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**Putnam COVID-19
Active Cases:**

Hospitalized: 5	Carmel: 59
Min One Vaccine: 43.6%	Kent: 22
Fully Vaccine: 28.9%	Southeast: 21
	Patterson: 21
	Putnam Valley: 16
	Philipstown: 6

April 20 - April 26, 2021

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 13, Issue 630

Putnam Officials Blow Smoke at State Weed Law

By Rick Pezzullo and Anna Young

Putnam County officials are contending Governor Andrew Cuomo and other state leaders are using the legalization of marijuana as one of the new sources of tax revenue to close a budget gap.

"This is a cash grab by NYS at the expense of the health and safety of our communities," Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell charged. "I understand that the state wants to generate a new source of revenue because of past mismanagement of the NYS budget, but at what price? The average person will look at the legalization of marijuana and say, 'This does not impact me.' But it is naïve to think that use among our young people will not increase. Will our roads be safer? It's like your parents always told you, 'Just because your friends are doing it, doesn't make it right.'"

The state plans to establish an Office of Cannabis Management to enforce the new set of marijuana regulations. Cuomo has projected New York State will raise

\$350 million in annual tax collections from adult-use cannabis.

The state excise tax on the retail sale of marijuana will be 9% and the local excise tax will be 4%. Municipalities that allow marijuana shops to open will get 75 percent of the local tax revenue, according to the new law. Counties will receive 25 percent of the local tax.

For every \$1 million worth of marijuana sold in Putnam County, the municipalities in which it was sold would split \$30,000.

Under the new state law legalizing recreational adult-use marijuana, cities, towns and villages have the option to ban the sale of the drug if they adopt a ban by the end of this year. Municipalities can also regulate where and when marijuana can be sold by adopting new zoning laws.

Odell is "urging municipal leaders to think long and hard before allowing the sale of marijuana within their borders," noting county government leaders' hands are tied.

"We already have an opioid crisis, we don't need the state making it easier for

people to start using drugs at an early age that can put them at risk and impair their quality of life," said Putnam County Legislature Chairwoman Toni Addonizio. "We're just barely getting through the COVID-19 epidemic. It is unacceptable for the state to force this potential public health crisis on us."

In Patterson, Supervisor Richard Williams requested the Town Board exercise caution when mulling if the municipality should opt in or out of the state law. If the town abides by the law, he said the boards "hands may be tied" when deciding where marijuana can be dispensed and consumed despite legislation allowing for jurisdictions to adopt specific zoning rules.

With marijuana grown in a controlled environment, such as a warehouse or greenhouse with 24-hour lighting, Williams said the state would be setting the criteria for where that could occur.

"It could end up in somebody's backyard, which is a very big concern," Williams said at an April 14 Town Board meeting. "The good news is we would be getting some tax revenue out of this but as our County Executive pointed out recently that if we had \$1 million worth of sales, they would be allocated to all the municipalities who allow consumption and sales of pot of \$30,000 to be split up between them."

Williams said that is not a big revenue source, considering the impact it could have on the community.

Williams added he has written a memo that will be sent to state officials regarding the subject. He noted that the board has about nine months to decide whether they want sales or consumption permitted anywhere within the boundaries of Patterson.

"Going forward we're going to have that discussion about whether we're opting in or out," he said.

Former Chief Cazzari Shrugs Off Attacks from Schmitt

By Rick Pezzullo

Former Carmel Police Chief Mike Cazzari maintained he was not taken aback by the sharp criticism levied at him by Supervisor Kenneth Schmitt for deciding to challenge the seven-term incumbent in a June 22 Republican primary.

"I wish the man no ill will. This is America. I have every right to run for office," said Cazzari, who noted he considered Schmitt a friend. "He's been there so long it's time for new ideas and change. If people think it's time for honesty and integrity, they'll vote for me."

Cazzari, who served as chief for six years before retiring last July and for a few years was Schmitt's superior in the Police Department, said he was never given an opportunity to address the Carmel Republican Committee before they endorsed Schmitt and his Town Board running mates, Councilwoman Suzanne McDonough and Steve Baranowski.

After mulling several elected offices, Cazzari, whose father served eight years as supervisor in the Town of Kent, said he opted to run for supervisor after being encouraged by many people, including some individuals on the GOP Executive Committee.

"I'm not beholden to anyone. I'd like to make it better here," he said. "When I look at the jobs, a councilperson really doesn't have any say in the day-to-day operations. You won't be able to change the dynamics

between management and the employee. As supervisor, you're the manager of the town. There's such a lack of leadership. I've been hearing for 14 years I'm only one of five (on the Town Board). You're not one of five. When you're leading people and serve the public, if you treat them with respect, you'll get more out of them."

Cazzari, a longtime Mahopac resident who served three years on the Mahopac Board of Education, said he was instrumental in saving the Carmel Police Department when there was effort to disband it and have the Putnam Sheriff's Office take over the police coverage.

He emphasized Carmel was in dire need of new businesses, adding he favored allowing residential units being located above commercial establishments.

"We should be encouraging business, not discouraging business," Schmitt said. "When you're in office too long you kind of get stagnant. You're set in your ways and not willing to see new ideas."

Cazzari confirmed while Erin Lee Crowley and Gerard Ahler, who are running for Town Board, will appear on the same primary ballot, they are not running together.

"There's no ticket or team. There are people running against the establishment," he said. "I think people will vote against the establishment, that we haven't had any business, we haven't had any change. We're out of balance. It's just common sense."

Rest in Peace, Memphis



Putnam Valley Supervisor Sam Oliverio's trusted sidekick, Memphis, died Thursday. The "unofficial mayor of Putnam Valley" had a constant presence at Town Hall and was loved by all. "He was the very best friend, buddy, companion and most beloved family member I have ever had. He will be and is so sorely missed," Oliverio stated on Facebook.

Multi-Phase Revitalization Project Proposed for Huestis Park

By Anna Young

Huestis Park could soon undergo a multi-phase revitalization project as Kent officials aim to modernize the area and make it more appealing to community members and visitors.

After experiencing some embarrassment with the current condition of the park located off Farmers Mills Road, Recreation and Parks Director Jared Kuczenski approached the Town Board with a proposal to fully upgrade the green and provide a new set of amenities that can accommodate several sporting events, children of all ages, senior activities, and special needs.

The proposal also seeks to improve the parking area and install a pavilion with bathrooms. The park, which is Kent's second largest, only offers porta potties.

"It's a really cool area, it's woodsy, it's got a really nice air to it, but it needs a considerable amount of TLC," Kuczenski said at the April 6 meeting. "With respect to parks, you want to improve the amenities you have and add new amenities that that will get different groups of people out who might not otherwise be served by what you currently offer."

With many outdoor programs offered in Kent, Kuczenski said making Huestis Park more accessible will benefit both the town and residents. He noted with the park's amenities currently in bad shape and lacking in services, the only logical path to achieving the goal of offering the

community more is by undergoing a full upgrade of the parkland.

With sinkholes plaguing the current basketball court, Kuczenski is proposing the installation of a fenced in multi-use games area, also known as a MUGA, that can cater to multiple sports, such as basketball, tennis, floor hockey, pickleball, futsal, and more. It would require the area currently home to the playground to be blasted, cleared, re-sloped and paved, he said. He said the project could cost upwards of \$150,000.

"This is something that would be very unique to the area but also is really necessary for Huestis Park," Kuczenski said. "The reason for that is Huestis Park cannot be expanded upon; the land around it is either swamp or it's rocky area. The only thing we can do is create something that allows us to combine all of them into one."

With the playground in atrocious condition, Kuczenski suggested investing in a new and modern three-set play area that can satisfy multiple age groups. He also proposed relocating the playground to the front half of the basketball court area, noting the backside of the court is currently unusable due to erosion.

Kuczenski explained moving the playground would solve the problem of it being obscured by the hillside where it currently stands as it would be relocated to a more central area where it can be visible at all the fields and the parking lot. He said it would increase traffic to the playground and would provide parents a sense of



comfort they don't currently have.

A new playground could cost about \$50,000 to install, he said.

Additionally, the proposal calls to remove and replace all perimeter fencing, a job that would total roughly \$35,000 and add at least 15 extra parking spots to mitigate the hazard visitors face walking to their vehicles if parked within the flow of traffic.

Kuczenski said the lack of parking contributes to the limited activities and events that can currently occur at the park.

The last phase of the project would see

the implementation of a small pavilion with bathrooms. While this idea was initially suggested as a potential goal, board members urged that it be placed in the finalized plan to appease those who visit the park once the upgrades are completed.

"There are so many opportunities for giving our community new, exciting things to do and I feel that with respect to Huestis Park, it's the best thing for us to do for that park," Kuczenski said. "We need to have an engineer who will do a concept and feasibility plan."

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Progress Seen in Limiting COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations in State

By Martin Wilbur

After a difficult fall and winter where COVID-19 cases spiked to alarming levels, a steady two-week drop has given way to cautious optimism.

Westchester County, which had been stuck between 5,000 and 6,000 active cases since early March until a couple of weeks ago, reported Monday a drop of just over 1,000 cases during the past week.

As of Sunday, there were 4,110 cases in the county, a sharp reduction from 5,128 a week earlier and from 5,868 on Apr. 4.

Similar good news was reported regarding COVID-19-related hospitalizations, with 150 people hospitalized, down from 192 last week and 238 on Apr. 4. Fatalities that had been totaling between 20 and 30 people a week since early March, also fell to 12 last week. That pushed Westchester's death toll since the start of the pandemic last year to 2,246.

County Executive George Latimer said that steadily rising vaccination rates could be playing a role in limiting the spread, serious illness and deaths from the disease.

"We look for trend lines, and a lower trend in active cases, a lower trend in hospitalizations and a lower trend in fatality all points to something very positive happening," he said.

As of Sunday, 32 percent of the county's nearly one million residents had been fully vaccinated, according to the county. Another 14 percent of the county has received one dose of either the two-shot Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, Latimer said.

On Monday, the County Center in White Plains administered its 200,000th dose since it opened just over three months ago. That venue, along with the county's two clinics at Westchester Community College and in White Plains and the Yonkers armory have provided 288,678 doses through the weekend.

Latimer said that even with last Tuesday's pause of the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine because six women suffered blood clots about three weeks after receiving their shot, which included one fatality, there is plenty of doses for most people to find a vaccine if they want one. However, residents should still make an appointment for their vaccine and not attempt to walk in.

"We are approaching the point where there's greater supply than demand but we're not at that point yet," Latimer said.

On Monday, the state also reported solid headway in seeing the reduction of transmission rates and serious health consequences in most areas of the state. Gov. Andrew Cuomo said statewide COVID-19-related hospitalizations Sunday stood at 3,783 and ICU patients at 836, the lowest total for both since Dec. 4. Sunday's statewide transmission rate of 2.94 percent was the lowest since Nov. 13, just before the holiday season surge.

However, there are still warning signs. The Western New York region, which includes Buffalo, had by far the worst transmission rate Sunday of the 10 regions, standing at 4.78 percent on the seven-day rolling average. By comparison, the four next highest regions stood at 3.25 percent for Mid Hudson, 3.10 for Long Island, 3.07 for New York City and 3.04 for Finger Lakes.

The Capital region was at 2.2 percent with the remainder of the state's regions below 2 percent.

Cuomo urged New Yorkers to stay vigilant and for residents to keep one another safe, even though the state is into its 14th month fighting the pandemic.

"Your community determines your infection rate, you determine your infection rate, your family determines your infection rate," he said.

Through Sunday, the state has administered more than 13.4 million doses, with 5,659,417 people fully vaccinated and another 8,326,432 people having received their first dose.

Recreation Choices to Expand

With the overall reduction in transmission, Latimer announced Monday that two county beaches, Croton Point Park and Playland, will open for Memorial Day weekend and

will operate on weekends until June 25. After that, Playland beach will be open daily through Labor Day while Croton Point Park will be open Wednesday through Sunday for the summer.

The county's four pools – Saxon Woods, Sprain Ridge, Tibbetts and Willson Woods – will be open every day from June 25 through Labor Day.

The amusement park at Playland will open Saturday, June 26 and operate Wednesday through Sunday. It will also be open on Monday, July 5 and Monday, Sept. 6, which is Labor Day.

Latimer said if there are transmission increases, the county will shut down one or more of any of its recreation venues.

"We recognize that these recreation facilities are essential to the quality of life and to the mental health of individuals who have been cooped up for so long as we are now into the second year of this pandemic," Latimer said. "It's a balancing act. We thought we found the right balance last year. We hope that will be true this year."

Cuomo announced that museums and zoos statewide will increase capacity to 50 percent next Monday, Apr. 26. Movie theaters will be allowed to have 33 percent capacity next week as well.

Large indoor sports arenas will allow 25 percent attendance starting May 19, in time for the start of the NBA playoffs, Cuomo said.



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Alzheimer's Association Launches Virtual Book Club for Caregivers

By Anna Young

The Hudson Valley and Long Island chapters of the Alzheimer's Association will be offering a special support group for book enthusiasts caring for loved ones with dementia.

The virtual book club and support group will be held from 4 to 5 p.m. on Mondays starting May 3 and will run for six weeks, ending on June 14. There will be no meeting on Memorial Day.

Program facilitator Deborah Ackerman, who also oversees a caregiver support group for the Hudson Valley Chapter,

said participants will read "Elizabeth is Missing," by Emma Healey. The book shares the story of forgetful Maud – who suffers from dementia – her exasperated daughter and her missing friend, Elizabeth.

Ackerman said group members can discuss and relate to Maud's story to their experiences loving and caring for someone living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. She added Maud's perspective offers caregivers a window

into how their loved ones with dementia may be thinking.

