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June 30 - July 6, 2020

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 14, Issue 669

Salute to the  
Class of 2020  
See Special Section



## COVID-19 Cluster From Greeley Graduation Rises to 14 Positive Cases

By Martin Wilbur

The cluster of positive COVID-19 cases linked to the recent Horace Greeley High School graduation rose to 14 on Monday afternoon.

County Executive George Latimer and county Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler made the joint announcement in front of New Castle Town Hall. At least one person who tested positive lives in the Town of Mount Pleasant.

Amler said she was unable to provide information regarding how many of the positive cases were students and adults.

The state Department of Health and the Westchester County Health Department continue to work with Chappaqua school officials to identify the individuals who attended the June 20 drive-in graduation ceremony at the Chappaqua train station or a subsequent gathering where they may have been exposed and if there may be additional cases. The New York State Contact Tracing Program has been reaching out to identify

anyone who attended the ceremony or the post-ceremony gathering and is urging them to get tested.

County and state health officials also continue to implore anyone who attended the ceremony to quarantine. That includes those who were at a non-school-sanctioned event following the ceremony that was attended by Greeley juniors and seniors and students from surrounding school districts that lasted into June 21.

Health officials warned that regardless of the results of a person's COVID-19 test, their isolation must continue until July 5 if they attended any of the events. For the 14 individuals who have tested positive, their two-week isolation period begins the day they received their test result, Amler said.

Latimer said despite excellent progress having been made in controlling COVID-19 in the county and region, everyone must take the virus seriously.

"This is a disease that has killed 1,400 people (in Westchester County) and the pleasurable use of your time and my time



Horace Greeley High School graduates gather in the parking lot at the Chappaqua train station on June 20 before the drive-in commencement ceremonies. Westchester County confirmed there are now 14 positive cases traced to one attendee who later tested positive for COVID-19.

is secondary to stopping the spread of the disease because more people could die potentially," Latimer said.

Last Saturday, Gov. Andrew Cuomo directed the state Department of Health to launch an investigation into potential

exposures from the graduation. He issued an executive order mandating that anyone who attended the graduation must quarantine until this Sunday, July 5.

"We learned this lesson in Westchester,"

*continued on page 2*

## Jones Expected to Win Dem Nomination in 17th Congressional District

By Martin Wilbur

First-time political candidate Mondaire Jones appears to be on the verge of an historic victory in the 17th Congressional District's Democratic primary as early voting and last week's in-person tally has given him a sizeable lead.

Jones, 33, who was the first challenger to jump into the race last summer, three months before Rep. Nita Lowey announced her retirement, has amassed 13,625 votes, to Adam Schleifer's 6,253, according to unofficial tabulations from the Board of Elections in Westchester and Rockland counties. State Sen. David Carlucci is in third place with 3,958 votes.

While there are an estimated 50,000 absentee ballots that won't start to be counted until Wednesday, Jones told supporters that he expects those votes to break similarly in his favor.

While addressing his supporters, the progressive candidate pledged to be a "people's



Mondaire Jones appears headed for victory in the 17th Congressional District Democratic primary.

champion."

"I want you to know that I will never stop fighting for you," Jones said. "That you have all fought alongside me, and that I will keep my promise that I will never stop fighting alongside you because what we've got on the

horizon are challenges unlike anything this country has ever faced."

Jones' campaign was bolstered by the endorsements from U.S. senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. On June 13, he picked up the endorsement from The New York Times. He would be the first openly gay African-American member of Congress if victorious in November.

Some political observers also noted that he had the progressive lane to himself while several centrist candidates fought for the moderate vote.

Jones, a Spring Valley native and an attorney who formerly worked in the Westchester County Law Department, stressed that his campaign was about several core ideas – healthcare for all, addressing the climate crisis and free tuition in public colleges.

He said his performance "is a moment unlike anything New York's 17th Congressional District has ever seen."

"Sometimes an idea is so powerful that

once you go down its path it becomes this unstoppable force," Jones said. "A movement, some people like to say, a movement in this case that has been joined by people from all walks of life, folks from all walks of life, folks from all races, genders, sexual orientations, income brackets and religions, creeds and on and on."

"Growing up poor, black and gay, I never imagined somebody like me would run for Congress...let alone being a leading contender for the nomination in the great New York 17th Congressional District," he said.

Should he maintain his lead, Jones is likely to take on and be heavily favored over Yorktown resident Maureen McArdle Schulman. Schulman was leading Yehudis Gottesfeld 4,893-1,280 in the Republican primary.

Two of Jones' Democratic rivals said there was little that they could do to stem the tide against strong showings by the party's progressive candidates throughout downstate New York. Evelyn Parkas, who did not

*continued on page 2*

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# COVID-19 Cluster From Greeley Graduation Rises to 14 Positive Cases

*continued from page 1*

Cuomo said during his Monday briefing. "It was one person in New Rochelle. We had the first hotspot in the United States. One person led to hundreds of cases. One person."

Amler said there were two sets of families that had traveled to Florida before the graduation, returned to the area and attended the ceremony. It wasn't until after the event that the initial person who tested positive began exhibiting symptoms, she said.

Amler said the first positive from the cluster came back on June 24. By last Saturday morning four more people who had attended or had contact with that individual were confirmed to have tested positive. That number grew to 12 on Sunday and 14 on Monday.

It is uncertain how many people attended the graduation or the post-ceremony

festivities. While there were 336 graduating seniors, according to the Chappaqua School District, it was not immediately known how many members of the class attended or the number of family members or school personnel who were on hand on June 20.

There were two New Castle police officers who were present and they are in quarantine, said Police Lt. James Dumser.

A statement from Superintendent of Schools Dr. Christine Ackerman over the weekend mentioned that the graduation was a carefully-planned event that strictly followed the governor's executive orders and state health guidelines. Clear guidance and protocols were continually communicated to graduates and families.

"Unfortunately, at the event, and despite police presence, numerous individuals failed

to follow our protocols," Ackerman stated.

Attendees were supposed to remain in their cars throughout the ceremony, but on local social media posts last Friday it was mentioned that many of the graduates were interacting.

Dumser said the two officers at the event told school district officials to make an announcement to have everyone return to their vehicles when people were seen mingling. For the most part, the instructions were followed, he said.

New Castle Deputy Supervisor Jeremy Saland said that it may seem extreme to quarantine everyone who attended the ceremony, but it is the responsibility of public health officials to protect people beyond the town's borders.

"The governor's decision to do this may

not directly be based on the science and medicine but it's an efficient way and the best way to ensure that the potential spread is limited," Saland said.

Latimer urged residents to put the good of the public over their own desires.

"If we're going to overcome the disease, not just in Chappaqua but in the United States of America, it will take some control and self-discipline," he said. "There are not enough police in the world that can come to your front door to make you do what is right."

On June 14, the state issued guidance in hopes of ensuring that any district which was planning to host a graduation ceremony would follow protective measures including social distancing, limits on attendees, face coverings and other steps.

## Jones Expected to Win Dem Nomination in 17th Congressional District

*continued from page 1*

officially concede but acknowledged that Jones was the likely victor, said there were too many headwinds for her to overcome, including multiple moderates and the suspension of conventional campaigning when the coronavirus pandemic struck.

She also said that Jones having entered the race first last July – he was the only candidate who was prepared to test Lowey in a primary – proved beneficial because he had a head start when the pandemic hit.

But it was mainly the strength of progressive candidates and the cries for social justice in the Democratic Party that was the difference.

"That one decided for us that this was the moment to elect a candidate who represented what we were fighting for in terms of social justice," Farkas said.

Assemblyman David Buchwald, who was an early favorite and faded to fifth, congratulated Jones on his lead and that he represented the change that Democrats want to see. There was no single change in strategy that could have been made to his campaign that would have changed the outcome, he said.

"I wish him all the best as he represents the best congressional district in the entire country," Buchwald said.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment last week was the performance of Adam Schleifer, who spent between \$4 million and \$5 million and came in a distant second. Schleifer didn't concede and thanked his backers for their support.

