expect them to implement this unrealistic order."

Odell said Hochul didn't consult with any county executives before issuing the mandate that she maintained forces the county to redeploy resources essential in fighting the spread of COVID-19.

"It's not a wise use of resources, as any County Executive would have pointed out, had they been consulted," Odell remarked. "In addition, our Department of Health is a team of health care professionals whose job is to educate and inform residents about the steps necessary to protect themselves. It is not a policing agency."

"Here in Putnam County, the Health Department is working overtime to vaccinate our residents. Are we really supposed to

stop them from running essential vaccine clinics and redirect them to checking whether the unvaccinated are entering buildings unmasked?" she continued. "The department is in the midst of arranging a private-public partnership to create a COVID testing site that will open at the Donald B. Smith campus in Carmel before Christmas and operate six days a week."

When announcing the action last week, Hochul explained the determination was based on the state's weekly seven-day case rate, as well as increasing hospitalizations. The new business and venue requirements extend to both patrons and staff and is in effect until Jan. 15, 2022, after which state officials will re-evaluate based on current conditions.

"As Governor, my two top priorities are to protect the health of New Yorkers and

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Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell

Putnam Valley Students Hold Food Drive



Students at Putnam Valley Middle School collected more than 1,400 food items during its annual food drive, benefitting the Putnam Valley community food pantry at Grace Methodist Church and the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown's food pantry. The food drive was sponsored by the PVMS student council, which turned the food drive into a contest, creating friendly competition between the students in grades five through eight. For each item donated, students received a ticket for a lottery—one student from each grade level winning a \$10 Amazon gift card. The grade level that collected the most items also won Dunkin Donuts at lunch. The student that donated the most items school-wide won a \$20 Amazon gift card. This year, sixth-grader Abigail Kui was determined to win, donating a truckload of food, totaling 352 items.

Health Dept. Reports Flu Cases on the Rise in Putnam County

By Rick Pezzullo

The Putnam County Health Department is reporting an increased number of influenza cases in recent week.

According to officials, flu cases jumped from eight in the week ending November 13, to 60 cases in the week ending December 4. Half of the cases were individuals in their late teens and early 20s.

The Health Department has alerted healthcare providers to have increased suspicion for flu. Prevention methods such as mask wearing, frequent handwashing, and respiratory etiquette that are recommended for COVID-19 will also reduce risk for flu. Those who have not already received their flu vaccine this season are encouraged that it is not too late to get vaccinated.

COVID boosters or primary series shots can be administered at the same time as the flu vaccine and are advised by healthcare experts to protect yourself and your family this holiday season. Both vaccines are also currently being given at local pharmacies.

Meanwhile, with winter rapidly approaching, the Health Department is encouraging residents to enjoy outdoor activities safely. Temperatures usually drop about 10 degrees each month from October through January, with average lows in December around the freezing point of 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

"Fresh air and sunshine, paired with walking and other outdoor exercise, can have positive impacts on a person's physical and mental health especially in winter," said Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD. "There are however cold weather risks of which everyone should be informed. If a person's body temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit due to prolonged exposure to cold, this can lead to hypothermia, a serious and potentially deadly condition. When this occurs, the heart, other organs and the nervous system slow down and malfunction. If left untreated, it can lead to heart or respiratory failure, and possibly death."

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Mahopac High School Musician First Violinist at All-State Orchestra

By Rick Pezzullo

Mahopac High School junior Rachel Berger played First Violin in the All-State Symphony Orchestra at the NYSSMA Conference in Rochester in early December.

The All-State Symphony Orchestra is made up of the top student musicians in New York and Berger was selected after auditioning at the Solo Festival in the spring.

"Even scoring perfectly at the audition, which Rachel did, does not guarantee you a spot in one of the ensembles," said Evan McGregor, Mahopac High Orchestra Director and Music Department Chair. "Rachel's selection is a testament to her drive for excellence and her achievement of it."

Berger started playing violin when she was five years old. She said it was great to play with a group of such high-level musicians at All-State, but that she also enjoys playing at local hospitals and nursing homes, which she has done for community service.

"I really love to play violin because I find it extremely rewarding to see how my music can bring comfort and joy to others," she said. "It is incredibly heartwarming to see



Mahopac High School junior Rachel Berger

the faces of the old and sick light up when I perform."

The Mahopac Central School District is known for its outstanding performing arts. The high school offers a wide array of musical ensembles including the Philharmonic Orchestra, String Sinfonietta, Chorus, Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band and produces a musical extravaganza known as "Illusion" each year featuring the district's most talented rock musicians and vocalists.

It is also regularly cited as among the Best Schools for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation.

Odell Declares Putnam Won't Enforce 'Unrealistic' Mask Mandate

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to protect the health of our economy. The temporary measures I am taking today will help accomplish this through the holiday season," Hochul stated. "We shouldn't have reached the point where we are confronted with a winter surge, especially with the vaccine at our disposal, and I share many New Yorkers' frustration that we are not past this pandemic yet."

"I have warned for weeks that additional steps could be necessary, and now we are at that point based upon three metrics: Increasing cases, reduced hospital capacity, and insufficient vaccination rates in certain areas," Hochul added.

Since Thanksgiving, Hochul said the statewide seven-day average case rate has increased by 43% and hospitalizations have increased by 29%. While the percentage of New Yorkers fully vaccinated continues to increase—gaining 2% from Thanksgiving weekend to now—the uptick is not fast enough to completely curb the spread of the virus, particularly among communities with low vaccination coverage.

A violation of any provision of the measure is subject to a maximum fine of \$1,000 for each violation. Local health departments

are being asked by state officials to enforce these requirements.

"Community spread requires a community-minded solution, as the Omicron variant emerges and the overwhelmingly dominant Delta variant continues to circulate. We have the tools we need to protect against the virus - and now we must ensure we use them," Acting Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett stated. "There are tools each individual can use, and there are actions we can take as government. Getting vaccinated protects you, and wearing a mask is how we will better protect each other. Both vaccination and mask-wearing are needed to slow this COVID-19 winter surge."

Since vaccines for children ages 5 -11 have only been available since November, they only have to have proof of having had at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccination.

Odell is not pleased with Hochul's mandate.

"County executives throughout the state had hoped that the change in the governor's office would have led to an improved partnership between the state and its counties," Odell stated. "Clearly, we are still waiting for that change."

A Visit with Santa



Santa Claus made a stop at Once Upon A Time Preschool in Putnam Valley Friday to hear the wish lists of children and spread holiday cheer.

Health Dept. Reports Flu Cases on the Rise in Putnam

continued from page 1

Older adults and infants are among those at higher risk for hyperthermia, since they are less able to regulate their body temperature. Symptoms to watch for include shivering, memory loss, clumsiness or lack of coordination, slurred speech or mumbling, shallow or slow breathing, drowsiness or low energy, and loss of consciousness. Infants suffering from hypothermia may have bright red or cold skin, and low energy. Medical attention is needed if hypothermia is suspected. While awaiting help, the person should be brought to a warm room, and any wet clothing should be removed.

Certain factors increase the risk for hypothermia. These include exhaustion, older age, very young age, mental health issues, dehydration, certain medications, and alcohol or drug use. However, anyone can suffer from hypothermia given the right set of circumstances. Even athletes can become hypothermic during strenuous outdoor activities, losing heat quickly if they become extremely overtired, dehydrated, and damp from sweat. Hypothermia can also occur indoors, and this is of particular concern with the elderly.

Recommendations from the National

Institute of Aging suggest setting the thermostat to at least 68 to 70 F. Infants less than one year of age should never sleep in a cold room. To prevent loss of body heat, they should sleep in warm clothing, not with blankets which put them at higher risk for sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS.

Frostbite is another cold weather concern. This injury is caused by the freezing of a person's skin and underlying tissues, typically hands, feet, nose, ears, chin, and cheeks. Having poor circulation or not being properly dressed for the outdoors can put someone at a greater risk of developing frostbite. With early frostbite, also known as frostnip, no permanent damage occurs. The earliest signs are cold skin with a prickling sensation, which leads to numbness. As frostbite worsens, discolored skin and a hard or waxy appearance to the skin develops. Discolored skin can vary—red, white, blueish-white, grayish-yellow, purplish, brown, or ashen tones may result.

Wearing multiple loose layers of clothing, as well as hats, mittens or gloves, and scarfs are effective methods for limiting cold weather problems and appreciating the full benefits and enjoyment of outdoor winter activities.

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Dan's Wine of the Year

2014 Casa Santos Lima Reserva



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

\$11⁹⁷

Jason's Wine of the Year

2019 Oak Farm Tievoli Cabernet Sauvignon



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

\$14⁹⁷

Suburban's Sparkling Wine of the Year

NV Isotta Manzoni Prosecco Rose



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

\$13⁹⁷

Tom's Wine of the Year

2018 Laurent Combier Crozes Hermitage



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

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Board of Legislators Approve \$2.2B Budget for 2022 With Tax Levy Cut

By Martin Wilbur

The Westchester Board of Legislators voted unanimously Monday morning to approve the 2022 county budget that increases support of human services and expands the county's investment in infrastructure improvements.

The \$2.2 billion spending plan cuts the county property tax levy for the third consecutive year, this time by \$7 million,

avoids the use of surplus money and addresses key social needs issues.

County Executive George Latimer is expected to sign the 2022 budget Tuesday afternoon.

Board Chairman Ben Boykin (D-White Plains) said the county is better off financially than it was four years ago and is making crucial investments in capital projects and assisting those who need help.

"Today, we've restored the county's financial health and we are expanding our investment in Westchester's future – not just by investing in our roads, bridges, parks and transportation, but most importantly by investing in our people," Boykin said. "These budgets put people first."

Among the highlights is a \$10.2 million increase in childcare funding and \$10 million from the American Rescue Plan for the Small

Landlord Rehabilitation Assistance Program, which would provide qualifying building owners with a 75 percent reimbursement for physical improvements to a property in exchange for keeping rents affordable for at least 10 years.

Other initiatives included in next year's budget is \$50 million for land acquisition and infrastructure improvements to entice development of more affordable housing, \$35 million to continue the conversion of the county's Bee-Line bus fleet from fuel to hybrid and electric vehicles and more than \$57 million to upgrade waste water treatment facilities around the county.

There is also funding for flood mitigation around the county. Lawmakers added \$11 million from Latimer's original proposal for flood mitigation along Mamaroneck Avenue from the Sheldrake and Mamaroneck Rivers, which has one of the most acute flooding problems in the county.

Legislator Catherine Borgia (D-Ossining), chair of the Budget and Appropriations Committee, said the increased investment in people, such as more money toward helping working families fund their child care needs and adding \$1 to address food insecurity has helped make the 2022 budget "a transformational" spending plan.

"This budget reflects our values – that government must respond to real community needs – and provides proof that we can strengthen the social safety net, invest in our infrastructure, and at the same time make historic improvements in the county's finances," Borgia said.

Latimer Tests Positive for COVID-19; to Isolate at Home

The Westchester County Executive's office released a statement Monday afternoon revealing that George Latimer tested positive for COVID-19.