"I think it gives the caregivers more of a sense of when Mom looks at you blankly or does the opposite of what you asked her to do, here's what might have gone on in her head," Ackerman said. "Mom can't tell you why she just threw the knives and forks in the garbage instead of the sink, but Maud's thoughts kind of give that answer. And hopefully it helps the care partner – even

though it's a frustrating situation – realize that their loved ones are not deliberately doing things to be annoying."

Participation in the support group will be limited to eight members to create an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable interacting. If more people express interest, Ackerman said the program will be offered again.

It was also held previously on Long Island.

"I believe if there is enough interest, they will do it again, and if it goes over, I'd be glad to run it again," Ackerman said. "I think after we go past eight, it's hard for people to get their say in."

Ackerman added the book is a fun read and doesn't involve any clinical terminology. She said the book doesn't focus on a diagnosis, rather the symptoms, the character's point of view and identifying how she processes information.

"It's six weeks, and it's an enjoyable book," Ackerman said. "This is such a great book that it may encourage people who have never tried the Alzheimer's Association to learn about it and take advantage."

Participants are encouraged to register for the program online at <https://www.alz.org/hudsonvalley> to receive a free copy of "Elizabeth is Missing." Registration can also be completed by calling the Alzheimer's Association at 800-272-3900.

Greenburgh Police Investigation Pedestrian Road Crossing Death

An investigation was launched in Greenburgh last week after a pedestrian was killed walking across Tarrytown Road.

On Apr. 15 at about 9:50 p.m., a 59-year-old man was struck by a vehicle as he was crossing the street near 407 Tarrytown Rd., according to the Greenburgh Police Department. Police responded to the scene where they observed the victim lying injured in the roadway.

Greenburgh Police EMS performed a

trauma assessment, but the pedestrian was pronounced dead, police said.

The driver of the vehicle remained on the scene after the incident and is cooperating with the accident investigation launched by the Greenburgh Police Detective Division.

Anyone that may have witnessed the accident and can help with the investigation is asked to contact the Greenburgh Police Detective Division at 914-989-1725.

—Anna Young

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Increased School Funding for Peekskill, Ossining Celebrated

By Rick Pezzullo

State elected officials and school leaders last week celebrated increased education funding in the recently approved state budget, particularly for the Peekskill and Ossining school districts.

Education funding totaled \$29.6 billion, an increase of \$3.1 billion from last year. Foundation Aid, which was finalized at \$19.8 billion, increased by \$1.4 billion.

"Our students, parents, educators and unions shouldn't have had to become lobbyists for Foundation Aid to deliver the fiscal equity that our schools need and deserve," Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said outside the Peekskill School District's central office last Wednesday. "The Senate Majority fought to pass a budget with a commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid so funding goes where it is needed most. The difference between success and failure lies in these classrooms."

In the 40th Senate District represented by Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro), 19 school districts each saw an average funding increase of 11.4 percent.

Peekskill and Ossining are both receiving more than \$5 million in school aid, along with increases in Foundation Aid. Ossining, which has been fighting for more Foundation Aid for years, will see a 27 percent (\$3.8 million) jump in Foundation Aid.

"When I joined the Senate Democratic majority in 2019, to a person, our number one priority was fully funding education,"



RICK PEZZULLO PHOTO

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins speaks outside the Peekskill School District's central office last week to laud the additional \$3.1 billion in state funding for education and \$1.4 billion in Foundation Aid for the 2021-22 school year. She was joined by state Sen. Shelley Mayer, far left, chair of the Senate Education Committee, state Sen. Peter Harckham, second from right, and Peekskill and Ossining school officials.

Harckham said. "Every child in the state, regardless of the zip code in which they live, should receive a high-quality education. Peekskill and Ossining have been underfunded for years."

"It is about time we fully funded Foundation Aid, as we have been advocating for that to be part of our state budget for years," said Assemblywoman Sandy Galef (D-Ossining). "This is a great day for our children. We are

bringing equity to our educational system at last."

Peekskill Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Mauricio and Ossining Superintendent of Schools Dr. Raymond Sanchez expressed their gratitude.

"When I think about what this means for our schools moving forward, it's a critical game changer. You have given us the fuel to move this ship forward," Mauricio told the lawmakers. "For years, parents, students, educators, school board members, advocacy organizations and locally elected officials have stood together to demand that New York State do what was fair and equitable for our children. This is the support our children deserve, and will help assist in closing the equity gap."

"This is about liberation. This is about justice," Sanchez remarked. "This is not about numbers solely. Behind every number there is an individual child with a story that needs to be understood, and it is incumbent upon us that we adapt to the ever-changing needs of our students and our families. That's what we do."

The state legislature and Gov. Andrew Cuomo agreed to phase in 100 percent of Foundation Aid over the next three years. For the upcoming school year, every district in the state will receive at least 60 percent of aid and have a minimum 2 percent increase. The following two years will see 80 and 100 percent Foundation Aid funding, respectively.

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Towns Begin Discussion on Whether to Participate in Cannabis Sales

By Martin Wilbur

Officials in communities throughout the area have begun to weigh whether they should consider allowing cannabis dispensaries and lounges in their jurisdictions following the Mar. 31 legalization of recreational marijuana by New York State.

Last week, the town boards in New Castle and North Castle held preliminary discussions on the issue to better understand the nuances of the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA). Municipalities have until the end of the year to decide whether to opt out and prohibit the retail sale of cannabis and adult consumption venues. Any opt out would require passage of a local law.

If a Town Board opts out, members of the public may force a referendum by submitting a valid petition containing a requisite number of signatures from residents of the municipality.

Should a governing board permits dispensaries, it may enact reasonable zoning restrictions, said Drew Gamils, an attorney for the White Plans law firm Keane & Beane, which represents New Castle.

"If you choose to opt in, you can't effectively ban these facilities by adopting too restrictive zoning regulations," Gamils told town officials last week.

There would be a 13 percent tax on all cannabis sales, with 9 percent going to the state and 4 percent staying local. Of that

4 percent, the municipality would receive three-quarters of the local revenue with the county taking in the rest, Gamils said.

New Castle approved zoning regulations in 2019 that included tight regulations on vape shops within the town with the possibility of expanding it to cover marijuana in anticipation that its recreational use would be legalized. Supervisor Ivy Pool said the town needs clarity on what restrictions will be allowed.

"If we can follow up and have a clearer understanding of where within town you would be able to site a marijuana dispensary based upon our zoning code that we approved in 2019," Pool said. "I think that would be helpful to the conversation."

The 2019 regulations prohibited the shops within 500 feet of a park, playground, library or religious institution or within 2,000 feet of any school.

Deputy Supervisor Jeremy Saland said he would like to learn how much revenue a dispensary might generate in comparably-sized municipalities in the other states that have legalized cannabis.

Three percent of \$500,000 compared to 3 percent of \$2 million would be insignificant, he said.

"I think we need to understand what these numbers are and then we can see similar-sized communities and similarly-sized metropolitan areas to see what they've done in terms of their sales and taxes," Saland said.

Gamils said marijuana use would be

prohibited everywhere smoking is currently prohibited in town. The law would allow for personal cultivation of up to six plants and for consumption in one's home.

In North Castle, Supervisor Michael Schiliro recommended to his board colleagues that the town have a robust public discussion on the issue to make sure officials hear the pros and cons of allowing dispensaries to operate or enacting the opt-out provision.

As many different community stakeholders as possible should be encouraged to participate to come to a decision, added Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto.

"I really feel we need to hear from that cross-section – our police department, our first responders," she said. "I think we need as much input (as possible) to digest. I think it's a very big decision and I think you're right, it just can't be my personal view."

While communities have until Dec. 31 to decide whether to opt out, Town Attorney Roland Baroni said the public forums should be held by no later than summer. That way if the town were to opt out and a petition is submitted triggering a permissive referendum, the town could avoid the expense of holding an extra election and place the proposition on the general election ballot.

DiGiacinto said if the board is uncertain or does not have enough time to make a decision, it could opt out. Under the law, municipalities can choose to change course

and allow retail sales and lounges without penalty after opting out.

Councilman Jose Berra said the issue should be based on public feedback.

"You can't say there's a correct answer," Berra said. "It depends on what the residents want. We have a good sense already. We've heard from a lot of residents. There are other means, too, but we've heard from a lot of residents who don't want this here, I would say."

North Castle had also passed regulations restricting the sale of vaping and nicotine products in 2019, but held off addressing marijuana sales in the zoning code until state legislation was approved.

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Disbarred Yorktown Attorney Sentenced for Stealing \$1M From 9/11 Victim

By Anna Young

A disbarred Yorktown lawyer could spend more than four years in prison after stealing nearly \$1 million that had been awarded to a Sept. 11, 2001 first responder he represented.

Gustavo Vila, of Yorktown Heights, was sentenced last week in White Plains Federal Court to 51 months in prison. Vila pleaded guilty last Oct. 29 to one count of theft of government funds after pocketing money that was granted to former client and disabled New York City police officer John Ferreyra by the Department of Justice's 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund.

"Gustavo Vila stole money awarded by the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund to his client, an NYPD officer and first responder," said U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss. "Further, Vila lied to his client for more than three years, telling him that the stolen money had yet to be released by the fund. Now Gustavo Vila has been sentenced to prison for his betrayal."

According to court records, Ferreyra had retained Vila, a retired NYPD lieutenant, under the assumption he would do right by him after being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2005. The cancer was linked to toxins ingested at Ground Zero during the months he spent assisting in rescue and recovery efforts.

Due to his diagnosis, Ferreyra has undergone surgeries, a stem cell transplant, chemotherapy and multiple radiation therapy

sessions.

Following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Congress created the Victims Compensation Fund to provide reparations with federal government funds to any individual who suffered physical harm or was killed because of the attacks, or as a result of the debris removal efforts that took place in the immediate aftermath.

Claimants seeking compensation from the fund were authorized to work with an attorney who would, on behalf of their client, submit a claim and receive the award. Attorney's fees were limited to 10 percent of any award, according to a Department of Justice statement.

Between 2012 and 2019, Vila represented Ferreyra following his diagnosis. However, while Vila acted as the middle man for his client and the Victims Compensation Fund, he had been disbarred in 2015 due to an unrelated theft.

In May 2013, Vila submitted a claim on behalf of Ferreyra, along with forms authorizing the fund to deposit the awarded money directly into his law firm's bank account. On Sept. 12, 2016, an award of \$1,030,622.04 was authorized for life-threatening illnesses that Ferrerya sustained at Ground Zero.

A month later, the full amount was deposited into Vila's bank account, officials said, which Vila was required to distribute to Ferreyra, with 10 percent reduced. But Vila failed to inform his client about the full deposit – giving Ferreyra \$103,062 and



Disabled New York City Police Officer John Ferreyra, pictured above, was fleeced for nearly \$1 million by his attorney, Gustavo Vila, who stole most of his 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund award. Vila was sentenced last week to 51 months in jail.

keeping the rest for himself.

Officials said Vila used the money for his personal benefit, including to pay his taxes and personal loans.

Up until last February, Vila had maintained the Victims Compensation Fund had not yet released the additional compensation that was promised, claiming the organization ran out of funding, officials said.

Under the advisement of fellow officers who found the multiyear payout delay unusual, Ferreyra contacted New York City-based law firm Barasch & McGarry. The group has represented more than 20,000

9/11 victims, including thousands of former police officers.

Ferrerya was advised to contact the Victims Compensation Fund immediately, and it was confirmed that his award had been paid in full to Vila on Oct. 12, 2016. The U.S. Attorney's Office was then alerted, while authorities searched for other victims of Vila's.

The prosecution of the case was handled by the office's General Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorney Sarah L. Kushner oversaw the prosecution.

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Obituaries

Jeni Schutrick-Vitielo

Jeni Schutrick-Vitielo (nee Giovanna Bamonte), a longtime employee in the Town of Cortlandt attorney's office, died Mar. 20 after a brief illness. She was 84.

She was born in Philadelphia to Pasqualina (Lena) and Charles Bamonte on Sept. 11, 1936. After her father's sudden passing, her mom, sister Rose Anne and Jeni relocated to New York where Jeni spent the remainder of her life.

From the time Jeni was a young girl, she had an abiding Catholic faith and a deep devotion to Jesus and His teachings. She lived her life from a place of compassion, generosity and love. She had an incredible sense of humor, and her laughter was a source of great joy to all who knew her. Professionally, she was a paralegal and loved her work. She retired from the Town of Cortlandt at 70, but that did not slow her down.

Her volunteerism won her many awards, but this was never the motivation for her selfless work. Among many other things, she gave freely of her time to head the Friends of Hudson Valley Mental Health, the food pantry in her community, and coordinated monthly meals for the homeless. Jeni was a Eucharistic minister, a hospital chaplain and taught CCD for 55 years.

She made certain that everyone had a seat at her holiday table who would otherwise be alone. She loved the season of Lent and every year made 100 Easter baskets for needy children so they too would have

joy during Easter. At Christmastime, she distributed a countless number of gift cards to struggling families. Always looking out for others, there was nothing she wouldn't do to make someone feel included, loved, safe or wanted. It was genuine, it was Jeni.

Jeni loved her precious family without reservation and with all of her heart. Her countless friends were graced by her unending kindnesses, and she always extended her hand to strangers who rarely stayed strangers for long. The size of her heart was limitless. Jeni recently said that she wanted to write a book about the family. The book was not written, but the story of Jeni and her life will live on.

Jeni was married to Thomas Schutrick, with whom she had two sons, Charles and Thomas. Many years after that marriage ended, Jeni met and married Vincent Vitielo, with whom she shared a happy life. When he passed, many people said how sorry they were that she "lost" him. She would kindly reply that he was not lost; she knew exactly where he was – safe in the arms of God.

Jeni is survived by her sons, Charles (Susan) and Thomas (Elizabeth); grandchildren Justin, Jarod, Jessica, Charles (Alicia); her great-grandson, Wyatt; and many loving cousins and friends. She was predeceased by her parents, stepfather Jack Grandazzo, husband Vincent and sister Rose Ann (Bamonte) Broderick.