"I am so proud of the campaign we've run," he said. "Through historic challenges and dislocations, we handled all that came our way and remained true to our guiding principle, simple as it was: that now, more than ever, it's time to come together to get things done."

Carlucci issued a statement late last Wednesday congratulating Jones as the likely

winner.

"I congratulate Mondaire Jones, who is likely to win a hard-fought race, and offer my assistance in any way I can," Carlucci said. "To the voters and supporters of my campaign, thank you. Our volunteers can be proud of the campaign we ran. I will continue to work hard every day for our community for the rest of my term in the Senate."

The remaining unofficial tallies were Farkas finishing fourth with 3,565, followed by Buchwald (2,267), Asha Castlebury-Hernandez (1,146), Catherine Parker (801) and Alison Fine (642).

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# Cuomo Blasts Trump, Federal Government for Poor COVID-19 Response

By Martin Wilbur

Gov. Andrew Cuomo slammed the federal government and President Donald Trump Monday for a failed coronavirus response that could imperil New York despite the state's continued decline in transmission rates, hospitalizations and deaths.

As COVID-19 cases surge in 32 states, including several in record territory, travelers can descend on the New York metropolitan area from throughout the country, which can reignite a spread, he said.

He called on President Trump to sign an executive order to mandate wearing of masks in public and for the president to wear one himself.

"It's time to wake up, America," Cuomo said. "The White House has been in denial about the coronavirus from the get-go and the federal response has just been wrong."

On June 24, Cuomo announced that New York, New Jersey and Connecticut enacted a mandatory 14-day quarantine for people coming from states where COVID-19 cases are rising rapidly in an attempt to guard the metropolitan area against an increase in cases.

Under the advisory, a traveler from any state that registers 10 positive cases per 100,000 people on a seven-day rolling average or has a seven-day average of 10 percent positive COVID-19 test results based on the state's entire population will be subject to the quarantine, Cuomo said.

Last week, he listed nine states that qualify for the restriction: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington state, Texas and Utah. The statistics and which state's travelers would be subject to the regulation will be updated on a daily basis, Cuomo said.

Violators would be subject to a mandatory quarantine and up to a \$2,000 fine for the first violation, up to \$5,000 for the second offense and up to \$10,000 for anyone who caused harm.

The governor also chided the administration for its poor record on testing. He said New York has more than 750 testing sites statewide while the federal government has only set up 41 across the United States.

Cuomo's comments came as New York's metrics monitoring the virus is at its best levels since the start of the crisis. On Sunday, there were only 853 COVID-19-related hospitalizations statewide, the lowest total since Mar. 18. The number of virus-related deaths were five and seven on Saturday and Sunday, respectively, he said.

Out of 46,428 tests administered on Sunday, there were just 391 positive cases, or .84 percent, the lowest rate since the state started tracking that information. Nine of the state's 10 regions were at or below a 1 percent transmission, including New York City at 1 percent, Long Island at 0.7 percent and the Mid-Hudson region at 0.6 percent.

Westchester recorded a 0.7 percent rate and Putnam clocked in at 0.9 percent, according to the state's dashboard on Monday.

Cuomo said the transmission rates have remained low despite five upstate regions

having reached Phase 4, with Western New York joining that group tomorrow. Mid-Hudson and Long Island are now about halfway through Phase 3 and New York City is in Phase 2.

The states that have seen record case numbers have generally been in excess of 10 percent.

He attributed New York's success so far to the public's vigilance about mask wearing and social distancing. The governor estimated compliance at about 95 percent.

"Our reopening has worked very well," Cuomo said. "We're not going backwards;



## CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

we're going forward. A lot of these other states actually have had to go backwards."

He sounded a cautionary warning, however, particularly about indoor dining in New York City, which would start at 50 percent capacity when the five boroughs move to Phase 3. That is scheduled for next Monday. State officials are still examining whether indoor dining can be done safely in the city and are scheduled to issue guidance on Wednesday, he said.

Cuomo said the state is requiring that all indoor malls install an HEPA filter into the

air filtration systems. It is a high-efficiency particulate air filter, which can help filter out the COVID-19 virus. It is also being recommended for offices.

On Monday, Westchester announced that it was down to 471 active cases despite the 14-case spike connected to the June 20 Horace Greeley High School graduation. Hospitalizations are down to 73, and after two nights of no deaths, there were four fatalities in the county on Sunday, bringing the death toll to 1,424.

In Putnam County, the latest statistics show 12 active cases, zero hospitalizations and 63 deaths since the start of the crisis.

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# Rocah With Commanding Lead in District Attorney’s Primary

By Martin Wilbur

Challenger Mimi Rocah is poised to win the Democratic nomination for Westchester County district attorney over incumbent Anthony Scarpino following a bruising campaign.

Riding the anti-establishment wave in this year’s primary elections, Rocah was leading by more than a 2-to-1 margin (27,748-13,064), although the Board of Elections estimated early last week that there were at least 50,000 absentee ballots that must still be counted starting Wednesday.

A few hours after racking up a sizable lead, Rocah and her campaign exuded confidence, stating that it was an advantage that “leaves little chance” for Scarpino to mount a comeback and retain his seat.

The 49-year-old Scarsdale resident acknowledged that she was hesitant to put out a statement with thousands of votes still to be counted but appeared certain that she would emerge victorious.

“While tonight’s results are preliminary, and it is imperative that every vote is counted, our lead is extremely strong and the strength of our support so far makes it clear that we will win this primary,” Rocah

said in a statement. “We look forward to focusing on and winning the election in November, and reforming criminal justice in our county.”

On Wednesday morning, Scarpino refused to concede, pointing to the large number of absentee ballots that need to be counted. Typically, a smaller number of absentee ballots fairly closely mirror the in-person voting. But a few candidates that are trailing have pointed out that close to two-thirds of voters participating in the primary did so by absentee ballot.

“There are still tens of thousands of absentee ballots outstanding and more coming in,” the Scarpino campaign’s statement read. “That process needs to run its course. The results of this election are still pending, and we look forward to seeing all the votes counted.”

Rocah, a former federal prosecutor and MSNBC commentator, ran a hard-nosed campaign, criticizing Scarpino for being reactive on too many issues. She hit Scarpino particularly hard on his sluggishness to release certain prisoners from the county jail during the early days of the pandemic as well as failing to investigate charges of misconduct on the part of Mount Vernon police officers.

Assuming Rocah maintains her lead, she



Mimi Rocah appears to be headed toward capturing the Democratic nomination for Westchester County district attorney, leading incumbent Anthony Scarpino by more than a 2-to-1 margin.

would face Republican Bruce Bendish in the general election this fall.

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# Abinanti, Burdick Lead in Assembly Contests, But Too Close to Call

By Martin Wilbur

Five-term Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti (D-Pleasantville) is in a virtual dead heat in his race with insurgent challenger Jennifer Williams in the 92nd Assembly District Democratic primary.

Meanwhile, Bedford Supervisor Chris Burdick held a 195-vote lead over Chappaqua attorney Kristen Browde in the five-candidate 93rd Assembly District race. Burdick was in front 1,942-1,747, followed by Jeremiah Frei-Pearson with 1,297 votes, Alex Roithmayr at 511 and Mark Jaffe with 396.

Abinanti, a five-term incumbent who also served for 18 years on the Board of Legislators and on the Greenburgh Town Board in the 1980s, found himself last Wednesday in a surprisingly tight race. He held a razor-thin lead (3,320-3,295), with at least 8,000 absentee ballots that had been returned as of early last week still to be counted.

In explaining the results, Abinanti said many of this year's Democratic primary voters were simply looking to shake up the system. That held true not only in his race, but in many of the other races including the congressional contests and the district attorney's race, he said.

It was also the case in the 91st Assembly District where incumbent Steven Otis is trailing his challenger, Meg Cameron, by 559 votes.