"The County Executive sought out a test after hearing that he was exposed at a community event," the statement read. "The County Executive is home in isolation, and is continuing to carry out the work of the Government from his residence. He is grateful his symptoms are mild thanks to his COVID-19 vaccinations."

It was mentioned what event Latimer, 68, attended where he may have been exposed.

He was scheduled to sign the 2022 county budget Tuesday afternoon virtually and will do so over Facebook Live.

Cases of COVID-19 continue to surge with the statewide positivity rate as of Sunday standing at 5 percent.

In Westchester County, the number of active cases has exploded from just over

3,000 last Monday to 4,997 through Sunday, according to the county's COVID-19 dashboard.

On Sunday, there were 350 new positives from 7,306 test administered, a 4.8 percent rate.

Last week, Latimer issued an emergency declaration because of the soaring caseloads.

In Putnam County, the infection rate on Sunday was 5.2 percent. On Monday morning, County Executive MaryEllen Odell issued a statement saying that the county government, Health Department and law enforcement will not be enforcing Gov. Kathy Hochul's "unrealistic" mask mandate.

"Our Main Street businesses have followed all the rules, from recommendations and guidelines to shutdowns throughout this pandemic in order to keep the public and their customers safe and healthy," Odell said. "Now, in the midst of the holiday season, business owners are facing numerous



Westchester County Executive George Latimer

operating issues including supply chain and hiring difficulties. We cannot expect them to implement this unrealistic order."

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Hochul Issues Statewide Mask Mandate as COVID Cases Soar

By Martin Wilbur

Last Friday Gov. Kathy Hochul announced activation of an indoor mask mandate unless a business or organization requires proof of vaccination for entry.

The announcement comes as the latest COVID-19 cases and infection rates continue to soar throughout the region and the state. Last Tuesday, Westchester County officials also confirmed the first Omicron case locally.

Hochul said it is her intention to make the mask mandate, which will require face coverings inside all public spaces, temporary. Gatherings at private homes will not be affected.

The policy will be reassessed on Jan. 15, which will take in the holiday season and its two-week aftermath.

"I have to protect people but also the economy," Hochul said. "I want to make sure that the little businesses that were hurt so hard during the pandemic and have been shut down resulting in their loss of income, the loss of income of all the people who worked for them, we have to prevent that from happening."

As of Saturday, New York State reported a 4.6 percent statewide positivity rate from nearly 250,000 tests administered. Three times from Nov. 30 to Dec. 8 the statewide infection rate reached 5 percent.

Four upstate regions – Western New York, North Country, Finger Lakes and Central New York – each reported a positivity rate of more than 7 percent on Saturday. On Dec. 8, three of those regions had at least a 9

percent infection rate.

The Mid-Hudson region, which includes Westchester and Putnam counties, had the state's second-lowest positivity rate Saturday at 4.8 percent. Only New York City was lower at 3.3 percent.

The state reported that Westchester had a 3.9 percent infection rate on Saturday while Putnam stood at 6.6 percent.

Meanwhile, Westchester, which exceeded 3,000 active cases last Monday for the first time since early this year, surpassed 4,000 cases before the end of last week, according to the county's COVID-19 dashboard. An additional 459 new positive cases were reported by the Westchester Department of Health on Saturday.

Hochul's would-be opponent in next year's gubernatorial election should she gain the Democratic nomination, presumptive Republican frontrunner Lee Zeldin, said Friday he was vehemently opposed to the mask mandate.

"I do not support Kathy Hochul's decision to impose a statewide mask mandate, I do not support her threats and heavy handed approach firing essential workers, trying to turn them from heroes to zeroes, and I do not support her order ending elective procedures," Zeldin said.

"Access to vaccines is important. Access to therapeutics is important. Medical freedom is important."

Last week, Westchester County Executive George Latimer issued an emergency declaration but shied away from calling for a mask mandate other than the already-existing



Gov. Kathy Hochul announced a mask mandate last week until at least Jan. 15 as COVID-19 cases continue to rise.

requirement for face coverings for people on public transportation or to gain admittance into county buildings. However, on Friday afternoon he applauded Hochul's decision.

"We recognize Governor Kathy Hochul for her leadership in announcing a statewide mask mandate," Latimer said in a statement. "This pandemic has reached crisis proportions in parts of the state, and we can't be sure that it won't rise to equal status in the rest of the state. The Governor does not make these decisions lightly, and I respect and appreciate her steady hand in these difficult times. Westchester County

will do our professional best to enforce this mask provision. At this point, this is the best move to protect the health of New Yorkers, and to protect the health of the New York State economy. It is far less restrictive than a shutdown of our businesses; it is an action that shows leadership and restraint."

Hochul's mask mandate is not expected to be popular with some parents, who have been speaking out at local Board of Education meetings this school year, urging school officials to roll back the requirement for students to cover their faces inside school buildings.

At last Wednesday's Byram Hills Board of Education meeting, parents spoke for more than 20 minutes and urged Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jen Lamia and the board to urge the state Education Department to make changes.

"I get the people being upset with the state that your children are in right now," Lamia said. "The Board of Education is not doing that to your children. This is what's coming to us from people who are holding us as a public institution, which we are."

Last Tuesday evening, the New Castle Town Board discussed enacting a local mask mandate for anyone on municipal property and inside places of business such as retail shops or restaurants. However, the initiative failed to receive the requisite support of three members on the four-member board.

The board is scheduled to discuss the issue again this week now that Hochul has put a statewide mandate in effect for the next month.





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Fox Lane Student Makes Threatening Post, But No Imminent Danger

By Martin Wilbur

A threatening social media post from a Fox Lane High School student on Sunday sent shockwaves through the Bedford school community Monday, but district officials and police assured families there was no danger to students.

Bedford Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joel Adelberg informed community members Monday morning in an e-mailed letter and in an online message that a disturbing post on SnapChat from an unidentified student had been circulating among members of the student body, which notified the district of the communication.

Adelberg said the district immediately notified its school resource officer, Bedford police and the Westchester County Police Department. County officers visited the boy's Mount Kisco residence where he was interviewed with his parents present, police said. The family was cooperative and the student was not in school on Monday.

"While we cannot share the details of the investigation, please know that this is taken seriously," Adelberg stated. "The police determined, based upon their investigation, that there is no imminent threat to our school community."

There was added police presence at the campus on Route 172 on Monday, in addition to the regular school resource officer, he said. Classes were held as scheduled, although sources confirmed a significant number of students leaving school. There was also no interruption of classes at the middle school or

the district's five elementary schools.

A screenshot of the student's social post was reviewed by The Examiner, which read "Pray the government never gives me by gun license don't come to school monday, y'all."

The incident lit up local social media boards, with some parents outraged they weren't informed of the incident last night or before they sent their children to school early Monday morning. Some noted that Tuesday is the ninth anniversary of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Conn. It also occurred less than two weeks after the deadly shooting at a Michigan high school.

"I think it is evident, at least to me, that this is not being dealt with seriously enough nor (is) the communication to the community adequate," one parent posted. "So discouraging and disheartening give the climate we are living in."

Others noted the student made additional posts later Monday morning; those posts were also reviewed by The Examiner.

Adelberg said the high school and district safety teams met throughout the day on Monday and all district facilities were placed in lockdown, a protocol when the district closely monitors all traffic in and out of the building.

Personnel throughout the district were asked to be even more vigilant in managing the flow of traffic entering and exiting the school and will occur on Tuesday.

"I know that there are questions from community members about what happens next," Adelberg said. "Our district has strict protocols in place regarding disciplinary proceedings and clinical support. Today's

incident will require both. There will be strict and stiff disciplinary actions taken and there will be clinical support made available to involved students."

Adelberg thanked students and parents who swiftly contacted district personnel and the

police upon learning of the threatening post.

"We cannot stress the continuing importance for vigilance," he stated. "These are challenging times and we must look out for and protect one another."

Ronald McDonald House to Host Inaugural GiveByGaming Video Tournament

Ronald McDonald House of the Greater Hudson Valley announced Monday it will be hosting its first-ever GiveByGaming Video Game Tournament featuring Epic Games' Fortnite, with prizeing being provided by Turtle Beach Corporation.

The two-round tournament will take place this Saturday, Dec. 18. Participation is free.

GiveByGaming tournament participants are encouraged to share their custom fundraising pages with family and friends and to raise funds that can help Ronald McDonald House support families of sick children.

Additionally, participants can also earn community service hours for their schools by raising funds through the tournament.

This initial GiveByGaming Tournament will be the first of many, said Christina Riley, executive director of Ronald McDonald House.

"We are excited to bring this unique opportunity for fundraising and engagement with a whole new demographic of our community and plan to host several similar

gaming tournaments throughout the new year," Riley said.

Turtle Beach, the leading gaming accessory maker, will be donating \$3,500 in prizes to be awarded to top scorers and fundraisers, including gaming gear from its best-selling and award-winning Turtle Beach and ROCCAT brands.

The prize pool, which will be awarded to the top 15 tournament players, will include a grand prize with \$500 worth of gaming accessories including a Turtle Beach Elite Pro 2 headset, ROCCAT Kone Pro gaming mouse and ROCCAT Vulcan TKL Pro mechanical gaming keyboard.

Second- and third-place winners will receive gaming accessories including a Turtle Beach Elite Pro 2 headset. Runner-up prizes include Turtle Beach Recon 200 Gen 2 headsets. Prizes will also be awarded to the top three fundraisers for the event.

The first game of the tournament begins at 2 p.m. For the list of rules and registration, visit <https://bit.ly/GiveByGaming>.

Brewster-Carmel Garden Club Seeks Gardens for Spring Garden Tour

Our club is seeking fine gardens for our showcase tour scheduled for May of 2022. Each garden will be open from 10am to 4pm. If you are willing to share your fine garden with the public for a worthy cause, please contact the Brewster/Carmel Garden Club Fine Garden Tour Chair at bcgardentour@gmail.com. Proceeds will benefit The Putnam County Children's Committee and the club's civic activities.

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Letters to the Editor

Please Call Me Mr. Ambassador to Support Good Local Journalism

The publisher of The Examiner recently appealed to readers to join the evolving world of media subscription and to subscribe to The Examiner.

Newspapers and journalism coexisted for a long time. In fact, I delivered newspapers on a bicycle when I was 12 years old. The institution of the newspaper, that paper that I receive every morning in a blue bag on my driveway, may be an endangered species, but journalism should not be endangered. It is impossible for working stiffs like me to follow and understand what is going on in this world first hand. I need to rely on a good source of information and maybe occasionally two sources of information. I need good journalism.

When I was a high school senior, I

subscribed to The New York Times; it was delivered to my home room. (Can you imagine? That is like 20 years ago. Wait a minute, my arithmetic may be off.) I started a relationship with a newspaper that continues to this day. I have discovered in my adult life that some people dislike The New York Times. Okay, that's fair, but I ask them "Where do you get your news?" Typically, they do not have a good answer, except for my brother, Phil. He dislikes The Times but he reads The Wall Street Journal every day.