Joseph Danko

Joseph Danko died Apr. 8. He was 73.

Danko was known and loved by many as Big Joe, Uncle Joe, Gooter and Poppy. He graduated from Lakeland High School in 1967 and served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam conflict. After the Navy, he worked at the Montrose VA until his retirement after 30 years of faithful service. He was also an associate member of the Peekskill Fire Department.

He loved golfing, bowling, softball, WWE wrestling, bingo, volunteering, being with family, music, concerts, traveling and going on road trips. He was a selfless, kind, caring, generous, funny, attentive, no-nonsense guy. He was a loyal longtime fan of the Boston Red Sox and Indianapolis Colts.

He is survived by his sweetheart of 12 years, Carole; his loving daughters, Jodie, (Bradley) and Jessica (Jim); and grandchildren Merissa, Michael, Matthew, Danielle and James.

He was predeceased in death by his parents, Stephen and Marion.



Joseph Danko

He was an amazing man who touched the lives of everyone who knew him. His memory will be held dear and his absence will be felt by many.

Michael Healy

Michael C. Healy, a Yorktown resident, died Apr. 11. He was 85.

Healy was born in Rossy, Keshcarrigan, Leitrim, Ireland on Nov. 28, 1935, to Thomas and Mary Josephine Healy. He was the loving husband of the late Margaret. He is survived by his son, Kevin Costello; grandchildren Kevin, Megan and Tara Costello; daughter in-law Maura Costello; he was the brother of Dennis (Mary Ann), Carmel (Jerry) Fitzgerald and Rita (Donald) Gormley and the late Charles, Catherine McHale, Thomas, John, Patrick, Sister Matilda and Maureen Brennan. He is also survived by his sisters-in-law Joan, Eileen and Margaret and many loving nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews.

Healy was a master carpenter and an incredible leader and role model to everyone he worked with. He came to this country as a young man and settled in New York City,

making many friends along the way. He was drafted by the United States Army in 1961, spending most of his enlisted career in Korea.

After his honorable discharge, he began working in the trades as a carpenter and eventually owned his own company. Michael met the love of his life, Margaret Costello, in the late 1970s and went on to spend a wonderful life of traveling all over the world with her.

He loved spending time with his family and friends and playing with his grand cat. His true passion was anything that had to do with his grandchildren. He was their biggest supporter, attending games, competitions, graduations, concerts, Boy Scout events and involved in their day-to-day life.

He will be remembered for his outgoing nature, generosity, sense of humor and ability to light up any room.

Vincent Tavano Jr.

Vincent Anthony Tavano Jr., a Lake Carmel resident, died suddenly and unexpectedly on Apr. 8. He was 57.

Vinny, as he was known, was born Feb. 4, 1964, in Yonkers to Vincent Sr. and Laticia (Carlson) Tavano. He is survived by his wife, JodiLynn (Johns) Tavano, whom he married on June 11, 1988, in Mount Vernon, his young son, Vincent III, his dogs Gizmo and Grizzly and cats Mandy and Candy.

He is also survived by his two sisters, Michelle Richardson and Niki Tavano Cocomello of Arizona; many aunts, uncles, several nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews; and brothers-in-law Richard (Donna) Johns, Ronald Johns and Raymond Johns. He is predeceased by his mother-in-law and father-in-law Grace and Richard Johns.

Vinny was the sole owner and contractor of Custom Floors Installations where he

was able to show his phenomenal talents with his own designs of hardwood floors and cabinetry, which he put to use building and designing his own floors and furniture.

In his spare time, Vinny had a passion and talent for bowling, having bowled several 300 games, playing pool, baseball and tending to his garden of fruit trees, vegetables and plants. When he had time off, he loved to go down to his condo in West Palm Beach, Fla. and kick back and take a relaxing swim on the beach.

Vinny had a way of always making people laugh and feel at ease the minute he walked into a room. He also had a serious side, and if you needed advice or help you knew you could go to him without hesitation. He was a wonderful, kindhearted, thoughtful and caring man. He will be missed deeply and greatly, leaving a hole in his entire family as well as all of his friends.



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Agreement Reached in Post-Shutdown Transfer of Indian Point

By Rick Pezzullo

It appears all major hurdles have been cleared to pave the way for the transfer of ownership of the Indian Point nuclear power plants in Buchanan.

Last week, it was announced a provisional agreement had been reached between the New York State, environmental organizations, government agencies, Entergy, the current owner of the plants, Holtec International, which will oversee the decommissioning, and other interested parties for the swift and safe cleanup of the site.

The comprehensive settlement is now being sent to the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC), which is slated to vote on the proposal on May 13.

"We are pleased to have reached a comprehensive and equitable agreement relative to the prompt decommissioning of Indian Point with the many stakeholders who were involved in the process," said Leo Denault, Entergy's chairman and CEO.

"Holtec is pleased to have found common ground and reached consensus with the State of New York, and the interested parties, on a joint petition that supports the prompt, safe and efficient decommissioning of Indian Point," said Holtec's president and CEO Dr. Kris Singh. "Our commitment to be a good neighbor and shared goal of protecting the health and safety of the public and the environment, were key to reaching agreement on a number of issues. This joint proposal provides for additional financial assurance, oversight as well as environmental protections

that serve to mitigate the risk and protect the interests of the local communities and citizens of New York."

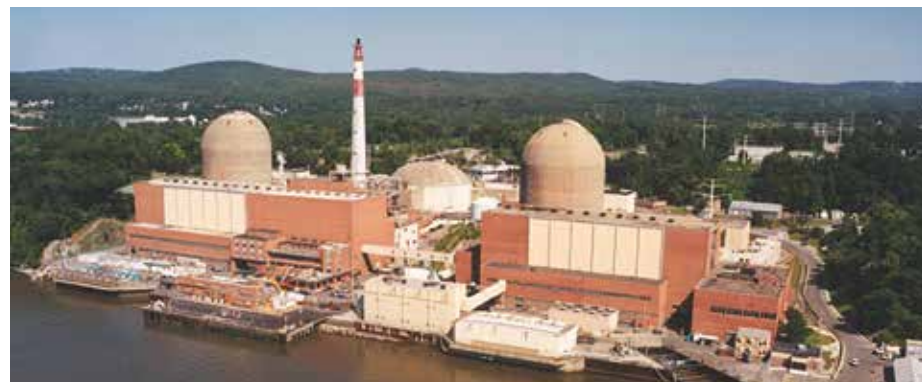
The last remaining operating unit at the facility is scheduled to cease operations by Apr. 30.

In 2017, Entergy, New York State and Riverkeeper stunned local officials when they announced the two operating nuclear reactors at Indian Point would close. Unit 2 powered down last April.

In November 2019, Entergy and Holtec filed an application for license transfer with the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). In January 2020, the NRC announced that it was considering approval of an application by Entergy to transfer the Indian Point license – and the facility's trust funds to pay for decommissioning – to Holtec to implement the facility's decommissioning. NRC approved the sale last November.

This joint agreement regarding the proposed license transfer is intended to ensure that adequate funds are available to complete the project subject to state oversight. Under the agreement, Holtec is required to adhere to financial and administrative provisions, including:

- Maintaining a minimum balance of no less than \$400 million in the Decommissioning Trust Fund for 10 years following the transaction closing date;
- Maintaining a minimum balance of no less than \$360 million in the Decommissioning Trust Fund at partial site release from the NRC for costs related to waste management and radiological cleanup of the site;



Agreements regarding the ownership of Indian Point nuclear power plant have been completed. The facility will cease operations next Friday, Apr. 30.

- Requiring Holtec to return 50 percent of the money it recovers from the Department of Energy for spent fuel management costs to the Decommissioning Trust Fund;
- Conducting site restoration and remediation under an order on consent with the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), which will oversee the hazardous materials cleanup at Indian Point, including through the use of an on-site monitor;
- Providing funds for state and local emergency management and response; and
- Providing financial and project reporting to the state and the public through a website and other channels to ensure transparency regarding project status and costs.

Per additional agreement terms, the state attorney general's office, Riverkeeper, the Town of Cortlandt and the Hendrick Hudson School District will withdraw their lawsuits

against the NRC, which are currently pending in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Last Monday, the Cortlandt Town Board voted on a Memorandum of Understanding to continue its Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) arrangement from Entergy to Holtec that will guarantee the town receives \$809,000 in 2022 and \$550,000 in 2023. Cortlandt has been receiving \$809,000 annually from the PILOT.

"It's not the end of the game. It's just the beginning," said Councilman James Creighton. "Hopefully we can agree on a long-term pilot in the near future."

Meanwhile, Holtec has agreed to provide job opportunities for more than 300 of Entergy's current employees at Indian Point and honor the collective bargaining agreements that apply to about 1,000 workers at the facility.

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Obituaries

Charles Velardi

Charles Henry Velardi died peacefully at home in his sleep, in the wee hours of the morning of Mar. 16 from heart failure and chronic kidney disease. He was 92.

His wife, Joan Antoinette Ruger Velardi preceded him in death almost one year earlier on Mar. 26, 2020.

Charlie was an attorney in Brewster. He was a general practitioner of small-town law, assisting clients, neighbors and friends resolve their legal problems, dispensing advice in his analytical, compassionate way. He was highly respected and represented Brewster's interests as village attorney for many years.

Charlie was a restless spirit. He loved traveling in all its permutations: airplanes and eventually RVing around the country. Charlie didn't settle down until he turned 91. He decided on his own that it was time to quit driving, wanting to protect his perfect record of no accidents ever in his flying and driving career.

Charlie loved politics and history. His long life gave him a long view of Republican ideology, and he was deeply committed to Eisenhower's middle ground Republicanism. He loved fresh figs, chocolate and small animals. Cognizant to the end and watching birds from his bedroom window, he reminded his caregivers to fill his bird feeders.

He moved to Arizona to protect the health of his wife, but remained connected with his family back east. He is now in the arms of



Charles Velardi

his wife of 63 years, Toni, and is celebrating a reunion with his sister, mother and father, whom he dearly loved. He leaves behind many family and friends who loved him, including three children, six grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Charlie lived a life of honor, with a powerful drive for fair play and social justice. He touched many lives, and will be sorely missed by all who knew him well.

A veteran of the Korean War, Charlie was buried with military honors at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona.

Colleen Murphy

Colleen Ann Murphy, a Buchanan resident, died Apr. 10. She was 53.

Murphy was born Aug. 16, 1967, to Robert C. and Jacqueline (Guyon) Conklin in Cold Spring. She was a cherished and dedicated wife to Patrick Murphy, and extremely loving and dedicated mother to her sons Kevin and Shawn. She was also a doting aunt to Robert and Brianna Dejesse and Samantha Murphy.

Choosing to be a happy homemaker, she was able to create a very loving, caring environment for her family to grow and to form strong character in her sons.

She was involved in many community organizations: PTA vice president within the Hendrick Hudson School District, secretary for the Buchanan Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary, the Village of Buchanan Beautification Committee, often decorating Village Hall for various holidays, and the Trinity Boscobel Methodist Church. She is viewed by an entire community as a mother and friend to all who knew her. She was the kind of person that put others first and lifted their spirits wherever and whenever



Colleen Murphy

needed. She will be missed by not only her husband and sons but also her mother, Jacqueline, sister Kathleen and family, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, loving in-laws and a large community of friends.

P'ville Welcomes Two New Police Officers, Increases Force to 23

By Abby Luby

Pleasantville welcomed two new police officers to the village last week.

Officers Donelle Charles and Gustavo Paredes were sworn in last Monday, expanding the department to 23 members.

Charles has 12 years of experience serving another department in the state that was not disclosed. During that time, he was awarded multiple promotions leading to a position on the command staff. He was also assigned an assortment of duties, including investigator, records management system administrator and bike patrol coordinator.

Paredes has been a police officer in what the village only described as an urban department serving a socioeconomically diverse community. He has been an officer for two years and is fluent in Spanish.

At the virtual swearing-in ceremony at last Monday's Village Board meeting, Pleasantville Police Chief Erik Grutzner introduced both cops to the community.

"Both of these officers were hired because they interviewed extremely well and their backgrounds revealed that they both have proven themselves to be comfortable engaging with the communities they served," Grutzner said.

With the new hires, the force now includes two women officers, one Black officer and three Hispanic officers.

"We obviously have been looking to

diversify the department for some time but we haven't done it because we never found the right candidate," Grutzner said. "These two (new) officers are the right candidates and the diversification is a side benefit."

During the public sessions for the village police reform process, repeated recommendations were made for more officers to be visible and on foot and officers' training be updated.

In his introduction, Grutzner referenced those recommendations. He said having more officers allows the department to provide more opportunities for community interaction, one of the key requests during the police reform sessions.

The hiring process included reviewing resumes of all candidates wanting to serve another department. Charles' salary is \$77,903.21 and Paredes' will earn \$71,492.74. Both appointees are subject to a probationary period of at least 52 weeks, which can be extended to 78 weeks.

After the online ceremony, Pleasantville Mayor Peter Scherer welcomed the new officers to the village.

"I very much regret that we're not here face to face because these are good moments and (if in person) we would also have the opportunity for a friend or family member to pin the badge upon you," Scherer said. "Donelle and Gustavo, welcome to Pleasantville. We are delighted to have you."

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Large Crowd Gathers to Stop Asian American Pacific Islander Hate

By Abby Luby

The voices of young people were heard loud and clear on Sunday at the Westchester Against Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Hate rally in Pleasantville.

A diverse crowd of roughly 200 people attended the rally, listening to speakers share their experiences as targets of racial bias. Under overcast skies and mild temperatures, many held signs protesting anti-Asian hate and bigotry.