"A lot of first-time voters who were looking for change weren't familiar with the



Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti, left, and Bedford Supervisor Chris Burdick lead in their respective races in the 92nd and 93rd Assembly Districts. Large numbers of absentee ballots will begin to be counted this week.

candidates and were just voting for change," Abinanti said. "I don't think they realize that I represent the change and the issues they support because they're not familiar with my background."

Williams said she was optimistic and excited for when the absentee ballots will be counted starting this week.

"I just think that change is happening now very quickly and I think people want a new voice and transparency," Williams said. "I think that's what we're all looking for and not just in my election but many of the elections



that happened. That's how people voted – a fresh new voice and for change."

Abinanti expressed confidence that he will be able to gain support through a majority of the absentee ballots. He explained that a larger portion of the paper ballots were likely cast by older voters, which should work to his advantage.

The winner of the primary is virtually assured of victory since there is no Republican challenger in the district, which takes in Pleasantville, Mount Pleasant and Greenburgh. Abinanti will appear on the

Working Families line in the general election.

## Burdick in Front in 93rd District

Burdick said he was hopeful that he would be able to hold onto his relatively slim lead for the Democratic nomination and the chance to succeed Assemblyman David Buchwals. There were about 10,000 absentee ballots that need to be counted as of last week.

"Obviously, with such an enormous number of absentee ballots that creates a good deal of uncertainty, but we're cautiously optimistic that I'll maintain the lead," he said.

While the percentage of absentee ballots have historically broken similarly to the in-person vote, there is no guarantee that pattern will continue when most of the votes are sent in through the mail.

Browde said she would have preferred to be 195 votes ahead than behind, but she is similarly holding out hope that she will be successful. She's also not ruling out Frei-Pearson who's another 450 votes back in third.

"I am not convinced," Browde said. "I don't know, I have no way of knowing who sent in an absentee ballot."

The winner of the Democratic primary will be heavily favored to defeat Republican challenger John Nuculovic in the fall. Nuculovic lost to Buchwald in 2018.

The 93rd Assembly District stretches from White Plains in the south and includes Harrison, North Castle, New Castle, Mount Kisco, Bedford, Lewisboro, Pound Ridge and North Salem.

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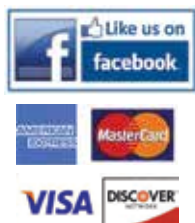
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# Biologist Advises Greenburgh Residents on How to Act Around Bears

By Bridget Bonanni

A state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) biologist advised residents at the Greenburgh Town Board meeting last week on what to do if they spot a black bear and how to resolve a conflict.

Emily Carrollo said there are currently 6,000 to 8,000 black bears in New York State with 30 to 35 percent of those in the Catskill region. Bears are also well-established in the Hudson Valley.

June and July are peak months for bear sightings because in the summer bears are at their most active.

"It's not necessarily because the black bear population is suddenly growing or that it's suddenly out of control," Carrollo said. "A lot of it just has to do with their natural behavior and their natural movement period."

There has been a rash of bear sightings in recent weeks at country clubs and playgrounds in Scarsdale, Hartsdale, Greenburgh and even at the City Center in downtown White Plains, said Greenburgh Supervisor Paul Feiner.

During her presentation, Carrollo described black bears as generally lazy and wanting to find the easiest meal possible, which is what puts them in contact with humans.

"They can get comfortable in a human environment, especially at night, when there's much less human activity, and they investigate a lawn to see if there's any bird feeder up or any garbage around," Carrollo

said.

Due to their range of smell, which is up to a mile, black bears can easily find food that has been left outside including pet food, bird feeder and garbage, she said. Carrollo emphasizes the only reason bears move is because of resources.

To minimize interaction with bears, humans must be careful of what they are leaving outside of their homes.

"If you remove the attractant, you will remove the bear," Carrollo said.

The state DEC has not removed the bears that have been spotted in Westchester this year because they aren't in an area long enough and they have not caused damage or harm to themselves or humans, she said.

"The bear is moving on, it's not finding those resources to hang around and it's continuing doing what it's doing and behaving the natural way it should behave," Carrollo said.

If an individual comes in contact with a bear, Carrollo said it is important that people make sure that the animal doesn't feel comfortable in a human landscape. One should "haze" the bear by clapping their hands, banging pots and pans or using an airhorn to make plenty of noise. In most cases the bear will retreat.

"In reality, it's really the bear being just as scared as we are and just as surprised as we are," Carrollo said. "They run off and go in the other direction."

She said to always be aware of your surroundings and think about what you should do if you're in an area where there



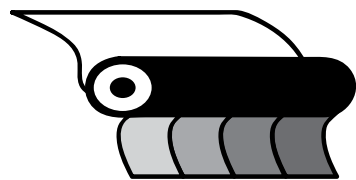
EVELYN LOPES PHOTO

Several black bears have been spotted traveling throughout Westchester over the last few weeks.

have been bears.

"It is very safe to be around black bears and I'm hoping my coverage today will help the public understand how to interact with black

bears and understand their behavior," said Carrollo.



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# Obituaries

## Gertrude Lent

Gertrude “Trudy” Marie Lent has gone to heaven and is reunited with the love of her life, Charlie. She was 90.

Lent entered eternal life on June 14 while sleeping peacefully in her home. Her spirit is carried on by her daughter, Donna, son-in-law Stephen (Steve) Lankard and her three grandchildren, Mary, Charlie and Julie who were her greatest gift and brought her the most joy.

Lent was born to James F. and Alice (Carney) Stager on Jan. 25, 1930, in Yonkers. She was the sixth of seven children and she outlived all her siblings: Catherine Newman, James Stager, Margaret Bell, Alice Nevins, William Stager and Mary Hehner.

Trudy was an educated woman. She had an eager interest in being a lifelong learner who never shied away from learning new skills or advances in technology. She was able to acquire and retain information quickly and was

known for always finishing the daily crossword puzzle and the word jumble, always staying sharp.

As a child she attended grade school at Saint Joseph’s in Yonkers and graduated from Gorton High School in 1947. She attended and graduated Cochran School of Nursing in 1950. Back then she was taught how to sterilize a syringe in an autoclave and sharpen a needle to remove burrs prior to giving an injection. She saw many changes in healthcare and always learned new advances and stayed on top of her game.

During her career as a nurse, she worked at Peekskill Hospital, Mount Saint Florence home for girls, Chestertown Hospital in Maryland, BOCES and Hudson Valley Hospital until she retired in 1994. Nursing was her calling; she was the ultimate caregiver especially in times of need. She was, as they say, “old school.” When she returned to nursing in the 1980s, she was one of the few wearing her nursing “whites” and the traditional starched white cap with the RN black stripe. She soon realized the



Gertrude Lent

dress code had been relaxed but she always wore her whites. Nurses and doctors looked up to her as she was classically trained, and her experience showed. But most importantly she always showed up for work – even in the worst snowstorms, sometimes escorted in Charlie’s green pickup truck or the snowplow truck.

She met Charlie Lent from Peekskill and fell in love. They were married at Saint Joseph’s Church in 1951 on Mar. 17 – St. Patrick’s Day. This was the only day marriages were permitted during the season of Lent in the Catholic Church at the time. They celebrated 50 years of marriage together in 2001.

Trudy and Charlie had fun together. They traveled, laughed, celebrated, volunteered and built a wonderful life together. They even built their own home together – and stayed married. They were the favorite aunt and uncle to many nieces and nephews. Many great memories were made at that little red house with all the kids and Susie, their dog. They longed for a child of their own, and in 1967, they adopted Donna Marie. They soon moved to Yorktown

to raise their family.

Trudy put her career on hold and dedicated herself to being a full-time mother. She volunteered at school and as a Girl Scout leader, always willing to lend a hand. She demonstrated how to be a good and generous person, a true role model for her daughter and others.