My point is that unless you are getting your news from credible world class journalism sites like The Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune,

Houston Chronicle, etc., then you are not well-informed. If your source of news is from television, whether it is from Fox, CNN, MSNBC, they simply cannot invest the amount of time into reporting that print journalism provides. Also, many (most) of the commentators on television are not journalists, they are pundits, advocates, columnists and mostly entertainers.

As the evolution of newspapers changes, we have to adapt in order to support journalism. Subscription to good online journalism is the next step. The end of the costly print and distribution of newspapers is in sight. I must admit that I am doing pretty well reading The New York Times on my phone when I do not have the hard copy.

Now I can support good local journalism by subscribing to The Examiner. I chose the ambassador level because I know a guy who spent a fortune on a presidential campaign to become an ambassador. I spent \$99 in order to become an ambassador. What a deal.

Christopher Carthy,
Armonk

Publisher's Note: We thank Mr. Carthy deeply for his incredibly kind and insightful words. While our print newspaper coverage can still be found for free on theexaminernews.com, we launched a new subscription-based digital publication (Examiner+) in October. Joining our Examiner+ digital newsmagazine community supports Examiner Media's broader local journalism mission. To subscribe to Examiner+, an in-depth news and lifestyle newsmagazine, visit www.examiner-plus.com/ subscribe. We are grateful to Mr. Carthy for selecting our \$99 Ambassador membership option. There's also a \$5.99 monthly paid subscription option and a \$49 annual subscription option being offered for \$39 until Dec. 31.

Byrne's a Strong Putnam County Executive Candidate But it's Not a Done Deal

Recently, I received correspondence from Assemblyman Kevin Byrne declaring his candidacy to serve as our next Putnam County executive. I then read about his announcement in this newspaper. I was excited with Kevin's decision and I contacted him to offer my full support. Our incumbent MaryEllen Odell has done an excellent job serving Putnam County, and Kevin has been right there with MaryEllen as the assemblyman for Putnam County.

As MaryEllen completes her final term in office, I can think of no one better to run for the office than Kevin Byrne.

I was concerned when I read County Legislator Carl Albano's quote in the Courier on Nov. 16, stating "I am in 100 percent and have support of all the GOP committees from as far as I can tell." I know Legislator Albano to be a good man, but this is false and quickly undermines our political process.

Carl cannot make that statement as I never had any communication with him. Carl suggested he had the support of "all the GOP

committees..." As a member of the Carmel Republican Committee, I am annoyed with this statement. Currently, only one candidate has formally announced – Assemblyman Kevin Byrne.

Our GOP committees have not gone through the proper procedure to select a candidate. We have not held interviews and discussions. Each candidate is supposed to come before the committee to be interviewed in order to gain our endorsement prior to our party's county convention. The fact that Carl is suggesting that this is a done deal should give every GOP committee member serious pause.

I am a man that respects the process, as do all the committee members. Candidates who work hard and present a good case for their candidacy will earn our vote and support.

We, as committee members, should be doing our due diligence to represent those people. Ultimately, the members of our Grand Old Party, and then the voters at large in November 2022, will decide who will lead

our county into the future.

Personally, I believe that person to be Kevin Byrne. I have been a supporter of his since he first thought of running for the Assembly and his hard work and attention to detail proved that I made the right choice.

Kevin has worked with numerous county governments – as a first responder, as a nonprofit health leader and as a leader in government having served on a local town Planning Board, as deputy district director to former congresswoman Nan Hayworth and presently as our assemblyman. Kevin also holds a master's degree in public administration and worked in healthcare administration for our state's largest private multispecialty medical group.

He's a fighter –he took on Cuomo and won – and I only see him getting better. Kevin believes in Putnam and I believe in Kevin.

John D. Huffnagel
Carmel Town Republican Committee
Member

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Business Team:

Adam Stone
Publisher
astone@theexaminernews.com

Laura Markowski
Associate Publisher
lmarkowski@theexaminernews.com

Peter Stone
C.F.O.
pstone@theexaminernews.com

To inquire about paid subscriptions, email subscriptions@theexaminernews.com for pricing and other details

PO Box 611
Mount Kisco, NY 10549
914-864-0878
www.TheExaminerNews.com

Print Team:

Martin Wilbur
Editor-in-Chief
mwilbur@theexaminernews.com

Rick Pezzullo
Editor
rpezzullo@theexaminernews.com

Ray Gallagher
Sports Editor
rgallagher@theexaminernews.com

Andy Jacobs
Sports Editor
ajacobs@theexaminernews.com

Annette Van Ommeren
Designer

Paul Cardi
Senior Account Executive
pcardi@theexaminernews.com

Jeff Ohlbaum
Senior Account Executive
johlbaum@theexaminernews.com

Ken Gulmi
Senior Account Executive
kgulmi@theexaminernews.com

Nick Antonaccio
Wine columnist

Bill Primavera
Real estate columnist

Morris Gut
Food Writer

David Devine
Distribution

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Distribution

Digital Team:

Robert Schork
Digital Editorial Director
rschork@theexaminernews.com

Bailey Hosfelt
Reporter
bhosfelt@theexaminernews.com

Dean Pacchiana
Webmaster
dpacchiana@theexaminernews.com

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Guest Column

Clearing Trees Can Have Disastrous Unintended Consequences

I write concerning the scoping of the full state Environmental Quality (SEQR) review mandated by the Mount Pleasant Planning Board regarding the proposed 31-lot cluster project for 715 Sleepy Hollow Rd. in Pocantico Hills.

Specifically, I wish to draw attention to the oral comments received by the board at its Oct. 18 hearing addressing the issue of preserving the rare oak and tulip tree forest that currently occupies the property and which serves as home to myriad, protected animal and plant species.

The board has already received numerous, lengthy explanations concerning the importance of protecting the Critical Environmental Areas that may be drastically damaged by development of the property.

One of the issues that has not received proper attention, however, is the point raised at the hearing by Ms. Moira Trachtenberg: that the cutting of some trees in a sensitive forest environment can lead to the death of many other trees within that forest, producing unintended destruction and deforestation. That issue is especially pertinent in the present case, where evidence of just such a phenomenon was illustrated on two parcels situated within feet of the property.

It is now settled science that trees within a forest grouping often have symbiotic relationships with one another through the joining of their underground root systems.

According to a recent article published by the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences:

"This complex network connecting trees is dependent on a symbiotic relationship with



The shoreline of Pocantico Lake, near the site of the proposed 31-lot cluster project for 715 Sleepy Hollow Rd.

microbes in the soil, like fungi and bacteria. Symbiosis is when two separate organisms form a mutually advantageous relationship with each other. Fungi can cover a large surface area by developing white fungal threads known as mycelium. Mycelium spreads out on top of tree roots by uptaking sugars from the tree and by providing vital minerals back to the tree, such as nitrogen and phosphorus...This symbiotic relationship between tree roots and fungi is known as the mycorrhizal network (from Greek, Myco, "fungi" and Rhiza, "root").

"To identify the species that constitute the mycorrhizal network, scientists have utilized recent technological advances in DNA sequencing and big-data analysis. Microbiologists have identified different species of fungi and bacteria that form

symbiotic relationships with different species of trees. Scientists believe all trees have a mycorrhizal network, but trees only communicate with each other if the fungal and bacterial species that constitute their mycorrhizal networks are the same. The most common combination of fungi constitute the arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) network, which has been found to be important for nutrient uptake in 65% of all trees and plant species. The remaining 35% of tree and plant species may have combinations of other fungi varieties that comprise their networks."

Over the past approximately four years, significant construction and tree cutting has been undertaken on two parcels of land located directly across the street from the western end of the property, at 59 and 61 Old Sleepy Hollow Rd. During that process (from my observations), developers chain-sawed about two dozen mature trees of significant height and girth on those parcels, in what I am certain they claimed was "limited" thinning of the semi-forested residential properties.

A few months later, as any local observer can verify, many of the remaining trees began to sicken and die. I witnessed this myself on a daily basis. As a result, today there remains a single tree out of the several that were not originally cleared on the street-facing portion of the 59 Old Sleepy Hollow Rd. parcel closest to the property, and only a handful of mature trees left on the street side of the 61 Old Sleepy Hollow Rd. parcel out of many more not originally cut.

Under such circumstances, it is clear to

any reasonable observer that the 715 Sleepy Hollow Rd. property may well sit within a particularly sensitive forest environment with a mycorrhizal network, the disturbance of which has a profoundly negative effect on all trees in the immediate vicinity.

I respectfully suggest that such an obviously observed and potentially dangerous environmental phenomenon at least mandates further investigation by scientific consultants (perhaps those familiar with the local environment in the neighboring Rockefeller Preserve) and should be included as part of the scoping of the full SEQR Environmental Impact Statement on the property.

Such scoping should also encompass the necessity for an examination of the deforested parcels at 59 and 61 Old Sleepy Hollow Rd., and a questioning of local residents and the developers involved (including those who constructed the new parking lot at the end of Old Sleepy Hollow Road in Pocantico Lake Park) in order to avoid repetition of this catastrophic environmental result should the 715 Sleepy Hollow Rd. property project go forward, even in a limited way.

New York State statutes would seem to require scoping that includes such an investigation as a matter of law in light of these observable facts.

Charles Sanders is a Briarcliff Manor resident. This letter was submitted to the Mount Pleasant Planning Board on Dec. 1 and was requested to be published as the board's vote whether to accept the scoping document for the project is scheduled for Dec. 20.

Letter to the Editor

Yorktown Should Extend Outdoor Dining, Retail for Another Year

The outdoor dining and retail initiative that was put in place to facilitate commerce for our impacted businesses is set to expire on Dec 31. If you recall the initiative, which the Yorktown Chamber of Commerce helped craft and advocated for, was put in place with the advent of COVID-19 to give businesses of all types more robust and diverse opportunities to continue to stay open and "do business."

The temporary legislation was extremely successful, and I applaud Supervisor Matt Slater and the Town Board for taking appropriate action. The initiative was also a model for other municipalities and allowed businesses across Westchester to not only survive but thrive. I am very proud of the role the Yorktown chamber played in this endeavor.