Repeated attacks on Asian Americans throughout the country since the start of the pandemic has prompted several rallies in Westchester. Last month, an 83-year-old Korean woman in White Plains was punched in the face and knocked down.

The event was co-organized by Raghav Joshi, a junior at Blind Brook High School in Rye Brook, and Liv Bespolka, a local community organizer. Joshi spoke of walking with a friend at night in Rye Brook hearing racist names called out by high school students in a car.

"No community has been spared. We have to work towards building a better community," he said.

Pleasantville High School student Angelie Wallace gave a fiery speech about complacency.



ABBY LUBY PHOTOS

Several of the close to 200 people who attended the Westchester Against AAPI Hate rally in Pleasantville on Sunday.



Left: Sen. Chuck Schumer made a surprise visit to Sunday's rally denouncing hate incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

"Our negligence is our enemy. Asian lives are not your Twitter trend or your pawn for power," Wallace said.

Pleasantville Village Trustee David Vinjamuri, with his two young children at his side, told of his father coming to the United States from India in 1955. Vinjamuri denounced xenophobia experienced by many immigrants but praised the strength of immigration in this country.

"America has attracted the best

and the brightest to the United States and those who work the hardest," he said.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer made a surprise appearance wearing a mask that said #StopAsianHate. Schumer decried the spiraling incidents of racism over the last four years.

"As a result, we've seen too many people exhibit hatred and bigotry to Asians and other people as well," he said. "Hatred turns to violence."

Schumer said the new COVID-19

Hate Crimes Act, expected to pass this week, will see comprehensive reporting of bias crimes related to the pandemic.

"With this law, those who commit this kind of hate violence will be prosecuted," Schumer said.

Demeaning verbal harassment can come from those who don't know any better, said 16-year-old Archana Kumaran.

"Ignorance breeds hate and these values actively educates us what is wrong," she said.

Amina Payaz, a Pleasantville High School junior, said bias can be more nuanced but just as cruel.

"It's the small things like when the teacher mispronounces your name or confuses you with the other Asian girl in the class," she said. "Even though I was born and raised in this country, I've been asked where I'm from. These are all micro-aggressions."

Praising the efforts of the students was Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-Cold Spring). Rep. Mondaire Jones (D-White Plains) also participated.

Jones pointed to the nation's rise in white supremacy as being a root cause of the wave of anti-Asian behavior. He called on schools to do more to teach about the history of America's diverse AAPI community.

Anti-Asian sentiment has presented itself in other forms. The pandemic has seen many Asian-owned businesses lose patrons, a point stressed by Bill Kuang, co-vice president at the Office of Chinese Americans Westchester and Hudson Valley. Kuang said some businesses have seen a 70 to 80 percent drop in revenue since the start of the pandemic.

Lilian Wu, a known emeritus research scientist at IBM and a Taiwanese immigrant serving on Westchester County's Asian American Advisory Board who attended the event, said she has concerns about the lack of Asian American women in science and technology professions.

"The narrative on Asian women is that we are quiet and good listeners but we don't make good leaders," Wu said. "That narrative has to be changed."

Helping Joshi organize the rally was his close friend, Matt Weinstock, 18. He has helped Joshi organize Black Lives Matter rallies.

"We are focusing on getting the anti-Asian sentiment message out to politicians and legislators," Weinstock said. "It's depressing to live in this country where racism is still so prevalent."

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Letters to the Editor

New York's COVID-19 Restrictions Have Become Excessive

While I fully support Pleasantville Music Festival Executive Director Bruce Figler and Mayor Peter Scherer's decision not to hold the 2021 Pleasantville Music Festival due to New York State's COVID-19 restrictions making such events financially unviable, I do not support the state's continued COVID-19 policies on events such as these because basic math proves they're no longer needed. Now is the time to terminate these policies and let Pleasantville people party!

If it's okay to ride on overcrowded subways, buses, trains and planes, why isn't it okay for some fun in the sanitizing sun, sitting on a baking field on a hot July day at the Pleasantville Music Festival when transmission rates are lower than 1

in 10,000 for vaccinated people? That's the height of absurdity!

Based on the New York Post's story of 5,800 vaccinated individuals out of 66 million getting COVID-19 two weeks or later after their final shot, we can calculate the rate of transmission of vaccinated Americans at 1 out of every 11,379 people, compared to the rate of unvaccinated Americans, which is 1 out of every 10.39 people. (New York City calculates to 1 out of 11 unvaccinated people.) In other words, the rate of transmission of vaccinated people to the rate of transmission of unvaccinated people is 1/1,098th, proving that the vaccinations have done their job and now it's time for us to go back to our lives.

Additionally, as of today, at least 40 percent of New York State's residents have had one shot, and if current rates of weekly vaccination continue, by July 10, 88 percent of us will have at least that one shot and 72 percent of us will be fully vaccinated, plus two weeks.

All the Pleasantville Music Festival needs to do is to require individuals be fully vaccinated, plus two weeks, and we can have some fun in the sun and do what we do best – have fun!

Albany, it's time to let our Pleasantville people party!

Mark Markarian
Pleasantville

New Trustees Needed After Carmel Board of Ed's Glaring Incompetence

The Carmel School Board recently announced that for the 2021-22 fiscal year, the district is facing a \$4.7 million budget hole. As usual, the school board's first reaction is to raise taxes instead of first trying to cut spending. Trustee Eric Mittelstadt, in an obvious attempt to appease and mollify the voters, stated that we have fairly intelligent residents who will know and understand if next year's school budget is much higher. This is a very thinly veiled hint that he intends to override the state mandated 2 percent tax cap.

I would remind Mr. Mittelstadt that a 60 percent supermajority vote is required for the budget to pass if the cap is overridden. Board members, being fairly intelligent residents themselves, should not be looking to impose a massive tax increase, but instead should be concentrating on reducing costs

and the tax burden on our already overtaxed residents.

This month marks the second anniversary of the forced approval of the school bus garage referendum. After being rejected three times by the voters, the referendum was passed on the board's fourth attempt. To date, the school board has made no progress toward construction; in fact, they have gone backwards. The site has no zoning variance, an issue which a competent school board would have corrected prior to purchase. A proper set of architectural plans has yet to be submitted to replace the first set, which had a second story added to the garage, nearly doubling the cost.

I might note that the school board claims they have no idea who ordered this second floor into the plans. Is there anyone BUT the board that can do that? Also, to date,

the board has yet to obtain a building permit in order to proceed with construction. Therefore, in two years, the school board cannot report any progress, but believes that the voters are intelligent and will authorize more taxes to extend this incompetence. Nothing could be further from an intelligent thought, but is more accurately described as a first-class con job.

In light of this total incompetence and the blatant, deceitful attempt at a large tax increase, I believe that in the next school board election in May, all incumbents on the ballot should be voted out. It is time to try a new slate and give others who are interested a chance to use the taxpayers' money wisely and make some sorely needed progress.

Paul Collazo
Lake Carmel

New Castle Should Pursue Development of ChapLine

I am writing in support of the proposed New Castle ChapLine. Residents already use the trail and it is in desperate need of an upgrade. Safe, visible, walkable pathways are underdeveloped, which leaves residents to literally chart their own path. My son has regularly used the trail throughout his

tenure at Horace Greeley High School. A friend on the cross-country team showed him the path after school one day. Greeley runners have long used the path to get their miles in. Since we are already using it, let's make it safe.

We should seek outside grants in order to

mitigate the expense to the town.

Jennifer Bounds
Chappaqua

Jennifer Bounds is a candidate for New Castle Town Board.

United Way Public Health Career Scholarships Available for Grad Students

Westchester County graduate students pursuing careers in social work or public health are invited to apply for scholarship assistance through the Ruth Taylor Scholarship Fund.

The fund was established in tribute to Taylor upon her retirement as the county's commissioner of public welfare and in recognition of her nearly four decades of outstanding service. The annual awards are sponsored by United Way of Westchester and Putnam, Westchester County government and the Urban League of Westchester County. Applicants must be residents

of Westchester County and enrolled in graduate studies in social work or public health on a full-time basis. The submission deadline is Monday, June 14 for the application and all supporting documents to be received.

Financial need, public service and scholastic capacity are part of the evaluation criteria. Recipients must maintain the minimum cumulative university GPA for the duration of the award. Awards are issued annually, and students are eligible to apply if they have not previously received the scholarship. A change in major or enrollment status

(to part-time) will result in loss of the scholarship award.

Since 2008, United Way, through the Ruth Taylor Scholarship Fund, has awarded \$175,000 to 64 graduate students. The average award has been \$3,000 and can be used for tuition or maintenance or both.

Inquiries can be directed to United Way of Westchester and Putnam, Sabrina Ponzini, impact coordinator, via e-mail at sponzini@uwwp.org or download the application and cover letter at www.uwwp.org/ruthtaylorscholarships.

Pleasantville Mom Helps Hundreds Get Vaccine Appointments

By Martin Wilbur

Daneen Mancuso has been a godsend for hundreds of local residents who didn't have the time, patience or adeptness with technology to get a COVID-19 vaccination appointment online.

The Pleasantville resident had joined a Facebook group during the winter called Helping Westchester County (NY) Get Vaccinated (COVID-19) to help out those who were having trouble finding an open time slot to receive the vaccine. By the first week in March, when it was still difficult for many people to land an appointment, Mancuso was spending hours each evening and using her free time on weekends searching for open slots for people eager to get vaccinated.

"It really just started out with family and friends, and when I joined this group, I offered to help out as many people as I could," Mancuso said.

It has turned into a mission for Mancuso. By her estimate she has helped well over 450 local residents schedule their appointments, but also people who found out about her efforts from as far away as Brewster and Mount Vernon and a couple of others from Queens.

Many of the people she has helped are seniors or those too busy to spend hours, in some cases, in front of their computers, hitting the refresh button in hopes of having an appointment open up. Mancuso, who has a full-time job as a recruiter, has even scheduled appointments while waiting in



her car for her oldest son to finish basketball practice.

"I do tell everyone that I am in contact with to be patient, give me until this evening, and that's when I work on a lot of my appointments," she said. "I'll work on it either very early in the morning or any time after dinner. One night I was up till way past 11 o'clock because I had such a long list of people to get through and wanted to make sure I secured their appointment for them."

Most of the appointments Mancuso has snagged have been through the New York state site, for appointments typically at the County Center, and in some cases the Yonkers armory and even the Javits

Center in Manhattan. The people who have requested Mancuso's assistance, provide their name and days and times of availability for them to get their shots. She browses the sites looking for a match.

In one case, there was a man who said he was only available on Monday because he works in Manhattan, is pressed for time and commutes, she said. At the time of his request last month, he would have had to wait until sometime in May for his appointment. With Mancuso's help, he had his first dose on Apr. 5.

In several other instances, she was able to find an opening for someone later that same day or the next day.

"Really, it's timing," Mancuso said. "You have to put in the time to sit there and keep refreshing and have the patience to do it."

During the busiest stretches, Mancuso said she received between 40 and 50 requests in a day. With the increasing availability of the vaccines and many pharmacies now offering it, the volume of daily requests has slackened off to less than half that number. She has many who she already helped reach back out to assist with making appointments for other family members.

But as eligibility has increased to include everyone 16 years old and up, an increasing number of requests have come from parents of college students. The students are currently out of town but will be back in town by mid-May and

she has helped them already secure their appointment for when they return.

Even though, there are other groups that have organized to help others, Mancuso said it was important for her to be of assistance. She plans to continue her efforts until they aren't needed anymore.

Aside from the satisfaction she derives, Mancuso said she feels as though she's setting a good example for her two sons, who are nine and 12 years old.

"I'm just happy that in my community I was able to help so many people secure appointments," Mancuso said.

For anyone who may still need help in scheduling an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine, they can e-mail Mancuso directly at vaccineangel74@yahoo.com.

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Yorktown's Veterans Road Officially Reopens After 14-Week Closure

Work was completed last week on Veterans Road in Yorktown reopening the street to traffic after it was closed for more than three months.

Crews completely replaced the culvert that carries Veterans Road over the Hallocks Mill Brook.

"This major road improvement demonstrates our willingness to invest in our community and it sends a signal to outside investors that we are serious about quickly completing projects," said Supervisor Matt Slater.

The Veterans Road reconstruction was part of a larger project that includes the Hill Boulevard Bridge, which is still closed. The bridge work involves the complete replacement of the bridge that carries Hill

Boulevard over a Barger Brook tributary. That project is expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

"This is not the finished product," said Highway Superintendent Dave Paganelli during last Friday's ribbon cutting at the site. "Bear in mind that this will get a topcoat of an inch-and-a-half to two inches of asphalt when we do Hill Boulevard."

Work at both sites included removing the existing twin corrugated metal pipes and replacing them with a precast structure. The work required a temporary waterway diversion and dewatering measures, replacing approach roadway pavement and appurtenances, and restoring disturbed areas within the project limits.

"This is a job that was much-needed.

It actually became an emergency," said Councilman Ed Lachterman. "I'm really happy that we got this done."

Yorktown received two grants for the work from the New York State Department of Transportation under the BridgeNY program. The grant for the culvert replacement was for up to \$820,000 and the grant for the Hill Boulevard Bridge was for up to \$2.6 million.

"We have some improvements that we're going to do to this road with traffic safety," Councilman Tom Diana said. "What that culvert looked like before this was done was unbelievable. It wasn't a pretty sight."

The Town Board awarded a \$3 million bid for the work last Sept. 1 to Transit Construction Corp. of Yonkers.



Yorktown officials cut the ribbon on the reopened Veterans Road culvert last Friday. The street had been closed since late last year.

Community Housing Innovations Offers Rent Assistance for Families

Low-income families in Westchester County who are having difficulty paying their rent or utilities because of COVID-19-related income loss may be eligible for financial help.