Her greatest gifts were her grandchildren. She stepped right up to be the best Nana ever. She taught them to be loving, kind and to “be nice.” She loved them unconditionally and always offered advice whether invited or not. She took time to play with them and teach them lessons, ones they would never forget. The fairy box was a source of mystery and excitement for good children who came to visit. The “May I” jar always had goodies, but you had to ask politely to access its treasures. She loved being a Nana and it showed.

Trudy was generous. She gave and gave, if she had it, and she would share her time, love, friendship, money, all of it. Just ask the kids in the neighborhood. They will tell you who gave out the full-size candy bars at Halloween. She just loved seeing their eyes widen as they gazed over the selection of big candy bars.

She had a wonderful sense of humor and quick wit. You always knew where you stood with her and was always very matter-of-fact. Admirable qualities that are genuine. Trudy would want you to share your love, say what you feel, be honest, be kind and be as generous as you can with all that you have and have a drink on me! She always signed off with blowing a kiss and all her notes ended with “Mucho Love.” So, it seems fitting to end this tribute with Mucho Love, Trudy.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Yorktown Community Help, 1974 Commerce St., Yorktown Heights, N.Y. 10598 or the Jack DeVito Foundation, 334 Underhill Ave., Suite 4D, Yorktown Heights N.Y. 10598 or at [www.jackdevitofoundation.org](http://www.jackdevitofoundation.org).

## Janet Nassar

Janet Ann Nassar of Peekskill passed away from natural causes on Apr. 23. She was 80.

Nassar was born in Yonkers on July 4, 1939, to George and Jemelia Nassar. She was the second of four children and the only daughter.

After graduating from the Columbia University School of Nursing, Nassar began her lifelong journey of nursing. She started her career by working at the Hart Island prison in New York in psychiatric care. She moved to Phoenix, motivated by an opportunity to teach nursing and share her experiences with the next generation. Janet relocated to San Francisco after a couple of years. As a compassionate nurse, she was on the front line of the AIDS epidemic before the disease was widely acknowledged or understood. She became the director of the AIDS/CASE Management and Home/Community-Based Care Program for Westside Community Mental Health Center, one of the first hospices for patients dying of AIDS in the area <http://www.westside-health.org/>.

Janet fought for people with mental health issues and took up grant writing to help fund social programs for them. A loving friend fondly remembers, “Janet’s empathy for the clients was always balanced by

professionalism. She would be warm and stern at the same time...She was amazing.”

She moved back to New York to nurse her mother and live closer to her extended family. Her humor and love for her family, especially the children, was palpable. She made everyone feel better by the warmth of her personality and joyful laugh. Janet loved making jewelry, listening to jazz and appreciating art.

Nassar was predeceased by her husband, Raymond Howell III, a prolific African-American artist, and her older brother, George Nassar. She is survived by her brothers, Dr. Paul Nassar and spouse Dorothy and Philip Nassar and spouse Michele; nephews Dr. Jay Nassar and spouse Jolene, Josh Nassar and spouse Amy, Jordan Nassar and spouse Amir and Paulie Nassar; nieces Debra Nassar Snyder and spouse Doug, Sarah Nassar Garcia and spouse Matthew and Katie Nassar Harrison and spouse Phil; and many great-nephews and great-nieces.

Janet’s sense of humor, frankness, empathy and deep love for family and friends was treasured and will be missed.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, services will be announced at a later date.

## Paul Williams

Paul Denis Williams died on June 27. He was 82.

Williams was born on Oct. 4, 1938, to Gertrude Van Nostrand Williams and Frank Williams. He had two older brothers, Jack and Jimmy, both of whom predeceased him. In 1962, he married his childhood sweetheart, Phyllis Casolaro Williams. They lived in Briarcliff Manor for 53 years, until moving to Pleasantville in 2017.

Williams was educated in New York City, attending Incarnation School and Fordham Preparatory School. He received a bachelor’s from Fordham University and an MBA from NYU.

His career spanned over 50 years and included positions at Johnson & Higgins, The Equitable, General Foods, Phillip Morris, Warner Brothers and Time Warner Inc., where he retired as the director of employee benefits, assistant secretary of the corporation and the president of Time Warner Canada.

In addition to his penchant for travel, Williams was an accomplished drummer and a track and field athlete. Educated by the Jesuits, Paul was a true “Man for Others.” He was a passionate philanthropist and volunteer, and he actively participated in the lives of his family

and friends. He was a dedicated alumnus of Fordham Preparatory School, serving several terms on its Board of Trustees and dedicating endless hours of volunteer service to the school. He was an active member of St. Theresa’s Church in Briarcliff Manor for over 50 years where he served a few terms as president of the Parish Council. He was a 40-year member of the Pleasantville Lions Club, serving multiple terms as its president.

Williams is survived by his wife of 58 years, Phyllis; his daughters, Patreece Williams Creegan and Pamela Williams Mezzatesta and their husbands Patrick Joseph Creegan and Christopher John Mezzatesta; five grandchildren, whom he dearly loved, Christopher John (“CJ”) Mezzatesta Jr., Madison Rose Mezzatesta and Hunter Williams Mezzatesta and Paul Francis Creegan and Paige Marirose Creegan.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions be made to the Paul D. Williams Scholarship Fund at Fordham Preparatory School, 441 E. Fordham Rd., Bronx, N.Y. 10458.

A celebration of Paul’s life will be held at a later date.



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# Pleasantville Pool to Stay Closed for the Summer Despite Petition

By Abby Luby

More than 70 Pleasantville residents logged in for a virtual town hall meeting last Thursday evening in a last-ditch effort to convince village officials to change their minds and open the municipality's pool this summer.

For almost two hours, Mayor Peter Scherer, trustees Nicole Asquith and David Vinjamuri and future trustee Paul Alvarez listened to comments, criticisms and ideas on how the pool could operate.

Despite the outpouring of concern, one day later, the board posted an announcement reaffirming its original decision in May.

"This is a difficult choice that we know leaves many in our community disappointed," the board's statement read. "However, the safety and public health of our community is paramount. Given all of the factors and challenges involved in operating the Village's municipal pool during the COVID pandemic, the Board believes this to be the most prudent decision."

The board announced the pool's closure more than a month ago because of uncertainty and health risks due to the coronavirus. It recently stirred passion in the community after an online petition,

titled "Save the Pool," was posted by the Pleasantville Swim Team. The petition has attracted more than 500 signatures.

Adding to the discontent was the opening of other area pools, which are required to strictly adhere to guidelines for limited capacity and social distancing.

At last week's live-streamed meeting, there were numerous suggestions on how to safely open the pool.

"Have you done an analysis in terms of the number of people allowed in the pool at any one time and what it would look like in terms of the actual number of people you allow in?" asked former village trustee Jonathan Cunningham.

Maximum capacity in the main pool and kiddie pool combined is 660 people, according to Scherer.

"The official rule is not more than 50 percent of capacity," he said. "Theoretically you can have 330 in the pool; in reality it would be far less than that if maintaining the social distance requirement of six feet apart."

Maintaining that distance in the narrow space on the wooded side of the pool would also be difficult.

"You can have a single person hang out on the deck but a family of five takes up more space," Scherer



Pleasantville's municipal pool will remain closed this summer after village officials concluded it would be imprudent to operate the facility.

explained.

The vast majority of complaints received about the closure were from families who wanted the pool for their kids to use, Scherer said.

"I would love to take my kids to the pool and have them play with their friends," said Trustee Nicole Asquith. "But it would be hard to tell my daughter that she has to wear a face mask and she couldn't play with her friends."

Resident Jim Kennedy asked the board to consider special programming to regulate the capacity.

"The mornings could be reserved for fitness swimming or lessons and later be for open swim with time

slots," he suggested.

However, most community pools have canceled swim team meets, training and lessons, Scherer said.

"A number of pools that have allowed fitness restrict one swimmer to a lane and every other lane is used," he said. "If we were to open the pool mostly for fitness and lane swimming, I think we would have an enormous uprising."

Troy Tassier, a Pleasantville Swim Team board member, said he was concerned that the pool closure would force older youths to flock to area beaches.