Councilman Ed Lachterman, a lifelong restaurateur, agrees the time has come to extend this legislation to allow our businesses to continue to thrive in this not-so-post-pandemic world we still live in. In fact, the new Omicron strain of COVID-19 has appeared in other countries and has

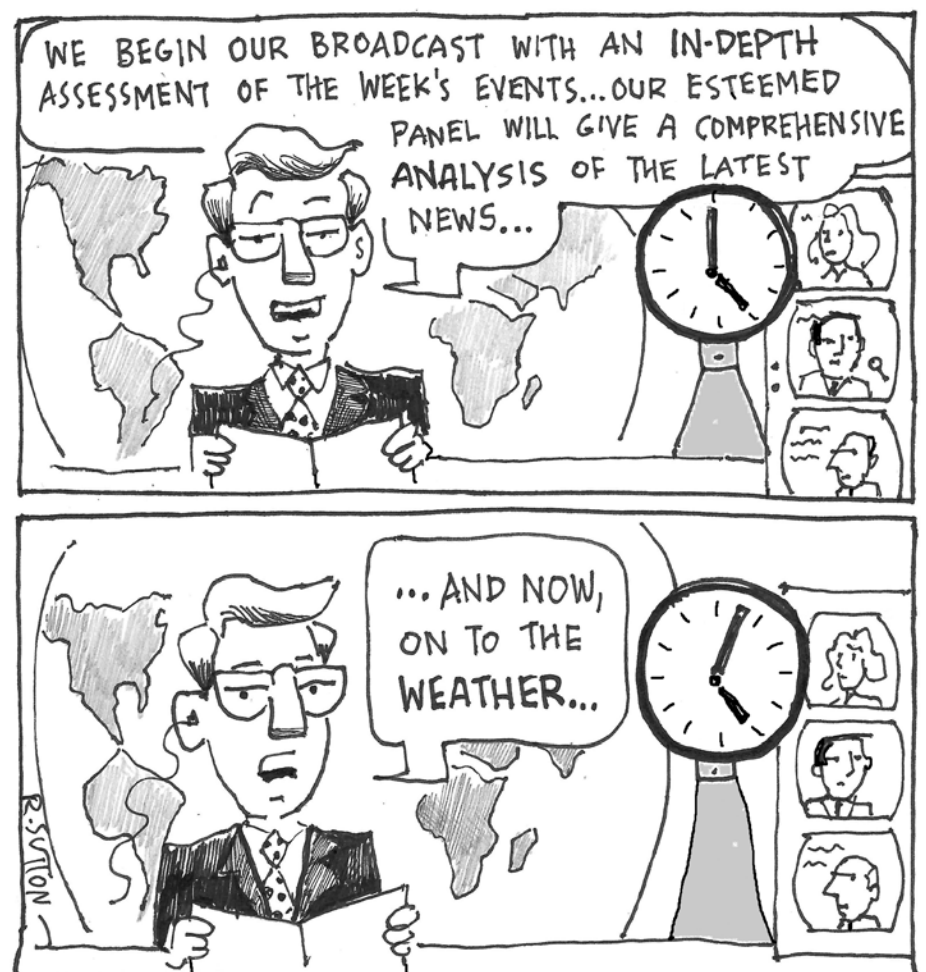
resulted in a new state of emergency. In our new reality and during the holidays, COVID numbers almost inevitably seem to creep up, and I believe this legislation not only helped to keep numbers down in the past but will help to keep them down in the present and future.

Truth be told, I also have selfish reasons for promoting the outdoor dining and retail initiative. I like it! I enjoy shopping and dining outside. I appreciate the feel that it gives Yorktown's five hamlets.

What can be done? The Town Board, which has been extremely receptive to the legislation, can simply extend the deadline another 12 months or longer. It will help keep our businesses and eateries active, it will help keep our workers employed and it will help keep our citizens safe.

**Sergio Esposito
Yorktown**

Sergio Esposito has been the president of the Yorktown Chamber of Commerce and is a Yorktown councilman-elect.



SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Police Blotter

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Nov. 25: Patrol responded to Mount Airy Road at 10 p.m. after a resident reported observing an older model white pickup truck with black trim operated by a White male in his 20s wearing a hat. The vehicle was traveling up the hill slowly and stopped in front of a neighbor's home, took a picture, then stopped in front of another residence and may have taken another photo. The area was canvassed with negative results.

Nov. 27: A Grand Street resident reported at 10:08 p.m. that her juvenile son left the residence after they had an argument. The surrounding areas were canvassed and the child was located. No injuries were reported; a report will be filed.

North Castle Police Department

Dec. 3: A caller reported at 11:30 a.m. that the window of his vehicle was broken while it was parked behind Broadway North Pizzeria on Main Street sometime last night

or earlier today. The responding officer reported gathering information; a report to follow.

Dec. 4: An employee reported at 5:26 p.m. that a catalytic convertor was stolen from three trucks that were parked at the U-Haul location on Virginia Road during the overnight hours. The responding officer gathered the information and depositions were secured. A report will follow.

Dec. 4: A caller reported at 7:07 p.m. that a customer at the Shop-Rite on North Broadway was shoved by a homeless man in the bottle return room. No injuries were reported. The male subject then left the area. No description was given. The responding officer reported that the party who was shoved does not wish to fill out a deposition or file charges. The store manager stated that the male party in question is no longer allowed on the property and will call police if he returns.

Dec. 5: A complainant arrived at headquarters at 11:04 a.m. to report an incident with his neighbor that occurred earlier this date. The complainant stated he was blowing his leaves in the front yard and

was approached by his elderly neighbor, who told him very angrily and aggressively to turn off his leaf blower. He reported that his neighbor has approached him angrily more than 10 times in the past with miniscule complaints. He requested an officer call the neighbor and advise him to cease contact. A witness deposition was filed.

Dec. 8: At 8:01 a.m., report of a past burglary at Buck's Flower Garden on Bedford Banksville Road. The merchant stated she has been noticing that some equipment has gone missing from the store and decided to review surveillance video footage. She observed that on Nov. 16, multiple unknown parties can be seen entering the business office at about 11 p.m. wearing masks and stole multiple items, including an antique shotgun. The business owner will file a deposition later.

Pleasantville Police Department

Dec. 9: Report of two suspicious youngsters making noise at 18 Marble Ave. at 2:08 a.m. After an investigation, no action was taken.

Dec. 10: A hazardous gas odor was detected on Dennis Lane at 5:02 p.m. Con Edison was called to investigate.

Putnam County Sheriff's Department

Dec. 3: A 52-year-old Peekskill woman was arrested at 12:29 a.m. for third-degree aggravated unlicensed operation of a vehicle after the vehicle she was operating was stopped on Route 9 in Philipstown because it had a temporary plate that was flapping in the wind and not securely attached. Upon further investigation, the deputy learned that the driver's license had been suspended three times.

Dec. 5: A 40-year-old male driver was pulled over on the Taconic State Parkway in Putnam Valley for traffic violations at 2:20 a.m. He was arrested and charged with third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a felony, seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a misdemeanor, second-degree criminal use of drug paraphernalia and third-

degree aggravated unlicensed operation of a vehicle. The 27-year-old female passenger was charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance.

Dec. 9: Deputies were dispatched to a Southeast residence at 8:54 p.m. on a report of a possible violation of an order of protection. Upon arrival, deputies interviewed the 29-year-old female resident who reported that she has a Family Court Order of Protection against her teenage stepdaughter that prohibits the teenager from smoking, possessing or being under the influence of marijuana. Upon further investigation, it was determined that there was no evidence of a violation of the order.

White Plains Police Department

Dec. 5: Irvin Martinez was charged with second-degree assault and second-degree menacing for injuring a neighbor with a knife on Mitchell Place.

Dec. 5: Dario Contreras Sr. was arrested for third-degree assault, endangering the welfare of a child and resisting arrest on Washington Street.

Dec. 8: Kwaisa Holmes was arrested for second-degree assault of a police officer at 232 Chatterton.

Yorktown Police Department

Dec. 5: Timothy Brunelle, 36, of Yorktown, was charged with third-degree assault at 12:29 a.m. following a report of a disturbance at a Yorktown residence. After an investigation, it was alleged Brunelle caused physical injury by punching the victim with a closed fist. The victim was treated for head, shoulder and back injuries at the scene and transported to a local hospital for further medical attention. Yorktown Town Justice Gary Raniolo issued a temporary order of protection on behalf of the victim.

Dec. 8: A 17-year-old Yorktown male was charged at 11:15 a.m. with possessing an obscene sexual performance of a child, a Class E felony, after allegedly possessing images of child pornography on a cell phone on Apr. 14, 2021.

Obituary

Lillian DeCarlo

Lillian DeCarlo passed away on Dec. 6 in her home in Thornwood. She died one day before her 101st birthday with her son, Terrell Kolodzinski, by her side.

She was predeceased by her husband, Frank J. Kolodzinski, her second husband, John DeCarlo, and her eldest son, Frank J. Kolodzinski Jr.

Lillian was born in Beaufort, S.C. on Dec. 7, 1920. She moved to New York when her father died in 1936.

She is survived by her sons, Terrell Kolodzinski, and John DeCarlo (Karen), and her daughter-in-law Theresa Kolodzinski; her grandchildren, Kim (Charles) Gruver, Frank J. Kolodzinski III (Krista), Desirai DeCarlo, John DeCarlo, Taber (Robert) Harris and Tyson DeCarlo;

her great-grandchildren, Charles Gruver IV, Matthew Gruver, Jon Crabtree, Frank J. Kolodzinski IV, Kyle Kolodzinski and Harper Harris; as well as extended family and friends.

Lillian was very active in her church, Holy Innocents in Pleasantville, where she was a member of the Parish Reach Out to Seniors, and was a member of the Thornwood Women's Club. Lillian was a lay eucharistic minister and she trained parishioners to become lay eucharistic ministers for the church as well.

The family received friends on Dec. 10 at Beecher Flooks Funeral Home in Pleasantville. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 11 at Holy Innocents Church in Pleasantville.

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Mt. Pleasant to Consider Accepting Cluster Subdivision Scope Next Week

By Martin Wilbur

The Mount Pleasant Planning Board appears likely to accept the scoping document next week for a 31-lot cluster subdivision on the Pocantico Lake shoreline that has galvanized area residents concerned about the project's environmental impacts.

On Monday evening, the board is expected to move forward with this first step for the project called the Meadows at Briarcliff on 36.8 acres located at 715 Sleepy Hollow Rd. The developer is ZappiCo Real Estate Development of Hawthorne.

Board Chairman Michael McLaughlin announced at the Dec. 2 meeting that the board would hold off on a vote to accept the scoping document under the state Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) because the written public comment period remained open until Dec. 1 and multiple submissions came in from residents during the final day.

He admonished members of the public, many of whom appeared to wait to the last minute to raise various issues in their written comments, even though they were able to add to the conversation since after the Oct. 18 public hearing.

"Our job is to ensure that we get all of the input that we can and put it into the scoping document," McLaughlin said. "We do that because we represent you."

In October, about 20 speakers lined

up during oral comments on the scoping document, focusing on how the clear-cutting of trees, potential runoff into the lake and traffic could pose significant threats to the area.

The general vicinity, which includes the parcel, was deemed a Critical Environmental Area by the state Department of Environmental Conservation more than 30 years.

At the Dec. 2 meeting, the board entertained additional comments from a handful of speakers. Ted Sabety of Bedford Road said the scope seemed to lack serious alternatives for the project as well as more detailed information about potential blasting at the site.

Resident Rhea Mallett said the developer seemed to try to be taking advantage of his ability under the cluster subdivision to increase density and defeat the purpose of the clustering.

Furthermore, the applicant should also have to address how the project along with two other nearby properties that have been developed would affect the area.