Community Housing Innovations (CHI) is offering cash payments for back rent and utilities through its Westchester Eviction Prevention Program, funded by Westchester County. Eligible families must meet income and geographic restrictions.

"The eviction moratorium has been extended nationwide,

but most landlords will seek full payment once the moratorium is lifted," said Julie Stern, director of homeownership programs for CHI.

Even renters who don't currently owe back rent because of the moratorium should apply, she said. In addition, the program will help renters who have been unable to pay their utility bills (electricity, heat and water) due to COVID.

To be eligible, applicants must meet the following income limitations based on household size:

- One person: household income

of no more than \$44,050.

- Two people: household income of no more than \$50,350.
- Three people: household income of no more than \$56,650.
- Four people: household income of no more than \$62,900.
- Five people: household income of no more than \$67,950.
- Six people: household income of no more than \$73,000.

Applicants must be within 21 days of eviction or utility shut-off (or both) and must not have owed back rent due before Apr. 1, 2020, or utility bills due before Mar. 15,

2021. The maximum payment is four months of back rent or utility payments (or both). Payments will be made directly to landlords, management companies and utility providers.

This program is open to residents in the Westchester County communities of Ardsley, Bedford, Briarcliff Manor, Buchanan, Cortlandt, Croton-on-Hudson, Dobbs Ferry, Elmsford, Greenburgh, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington, Lewisboro, Mamaroneck Town (except Village of Larchmont),

Mamaroneck Village, Mount Kisco, New Castle, North Salem, Ossining Town, Ossining Village, Peekskill, Pelham, Pleasantville, Port Chester, Rye Brook, Rye Town, Scarsdale, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, Tuckahoe and Yorktown.

For complete details on the Westchester Eviction Prevention Program at CHI, visit www.communityhousing.org/programs/westchester-eviction-prevention/, e-mail CHICounseling@communityhousing.org or call Greg at 914-595-0992.

Putnam County Department of Health - HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE DROP-OFF DAY

May 1, 2021

9am-12pm

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As part of New York State's novel coronavirus (COVID -19) response, events such as these run by the Putnam County Department of Health, all staff, vendors and attendees must follow all applicable COVID-19 guidance at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home> and <https://esd.ny.gov/>.

The following will be required:

- Masks will be required if 6 ft social distancing cannot be maintained.
- HHWD - All participants MUST remain in their vehicles at ALL times.
- Sanitizer will be available not only to staff & vendors, but also to participants.

These additional safety precautions are to ensure that we all are operating in compliance with these important social distancing directives, which are designed to prevent the spread of this virus.

Please place all materials to be discarded in rearmost compartment or trunk of your vehicle
Thank you for your cooperation.

Items Accepted: Consumer commodity packaged household products only, inclusive of: Photo chemicals, non-latex driveway sealer, pool chemicals, creosote, kerosene, flammable liquids, metal polish, drain/oven cleaners, rug/upholstery cleaners, wood preservatives, turpentine, stains, varnishes, strippers, thinners, mothballs, rodent poisons, flea powders & collars, bug spray, nail polish remover, hair dyes, hair sprays, gasoline/oil mixtures, brake fluid, antifreeze, auto fluids, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers, adhesives, resins, solvents, oil-based paints, mercury containing products, button cell batteries (from watches and hearing aids), lithium & sealed lead acid batteries, rechargeable batteries, fluorescent light bulbs and tubes, smoke detectors, propane tanks up to 20-pound size, household size quantities of recalled hand sanitizer (methanol tainted).

Items Not Accepted: Industrial or commercial type and/or quantity hazardous waste or reagents, inclusive of: Electronic waste (e-waste), used motor oil, latex paint, plastic bags, tires, unlabeled/unidentified containers, household batteries (AAA, AA, C, D, 9V), ammunition, explosives, fireworks, asbestos products, construction debris, furniture, toys or clothing, medical waste, old medications. **ITEMS IN GARBAGE AND/OR LAWN BAGS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

All waste is subject to inspection and will only be accepted in the County's discretion. Please be advised that if any not accepted items as specified above are brought and are determined to present a hazard to residents, workers or the environment, Putnam County reserves the right to take any necessary safety measures, the cost of which shall be the resident's responsibility.

For additional information about waste disposal options, recycling and more, please visit: www.putnamcountyny.com/green-putnam/ or call (845) 808-1390 ext. 43125

Pre-Registration Required. Please visit our website at www.putnamcountyny.com/green-putnam/ to schedule your appointment.

Please bring your confirmation email with you to the event. For more information call (845) 808-1390 ext. 43150.

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The Household Hazardous Waste program is partially financed with a grant from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.



Pleasantville Music Festival Canceled for Second Straight Year

By Martin Wilbur

Once again, this year there will be no Pleasantville Music Festival, another consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Festival Executive Director Bruce Figler confirmed last weekend what had been suspected for weeks, that with strict capacity limits set by New York State and time growing short to secure performers and organize the event, there was little choice but to cancel the July 10 festival scheduled for Parkway Field.

Figler said that he had been hopeful earlier this year when the state revised its guidelines that could allow 33 percent capacity, organizers could plan a scaled-back festival. However, the maximum attendance would be 500 people with proof of full vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test and would include all people at the venue, including police officers, volunteers, vendors, the stage crew and musicians.

Recently, the festival has drawn about 5,000 music fans in good weather.

"What, are we going to sell 300 tickets?" Figler noted. "That's not exactly a way to make it a successful operation, which means we have to lose money. I don't want to be losing money for the village. So with that in mind, there's light at the end of the tunnel, but it's still too far off."

There is a possibility of moving the festival to later in the year, but until restrictions are lifted no plans will

move forward, Figler said. If there is no substitute event, the village will look to try again next year by most likely scheduling it for July 9, 2022.

Until last year, the festival had been held for 15 straight years since it was established in 2005. It is typically held on the second Saturday in July.

Mayor Peter Scherer said the loss of the festival for the second year in a row can't really be quantified in dollars and cents, except for the local businesses that would be a vendor and any spillover effect for some stores downtown.

But the village loses a day where people arrive in Pleasantville from throughout the metropolitan area, some of them for the first time, and get to see what the community is like.

"Obviously, it's a day that puts us on the map and it builds recognition of what a great place this is and a good place to come and we regret all of that, but I have to say that Bruce and his team are keeping the flame burning and they do such a great job of it," Scherer said.

Figler said being forced to cancel again is disappointing, but he believes that when the festival does return there will be pent-up energy and enthusiasm for what promises to be a great event.

"We're going to have a lot of music-starved people," he said.

While Figler had hoped that maybe they would be allowed to have 1,500 people on site at the expansive Parkway Field, the



The Pleasantville Music Festival, arguably the biggest day of the year for the village, has been canceled for the second consecutive year after New York State's capacity restrictions would limit crowds and make the event financially unfeasible. It had been scheduled for Saturday, July 10.

village never crunched the numbers to learn what the lowest number of spectators it could bring in and still have a chance at breaking even, Figler said.

"If we get the go-ahead for this thing (next year), I'll start working on it in November for next year," he said.

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You Can Have a No-Work Garden, But it Takes Work

Since the onset of COVID-19, I, like everyone else, have been more confined at home. My living circumstances make it more difficult than it might have been several years ago when I lived in a home with a good-sized lawn and garden. I would have had the opportunity to busy myself outside maintaining both.

But as it happens, I live in a condo development where all the landscaping is done by other people. It's something that I sorely miss.

Since the invention of the washing machine, vacuum cleaner, dishwasher and self-cleaning oven, the time needed for household chores has been greatly reduced. Outside in the garden, however, there haven't been many inventions to assist us in cutting down on time, with the possible exception of the lawn mower. The dull task of cutting grass is one that I handed over to the experts when I first moved to the suburbs.

Early on as a homeowner, I surrounded myself in the garden with beauty and color from early spring to late fall, with very little time spent for labor. My method required just one weekend of work at the beginning of the season and only a few periodic touch-ups, which I called my therapy, along the way. This included the planting and cultivation of plants and the onerous chore

of keeping weeds, invasive plants and deer at bay.

My first teacher in easy gardening was Ruth Stout, the sister of mystery writer Rex Stout, who many years ago wrote my favorite book about gardening called "The No-Work Garden Book." Stout's mainstays for an easy garden were thick mulching and composting. Though no longer in print, there are still copies of her book available on eBay.

Somehow this handy book was lost from my library years ago, and I suspect I gave it to a new homeowner who, like me, moved to a suburban home with a big

yard.

I developed an approach with a few rules of (a green) thumb – and with some trial-and-error experimentation on my own – for advancing the beauty of my garden from year to year while cutting back on the time required to maintain it.

Actually, it's a three-pronged approach. First, I considered carefully which plants I put into my garden and which I would keep out. Excluded were roses, which can kill you from the constant attention needed, and annual flowers for cutting which can be as intense as raising a child.

Anything that blooms every year with no attention from me can be included, from the foundation planting of bushes such as

azaleas and rhododendrons, to blossoming trees like cherry, apple and dogwood. My flowers were mostly perennials, including phlox and black-eyed Susan, which, if properly watered and fertilized, naturally or otherwise, will spread each year, along with bulbs and tubular plants.

Martha Stewart might cringe at my choices, but I did plant annuals that require no work at all once I stuck them in the ground. They included impatiens, which actually do better in the shade than in the sun, annual geraniums, which thrive in bright sun and can take incredible abuse from weather and lack of water, and my beloved petunias which, while requiring frequent watering, perform gloriously all season long.

To these I added many perennial geraniums. The latter don't look like regular geraniums at all, but rather grow on vine-like stems every year, without prodding, and have delicate little flowers that last from late spring to frost.

A side tip is that if you plant the annuals in clusters or in tubs and urns, they "pop" better in the overall landscape. My annuals required just one long day to plant and gave a full season of colorful pleasure.

Step two of my no-work garden was to employ thick mulch doing its triple-duty miracle work of retaining moisture while inhibiting weed growth, plus adding nutrients to the soil as it decays. I have a money-saving trick in achieving a thick mulch look. Regular mulch can be quite expensive, so I

asked my landscaping company to drop a full load of clean chips near my driveway. I used them in all my garden beds as a first layer. Then, I cover that layer with a mere skin of the more expensive mulch. Clever, huh?

My third element for easy gardening was to utilize certain products to keep plant and animal invaders at bay. I always liked Preen, those tiny granules that keep weeds from germinating.

Another product in my arsenal was Bobbex, which keeps deer from wishing each other bon appétit over my hostas and most other plants with flowers. While Bobbex must be sprayed at least once a month to continue its effectiveness, it's a small price to pay to assure that you won't lose an entire bed of plantings to one evening of deer indulgence.

If I had had the time, I probably would have planted annual flowers for cutting, but instead I would stop off at the local grocery store every week where I would buy them cheap, already cut and bundled nicely, for my wife. It serves two purposes. It demonstrates to my wife that I am a sensitive guy who thinks of her whenever I see flowers, but it was also to eliminate the big gardening chore of growing them myself.

Bill Primavera, while a publicist and journalist, is also a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate and founder of Primavera Public Relations, Inc. (www.PrimaveraPR.com). To engage the services of The Home Guru to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.



By Bill Primavera



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Family Creates Chappaqua Preschool Scholarship Honoring Son

By Martin Wilbur

When 11-year-old Mattias Edstrom tragically lost his life in February 2020, contributions poured in from the community in his memory.

His mother, New Castle Supervisor Ivy Pool, and father Christian Edstrom looked for some way to use the funds that would honor Mattias and have others remember him.

Having started his schooling at Play Care Early Learning Center at the First Congregational of Chappaqua when he was two years old, they reasoned it would make perfect sense to help families who could use the financial assistance to send their children to the preschool program through the establishment of the Mattias Edstrom Scholarship. The family's daughter, Alexandra, also attended Play Care.

Pool described her son as someone who cared deeply about those less fortunate and was "a kid wise beyond his years."

"We talked about a lot of the causes that were important to him, but setting something up at the preschool where he was educated, and this is also the church he belonged to, the First Congregational Church is also the sponsor of the Boy Scout troop, Troop 2 in Chappaqua, so this is a place that has a lot of special meaning for him, for our family, so it seems like a

natural fit," Pool said.

Play Care Director Xann Palmer said she hopes that one or two families in the community can be helped for next school year. Palmer and Pool hope to be able to fund the scholarship in perpetuity.

Recipients will receive tuition of up to \$4,700 for one child and up to \$6,350 for two or more children. The scholarship would cover the equivalent tuition for one child to attend the pre-school three days a week or for two children to attend two days a week.

Families who are eligible would live in affordable or workforce housing in Chappaqua or a surrounding community or not exceed gross annual household income thresholds. The income requirements are \$60,420 for a two-person household; \$67,980 for a three-person household; \$75,480 for a four-member family; and \$81,540 for five people.

Word will also be circulated to families at the new Chappaqua Station affordable housing complex on Hunts Lane and those living in workforce or affordable units at Chappaqua Crossing.

Palmer said she's uncertain what the need may be or who may apply, but the school is trying to be as flexible as possible.

"It's an application process and hopefully people will get the word out and tours can be given," said Palmer, who has been Play



The family of Mattias Edstrom has established a scholarship fund for families who could use assistance to pay the tuition to send their child to Play Care Learning Center in Chappaqua. Edstrom, 11, died in a hiking accident last year and had attended the preschool.

Care's Director since 2014. "Everybody should come visit, and I'm happy to show them around and go through everything that could be their experience here."

For Rev. Dr. Martha Jacobs, the senior minister at First Congregational Church,

said the scholarship effort is consistent with the church's mission of helping others in need and with Mattias's values. She recalled during summer camp shortly after Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico in 2017, he suggested assisting those devastated by the storm.

Helping people was truly important to him, Jacobs said, and the church raised several thousand dollars. With the help of a congregant who has family in Puerto Rico, they sent a check and care packages to people in need.