"How is that safer than having them stay in town with a little more supervision at our own pool?"

Tassier asked. "I still think we can limit the capacity in the pool where it is much more manageable than other places."

Trustee David Vinjamuri said he would support opening the pool if guidelines were strictly followed while calculating the correct number of members and assigning a price tag that would make sense. Vinjamuri said he would support opening the pool if two violations of safety protocols triggered a loss of privileges without a refund.

Superintendent of Recreation & Parks Matt Trainor pointed to the challenge of training lifeguards and pool staff to enforce the COVID-19 guidelines, all of whom are 16 to 25 years old.

"You may have observed (in the past) how many times during the summer a patron notices a lifeguard is not paying attention. That's an issue we deal with," Trainor said. "I'm concerned about the backlash the guards get when they ask people to keep social distancing. This pandemic poses many problems."

Pleasantville residents are able to swim at the Mount Pleasant pool complex in Valhalla starting this week. Check out the Recreation & Parks Department page on the town's website at [www.mtpleasantny.com](http://www.mtpleasantny.com).

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# Chappaqua Library Director to Retire, Citing Differences With Board

By Martin Wilbur

Citing “philosophical differences” with some members of the Board of Trustees, Chappaqua Library Director Pamela Thornton has announced that she will retire from her post on Aug. 4, two years earlier than she had planned.

Thornton, 63, has been director of the

Chappaqua Library since January 2007, but said that it was best for her to depart now since there has been a growing split between herself and some trustees during the past few years.

“When I was hired over 13 years ago, the board entrusted the mission of the library to me and the Library has thrived and continues to be a cornerstone in the

Chappaqua community,” Thornton stated in her June 16 letter to the board. “But, over the past three years the dynamics of the board have changed and it has become increasingly difficult to comply with the wishes of specific board members which hamper or deter the work of the library.”

Reached last week, Thornton declined to elaborate on the differences she has had with board members.

Library Board Trustee Maggie Christ praised Thornton for her contributions to the library, calling her “a terrific director.” Thornton has been fiscally responsible, and has done a good job of moving the library forward.

“I’m sure that you have excellent reasons but I think it is a tremendous loss to the library and the town to have you leave at this time,” Christ said at the June 16 Library Board meeting. “You’ve been an amazing director. I think you’ve gotten incredibly good things done and it is a huge loss to the community.”

She said that the board is beginning its search for a replacement by using the civil service list. If no one on the list is interested, the library can then conduct a broader search.

An interim director will probably

be named because it is unlikely that a permanent replacement could be found between now and early August, Christ said.

Thornton, a longtime Ossining resident, has been a librarian since earning her master’s degree in 1980. She has worked in Westchester for the past 28 years. Prior to Chappaqua, Thornton served as director of the Somers Library for six years and in New Rochelle before that.

She said that she’s proud of the programming that the Chappaqua Library has been able to offer, including an impressive list of well-known authors who have conducted signings and talks.

Thornton also said it was great to see that the parking lot expansion project was able to be completed on her watch. That had been an issue since before her arrival in Chappaqua, she said.

Thornton did not dismiss the possibility of working again, but for now will take at least a little time to take a well-earned breather.

“I want to sit on my front porch,” Thornton said. “I have worked so hard all of these years. I bought a house eight years ago and I never go to spend time in it.”

## Police Blotter

### North Castle Police Department

**June 19:** A caller reported an erratic driver swerving from lane to lane and crossing the double yellow line into oncoming traffic on Route 22 at 5:47 p.m. The caller then stated that the vehicle crashed into the woods. The desk officer notified 60 Control who dispatched the Armonk Fire Department and Armonk EMS. The party was transported to Westchester Medical Center. Armonk Garage secured the vehicle.

**June 20:** A Brookwood Road resident reported at 12:48 p.m. that an LGBT sign that was posted in her yard earlier today was damaged. She stated that sometime in the late morning she observed a group of bicyclists stop in front of her residence. An older white male in his seventies got off his bike and come onto her property. He then tore a rainbow LGBT flag from its post and threw it in the street. She also observed him knock down a Black Lives Matter sign.

**June 24:** A Roberta Place resident reported at 10:24 a.m. that her husband was outside on the porch when the glass he was drinking out of exploded in his hand. No one was injured but the caller believes that someone shot the glass out of her husband’s hand. The responding officer stated that it appeared the glass may have expanded and broke on its own due to the outside temperature.

### White Plains Police Department

**June 27:** A vehicle was stolen from a residential driveway and was recovered on June 28, one block away with only an E-Z Pass missing. The vehicle had been parked in the driveway with its keys still inside.

**June 28:** Police are investigating a burglary of a first-story apartment midday Sunday. The apartment resident left a ladder outside and came home to find the suspect climbing down from the window on the ladder.

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# Pace, Manhattanville Announce Reopening Plans for 2020-21

By Martin Wilbur

Pace University and Manhattanville College announced last week the schools will begin the 2020-21 academic year in late August with a combination of in-person and remote learning and complete classes in time for the Thanksgiving break.

A joint letter from Pace President Marvin Krislov, Vanya Quiñones, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, and Brian Anderson, director of emergency management and environmental health and safety, outlined a list of regulations and safety protocols for students, faculty and staff to follow.

The schedule for the semester, which will begin Aug. 24, will affect all three of the university's campuses – Pleasantville, New York City and the Elisabeth Haub School of Law in White Plains.

"We are determined to provide our students with the high-quality educational experience they expect while protecting health and safety for everyone in our community, including students, faculty, and staff," the letter stated.

Pace also announced that a coronavirus coordination officer will be appointed to serve as a point of contact for all students,

faculty and staff to manage testing, tracing and response efforts. The officer will also coordinate with public health officials.

All final exams will be administered remotely from Nov. 30 through Dec. 5.

Manhattanville will follow a similar plan but will start classes on Aug. 31, said President Michael Geisler. The college will follow all state safety guidelines and protocols to protect students, faculty and staff, he said.

It is expected that remote learning will begin after Thanksgiving, including final exams.

"I want to assure you that every decision regarding our reopening plans are made with our community's health and safety as our highest priority," Geisler said. "And we are taking extensive measures to ensure that we have practical procedures in place to not only protect our students, faculty and staff, but to deliver a college experience that is rewarding and fulfilling and worthy of our institution."

The joint Pace letter stated that ending the semester on campus by Thanksgiving will comply with public health guidance. It is to avoid dispersing students, faculty and staff across the country before



Manhattanville College will resume in-person classes Aug. 31, but will disperse students by Thanksgiving.

they return to the campus, which could potentially contribute to spreading the virus.

It was not mentioned how the spring semester will be handled.

According to the Pace plan, critical operations staff and research personnel will return to campus on June 29 and student-facing staff and those necessary to prepare residence halls for student arrivals will start returning July 6.

Then full faculty and staff will begin to return to campus on Aug. 10. There will be a target of 25 percent overall occupancy on each campus. That target will be achieved with a mix of remote work for some, in-person attendance and staggered scheduling.

Students may begin arriving at the dormitories as early as Aug. 14 with social distancing protocols

being followed, the letter stated.

All members of the Pace community should be tested for COVID-19 before they return to campus. There will be ongoing health monitoring of everyone on campus. Those who test positive may not come onto campus and should consult a healthcare provider. That would require 14 days of isolation, and three days without fever or fever-reducing medication, before returning to campus, according to the letter.

There will be random temperature checks conducted and everyone on campus will be required to conduct daily self-monitoring for symptoms, using the CDC questionnaire this summer and via a Pace mobile app beginning in the fall. Anyone reporting symptoms will be

referred to healthcare at Pace or their own healthcare provider. Approved visitors to campus, including vendors and contractors, will be expected to follow these procedures.

Various factors will help determine how many students will attend the in-person classes, including the size of the space and the types of classes, said Pace spokesman Jerry McKinstry.

Any student uncomfortable with attending in-person classes may take their courses remotely.