"We just want to make sure we're asking (that) throughout the document, in every single area, there's a focus on cumulative impacts in order to comply with SEQRA," Mallett said.

McLaughlin said that the board has requested an alternative plan that requires no special permits and wants to see the area protected in the most effective manner possible.

"We all share maybe not all of the concerns but many of the concerns that you have and none of us is going to let an opportunity that fails to protect the water, the runoff, etc., all of these things in the

Critical Environmental Area and in the lake," he said.

Next Monday's meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at Mount Pleasant Town Hall in Valhalla.



Merry Christmas Charlie Brown

There is one more weekend to catch Gershwin Entertainment's "A Charlie Brown Christmas: Live on Stage" at the Chappaqua Performing Arts Center. Performances are scheduled for 7 p.m. this Thursday and Friday, Saturday at 12, 4 and 7 p.m. and Sunday at 1 and 4 p.m. If you miss it, you'll have to trek into Manhattan, where it will be performed at The Palladium Times Square. For information and tickets, visit www.ticketmaster.com.

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Attempted Murder Suspect Leads Police on Chase Through Westchester

By Martin Wilbur

A Bronx man wanted on an attempted murder charge in New York City was arrested Wednesday after he led officers on a wild 35-minute chase along two parkways through Westchester and onto local streets in Yonkers.

Dwayne Tucker, 27, of East 224th Street is facing additional charges after he fled from officers who attempted a traffic stop, county

police said. The suspect, who was driving a stolen car, sideswiped several police and civilian vehicles during his attempt to get away. One civilian and two officers suffered minor injuries.

Police said the incident began at about 10 a.m. after the NYPD reported that Tucker fled in a black Ford Explorer as officers arrived at his home. Tucker drove north into Westchester, where county police located his vehicle on the Taconic State Parkway in

Mount Pleasant.

He continued traveling north to FDR Park in Yorktown, where officers lost sight of the vehicle, police said. The suspect then drove south on the Taconic, where it was again spotted again by county police, before it eventually drove onto the Saw Mill River Parkway, sideswiping a civilian's car near Lawrence Street in Ardsley and another at Palmer Road in Yonkers.

The suspect exited the Saw Mill at Yonkers

Avenue and traveled into the Nodine Hill neighborhood, where Westchester County and Yonkers officers took Tucker into custody.

A juvenile female passenger was also taken into custody but later released to a family member, police said. She was not charged.

Tucker was charged by county police with criminal possession of stolen property, a felony, and unlawful fleeing a police officer and reckless driving, both misdemeanors. He was expected to be turned over to the NYPD after booking.

Tucker's apprehension was the second arrest of a suspect last week who unlawfully fled police in Westchester, said Public Safety Commissioner Thomas A. Gleason. On Dec. 6, Michael Diaz, 32, of the Bronx was also charged with that offense and second-degree reckless endangerment after leading police on a chase on Nov. 30 following an attempted stop for a traffic infraction on the Hutchinson River Parkway in Mount Vernon. An officer terminated that pursuit and the matter was turned over to detectives for additional investigation.

"Motorists who flee from the police endanger themselves, any passengers, other drivers on the road and police officers," Gleason said. "We take these incidents very seriously and will continue to investigate even in instances where we terminate a pursuit. If you run from the police, you will end up in handcuffs one way or the other."

Yorktown Planning Board Approves Solar Array at Arcadia Farm

The Yorktown Planning Board approved a large solar array for Arcadia Farm last week.

The approval clears the way for the horse farm at 1300 Baptist Church Rd. to build a six-acre ground-mount solar array on its almost 29-acre property. The solar farm is expected to produce 800 kilowatts of electricity.

"In the past two years the Town Board has adopted a number of resolutions and ordinances designed to reduce Yorktown's carbon footprint," said Supervisor Matt Slater. "The

Arcadia Farm solar array was possible thanks to legislation adopted in 2020 and the Town Board will continue searching for smart measures that allow our community to do its share in combatting climate change.

"I applaud the Planning Board for its diligent work examining large-scale solar applications with a balanced objective of advancing needed renewable energy projects while protecting the natural beauty for which our community is known."

The solar array will be built by the

Croton Energy Group of Croton-on-Hudson. The array will sit on land that is surrounded by trees on most sides.

Arcadia Farm already uses solar power to reduce its carbon emissions. In 2010 the farm installed solar-powered water heaters that employ tubes mounted on the horse stables.

According to the installer, the yearly environmental benefits of the new energy system is equivalent to offsetting carbon dioxide emissions from burning 238,614 pounds of coal or 24,368 gallons of gasoline.



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Trailblazer Honored for Opening Doors to Future Disabled Individuals

By Martin Wilbur

Lindsay Waxman has witnessed the frustration of working for organizations that lacked the focus and patience to properly train employees who are on the autism spectrum.

But the White Plains resident's work experience markedly improved last December when she was hired by Spectrum Designs Foundation as an administrative and production assistant, the organization's first employee in an administrative role with what is perceived as a disability that should disqualify a person from such a role.

Last week, Waxman was honored by Spectrum Designs and the New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID), advocates for individuals with disabilities and local officials for being named a NYSID William B. Joslin Outstanding Performance Award winner. She outlasted 44 other nominees across the state for the award.

Waxman said the supportive culture at Spectrum Designs with coaches encouraging the employees and taking the time to teach has made the difference in her life.

"If it were not for the mission of the company, I would not be so successful in what I do," Waxman said after receiving the award. "The biggest part of this job that I really like is they let me grow, learn



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Spectrum Designs administrative and production assistant Lindsay Waxman addresses visitors at the organization's Pleasantville location last Thursday as its co-founder, Patrick Beardsley, looks on. Waxman, Spectrum Designs' first employee on the autism spectrum in an administrative role, was presented with an outstanding performance award.

and not just get the job done."

Spectrum Designs, a Port Washington-based nonprofit organization that launched about 11 years ago, trains and provides

jobs for the adult special needs population where the unemployment rate is excessively high and many lack the skills to live independently.

The organization opened its second location, in an 8,000-square-foot space converted warehouse on Tompkins Avenue in Pleasantville last December. Among the services it provides are the production of custom apparel, promotional items and baked goods as well as laundry services.

Maureen O'Brien, president and CEO of NYSID, said Spectrum Designs doesn't provide menial tasks for their approximately 35 special needs employees. NYSID does about \$1.5 million a year in business through Spectrum for state and local agencies and public authorities.

The application from Spectrum Designs that nominated Waxman stated that "she cares deeply about her performance in managing the daily vendor payments and accounts." She's also trained in production, so when necessary, Waxman helps out on the shop floor," O'Brien pointed out.

"It's thrilling to be here and I'm really happy that we're in a place where we're talking openly now about what individuals with disabilities bring to the workforce," she said.

What makes Waxman's achievement special is that she has been able to reach her level within a year that has coincided with a pandemic, said Patrick Beardsley,

one of the Spectrum Design co-founders.

"She showed us that we can hire people with different abilities not just in production but in administration," Beardsley said. "So she kind of trailblazed that, which is really, really cool. We're looking into more and more positions like that. So we'll open our doors as wide as possible in the next year as we go on."

County legislators Margaret Cunzio (C-Mount Pleasant) and Maryjane Shimskey (D-Dobbs Ferry) and Pleasantville Mayor Peter Scherer and village Trustee Paul Alvarez presented Waxman with proclamations recognizing her accomplishment.

Waxman, who lives in an independent housing program, said Spectrum Designs not only focuses on getting the job done, which is critical, but to work with each employee to make certain they know what is expected of them. When mistakes are made, the coaches take the time to make sure the employee understands their error in order to avoid making the same mistake again, she said.

There is also a logical progression of training and internship that prepares a trainee for a paid job.

"They take the time to get you where you want to be," Waxman said.

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Caring for Your Parents' Health Starts at Home This Holiday Season

Millions of adult children will be visiting their parents during the upcoming holidays. For some, their last visit home may have been months ago and for others, routine visits might be common.

Health experts advise that while visiting, in addition to enjoying the many fun-filled traditions, it's important that children also take time to consider their aging parents' health needs at home.

"Long Island has a rapidly growing senior population, but very few have homes that are safe for them to live in," said Daniel Elliot, a certified aging in place professional and licensed occupational therapist with Jukebox Health, a leading tristate health care company that works with families and seniors to develop home solutions for optimal independent living.

"Knowing that most seniors want to remain living in their own homes as they age, it's important that their homes be safe for them to live in. Caring for your parents' health needs to start at home."

Was mom recently hospitalized and now feeling somewhat weaker? Did dad have a recent fall? These are some of the questions to ask yourself when visiting your parents this holiday, according to Elliot.

"Take a walk around the house to see how the lighting is in each room, especially

those without windows like a basement, a stairwell or a closet. Are grab bars now needed in the bathroom or beside the bed to help dad stand up?" Elliot said.

"In addition to considering assisted living communities and nursing homes, families should also consider aging in place at home as a viable option for their senior family members," he continued. "Thankfully many products and services exist today to help seniors live safely at home, without compromising their home aesthetic."

Jukebox Health offers personalized home safety assessments performed by certified aging-in-place professionals that include clinically driven home safety recommendations. Families collaborate with professionals to design and install the home modifications, working with local licensed contractors.

Examples of modifications recommended in an assessment might include improved lighting; smart technology; grab bars that come in decorative finishes; anti-slip mats; wheelchair accessible tabletops and countertops; accessible entries, exits and stairwells with handrails; zero step entries into showers; extra tall or powered toilet seats; and bedrails that come in decorative finishes.

Other behaviors to look for when visiting



your parents include paying attention to their use of the various rooms in the house.

"Many times, we see an avoidance of certain rooms used at home, which usually signals an issue but can easily be remedied, restoring their freedom and full use of the house," Elliot said.

"There is a large emotional dimension to

aging in place. Seniors want choices about how and where they age," Elliot mentioned.

"Remaining in their homes provides independence and familiarity, which many times, leads to living a longer, happier life."

For more information on these topics, visit <https://www.jukeboxhealth.com/>.

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10 Predictions for the Future of the Real Estate Market

As a realtor, it is one of my jobs to keep up with current housing trends, but I have never professed to be a prognosticator, knowing what's coming down the pike. I rely on the wisdom of the experts whose job it is to project trends and we all can react accordingly, whether you're a buyer or seller.

A recent article in Forbes magazine invited a number of experts to project the coming market, and feeling that it is particularly worthwhile information, I share with you a brief outline of it here.

As one might suspect, the real estate market was thrown into a tumultuous state when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Between people losing their jobs and being afraid or unable to move, the year in lockdown made a significant impact on the market.

Even as we return to a greater sense of normalcy, there are several factors that will continue to impact housing prices, buyer behavior and the real estate market in general. I share with you the predictions of the Forbes Real Estate Council as 2021 comes to a close and we venture into 2022.

1. Less urgency to buy residential real estate. There will be less urgency to buy residential real estate as more people go outside their homes and return to other activities. The more robust cities will remain strong, and prices should stabilize for the short term as more inventory emerges.