"I have very mixed emotions about this," Jacobs said. "I love this but I hate the fact that we have to have this idea (for the scholarship). That's where kind of the mixed emotion is. It's an incredible opportunity for us to serve a community that is underserved and has needs."

Pool said Chappaqua has been special to her family and this is a way for them to help others as well.

"I know he is sort of looking down and smiling," Pool said. "This is perfectly aligned with who he was and what he wanted for his community."

For more information on the Mattias Edstrom Scholarship, including ways to contribute and an online application form, visit <http://fcc-chappaqua.org/> or contact Xann Palmer at 914-238-6206 or e-mail director@playcarepreschool.com.

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David Rocco is an artist member of ArtsWestchester.

P'ville Recreation Super Returns to North Castle This Week

By Martin Wilbur

North Castle is welcoming a familiar face back to town.

The Town Board approved the appointment last Wednesday night of Matt Trainor to return as the municipality's Superintendent of Parks and Recreation a little more than two years after he left to take the same position in Pleasantville.

Last Monday night, the Pleasantville Village Board approved Trainor's resignation, which was effective Apr. 16.

North Castle officials said they were thrilled to have Trainor return, a position he held for nearly seven years until his departure to Pleasantville in February 2019.

"It was a move that Matt wanted to make," Supervisor Michael Schilero said of his move two years ago. "Matt will more than hit the ground running so we're excited to have him back and just a really excellent work ethic."

The vacancy in North Castle became available after the town's current Parks and Recreation Superintendent Todd Orlowski informed the board he will be leaving for an opportunity in the private sector, Schilero said. Orlowski, whose last day was Friday, came from Yorktown to replace Trainor two years ago.

In his previous stint in North Castle, Trainor was recognized for helping the

town take over the former Anita Louis Ehrman Pool on Greenway and convert it into a facility that is an important amenity for the town. Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said before the start of one swim season, Trainor was found cleaning the bathrooms at the pool complex by himself the week before the traditional Memorial Day weekend opening.

"I think we're all so pleased that Matt Trainor is wanting to return to North Castle," DiGiacinto said. "He was an incredible force and presence."

Before coming to North Castle in 2012, he worked as the recreation supervisor in the City of Rye for nearly five years, and before that as the senior recreation leader and aquatic director in the Town of Mamaroneck.

Pleasantville Mayor Peter Scherer wished Trainor well and thanked him for the last two years.

"Matt came to us a little less than two years ago from a highly celebrated tenure in the town of North Castle," Scherer said. "Evidently North Castle hasn't forgiven us and they have encouraged him to come back and he is doing so. Thank you, Matt, for your service."

Pleasantville will commence a search for a permanent replacement.

Abby Luby contributed to this article.

Police Blotter

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Apr. 5: A New York Sports Club employee reported at 11:35 a.m. that one of their clients just told him that his vehicle was stolen from the parking lot. The caller does not know the client's name or make of the vehicle. Patrols responded and officers interviewed the vehicle owner who stated he locked his keys and wallet inside a locker at the club while he worked out. After his workout, he found his locker open and his keys and wallet missing. The vehicle owner then walked out and noticed his gray 2018 Toyota RAV4 missing. He also reported numerous charges were made on his credit cards at a store in White Plains.

Apr. 5: An unidentified caller reported 12:46 p.m. an incident that occurred yesterday. The caller stated that she and her husband, who are Asian American, brought their dog to Black Rock Park yesterday around 4 p.m. While there, she stated that a white male, named Adam, who had two dogs, was wearing a face mask and sunglasses, started asking her a lot of questions such as "Where do you live?" and "How long have you been here?" and making comments that "the neighborhood is definitely changing." The caller stated the male made her very uncomfortable and that she walked away from him and left the park. The caller wanted the incident on record in light of recent hate crimes against

the Asian population.

Apr. 9: A Grand Street resident reported at 10:03 p.m. that a black bear is in his yard. Patrol dispatched and checked the area. The animal was gone on arrival.

North Castle Police Department

Apr. 12: A complainant reported at headquarters at 10:16 a.m. that he was notified via mail that an unknown person has filed for unemployment in his name in Kentucky.

Apr. 15: An E-911 caller reported at 6:15 p.m. that her 64-year-old daughter passed out after drinking and is unconscious and unresponsive but breathing at this time. The responding officers reported that the subject is being transported to Westchester Medical Center with ALS on board.

Yorktown Police Department

Apr. 12: Marek Felkner, 43, of Rutherford, N.J., was charged with three-degree criminal possession of stolen property, a Class E felony, at 1:42 p.m. Officers were advised of a possible stolen vehicle heading north on the Taconic State Parkway. A traffic stop was initiated on the Taconic in the vicinity of Route 202, and Felkner was arrested for being in possession of a 2014 GMC van that had been reported stolen by the New York City Police Department.

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P'ville Pool to Open for Memorial Day Weekend With Restrictions

By Abby Luby

The Pleasantville Village Pool will open for the 2021 season on Memorial Day weekend and close on Labor Day weekend with COVID-19 restrictions in place to protect patrons' safety.

Outgoing Parks & Recreation Superintendent Matt Trainor said that all municipal pools in Westchester must follow strict guidelines set by the Westchester Department of Health (DOH) to minimize the threat and spread of the virus.

"We're dealing with a fluid situation in terms of requirements," Trainor said. "What the DOH is asking operators to do is from a safety and health standpoint."

The pool was closed last year for the entire season due to the pandemic.

Details of this year's pool opening were discussed during an informational meeting via Zoom last Wednesday that attracted more than 65 attendees. Joining the call were Recreation Supervisors Mike Newman and Chris Mantz who will oversee pool operations this summer.

The pool's restriction capacity will allow 10 people to a pod with a maximum of about 30 pods. Friends and family can arrive together in a group of up to 10 people. Teen groups will require supervision.

Trainor said all groups must be separated in and out of the water by at least six feet.



After being closed last summer, swimmers in Pleasantville will be able to return to the water but must adhere to strict COVID-19 protocols.

Some pools that opened last summer around the county scheduled morning and afternoon time slots requiring a sign-in process to guarantee patrons a fixed time to swim. Trainor said the village decided against using a similar system and allow people in on a first-come, first-served basis.

"If all of the slots on the pool deck are

full, and you're waiting on line and can't get in, we are asking for your patience a little while," Trainor said. "The rules may change if there are consistent long lines to wait to get in."

The six-foot rule will also apply in the kiddie pool. There will be clearly marked spaces around the pool for groups or pods

measuring about 10 feet by 10 feet. Masks do not have to be worn while within that space for each pod. Masks must be worn when leaving that area, but can be removed upon entering the pool.

Passes for the season will cost the same as 2019. Chairs will not be provided but swimmers can bring their own.

The snack bar and bathrooms will be open; however, locker rooms will be closed. Bathrooms will be sanitized on a regular basis. The guest pass policy has not been set.

"We need to see what our registration numbers are like before we determine the guest pass situation," Trainor said.

The department is considering shutting down the playground while the pool is open to maximize space. Lap lanes will be open and swimmers will be grouped according to their speed.

Swimming for the village day camp will be from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Since camp registration was lighter than expected, each camp group will swim every other day.

Mayor Peter Scherer said the village believes it can operate the pool safely following county health guidelines but warned that COVID-19 remains an issue.

"There are new positive cases in the village every single day," he said.

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Cherry Blossom Festival to Return to Peekskill Riverfront on May 1

By Anna Young

To reinvigorate a sense of normalcy following the blunder of the past year, the Rotary Club of Peekskill will be hosting its fourth annual Cherry Blossom Festival next month at the Riverfront Green.

The event, which will take place on Saturday, May 1 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., will mark Peekskill's first in-person event since the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in local organizations either canceling major happenings or transitioning to a virtual platform. Earlier this year, the Rotary held its annual horse show virtually due to the ongoing spread of the virus.

However, after canceling the Cherry Blossom Festival last year, the Rotary felt offering this outlet to community members was essential to proving that there is still hope amidst the anguish the pandemic has caused.

"For everything that happened with COVID, people need to see that there's hope and at the same with everybody stuck in their home, this is a celebration of springtime," said Chappy Manzer, a Rotary member and chair of the festival. "This is important because it's a celebration of springtime but also a celebration that there's light at the end of the tunnel."

As the 100 cherry trees the Rotary planted along the waterfront blossom, festival attendees can expect treasured activities like previous years, including a plant sale, food trucks, raffles and craft vendors. Children's

activities, such as face painting, flowerpot painting, seed planting, candle making and more, will also be available.

Manzer assured all children's activities will receive steady oversight from volunteers and members who will ensure all objects will be disinfected and games will be contactless.

The event is free to attend and will be held rain or shine. Pets are allowed.

Manzer said the festival will have about a dozen local food trucks catering to the delights and cravings of those in attendance, including the Peekskill Coffee House, Gleason's Peekskill, Wanna Empanada, Wrapper's Delight, Put Some Meat on Your Bones and Knot of this World Pretzels.

Additionally, nearly 15 craft vendors will be on hand for festivalgoers to peruse, with the variety ranging from boutiques and craft spirits to baked goods, music lessons, Henna and knickknacks.

With the festival the Peekskill Rotary's largest fundraising event of the year, all proceeds earned from the plant sale and raffle will benefit the community, Manzer said. In previous years, the event has raised upwards of \$22,000, which is allocated to various scholarships, international projects and organizations the Rotary sponsors.

"I would love to make that much again this year," Manzer said.

The Rotary is only selling 300 raffle tickets for \$100 per ticket, with nine case prizes given away on the day of the event when the tickets are drawn. The grand prize winner will receive \$5,000, with second place collecting \$3,000.



The remaining seven winners will each receive \$1,000.

In accordance with CDC guidelines, Manzer said the festival will have signs placed throughout the grounds directing folks to socially distance and wear a face mask. He said attendees have a responsibility to the city and each other to remain vigilant during the event.

Furthermore, Rotary members will be on hand reminding folks to wear their mask properly and to remain six feet apart. There will also be limited capacity within the plant tent.

"The city has entrusted us to let us have this festival and to avoid it become a super-spreader event," Manzer said. "We have to remind people to be responsible."

Manzer added hand sanitizer stations will be available throughout the event, with disinfectant donated by Craft Spirits. He said the festival and activities will be managed appropriately but this is a step toward normalcy.

"If you're not comfortable, you don't have to attend, but at some point, life has to get somewhat normal and this is a step in that direction," Manzer said. "It's really important and people are stuck in their house and need something to do that's both safe and fun."

The Cherry Blossom Festival and Plant Sale will take place on May 1 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Peekskill Riverfront Green Park. For more information, visit <https://peekskillrotary.com/page/cherry-blossom-festival>.

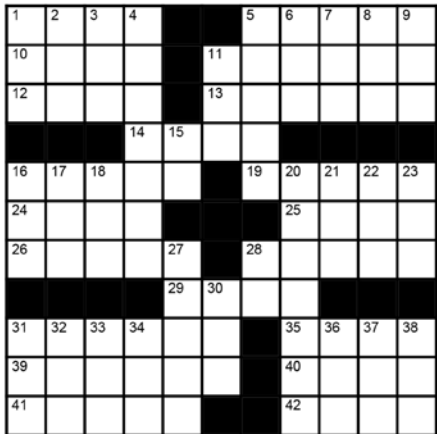
Crossword

Across

- 1. Preserved
- 5. Took off
- 10. Bangkok native
- 11. Greenback
- 12. Poses, as for a portrait
- 13. "That is to say ..."
- 14. Use binoculars
- 16. Roll over, as a subscription
- 19. Measures
- 24. Mineral supplement
- 25. Precipitation type
- 26. Whoop it up
- 28. In need of scrubbing
- 29. Make, as money
- 31. Feliciano's instrument
- 35. Maintain
- 39. Take
- 40. Incessantly
- 41. Parenting challenges
- 42. Put faith in

Down

- 1. "For what ___ worth ..."
- 2. White Sox city, on scoreboards
- 3. Take the cake
- 4. Take an opposing view
- 5. Bank business
- 6. Spreading tree
- 7. Hearty brew
- 8. Chum
- 9. Have a go at
- 11. Kind of test
- 15. The ___, TV network



- 16. Split open
- 17. "Golden" time
- 18. Not for love ___ money
- 20. Philosopher
- 21. "In one ___ and out the other"
- 22. Plum's center
- 23. Hard to catch
- 27. Quite a spell
- 28. ___ No (James Bond movie)
- 30. Type of studio
- 31. Understand
- 32. Get some good out of
- 33. Hotel freebie
- 34. Large supply
- 36. Early evictee
- 37. Conger, for one
- 38. Get nosy

Answers on page 26

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A Spiritual View

By Cantor Lilah Sugarman

In Hebrew, the word shalom means hello, goodbye and peace. Peace here means a lack of war, freedom of disturbance and tranquility, and it also goes deeper than that. The word Shalom, peace, has the same root as the Hebrew word sh'leimut, meaning wholeness.

So when we refer to having a sense of shalom, it is not just a lack of war or harmony; it is a sense of wholeness. This sense of harmony and wholeness refers to internal wholeness as well as external wholeness. We can cultivate wholeness by doing things

that provide physical and spiritual sustenance for ourselves.

However, to have a complete sense of wholeness, one must also help provide and offer support and sustenance to those around them and in their community. May we all find a sense of shalom, peace and wholeness in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Lilah Sugarman is the cantor at Congregation B'Nai Yisrael in Armonk and is part of the Armonk Faith Alliance. The alliance also comprises Hillside Church,

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, St. Patrick's RC Church and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.



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Yorktown Adaptive Playground Waits for Funding From State

By Abby Luby

There is a wide-open space at Yorktown's Granite Knolls Park that has been empty for the last two years.