"I think the goal is to offer (classes) in person and remote to whomever is comfortable doing either, and in some cases, that will be simultaneous," McKinstry said. "In some cases, there will be certain classes that will be only offered remotely."

Geisler said Manhattanville's class sizes have always been small, which will help the school safely distance in the classroom.

There are also protocols for managing, cleaning and disinfecting all spaces at Pace.

The Pace Board of Trustees approved the reopening plan proposed by the COVID-19 Task Force, which studied multiple options for three months searching for a safe return to campus this fall.

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## Editorial

### We're a Long Way From Being Done with COVID-19 in New York

Over the past month, there has been plenty of optimism in New York when it comes to COVID-19.

We had paid our dues with a sudden and severe lockdown for a little more than two months, and with the best weather of the year upon us, we started slowly and methodically reopening in the Hudson Valley, starting the day after Memorial Day.

Many of us could turn our thoughts to perhaps salvaging something of summer, modified pool and beach schedules, outdoor dining and maybe even watching our favorite baseball team on TV for a couple of months, all with the comforting thought that the worst was behind us.

But now, as the COVID-19 pandemic ravages more than half of the states across the nation, there have been all sorts of renewed worries. But we could explain that it is those states that haven't taken it seriously, and were now paying the price. No masks, premature reopening, anti-science, anti-common sense.

This is New York, we're smart and we had learned the hard way when not only the state but New Rochelle was the

nation's early hot spot.

The optimism has been shattered with, among other things, the fallout from the June 20 Horace Greeley High School graduation. Failure to social distance, too many people getting out of their vehicles to mingle and too few masks has spawned at least 14 infections as of Monday.

This isn't to impugn the Greeley graduates and the adults who let it happen. There were plenty of communities in the last couple of weeks in Westchester and Putnam counties that had graduation ceremonies scheduled, and even if the protocols were more or less being followed, you could easily find guidelines that were flouted.

But these are healthy young people, you may reason. Surely, for one night they could take a brief break from an unprecedented pandemic on the night of their high school graduation. It won't hurt them.

Except it can – and will. It's about the realization that if you let your guard down with COVID-19, even for one night or a couple of hours, there may be a reckoning.

As surges in infections are taking hold

in more than 30 states across the United States right now, society has to come to grips that this battle with COVID-19 is a long-term fight. It's not going to be over just because you want it to be over or you're tired or bored.

Every generation has had its challenges, some greater than others. For some of our fathers and grandfathers, it meant being shipped off to a foreign land at 18 years old, and them not knowing if they would return alive.

Today, we're asked to wear a mask when within shouting distance of others, sit at least six feet apart and wash our hands. Put that in perspective.

With so many states struggling to beat back the virus, there's legitimate fear that some of those cases will find their way back to New York, and we'll have to relive the dark days of March and April. It's a plausible concern.

The best way to make sure that doesn't happen? Follow the guidelines, listen to the best available advice and don't think you're immortal.

## Guest Column

### Do We Really Believe Our Community Exhibits Systemic Racism?

By Frank Del Campo

So much is being reported in the mainstream media and on social media about systemic racism in our communities. It was demonstrated within our own Mahopac community on Flag Day, with a rally culminating at our passive park downtown.

With speeches from adults, politicians and our youth, some were suggesting that our community has a systemic racism issue, particularly in our schools.

My hope is that my response to this accusation of systemic racism will be viewed, not as an attack on the peaceful participants of this rally, but rather provide some reflection and thought of what my observations have been as a 52-year Mahopac resident.

My five children went through the Mahopac school system from elementary school through high school and have benefited both academically and socially from their experience as they raise their own children and compete every day with the rigors of the work environment. I spent a great deal of my time involved with my children and other children as a coach in Mahopac Sports Association activities. My wife and I spent many years working with the St. John the Evangelist parish community as a CCD coordinator and teacher. We worked closely with other families to form a youth organization on the church grounds as well as bringing many families to participate in the Capuchin Youth ministry.

Our efforts were focused on guiding and directing the children to a strong moral and ethical awareness for themselves and others and the importance of tolerance and respect for all, no matter race, color or creed. I

even spent a year teaching at Mahopac High school, but reluctantly left to take an administrative position. In those years, the disparity in salaries between teachers and administrators were much wider, as my wife was home taking care of our children.

In the early 1980s, many of my friends and neighbors urged me to get involved in local politics as a way to expand my influence to better my community. I spent 20 years as councilman, town supervisor and deputy county executive to which I made it my priority to bring our community together in pursuing many quality-of-life issues.

From 1986 to 1995, I formed the Carmel-Mahopac Community Awareness Coalition, which sponsored many family programs on drug education, mental health and other family issues and gave all families of our Mahopac-Carmel community an opportunity to understand the value of all segments working together through awareness and communication. As supervisor, when important issues arose with differences of opinion, I and both Democratic and Republican legislators worked together in unity to avoid division and acrimony in solving many of these problems for the benefit of all our citizens.

This background is in no way to brag or enhance my ego, nor will I be seeking any political office again now or in the future. But I do feel compelled to speak out for so many of our silent members of our community who are disheartened and disturbed at the rhetoric of division recently displayed by a minority. When groups describe the Mahopac community as one filled with "systemic racism," they are ignoring the many efforts of so many good leaders of our churches, synagogues,

schools and businesses that showed respect and acceptance for all of our residents no matter their race or color.

Webster's Dictionary defines systemic as something carried out with organized regularity. No one will deny that there are individuals who espouse negative racial views. But to suggest and insist that these views are carried out by many of our institutions in our community with organized regularity can't be further from the truth now or in the past.

If we want to discuss racism against a few that may cause fear and discomfort, it should be viewed not as connection with one political party or another. Rather, as leaders of all those in our community, let's examine ourselves as individuals and how we can eliminate any evidence of the few who harbor racial divide that only discredits the work of so many institutions in Mahopac.

Too much effort has been expended by so many before and after me over the years to bring our community together, and I refuse to remain silent. By remaining silent, our true condition of tolerance and acceptance of all within our community only gives validity to the loud few.

Let us come together now as our schools reopen in the fall and allow all families to know that their children and families are truly welcomed in our community. We certainly can work together with better communication to improve all that we want that is good for each other and our families now and for the future.

*Mahopac resident Frank Del Campo served as a Carmel councilman, as the town's supervisor from 1996 to 2003 and as deputy county executive in Putnam County from 2003 to 2006.*



# P'ville to Continue Wheeler Avenue Dining for Two More Dates

By Abby Luby

The June 20 experiment to allow in-the-street dining on Wheeler Avenue was viewed as a success, prompting Pleasantville officials to allow for its continuation at least three more times.

The Village Board passed a resolution last week, which approved the closure of Wheeler Avenue last Saturday, and again on July 4 and 11 from 4 to 10 p.m. The police department was authorized to post no parking signs and to tow all vehicles in violation of what will be a temporary parking restriction.

"It was a nice night overall," Pleasantville Mayor Peter Scherer said of the initial alfresco dining session. "It was generally successful. The restaurants I spoke to said it was good for

them."

Scherer said they are prepared to tweak the program as they respond to people's comments.

"I thought that for the first night it was a home run," said Village Trustee Steve Lord. "To be able to walk down Wheeler created a really cool pedestrian vibe that we can really build on."

Pleasantville restaurant owners who put tables outside completed permit applications on the village's website. The permit was needed to serve patrons outside.

Last Tuesday the Mid-Hudson region, which includes Westchester County, moved to Phase 3 of the four-phase reopening. The phased reopening is to have a gradual but safe re-introduction of businesses to slowly but

safely help the economy to recover.

Restaurants can now offer indoor dining and seat up to 50 percent of their capacity. Masks are required to be worn by staff and customers unless seated at their tables and for tables and chairs at least six feet apart.