By Bill Primavera

The exodus from metropolitan areas we've experienced should subside, while second home markets are likely to experience a softening.

2. The workforce will face homebuying challenges. The affordable housing crisis is facing a perfect storm with the housing shortage and growing barriers to entry with higher credit scores, deposits and income requirements for renters. As a result, our workforce will have more challenges finding a place to live.

3. The market will appreciate significantly. Though "crash" articles may spell gloom and doom, real estate should appreciate at an above-average rate in the coming year for three reasons – scarcity, utility and demand. Scarcity: there is a shortage of 6.8 million housing units. Utility: the home is now the center of the remote workers' world by being both the office and gym. Demand: Millennials are America's largest generation, in their prime home-buying years.

4. There will be fewer showings and offers. Sales continued to increase over last year and prices remain stable. There should be fewer showings, fewer offers and less aggressive offers. In most markets, including ours, sellers overcorrected on their pricing months ago, so the inflated asking-price craziness has already settled down a bit.

5. Demand for multifamily homes will

increase. Since single-family home supply is constrained and prices are up, the demand for multifamily housing will increase. As a result, multifamily vacancies will go down and rents will increase. We've seen this trend since COVID started in early 2020, and this trend has been continuing in full force and will continue in the next 12 to 18 months.

6. Housing prices will become less affordable. Simply put, there is a lack of inventory in the affordable housing space and all the buyers that want to buy can only afford those types of properties. Builders are building houses that the average American cannot afford. Inventory is continuously shrinking and there are more buyers than ever for that product. Housing will continue to rise until it becomes much less affordable for the public.

7. The market is shifting into a more balanced state. Inventory seems to be picking up in our market, and buyers who have been suffering from fatigue have more options and buying leverage than we have seen in the past. There may be a more balanced market in the latter half of the year. For those who are house flippers, it may be wise to give a little cushion on the resale price to accommodate the shift.

8. Use of technology will drive value of assets. It is predicted that developers and owners will increase their interest in using technology to drive the value of their assets. It is going to be about looking for more ways to drive positive financial and climate outcomes.



9. Sublease space will continue to increase. Further softening is expected in the commercial office space market, driven by weakening demand as the shift to a more hybrid workforce continues, highlighting the ongoing transformation in how people work.

10. Rental market will keep growing. We're becoming more a renter nation, and this trend will keep growing into 2022. Housing prices have become so inflated that the percentage of people who can afford a home has already dropped off and will continue to do so. Much like with the last housing crisis, rental properties will move up to meet the demand for housing needs.

So there you have it. How do these predictions fit into your housing plans?

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



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New Burns Director Confident Film Center Will Continue to Flourish

By Martin Wilbur

Mary Jo Ziesel was admittedly uneasy when she started about three months ago as the new executive director of the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville.

She may have had extensive experience in nonprofit arts administration, having worked for the American Ballet Theatre for the past 22 years, but it was anyone's guess whether the film center's dedicated patrons would immediately return to the Jacob Burns for its ambitious and entertaining schedule of films, programs and classes.

As its 20th anniversary year draws to a close, the Burns has been steadily resuming much of its film and educational programming, and that will continue into 2022 despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

If last week was any indication, with the opening of the Romanian Film Festival, which included a Q&A with one of Romania's top actors, a reception and pre-screening of seven short films produced during the spring and summer by the participants of the Creative Culture Fellowship Program and screenings of the new "West Side Story," the film center is already hopping.

"Things are really heating up," Ziesel said. "People are starting to return, and when I first started in September, I was a little nervous. But slowly, I think, we've had all of these events and it's incredible to see the same people return. When people would tell me about the membership, I didn't quite

get it."

That would be a core membership that has been exceedingly loyal and supportive, not only with the frequency of their visits over the years, but with their pocketbooks. For a venue that had been shuttered for more than a year, like much of the industry, the Jacob Burns has been remarkably resilient in the face of COVID-19.

"There's been wonderful support from the community, and I really feel that our members, and I would say unlike other places, are special," she said.

Ziesel said that the experience of seeing a film on the big screen, especially in the presence of other knowledgeable moviegoers cannot be replicated at home.

It has also helped that the decision was made to mandate all patrons be vaccinated to gain entry and for everyone to wear masks except if a guest is seated and is eating or drinking, Ziesel said. As a result, there are no capacity limits.

Denise Treco, the director of marketing and communications for the Jacob Burns, said film lovers felt confident that staff was doing everything to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

"I think after being in quarantine and being home, I feel like more than ever you miss it, like there was something missing, and what we find is that now people are starting to come back and have set that muscle memory for that experience," Treco said. "They're coming back again, and coming back again is just great."



Jacob Burns Film Center Executive Director Mary Jo Ziesel, who came aboard in September to lead the Pleasantville arthouse theater, is excited for the upcoming year and the future of the venue.

For members and other patrons to return, the film center also has to make sure the quality is at least equal to what it had been pre-pandemic. Aside from returning to a full schedule of movies, there has been or will be in the weeks ahead a continuation of the programming that makes the Burns popular. The theater shows about 400 films a year

in its five theaters, ranging in size from 31 to 249 seats. There were also about 150 special events scheduled each year.

Last week's Creative Culture Fellowship Program celebrates new up-and-coming filmmakers. Ziesel said it continues to build on the legacy of Burns co-founder Stephen Apkon whose mission was to build visual literacy and encourage dialogue on a wide range of topics.

"It's really gotten to the point where a lot of these fellows have been accepted to Sundance and have been really making their mark in the film industry," Ziesel said.

Many of the educational programs at the media arts center will return for students and members of the community to learn. The film center recently hosted its first book event since the start of the pandemic, about the 25th anniversary of the release of "Fargo."

Starting in January, there will also be the return of the Jacob Burns film club, a monthly gathering of people who view screenings selected by staff followed by discussions about what they've watched.

Ziesel said the Burns is able to deliver to the public year after year because its staff is passionate about what it does and cares about making a trip to the film center a unique outing.

"I do believe that the film experience at the Burns is unparalleled in a way because of our house staff," she said. "The house staff, the theater staff are just incredible."

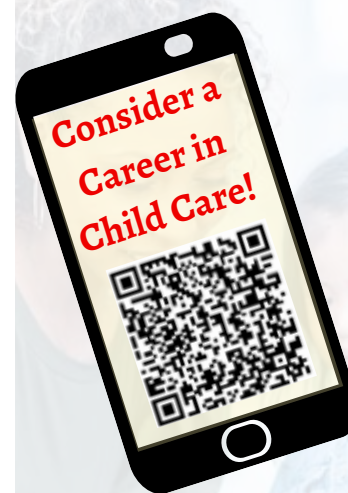
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Pet Dermatology Does More Than Scratch the Surface of Allergies

By Martin Wilbur

It made perfect sense that Dr. Jeanne Budgin would become a veterinarian.

Budgin loved animals as you would expect someone who grew up on a farm might. The New Jersey native had horses, goats and chickens, but, of course, enjoyed dogs and cats as well.

What was a little different than many other veterinarians is that relatively quickly into her career Budgin pivoted to specialize in pet dermatology.

"I was quite happy in general practice but really found kind of an interest in dermatology because it's so common," she said. "I think it's second only, depending on what data you're looking at, the first or the second most common reason why animals present to veterinarians."

During the summer Budgin opened her own practice on Commerce Street in Thornwood, Hudson Valley Veterinary Dermatology. She also practices two days a week at her office in Manhattan.

So why are skin problems so prevalent in dogs and cats?

Many pets suffer from allergies, easily the leading cause of skin problems for them, Budgin said. For dogs, virtually all of whom go outside regularly, they can be allergic to pollen just like humans, she said.

But there are pet allergies that can occur indoors, mostly commonly a negative reaction to dust mites, which can collect



Dr. Jeanne Budgin, a pet dermatologist, opened Hudson Valley Veterinary Dermatology in July in Thornwood.

on furniture, bedding and pillows.

"So that is a big trigger for dogs and cats, just like it is in people," Budgin said.

Then there can be other environmental reactions or even allergies to certain foods, she said.

The most obvious reaction when pets suffer from allergies is excessive scratching and itching. In dogs, licking their feet can also be a clue as well as hair

loss in certain areas. Some cats may tend to overgroom, another sign something could be wrong.

If there is strong odor coming from the pet there could be an ear infection.

Certain breeds are more susceptible to skin problems, Budgin said. For dogs, the West Highland White Terrier and the French bulldog, skin problems are quite common.

"When it comes to allergies, it's licking, it's cleaning, it's redness, it's hair loss, obvious scratching," Budgin said of what pet owners should look out for. "It could be odor from the ear."

Allergies will also likely be a recurring issue rather than a one-time problem.

"For pet owners, what's your tipping point because people reach that point," said Budgin, who earned her doctor of veterinary medicine from Iowa State University and gained her specialized dermatology training from the University of Pennsylvania.

"They go to their primary vet over and over and over again for that ear infection when what really needs to happen is a specialist needs to get involved who really can identify and manage that underlying allergy because that results in good success and a much happier and content pet owner."

Many of Budgin's patients come on referrals from their primary or family veterinarians, she said. However, pet owners are free to make an appointment with

her office if they suspect that they need greater and more specialized care than they aren't receiving elsewhere.

"It's important for people to know that they can seek out care," Budgin advised. "It's also important that they can work with their primary vet but their primary vet also needs to understand when best to refer, and that's on me to educate them about this."

Hudson Valley Veterinary Dermatology is located at 620 Commerce St. in Thornwood. For more information, visit www.nydermveter.com or call 914-495-8500.

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Sharpies vs. Coopers and Other States of Unknowing

By Brian Kluepfel

A friend stopped by to bless our new home with a bottle of wine, to commiserate about work, to shoot a few hoops. It was a pleasant, crisp late fall afternoon and we were in sterling company and outdoors.

At the end of his visit, my friend showed me a picture on his phone, and told me his wife had spied it near their home.

"What is it?" was the obvious question.

Although it was certainly a bird of prey, I couldn't tell immediately what it was. The picture was a bit blurry, but to be honest, I'm just not as good at identifying birds as many of my birding colleagues. After thinking about it some, I determined that it was likely a Cooper's or sharp-shinned hawk, species so similar, it is said, that many veteran naturalists have difficulty distinguishing them in the field.

One thing you should know is that if a raptor is menacing your backyard bird feeder, according to the Audubon website, it's likely a Cooper or sharpie. Their relatively short wings and rudder-like tails make for frequent feeder forays.

There are differences in size between these two accipiter species, as well as in the shape of the head and the formation of the tail, but these aren't always immediately apparent when viewing a bird in the real world (as opposed to your e-bird app or a printed field guide). In the end, I told my friend that the bird



was one or the other and left it at that.

One of the great discoveries (admissions?) in life is the limitations of one's knowledge. There is just no way to know everything, even about one subject, and most often you can find one, or several, persons who know more about your subject than you do. This isn't a bad thing. It is a way to make connections and expand our knowledge, and in turn, perhaps make the other person feel good about his or her knowledge.