The 25 square yards of pavement adjacent to the pavilion and to the pickleball courts was slated to be an adaptive playground for youngsters with disabilities in 2019 after the town received a \$250,000 state grant to build the playground. The total cost of the project is about \$350,000.

But the COVID-19 pandemic froze money earmarked for local projects and the playground was put on hold.

State Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro) who was a key player in getting the state grant, said the adaptive park grant wasn't the only project impacted by the pandemic.

"When the pandemic hit and finances of the state collapsed, the state Division of Budget clamped down on everything and no projects moved forward," he said. "Monies were withheld from all local governments."

Now that the state budget has been passed, Harckham is optimistic that projects that have been put on hold can move forward.

"Now that there's cash flow we can get back to normal," Harckham said.

The playground is designed to be accessible to children with many types of disabilities and will include a rubberized surface and have wheelchair-friendly equipment.

The idea was presented to the town more than two years ago by Yorktown resident and parent Lisa Canniff, whose five-old son,



State Sen. Peter Harckham stands with Yorktown officials at Granite Knolls Park to announce in 2019 that he had secured \$250,000 to build an adaptive use playground for children. Nearly two years later, the project has yet to be built because the state has frozen the money after the onset of the pandemic.

Lucas, became paralyzed from a blood clot in his spine when he was one. Lucas can only get around by wheelchair. Canniff works as a speech pathologist at Lakeland's Copper Beech Middle School in addition to caring for Lucas' special needs and his older siblings Ava, 10, and Tim, seven.

"Everyone is super excited for this playground to be built," said Canniff, who makes the 40-mile round trip to bring Luke to an adaptive park in Fishkill because of the dearth of adaptive playgrounds in northern

Westchester.

Canniff regularly posts Luke's progress on the Facebook page "Luke's Little Victories," which has more than 1,100 followers.

She said there is a sense of community behind this park, and will be accessible for all children, not just those with disabilities. There is value for an adaptive playground for all youngsters and how playing together teaches children to accept another's differences, Canniff said.

"This type of playground gives kids the

opportunity to play with disabled kids and see what they can do," she said.

When the town budgeted funds for the project two years ago it was prepared to initially spend about \$100,000 of its own money. The project was estimated to cost \$322,000, but didn't include a \$30,000 fence.

The \$250,000 grant for the playground will reimburse the town once work is completed. At that point the town will receive a grant disbursement agreement from the state's Dormitory Authority.

Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater said the town is still prepared to fund the park.

"We have the town's fund balance to cover the cost of this project," Slater said.

"The next step is to create the capital project and once we have that piece in place, the Town Board will pass a resolution creating the capital project and we'll be off to the races."

Slater said he is working with Harckham to get the grant moving.

"This project is the top of our priority list and we are very much looking forward to having the project come to fruition," Slater added. "It will be a great asset for kids of all abilities."

Yorktown Parks & Recreation Superintendent James Martorano Jr. is excited to see the project get started.

"We want to see this playground done," Martorano said. "It's heartbreaking that it's still not finished and not having a state-of-the-art adaptive playground is hard to see."



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New Shakespeare Company to Perform Outdoor Production This Summer

Theatergoers will have a chance to take in a live performance for the first time in over a year with the inaugural production from the Irvington Shakespeare Company: a reimagined, 90-minute "Twelfth Night," staged outdoors at O'Hara Nature Center this August.

The brand-new company joins four other arts partners who regularly collaborate with or present their shows at Irvington Theater.

Founder Kamran Saliani, a professional actor and lifelong Irvington resident, hopes to give back to his hometown by creating a community around classics.

"Shakespeare wrote from a Eurocentric viewpoint in a time when only men could play the roles," Saliani said. "His work was not exactly a beacon of inclusivity. Now, top that off with complex plot lines, poetic and confusing old English language and we know why watching Shakespeare can seem like work to many."

The Irvington Shakespeare Company aims to change that with free tickets, an intersectional approach to prioritizing accessibility, representative casting and wildly creative adaptations that draw on the most basic themes of humanity.

"I believe Shakespeare's work is meant to be interpreted, shared and celebrated," Saliani added.

Leading the inaugural production is Irene Lazaridis, an Astoria, Queens-based director whom Saliani met while they were



IRENE LAZARIDIS PHOTO

Astoria, Queens-based Irene Lazaridis is the co-producer and director of "Twelfth Night," the Irvington Shakespeare Company's upcoming initial production.

both studying at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She also studied Shakespeare in Oxford, England at the British American Drama Academy. Lazaridis' "Twelfth Night" will highlight the magical history of Irvington through a distinctly genderqueer lens.

"This is a world in which nothing is as it seems," Lazaridis said of Illyria, where "Twelfth Night" is set. "Love shows itself

in a myriad of ways. Each character yearns to find a sense of belonging and acceptance in this magical land."

A magical land it will be, thanks in great part to the Irvington Parks & Recreation Department and the O'Hara Nature Center whose woods, trails, reservoir and gardens will provide the perfect setting for this fresh take on Shakespeare's classic romantic comedy and for our collective return to live theater.

"I can't wait to see audiences in Irvington enjoying live performance again," said Irvington Theater Manager Greg Allen. "We are absolutely thrilled to welcome the Irvington Shakespeare Company to our family."

For Hudson Valley and Westchester-based performers looking to get involved, Lazaridis and Saliani are accepting submissions through Apr. 30 from actors of all ages, ethnicities, gender identities and abilities. E-mail your headshot and resume to casting@irvshakespeare.org (or submitting via Backstage or Actors Access) by Apr. 30.

"Twelfth Night" will run from Aug. 6 through Aug. 22 under guidance from the New York State Department of Health. Admission is free. Ticket reservations will begin at a later date, so be sure to follow Irvington Theater on social media for the latest announcements. Connect with the Irvington Shakespeare Company at irvshakespeare.org.



KAMRAN SALIANI PHOTO

Kamran Saliani, a lifelong Irvington resident, professional actor and the founder of the Irvington Shakespeare Company, which will be presenting live outdoor performances of "Twelfth Night" this August at the O'Hara Nature Center in Irvington.

Irvington Theater is home to a diverse range of innovative programming that entertains, enlightens and inspires, establishing itself over its 118-year history as the cultural heart of the Rivertowns. The theater continues its tradition with unprecedented reach though its all-virtual season, #IrvingtonAnywhere.



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Why Suffer With Back Pain? Your Options Are Better Than Ever!

By Gale Ritterhoff

Last Christmas, Anne Marie Devoe went to the mall to do some shopping. But once there, she wasn't focusing on finding the perfect gifts. She was looking for places to sit down.

"My only goal was to get to the next bench to rest," she recalled. "I could barely walk. The pain in my groin was excruciating."

A nurse's aide for 45 years, Devoe was no stranger to the aches and pains that result from physically demanding work.

"There was a lot of pulling and tugging and lifting," she said.

In addition to the strain associated with her job, Devoe had developed osteoarthritis, a condition in which the cartilage that acts as a cushion between the bones in our joints wears away, resulting in pain, stiffness and swelling. In fact, she had been suffering from back and hip soreness for over a decade.

But this level of discomfort was new. And, although she had retired in 2019 at 62, her pain was worsening. Before that day in the mall, Devoe had visited doctors to seek relief. Their efforts had focused on non-surgical interventions to manage her pain, including nerve block injections targeting her lower back and hip.

"The relief was wonderful," she said, "but it didn't last."

Devoe knew she needed a more serious intervention, and for a very important reason. Two of her children, both of whom live within 10 miles, were about to start families.

"Once I found out I was having grandchildren, I just had to get healthier," Devoe said. "I wanted to be able to play with them and to help with child care."

The first stop on her road to recovery was a visit with neurologist Dr. Ashlesh Dani at CareMount Medical. He suspected that her pain was a result of pressure on nerves within her back, and immediately referred her to Dr. Marshal Peris, spine surgeon and director of the Spine Section of the Orthopedic and Spine Institute at Northern Westchester Hospital.

Peris listened to Devoe's history and ordered X-rays and an MRI, which quickly confirmed a diagnosis. She was suffering from spinal stenosis, a condition often caused by the wear and tear on the spine associated with osteoarthritis. The nerves within Devoe's backbone were being compressed, a problem aggravated by a curvature or scoliosis of her spine that had developed as well. The pain in her groin was actually emanating from her back.

Surgery to relieve the nerve pressure was the solution, Peris advised. When Devoe stepped into Peris' office and he looked at the pictures and scans, he immediately said



Anne Marie Devoe has been relieved of excruciating back pain by the doctors at the Orthopedic and Spine Institute at Northern Westchester Hospital.

"I can help you."

But Devoe had to wait. The diagnostic appointment occurred in April 2020, during the height of the pandemic's first wave in our area. All elective surgery was put on hold.

In June, Devoe was cleared to undergo the procedure. Although the pandemic was far from over, she said the medical personnel's professionalism at Northern

Westchester Hospital reassured her. Nurses and technicians were following strict protocols regarding cleanliness and the careful use of PPE, Devoe noted.

The surgery, during which Peris removed her damaged discs and inserted titanium spacers, was a success. She stayed in the hospital for two nights, and was up on her feet the first night, shortly after returning to her room from post-op recovery.

"Within a week, I was walking nice and straight and steady. I wasn't hunched over at all, and I didn't need a cane," Devoe said.

Her family, extremely supportive throughout, was thrilled to see her new and improved condition. Two weeks post-surgery, Devoe "felt completely comfortable." She has dutifully followed up her operation with physical therapy and continues to stay as active as possible, swimming during the summer and walking now.

The next part: Her grandsons, Parker and Quinn, now four and eight months old, are already helping her stay active. Devoe is now a hands-on grandma, babysitting a few days a week and looking forward to keeping up with the two as they grow.

To learn more about state-of-the-art orthopedic and spine care at Northern Westchester Hospital, visit www.nwh.northwell.edu/osi.

With an Eye Toward Helping the Environment, Club Fit Goes Solar

By Sarah Sowards

There's wonderful news – the solar panels at Club Fit are being turned on.

We would love to take this opportunity to discuss the significance of this event and what it means for our club, and more importantly, our community and environment.

While the demands of everyday life can easily lull us into an egocentric existence, on occasion we are disrupted, drawn back to the bigger picture and reminded that our planet is dying. In the face of unrelenting population growth, over-reliance on fossil fuels and a slowly suffocating Earth, an unprecedented need for energy and food to be mindfully and sustainably sourced stares back at us, a solemn reminder that if we want to offer our children and grandchildren the same privileges of existence we enjoy, we need to act, and we need to act now.

Alternate energy sources are becoming increasingly popular, with wind and solar energy taking the lead. Solar energy is also cheap compared to other energy sources and the cost of maintaining solar power systems is relatively low. Solar and wind positively contribute to improved climate and air quality, and cumulative benefits over a 10-year period include billions of dollars and thousands of lives saved.

So, the decision to shift into solar energy should have been easy, right? Well, yes and no. The thought of utilizing solar energy has been on Club Fit President Bill Beck's mind for years. Making energy consumption less impactful and lowering its cost are great reasons to want to go solar. And considering the size of the roof covering Club Fit's Briarcliff facility, why not?



The new rooftop solar panels at Club Fit in Briarcliff Manor, which will help to offset nearly one million pounds of carbon dioxide and provide enough energy to power about 110 homes.

However, the cost of installing such a large collection of solar panels kept these good intentions at bay, at least until New York State got involved. Efforts to encourage the consumption of solar energy paved the way for promises of federal and state tax incentives and financial support to those installing solar panels, all of which finally thrust Beck into this \$2 million investment.

Fortunately for Beck, one 30-plus-year member, Eric Messer, knows a little bit about solar panel installation. A principal at Sunrise Solar Solutions LLC, Messer was able to work with Beck to have Club Fit's Briarcliff location equipped with solar panels. These panels typically work by absorbing sunlight, then converting the energy from DC to AC energy.

At Club Fit, the solar energy collected will be stored in Tesla batteries, a method

of solar energy collection that is becoming increasingly popular. This method allows energy to be saved and utilized at a later time. Storing energy in batteries helps prevent brownouts during periods of significant energy consumption.

During peak times, the grid can become overwhelmed when power companies are not producing enough energy. Storing solar energy in batteries allows Club Fit to tap the energy in those batteries during peak hours, preventing the system from being overwhelmed and to ensure that consumers don't experience power shortages or outages.

In addition to helping the grid, there are many other benefits to rooftop solar. Here are several interesting statistics surrounding Club Fit's solar power system.

- System Size: 560 kW

- Tesla Battery Storage Size: 1600 kW
- Homes Powered: about 110
- Carbon Dioxide offset: slightly under one million pounds

A fascinating feature of the solar panels' capabilities includes the amount of carbon dioxide that is sequestered. (Carbon sequestration is the process of collecting carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and storing it in a way that prevents the atmosphere from warming.) The impact of Club Fit's future carbon sequestering will equal that of a forest one-third the size of Briarcliff Manor, if we were to imagine that area completely covered in trees.

Moving forward, Beck hopes to include solar panels at the health club's Jefferson Valley location, possibly using the parking lots.

I hope to see others follow the example Club Fit has set for our environment and community. How wonderful would it be to one day to be completely powered by all renewable and less destructive sources? Sometimes we lose touch with our humanity and forget that we are part of a larger ecosystem, a system we have neglected for far too long.

So, congratulations and thank you to Beck, Messer and Doug Hertz, another Sunrise Solar Solutions principal, and everyone else at Sunrise Solar. Thank you for making an effort to make the world a healthier place and for making our existence more sustainable.

And to Club Fit members, thank you for your support for this amazing endeavor. We'll see you soon!

Sarah Sowards is the club experience assistant at Club Fit.

Sizing Up This Year's Academy Award Nominees

The 93rd annual Academy Awards will be held this Sunday, Apr. 25 at 8 p.m. on ABC. The following is a recap of the Oscar-nominated movies and predictions.