The initial estimated cost to close Wheeler Avenue for outdoor dining was \$25,000 to cover the rental of street barriers and weekend police overtime, which requires the payment of double pay. Village Administrator Eric Morrissey said \$25,000 was a conservative estimate for outdoor dining, which they originally based on two nights a week over the span of three months.

"There is money in the budget to cover that, especially since we had to cancel large events this year like Pleasantville Day and Memorial



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The Village of Pleasantville will continue its Saturday evening closures of Wheeler Avenue to allow for dining in the street on July 4 and 11.

Day parades," Morrissey said. "The outdoor dining is, after all, an economic development initiative."

## Real Time Crime Center Locates Three Missing, Endangered Persons

The Real Time Crime (RTC) intelligence center and patrol officers in Westchester County located three missing or endangered persons last week and turned them over to the care of mental health professionals or their families.

The incidents highlight a lesser-known component of the RTC, which is most closely associated with providing real-time information to help officers in the field locate stolen cars, fleeing suspects or vehicles wanted in connection with past crimes.

"When families report a missing person who is in emotional crisis

or suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia, RTC immediately goes to work," said Public Safety Commissioner Thomas A. Gleason said. "By leveraging the technology and investigative tools we have, RTC can often identify the location where a missing/endangered person is traveling. This helps patrol officers to find these persons before a tragedy occurs."

On June 25, police in New Jersey shared information about a man who had left home in a suicidal state. Several hours later, RTC determined that his car was on the Saw Mill River Parkway in Mount Pleasant,

police said.

Officers from multiple agencies responded and a Pleasantville police officer located the vehicle and stopped it. The man was taken to Northern Westchester Hospital and placed into the care of mental health professionals.

A similar scenario unfolded on June 24. A New Jersey police department shared information about a missing or endangered person. RTC subsequently determined that the woman's car was being driven on the Hutchinson River Parkway. A Rye Brook officer located the vehicle at Ridge Street. The woman

was taken to Greenwich Hospital for a mental health evaluation.

In addition to persons in emotional crisis, police are often called upon to find those suffering from Alzheimer's, dementia or other cognitive impairment. On June 22, when the Greenburgh Police Department reported that it was searching for a missing or endangered person, the department provided information about the vehicle an elderly woman was using.

RTC determined that the vehicle had been traveling on Dobbs Ferry Road, which narrowed the area where officers could search.

Greenburgh officers located the woman and brought her back home to the safety of her family.

"It is gratifying to all of us in law enforcement when we can find persons in a vulnerable state and bring them to the safety of a hospital or their loved ones," Gleason said.

The Real Time Crime center, housed at county police headquarters, is a multiagency intelligence center supported by more than 40 participating police agencies in Westchester and Putnam counties.



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# When Homes Came in a Box From Sears, Ready to Assemble

A while back I received a call from a 92-year-old gentleman telling me that he had read every one of my articles since I started writing as The Home Guru. I was quite flattered.

When he told me that he wouldn't consider having anyone else sell the house that he had lived in since he was married, I was delighted. But, when he told me it was a Sears, Roebuck house, built from a kit, I was thrilled. I couldn't wait to see it.

My enthusiasm dampened a bit when he added, "But I warn you, to reach my home you must climb exactly 50 steps up from the street." Okay, I'm game, I thought. If this 92-year-old man can cut it, certainly I can, too!

When I arrived at the home in the "quarry" neighborhood of North White Plains with my real estate partner Michael Pierce, we climbed to the flat plateau in the sky where the charming Sears home is perched, almost exactly as it was constructed in 1930.

Our host let us into the house and the first room we entered was the kitchen. There, on a small 1930s porcelain table, was a tall, neat pile of perfectly cut out – you guessed it – copies of my Home Guru columns.

Having been married to his first wife for more than 60 years, then left a widower for a while, he had remarried and was relocating



By Bill Primavera

to New England. The home he was leaving behind for another generation of home adventurers was also delightful as a piece of Americana.

Sears, Roebuck and Co., first conceived of selling ready-to-assemble homes by mail order in 1906. High inventory costs threatened to close their building supplies department until a new manager named Frank W. Kushel had the idea of letting the factories ship supplies directly to the buyers in the form of complete home kits.

The trustworthiness of the Sears catalogs already helped the buying public become comfortable with the idea of buying items sight unseen. By the time the first Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans was printed in 1908, customers were ready to trust Sears with what was likely to be the biggest purchase they would ever make.

Kits weighed 25 tons and were shipped by railroad boxcar and sometimes truck. Often families would wait at the train station in a state of high anticipation. Like Ikea today with furniture, the innovations and efficiencies Sears brought to its home kits made home ownership affordable to families who previously could only dream of having a house of their own.

The innovative "balloon-style" framing helped reduce the hours needed to

assemble a house by 40 percent compared to standard methods of construction. In fact, the process of assembling the homes from kits was simple enough that neighbors sometimes pitched in to do the job themselves, barn-raising style. All the major pieces were numbered, every beam, shingle and clapboard, and the nails came in just the right amount so there would never be any guesswork for the novice builder.

Today that attention to detail helps owners identify their houses as being authentic Sears Modern Homes, as the numbers are still visible on many of the untreated pieces.

Modern Homes incorporated the newest technologies for comfortable living, gradually adding central heating, indoor plumbing and electricity to most of their designs. They also utilized the newly invented drywall and asphalt shingles, which were light, easy to install and fire resistant.

From 1908 to 1940, about 75,000 homes were sold through the mail-order Modern Homes program. There were 447 different housing styles available, eventually branching into three distinct lines: Honor Bilt, the most expensive line with the highest grade of materials; Standard Built, recommended for warmer climates; and Simplex Sectional, the smallest and simplest design.

Not only did prospective homeowners have choice, but these designs allowed for great customization. Floor plans could be

reversed, breakfast nooks and ironing board cabinets added and trim customized. Sears even assembled home kits based on any other home design.

Sears offered mortgage financing for a few years, but the Great Depression caused many loans to go into default, and the company ended the service soon thereafter.

It's not always easy to identify a Sears home, especially as homeowners were given such great freedom in customizing the designs. To determine if a home is from Sears, check to see if it was built between 1908 and 1940. (Keep in mind that a few old kits were sold through 1942.) See if there are any shipping labels or the aforementioned printed numbers in the home framework. Another good sign of a Sears Modern Home is a record of a mortgage issued by Sears.

Even after all these years, Sears homes are still prized by collectors and are known for being of high quality in even their most humble variations.

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

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# Music Conservatory of Westchester's Virtual Lessons Go Beyond County

By Madeline Rosenberg

When the Music Conservatory of Westchester shut down in early March, voice teacher Mary Elizabeth Poore knew she had to find a way to keep her students singing.

With some research, a new microphone and speakers, Poore started her regular lesson schedule from her Manhattan apartment a few days after the announcement of the closure. Instead of meeting in conservatory rooms, she and her students share a Zoom screen.

"I just thought, I've got to get on this right away and make it all happen," said Poore, who has taught at the conservatory for almost 30 years. "When the conservatory first shut down, I had never done any virtual platform at all, and I knew this was a time that I needed to explore that and waste no time setting it up."

The White Plains nonprofit community music school swiftly made its private and group lessons go virtual. Poore, who has continued virtual lessons with her 30 students, is one of more than 70 faculty at the conservatory that adapted their lessons for students sequestered at home, allowing the school to continue teaching and even expand its reach outside of Westchester.

The virtual private lessons are a close match to in-person instruction.

"It's just over a screen," said Adriana Rivera, the conservatory's



The Music Conservatory of Westchester in White Plains has continued to thrive as its more than 70 faculty members have provided lessons remotely to students throughout the pandemic. The school has also attracted new students outside of the immediate area.

communications and marketing manager.

However, these private sessions feel more focused than before, Poore said, with fewer distractions and no one walking down the hallway to disrupt a lesson.

"This is a real concentrated one-on-one," Poore said. "It's really possible to work on a lot of detailed sections of their work whether it be technique or having to do with music."