The open and free exchange of wisdom is what makes the birding community so special. In all my years with Saw Mill River Audubon, many people have contributed to my understanding of birds.

A couple of people who shared some knowledge, as well as magical birding moments with me, were Joanne McAuley and John Salmon. I

knew them from Saw Mill River Audubon events, like the annual picnic or the members' December photo show, and I even got to travel to Cuba with them in 2016. Sitting on the bus, laughing, celebrating endemic island birds we'd never seen before, those are priceless memories.

SMRA and the birding community mourns the loss of Joanne and John, who died in 2021. In addition to their zest for nature, they were vibrant Westchester citizens with a range of interests who touched many lives through geocaching, curling, the Ossining Food Pantry and St. Theresa's Catholic Church. I bid them a hearty adieu.

We at Saw Mill River Audubon invite you to join us and appreciate the fun and excitement of birding. If you need to stock up your feeders for the winter, pass by our winter seed sale at Pruyn Sanctuary on Route 133 in Chappaqua this Saturday morning, Dec. 18 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It's held the third Saturday of each month.

Also, a reminder that our beautiful 2022 calendar, chock full of images of local birds, remains on sale. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar to purchase the calendar.

Brian Kluepfel is a longstanding Saw Mill River Audubon member and encourages you to support efforts in protecting and enjoying local wildlife habitats. Visit SMRA sanctuaries and attend their events online or in person. All are welcome.

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How Your Name Can Affect Your Estate Planning

At some point during an initial consultation, an intake form is presented to a prospective client.

The first line on the form asks for the person's legal name. A legal name is usually the name shown on a U.S. birth certificate unless it was changed subsequently through a name change proceeding, marriage, adoption or other court order.

Sometimes there is a noticeable hesitation to place pen to paper. I point out that line and remind them to provide their legal name. After a few beats, they lift their head and say, "My name is a little complicated."

How can a name be complicated? Often it starts at birth. A name on the birth certificate may never have been used in life. Shortened versions of longer names or nicknames may end up as the name that is used for legal documents, marriage certificates, armed forces documentation, passports and a driver's license.

After 9/11, and especially with modern enhanced driver's licenses,

names receive greater scrutiny. If the name listed on the birth certificate does not match later issued governmental identifications the renewal process for identity documents will be more difficult.

For estate planning purposes, setting up powers of attorney with an individual with multiple names requires the use of AKAs (Also Known As) listing every name that is associated with that person. Financial

institutions may have one name on file when an account was opened, but a new enhanced driver's license may show a completely different name, which

would raise a red flag when account changes, including the addition of a power of attorney, are initiated. Concurrent usage of a maiden name and married name is a common example where AKAs are necessary.

Another name issue concerns different generations of one family sharing the same name. If suffixes like junior, senior, III or IV are

used and referenced by family members in legal documents, then there is enough differentiation to avoid problems. If no suffixes are used, then two or three generations may share the same exact name.

Wills and trusts that mention a singular name that could describe multiple people can create major headaches. New York law provides an opportunity to clarify confusing language or name references for parties to a will through the use of a construction proceeding held in Surrogate's Court. In this instance, carrying on a family naming tradition could lead to unintended consequences and lost money. Identifying nicknames can be placed in testamentary documents to avoid confusion in this situation.

AKAs also come into play regarding probate and administration petitions. A decedent's name listed on the death certificate may be different



By Alan D. Feller, Esq.

from the name listed on an estate asset. Petitions should list all the names belonging to that decedent so that an executor or administrator can gain control over that estate asset.

If you have knowledge of complications with your name, be proactive. Making sure that your enhanced driver's license name matches your financial account

name will avoid legal problems in the future. Take the time to look over your estate planning documents and ask loved ones to check theirs to ensure name consistency.

Contact the professionals at Sloan & Feller today to go over legal name issues and estate planning.

Alan D. Feller, Esq. is managing partner of Sloan & Feller Attorneys at Law, located at 625 Route 6 in Mahopac. He can be reached at alandfeller@sloanandfeller.com.

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Crossword

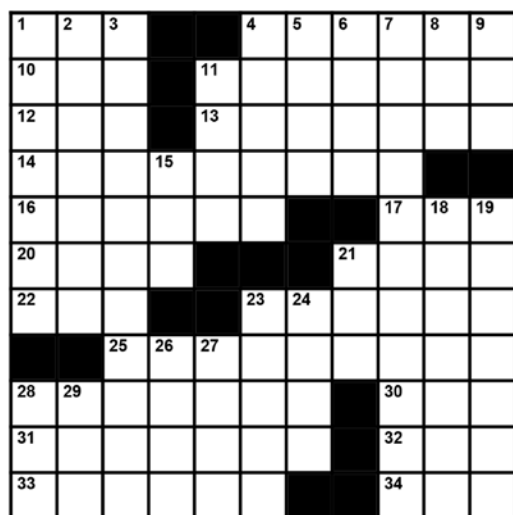
Across

1. Unruly crowd
4. Showed approval, or disapproval
10. Simpson judge
11. John and others
12. Lentil sauce
13. Grain alcohol
14. Looking after an elderly patient can be hard to bear: the solution is Westchester

16. Banded gemstones
17. Discontinuity
20. Puncture sound
21. Major-
22. Something owed at a bar
23. Greek islander
25. Authority on religious rites
28. Art of public speaking
30. "___ said before ..."
31. Begrudges
32. Export of India
33. Heads
34. Bailout key on a computer

Down

1. Region between Europe and Asia
2. Ear pain
3. Audacious
4. Univ. military programs
5. Workplace safety org.
6. On ___ with (2 words)- at the same level as



7. Work over the deal again
8. "Evil Woman" band for short
9. High-speed Internet inits.
11. Richard of "An Officer and a Gentleman"
15. Sci-fi figures
18. Rolls up
19. Noted Ottawa chief and a car model
21. Dover is its cap., abbr;
23. Belonging to baseball pitcher Schilling or Cortland Manor florist ___ Homestead
24. Skin tanners
26. Residents: Suffix
27. Coloring
28. Heavenly sphere
29. ___ Speedwagon band

Answers on page 30

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Local Author Pens Personal Quips in New Memoir

By Abby Luby

Susan Berliner has caught a moment. In fact, she has captured many wonderful, quirky moments in her new memoir "Doing the Write Thing."

The longtime Yorktown resident has penned personal and memorable snapshots into short stories that ring out like charming exclamation points. These splices of life stories are a departure for Berliner who has written multiple supernatural thrillers and off-beat short stories.

"Doing the Write Thing" is a compendium of Berliner's reflections on childhood, family and the multilinear trajectory of her writing career as a newspaper reporter, editor, promotions manager and nonfiction writer. She said she surprised herself with her latest effort, her first autobiographical book.

"I never thought I'd be a novelist," she said. "I never thought I'd write short stories or even a book with a sequel. And I certainly never thought I'd write a memoir."

The short quips in Berliner's new book grew out of longhand jots in a journal, diary entries and occasions that piqued her interest and stirred her thoughts – short posts that seemed to beg for a story.

"You live a whole life and you have things that happen," Berliner explained. "Bar Mitzvahs, funerals, little incidences that I found interesting."

One short story, entitled Growing Up "W," is Berliner's struggle as a youngster whose last name began with a "W," placing her at "the end of everything in school... floundering at the bottom of the alphabet."

That ended when she married Larry Berliner; her last name changed and she fully embraced being a "B."

"I just wrote this (book) pretty much chronologically from my childhood, growing up, meeting my husband, having my kids and my life as an author," Berliner said. "These are memories that I cherished and thought about. Some are humorous."

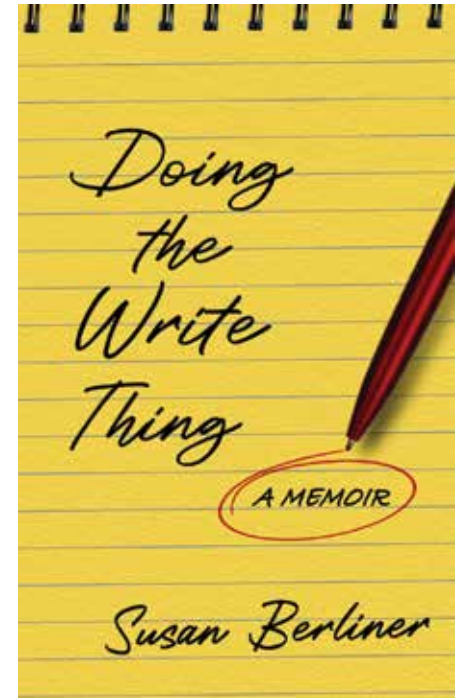
The 30 short stories in "Doing the Write Thing" include scenes from a Hasidic Bar Mitzvah (The Goyisher Table), socializing at a college house plan party (When Susan Met Harriet), almost losing her job – twice (Ready, Aim – Fire?) and her book-signing escapades (The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly). Another story is how her parents met after both escaped persecution in World War II.

Berliner also writes how she was assigned to cover fashion during a Mets Opening Day at Shea Stadium. At that time, it was tradition to hold a fashion show parade on the field. Recalling how it was cold and raining, Berliner said, "They wouldn't let me out on the field even though I had a press pass. It was because I was a woman. I was outraged. Today women reporters are everywhere."



Yorktown author Susan Berliner, who has previously written thriller novels, has now produced a memoir that draws upon personal experiences throughout her life.

"Doing the Write Thing" is a satisfying little book one can pick up, read a story or two, put it aside or cruise through a bunch of chapters.



"This is light reading," said Berliner. "I wrote it because I enjoyed what I was writing."

"Doing the Write Thing" can be purchased through Amazon and Barnes & Noble. To learn more about Berliner's books, visit www.susanberliner.com.

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*Guns have touched my life in profound and deeply personal ways.
My take on Oxford High.*



By Robert Schork

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It happened again. When news broke across my TV about the shooting spree at Oxford High School in Oakland County, Michigan, it brought everything back.

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For good and for ill, guns have played a recurring, though significant role in my life.

My grandfather was a Philadelphia police officer. Not only did he carry a firearm on duty, but he enjoyed guns recreationally. An expert shot, he even helped coach members of the US Olympic rifle team, I was told. His love of guns as both hobby and sport was passed along to my father, who, for much of his life, competed in all manner of target shooting — trap, skeet, pistol, small-bore, high-power, black powder — winning truckloads of trophies and awards along the way. Every winter, he faithfully hunted deer with my uncles in the Poconos (though, thankfully for the deer in my home state, with much less success than his target shooting).

As the son of a gun enthusiast, I grew up in a home with firearms and their myriad accoutrements. I used to joke



we had enough weapons and ammo to arm a CIA-backed revolution in a small Latin American country. But all of it legal and properly maintained. A responsible gun owner, my father always kept them locked up and drilled it into my sister's and my heads never to touch or go near them. When we were

older, my father introduced us to his hobby, bringing us to the various ranges at the gun club to which he belonged and teaching us how to shoot. We both scored a few trophies and awards of our own.