Judas and the Black Messiah

Directed by Shaka King, this film tells the true story surrounding Fred Hampton's death in the late 1960s. Fred Hampton, played by Daniel Kaluuya, was the charismatic leader of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party. William O'Neal, played by Lakeith Stanfield, is cornered into infiltrating the chapter at the behest of the FBI due to his own run-ins with the law.

Kaluuya's performance is among his best as he has become one of Hollywood's brightest young stars and fully encapsulates what made Hampton such an idolized figure. Stanfield also performs well in his role as a conflicted, but ultimately flawed individual who cannot sacrifice his freedom for his morality.

Although the film is a captivating and in-depth look into a story not well-known by many, "Judas and the Black Messiah" likely won't win many awards on. Kaluuya should and will win for Best Supporting Actor for a film that truly deserves more

recognition.

Rating: 9.5/10

Where to Watch: On-demand from Youtube, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, Google Play

Nomadland

This year's award season darling is a drama that follows the life of a middle-aged woman who leaves her home after her husband died and she lost her job at a sheetrock plant.

Fern, played by Frances McDormand, begins her new life as a nomad and travels from town to town in the Midwest, picking up different jobs as she goes. She meets many people from different walks of life in her travels and is often conflicted in whether she should continue on with her nomadic ways living in her van or try to return to the "stable" lifestyle she had before her husband passed.

Director Chloe Zhao does a brilliant job with cinematography as some of the scenes are quite breathtaking. The movie tells a unique story that is not often highlighted by mainstream media, and it was a nice touch to employ real-life nomads in the film.

Despite this, "Nomadland" is one of the most boring films I've watched in my lifetime. Devoid of a true plot, it feels like you're watching a four-hour documentary, even though it's just over 90 minutes.

McDormand does an excellent job in her role, as always, but nothing she did could have made me interested in this film. While I understand the stylistic elements that made this movie critically acclaimed and I respect shining a light on an marginalized population, I found it very difficult to relate to any of the characters.

"Nomadland" and Zhao are heavy favorites to take home Best Picture and Best Director respectively, but I'm not super excited about it.

Rating: 6.5/10

Where to Watch: Hulu

Sound of Metal

Directed by Darius Marder, "Sound of Metal" follows the life of a metal drummer named Ruben who loses his hearing in the midst of a tour with his band. Ruben, played by Riz Ahmed, also struggles with a history of drug addiction that has plagued him psychologically and with his relationship with his girlfriend, Lou.

While trying to find the money for cochlear implants, Ruben becomes a member of a group of hearing-impaired individuals who are similarly looking to rebuild their lives and adjust to their new reality.

Ahmed delivers his best performance to date playing a character with an abundance of internal struggle. His acting is raw, powerful and what appears to be a very realistic interpretation of what it would be like to suddenly lose your hearing when your livelihood and happiness depends on it. The scenes where audio is dulled and almost silenced are jarring, uncomfortable,

but necessary in portraying the gravity of the situation that Ruben is experiencing.

In any other year where the late Chadwick Boseman was not nominated, Ahmed would have a very strong case for Best Actor. "Sound of Metal" may have a shot at Best Sound or Best Film Editing, but don't expect a large haul for what could be one of the most snubbed movies of the year.

Rating: 9/10

Where to Watch: Amazon Prime Video

The Trial of the Chicago 7

Political film and television veteran Aaron Sorkin directs this enthralling drama of the events surrounding the famous trial of the Chicago 7 in 1969.

Seven progressive activists, as well as the chairman of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale, were arrested for allegedly inciting violence at the Democratic Convention the year before. It is evident that the arrests were merely a political stunt orchestrated by the new Nixon administration.

Sorkin does a masterful job of laying out the events from several vantage points and demonstrating the blatant injustice for the defendants by a corrupt and shameful legal system. Sacha Baron Cohen and Eddie Redmayne are standouts in their portrayals of Abbie Hoffman and Tom Hayden, respectively. A stacked cast that also features Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Michael Keaton utilizes a witty and fast-paced style that is empowering and entertaining, which is the norm for most Sorkin films.

After a momentum-building win for Outstanding Cast in a Motion Picture at the SAG awards, "The Trial of the Chicago 7," has a real shot to upset "Nomadland" for the night's biggest prize. Cohen will likely come up for short for Best Supporting Actor, but expect an Original Screenplay award for Sorkin.

"The Trial of the Chicago 7" is an outstanding film that is still thematically relevant to American society and would be a well-deserving winner of Best Picture on Oscar Sunday.

Rating: 9.5/10

Where to Watch: Netflix

Mank

This biographical drama follows the life of famous screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz as he writes the screenplay for "Citizen Kane." Cursed with quick wit and impulsivity, Mank, portrayed by Gary Oldman, finds himself as much loved as he is maligned. A man riddled with flaws, such as alcoholism and a gambling addiction, Mank struggles with the many relationships he develops in the film industry, including those with his brother Joseph, Louis Mayer, Marion Davies, and

William Hearst.

Oldman delivers a marvelous performance as Mank and has you feeling sympathetic for his character despite his many vices. The movie is filmed in black and white in an effort to transport the viewer to the 1930s, which I found to be a master stroke of cinematic brilliance and adds an authentic element to the story.

The film, however, is not without imperfections as the story is presented with

constant flashbacks, which can be a bit confusing.

"Mank" leads all films with 10 Academy Award nominations, but realistically will only have a shot at Best Production Design. Oldman is certainly deserving of Best Actor, but will find himself coming up short to Boseman.

"Mank" is certainly worthy of its critical accolades and is a unique story for those interested in film history, especially regarding the writing of one of Hollywood's classic movies.

Rating: 8.5/10

Where to Watch: Netflix

The Father

Based on the 2012 play, "Le Père," "The Father" follows an elderly man dealing with dementia as his daughter attempts to find the best solutions to care for him. Anthony, played by Anthony Hopkins, struggles to remember where his belongings are, where he is, and who certain people are. Frustration builds up for both Anne, played by Olivia Colman, and Anthony as the quarrel over what events are real and what are not.

The film is a harsh reminder of the reality that faces so many families dealing with different forms of dementia. The burden that it places on family and caretakers is sometimes overwhelming and forces people to make difficult decisions for the ones they hold dear. The movie is certainly not uplifting, but is a purposefully raw experience to engross the audience in what it is like to live with

continued on next page

Predictions for This Year's Major Academy Award Categories

Best Supporting Actor

Who Should Win: Daniel Kaluuya (Judas and the Black Messiah)
Who Will Win: Daniel Kaluuya (Judas and the Black Messiah)

Best Supporting Actress

Who Should Win: Youn Yuh-jung ("Minari")
Who Will Win: Youn Yuh-jung ("Minari")

Best Actor

Who Should Win: Chadwick Boseman ("Ma Rainey's Black Bottom")
Who Will Win: Chadwick Boseman ("Ma Rainey's Black Bottom")

Best Actress

Who Should Win: Carey Mulligan ("Promising Young Woman")
Who Will Win: Viola Davis ("Ma Rainey's Black Bottom")

Best Director

Who Should Win: Lee Isaac Chung ("Minari")
Who Will Win: Chloe Zhao ("Nomadland")

Best Picture

Who Should Win: "Minari"
Who Will Win: "Nomadland"



Crossword Answers



Influences on the Changing Profile of Wines in the Marketplace



By Nick Antonaccio

Make no mistake. For a number of wines – regardless of the grape varieties or wine regions – the flavor and aroma profiles have changed over the course of this century.

In the past, wines have been produced in a certain style – a reflection of the inherent qualities of a grape or wine region. Pinot Noir wines produced in the Burgundy region of France have always been characterized by their complexity and reasonable alcohol level. The Cabernet Sauvignons of the United States have earned a reputation as wines of distinction, possessing the complexities, bold flavor profiles and higher alcohol levels that appeal to Americans more so than to Europeans.

These (and other) wines have undergone more basic changes than in any other period that I can recall. French wines have reached historically high alcohol levels. American wines have acquired bold, in-your-face, egotistical personalities.

What has caused these changes? Is it the hand of winemakers and marketers or an underlying change in the forces of nature? As in many of life's mysteries, it is a combination of factors.

Meteorological factors such as wide swings in air temperature, amount of rainfall and protracted cold or hot spells will influence the flavor and aroma profile of wine in a particular year. Winemakers are able to tweak their alchemy (length of fermentation, length and concentration

of oak aging, fine-tuning of blending formulas) in order to successfully achieve a consistent flavor and aroma profile from one year to the next. These influences have persisted for centuries and will continue. I am referring to long-term changes that go beyond tradition and short-term causes.

One long-term example is winemakers who are succumbing to the pressures of marketers and wine critics, which have become pervasive as they employ the internet and social networking to entwine themselves in the very fiber of our decision-making.

The impact has been a rise in the concentration of wine flavors and an increase in their alcohol levels. Influential wine critics and industry marketing gurus have decided that more fruit-forward wines are preferable over leaner styles. Eager to sell their wines, winemakers are manipulating their wines to attract favorable wine reviews and recommendations.

In the span of a few years, profiles of American Cabernets and Chardonnays and French and Italian red wines have succumbed, for better or worse. Increasingly, I have seen a number of wines lose their balance between fruit and acidity. Fruit characteristics have become more dominant and wine juice is more concentrated.

Altered states of complexity are coming to market. Though not pervasive, certain wine critics have had a profound impact on the underpinnings of the wine market, perhaps foretelling the future of Cabernet Sauvignon (and other wines).

A more alarming example is the effect of generally warmer growing seasons. Over the past decade, growing seasons have

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lengthened, providing longer hang-times for grapes once they reach maturity. The end result is riper fruit, which equates to higher sugar levels, which equates to higher alcohol. Let's focus on alcohol levels.

Typically, wines of 12 percent alcohol by volume have been the accepted norm in the wine industry. Higher levels can "burn" a wine, altering its flavor and aroma profiles. Alcohol tends to blunt the subtleties in many food dishes and to escalate the savory components, potentially masking the true flavors of food.

In addition, higher alcohol can lead to (or hasten) inebriation. The 12 percent average alcohol levels of the past have slowly risen. It is increasingly common to see red wines over 15 percent; I've even seen white wines above 14 percent. The Alcohol Research Group in California found that two glasses of 15.5 percent wine have a similar effect on the average person as three glasses of 12 percent

wine. For some consumers this can lead to unintended consequences in the course of a meal or social gathering.

One caveat: these changes are individually experienced. Certain consumers will not discern any distinct alteration in either flavor profile or alcohol content.

These fundamental changes beg the question: are winemakers satisfying evolving consumer demand or is nature dictating consumer change? Perhaps only time will tell.

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.

Sizing Up This Year's Academy Award Nominees

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such a debilitating disease.

Hopkins is first class as always and had me on the edge of tears at times with his performance. He is deserving of his Oscar nomination and his recent BAFTA win for Best Actor. "The Father" was nominated for six Academy Awards, but I don't anticipate many wins for the film. It certainly is worth a watch if you are in the mood to be unsettled and to shed a few tears.

Rating: 8/10

Where to Watch: On-demand from Youtube, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, Google Play

Minari

Directed by Lee Isaac Chung, this drama follows the story of a Korean family moving to rural Arkansas in the 1980s in order to make a sustainable living using the crops from their new farmland. Jacob, played by Steve Yeun, is determined to make a success of himself after he and his wife, Monica, have had to work tirelessly

their whole lives sexing chicks.

The Yi family has two children, David and Anne. David, the younger brother, has a heart condition that limits his ability to run, amongst other things. Monica and Jacob fly in Monica's mother, Soon-ja, to help take care of the children, but she has a difficult time bonding with David. The family struggles with finances due to the upkeep of the farm, which puts a strain on their family dynamic and creates a stressful home environment.

"Minari" was a masterclass of character development and a film that had raw realism embedded in every scene. Loosely based off of Chung's own experiences, the film portrays the hardships of the immigrant family as well as the internal struggle to develop family camaraderie in the face of adversity.

The cast is brilliant as Yeun and Youn Yuh-jung put on performances deserving of their Oscar nominations. "Minari" was nominated for six Academy Awards and Yuh-jung is the favorite to take home Best Supporting Actress.

In what seems to be a golden age of

Korean filmmaking, "Minari" is in every way one of the best films of the year and would be well deserving of Best Picture on Sunday.

Rating: 10/10

Where to Watch: On-demand from Youtube, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, Google Play

Promising Young Woman

This unsettling comedy thriller stars Carey Mulligan, who plays Cassie Thomas, as she looks to avenge the death of her friend, Nina Fisher. While in medical school, Nina was raped by classmate Alexander Monroe, but the case was not investigated by the school and he was never convicted of any crime.

Nina and Cassie subsequently dropped out of school and Nina later commits suicide. Cassie has now dedicated herself to getting justice for Nina's death by threatening and blackmailing people close to the case and bystanders from her class who refused to do anything at the time. She often exposes sexual predators by feigning drunkenness on weekends at various clubs

and bars. Cassie's life becomes consumed by her mission and ultimately hinders her ability to have a relationship with anyone.

Mulligan delivers a solid performance and is adept at being witty and equally spine-chilling in the way she conducts her "business." The film itself is very original in concept and I found myself intrigued but also saddened by the way that society has failed so many women who are victims of sexual assault. Fans of plot twists will enjoy the film as it has many ebbs and flows that keep the viewer wondering the true direction.

The Academy has rewarded the film with five nominations, including one for Best Actress. In what is a wide-open field this year for Best Actress, Mulligan certainly has a shot to take home the prize. I wouldn't expect many awards for "Promising Young Woman," but its originality, wit and underlying message should certainly be commended.

Rating: 8.5/10

Where to Watch: On-demand from Youtube, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, Google Play

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