Despite my father's best efforts, he failed to pass the love of the sport onto me, but

what stuck with me from all the time I clocked with him at the gun club was the social dimension that accompanies most hobbies. My father befriended people from all walks of life: lawyers, carpenters, housewives, judges, students, dentists, retirees — people he'd probably never have met otherwise — and people you wouldn't necessarily peg as being gun enthusiasts.

Though I had bid a fond farewell to everyone at the gun club and target shooting by the time I entered high school, I would have a vastly different experience with guns a few years later

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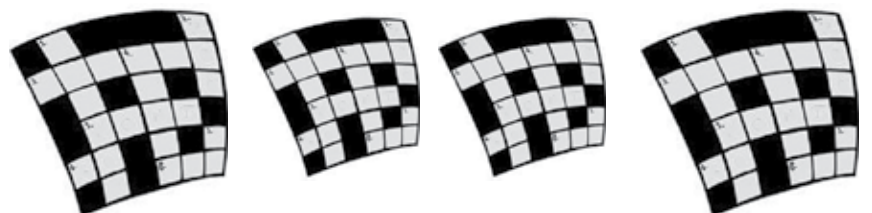
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Christmas and the Winter Solstice: Dusting off Tradition's Roots

Ireland, long the most Catholic of countries, retains more than a trace of practices from times past. These are often revealed throughout the year on the occasion of Christian celebrations lightly pasted on top of earlier, pagan events.

While our celebration of Christmas (Nollaig in Gaelic, pronounced "Nulleg") may not be so strongly influenced as Halloween, there still flows a strong current of the ancient beliefs. We are reminded that ways of old are not completely forgotten during these festive weeks. Here are several.

On Dec. 20, the eve of the winter solstice, it is traditional to light a fire in the hearth and have it burn for 12 hours, lasting into Solstice Day, Dec. 21. This is the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, the day with the least view of the shining sun.

The sun was thought by the ancient Celts to be the face of the great god Lugh. Throughout Europe, this was the day of the "fire festival" called Yula. On this day they honored the equally great goddess Brid. Upon her shoulders the early Christians built the many legends of Saint Brigid. She still rivals her male counterparts, Saints Patrick and Columba, for pre-eminent ranking in the "land of



By Brian McGowan

saints and scholars."

In addition to the fire, many will bring a pine tree indoors and decorate it with all manner of ornaments. Some say it is a German influence, introduced at the time of Prince Albert's marriage to Queen Victoria. But among these baubles are often found symbols of the sun, the moon and the stars. These were all revered by the Celts.

And what of Santa's reindeer, adorning the branches of the tree? Look no further than Cernunnos, the great horned god. He is the guardian of nature and fertility, and the ancestor all horned creatures, including the reindeer.

We put holly on doors and windows. Why? To welcome benevolent spirits, and keep evil ones at bay. We wear them on our person for the same reason. To wear a sprig in one's hair, on one's cap, or fastened to one's coat, continues to be a way to guard against the malevolent forces of a dangerous world.

An equally cherished practice is that of mistletoe. The plant itself is not widely native to Ireland, but our Celtic cousins in mainland Europe



and the island of Britain were no strangers to it. With an unwitting nod to them, we put mistletoe above a doorway and greet our guests beneath it. It will keep evil at bay, make poison harmless, blunt an ill-wisher's curse and bring good blessings to those who put their stock in it.

Another custom that has come down through time is that of placing candles in at least one window of the house, if not all. This is ostensibly to light the way of Mary and Joseph as they sought shelter in Bethlehem.

The custom also reflects the much-heralded Celtic concept of hospitality to all, especially travelers, wanderers and kind spirits, all adrift in the dead of night. The candle will

guide those looking for shelter, and a kindness extended now will one day be repaid in plenty. The honor of lighting the candle should go to the youngest girl in the house, who will in time pass the custom down.

And finally, come the 24th, Christmas Eve, leave on the kitchen table a loaf of bread made with caraway seeds and raisins, a pitcher of milk, a glass and a large candle, lit for the evening. These too shall welcome weary travelers, a company we are all part of at one time or another in our lives.

Whatever your beliefs, on Christmas Day with the first person you see that morning a solid "Nollaig shona duit!" (pronounced "Nulleg hunna gwitch!"). For the rest of your family, gathered in a group around the Christmas table later that day, the greeting is: "Nollaig shona dhaoibh!" ("Nulleg hunna ge-ev!").

Happy Christmas!

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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Ossining, Peekskill Schools Receive Grant for Mental Health Outreach

The Ossining School District has received a \$160,000 grant from the Westchester Community Foundation for a year-long effort to focus on students' mental health in partnership with the Peekskill School District.

Funding for the Mental Health Outreach Project will help both districts respond to an unanticipated and growing need for support. Hundreds of new families have registered in the districts amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The incoming students and families, who come from all walks of life, need social and emotional support due to difficult and poor socioeconomic conditions, trauma from loss and grief, transition, COVID-related

challenges and other factors.

"The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been a period of tremendous change, challenge and uncertainty for families," said Dr. Raymond Sanchez, Ossining Superintendent of Schools. "We want to provide our new families all the assistance and support they need as we welcome them into the district. This grant will help us ensure better social, emotional and academic outcomes for our scholars."

The districts recognize the need for expertise, emotional support and mental health screening at the time of registration. They will collaborate with the Guidance Center of Westchester to provide behavioral

health specialists to assist families. The project will focus on a three-tier approach to helping families: implementing an initial mental health screening and needs assessment for all new families and students; organizing an afterschool clinical support team; and scheduling pop-up mental health information and referral booths.

The Westchester Community Foundation and the Ossining and Peekskill school districts believe that by supporting students and families, removing barriers to school attendance and increasing access to supports and resources, they will be able to promote student and family wellness. This, in turn, offers these students the chance

to succeed academically and achieve their goals, ultimately leading to increased school performance.

"Because of our generous donors, the Westchester Community Foundation is able to fund the innovative Mental Health Outreach Project," said Laura Rossi, the foundation's executive director. "The Ossining and Peekskill school districts responded quickly to an unexpected increase in families in need of emotional and social support. When those needs are met, students and their families will be better prepared to succeed – in school and in life. We are pleased to be a part of this transformative project."

How to Ensure Your Child's Screen Time is Educational and Meaningful

Did you know that your child's screen time can be educational, thought-provoking and meaningful? Here's how to ensure that happens:

- Make educational screen time fun. The best learning apps for children these days don't just cover traditional school subjects, they also add creativity, problem-solving and social-emotional skills into the mix. Such tools will help lay the groundwork for a lifelong love of learning. Seek out educational games and content presented in fun and engaging ways.
- Pay attention. For greater peace of mind, consider leveraging tools and features that offer insights into the activities your child is engaging in

online. For example, educational apps might feature a parent dashboard, which can allow you to check in and track your child's progress with the program's curriculum.

- Stick with the program. The most versatile educational tech tools are ones that grow with your child's skills and interests and offer an expansive library of content so kids never get bored. For example, LeapFrog Academy, an interactive learning program designed by educators for children three to six years old, features more than 2,000 engaging games, eBooks, activities and more. Kids can earn certificates and rewards for their achievements. Plus, the app can be used on a variety

of devices, including computers, tablets and smartphones, and kids can even save their favorite activities to play without Wi-Fi.

- Set a good example. Your children are paying attention to your screen time use. If you want your child's screen time to be meaningful, yours should be too. Talk to your child about healthy digital habits and then set a good example.

One thing is certain, children absolutely love their tech tools. The good news is that by seeking out the best tools, games and apps, screen time can actually add value to their life.

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Crossword Answers

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The Impact of Various Influences on Our Appreciation of Wine



By Nick Antonaccio

Our perception and the reality of wine are influenced by many factors. Wine is not a monolithic sensory adventure. Each sip creates results in a confluence of taste and smell on our tongues, in our mouth and in our

nose. This experience may differ with each sip of a glass of wine, and each bottle of wine.

Our enjoyment of a glass of wine relies on our dominant senses of taste and smell. Scientific studies have analyzed these senses and their interconnectivity in creating an individual's unique perception of wine. But are these senses absolute measurements of our understanding and perception of wine? Are they providing an unadulterated insight into a wine's natural tastes and aromas? Or are there outside influences on our appreciation of wine?

Are there intrinsic, non-sensory components of our overall experience in tasting wine? And, if so, do these factors go beyond the science of our physiology?

The short answer is a resounding yes.

The psychology of our appreciation of wine plays a role that is as influential as our natural senses. Beyond our sensory self-analysis, our opinion and evaluation of a wine is impacted by external influences.

These tend to be subtle and may confuse, even override, our senses of taste and smell. Herein, several psychological influences on our perception of a wine.

1. History. If you make the effort to learn about the background and longevity of a long-standing winemaking family, your perception of their wine may be influenced beyond its taste and smell. A psychological bias is created for a family succeeding over several generations in the same land and culture. "It must be a good wine if this is the fifth-generation winemaker."

2. Culture. If you're of the Pepsi Generation or the "Got Milk?" era, your wine preferences have been strongly influenced by the advertising media. These, and similar, products influenced Americans' palates to prefer creamy and sweet foods. This is why the American palate differs greatly from the Western European palate. Generally speaking, Americans tend to prefer sweeter, less acidic wines; Western Europeans, more complex, drier styles.

3. Ratings. If the wine experts rate a wine highly it must be good. Before we imbibe the first sip of a rated wine, our brains have established a bias to a critic's opinion. The psychological impact on our brain neurons can override our basic sensory perceptions.

When wine critic Robert Parker introduced the 100-point rating system in the 1980s, Americans fell in line with an objective

'The psychology of our appreciation of wine plays a role that is as influential as our natural senses.'

means of appreciating wine, although wine appreciation is overwhelmingly subjective.

4. Mother Nature. I've blind-tasted wines that my senses of taste and aroma concluded were a particular grape, even from a particular wine region. Lo and behold, Mother Nature tricked my senses. The wine that convinced my senses it was a Merlot-based French Bordeaux blend was actually a Pinot Noir from Oregon. It can happen, much to the chagrin of my sensory receptors; bait and switch occurs regularly in our cerebrum.

5. Expectations. A study in the Journal of Marketing Research concluded (confirmed?) that many individuals' expectations are easily managed. When presented with two wines of widely disparate prices to sample, participants preferred the wine they were told had the higher price, even though the prices of the wines were reversed.

More telling, the tasters reached the same conclusion when the wines in the glasses were identical. "Expectations truly influence neurobiological responses," write the authors.



Just as a color palate influences, but does not dominate, the image an artist depicts on a canvas, so too our sensory palate influences, but does not dominate, the canvas of our perception of wine.

Nick Antonaccio is a 45-year Pleasantville resident. For over 25 years, he has conducted wine tastings and lectures. Nick is a member and Program Director of the Wine Media Guild of wine journalists. He also offers personalized wine tastings and wine travel services. Nick's credo: continuous experimenting results in instinctive behavior. You can reach him at nantonaccio@theexaminernews.com or on Twitter @sharingwine.

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