But transitioning to virtual lessons also came with some changes and a steep learning curve. Poore eventually learned to play the piano ahead of singers to account

for the delay in every video conferencing platform. She also sends her students recorded piano accompaniments and uses an app to scan sheet music.

Virtual lessons have also pushed conservatory students, from elementary school age to older adults, to notice the details of their performance – especially now that they see themselves on camera.

These details have become important for students who have joined one of Poore's five virtual recitals or those that other teachers have hosted to keep the community sharing music. Now, lighting and facial expressions matter even more, teaching students a new style of performing and allowing them to connect when they're physically apart.

"Because it is a screen rather than looking at a stage, you just are intimately connected with the performer," Poore said. "We want to see the thoughts on a singer's face, but when it's so isolated and it's really just your face on screen, it's something else to be careful of and work on."

What's more, virtual recitals and lessons have connected new faces to the conservatory community. Relatives who live in Canada and the United Kingdom have cheered on students during Poore's Zoom recitals.

Rivera said student enrollment for virtual lessons has also stretched beyond Westchester. With no need to drive to White Plains, the conservatory has

attracted new students from Dutchess and Putnam counties, as well as New Jersey and Connecticut. She said musicians are also finding virtual lessons more flexible for the same reason, allowing parents of younger students to regain the time it once took to drive them to the school.

This flexibility and broader reach prompted the conservatory to launch an online division for the fall, even as the music school plans to return to in-person instruction. Rivera said the conservatory had been hoping to eventually roll out virtual lessons, but accelerated that type of programming.

More than three months later, Poore said her students have enjoyed their lessons and have continued improving.

"I needed to continue to make music, because I knew that going on weeks or months, we didn't know how this was going to continue," Poore said. "I felt a loyalty to my students. I wanted them to still have music in their lives while things ruptured around them."

The conservatory is also launching virtual summer programs starting this week for grades K-7 to give students a sense of consistency and a musical outlet.

"Continuing that musical journey is really important," Rivera said. "No matter what, teachers are really encouraging their students and they're getting a lot out of it."

For more information about the Music Conservatory of Westchester, visit [www.musicconservatory.org](http://www.musicconservatory.org).



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# Local Artist Gives Back to Help NWH After Personal Crisis

By Lindsay Emery

Evan Lorberbaum knows how much Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco has helped tens of thousands of people in the local community.

That's one reason why Lorberbaum is giving back by selling his paintings and donating 75 percent of the proceeds to the hospital's COVID-19 relief efforts.

But it's also out of appreciation for what Northern Westchester did for him. Lorberbaum was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and underwent a manic episode in July 2015, forcing him to be hospitalized. Looking back on his time spent at Northern Westchester, he knew that he wanted to honor the healthcare workers in his own way.

"So this is also part of me giving back to them and being appreciative of how they were able to help me overcome what I was suffering at the time," said Lorberbaum, an Armonk resident.

As of last week, Lorberbaum had already sold two paintings, donating \$2,700 to the hospital. There are about 20 paintings that have been selected as a part of the sale. Lorberbaum does not have a deadline to sell the work, so he can raise as much money as possible.

During the first month or so of the pandemic, Lorberbaum said he wanted to make a difference somehow in his community but initially didn't know how. When he realized he could hold a charity sale for the hospital by selling his artwork and donating



JARED RYDER PHOTO

Artist Evan Lorberbaum in front of some of his artwork. Lorberbaum is donating 75 percent of the money from the sale of specific works to Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco.

the proceeds, he was delighted to see his idea was well-received.

"This is so much more impactful right now and really just trying to make an impact that is as great as possible in a short amount of time," Lorberbaum said.

The pandemic has allowed Lorberbaum to focus on his artwork. Beforehand, he mainly painted on the weekends. Lorberbaum works uses acrylic, oil and spray paint and concrete or plaster. He describes his style as abstract expressionism with influences from graffiti, street art, pop art, cubism and pointillism.

"I think in all of my work I definitely try to work with a lot of uplifting emotions and that's putting vibrant colors or unique mark-making or just something that catches your

eye, and I think definitely during this time we all need more positivity wherever we can find it," he said. "So that's definitely something I'm doubling down on and wanting to make sure that I can evoke a true positive emotion through the painting."

Lorberbaum wasn't interested in art until he went on a trip to Brazil the summer after graduating from Byram Hills High School in 2010. Throughout his childhood, Lorberbaum was focused on being an athlete, but it all changed when he saw the graffiti and street art in Brazil.

"So in Brazil, that's where I was originally, my mind was blown by the art that was encompassing their culture and embraced there," he said.

After briefly attending Tulane University, Lorberbaum had the opportunity to finally concentrate on art at NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Once enrolled, he studied the Business of Art and Entrepreneurship, with a focus in working in galleries, auction houses and art fairs. It was there that he was able to take advantage of a unique school where he could specially curate his own curriculum and focus on his art.

Lorberbaum works under the moniker ELO, which stands for Encourage, Life, Originality. It is a movement that he embraced after his bipolar diagnosis encouraged him to look at everything that was happening in his life.

"I wanted to take it (the diagnosis) in stride and see how I could turn it into a positive and that's kind of always something that has kept me motivated throughout my process," he said.

Lorberbaum would like to raise at least \$5,000 for the hospital from the sale of his paintings and is optimistic that he can eclipse that total.

"It would be really great to see if everything got some momentum and see how much we could really raise for the hospital," he said.

To explore his work that is available for sale for the COVID-19 Relief Sale, visit <https://tinyurl.com/y7hgd2nz>

To learn more about Lorberbaum and his artwork or to contact him, visit <https://www.elovisualart.com>, e-mail [elovisualart@gmail.com](mailto:elovisualart@gmail.com) or visit on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/eloart17](https://www.facebook.com/eloart17).

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# Greeley Grad Set to Embark on Journey to U.S. Naval Academy

By Martin Wilbur

William Wright never dreamed of joining the military while growing up nor was there much of a family legacy of going into the service.

His grandfathers served their country but that was by compulsion, not choice, he said.

Yet later this week, while most of his peers are preparing this summer for four years of college, Wright will be heading to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. for the start of what will be a 12-year commitment – four years of college, five years of service and three years in the reserves.

That difficult path may make many other young men and women hesitant but it doesn't faze Wright.

"Whenever I would visit a school there'd be a little bit missing, and then when I went to the Naval Academy, I realized it was a great fit for me," said Wright, who just graduated from Horace Greeley High School. "It was something that clicked. It just made sense."

It was about a year ago when Wright talked to a family friend who was a West Point graduate, said his mother Pam. It was the first time that Wright seriously considered applying to one of the service academies, she said. Since West Point was close by, he was

first interested in applying there, but his father had grown up in Virginia and was more familiar with the Naval Academy.

He was impressed after visits to both academies but the choice was clinched for Wright when he realized that the Naval Academy had competitive rowing, while West Point has a club team, his mother said. Wright has been a standout competitor with Greenwich Crew throughout high school.

"The more and more he focused on the Naval Academy, the more and more my husband and I learned about it, we started to realize it was a perfect fit for him, even though we were initially surprised," Pam Wright said. "I think there are not many people who are suited to the regimen, to sort of being part of a big team."

Wright, who is considering a major in mechanical engineering, said he wanted to have some assurances that when his schooling is done, he would have a meaningful career path.

"What it comes down to is when you finish school everything is pretty much still up in the air," he said. "It can be difficult to see where you're going, and with the Navy, it's a very clear path for your future."

Of course, it was no sure thing

that Wright would be accepted. With a roughly 9 percent acceptance rate, it is roughly on par with being accepted to an Ivy League school. In the 17th Congressional District, Wright was one of 29 applicants to be accepted to one of the nation's military academies.

During a socially distanced ceremony at the Chappaqua gazebo last Friday, Horace Greeley High School Principal Andrew Corsilia recited a long list of special qualities that the earnest Wright demonstrated during his high school years.

"I want to tell you that I admire you dedicating yourself to service and service to our country and to leadership," Corsilia said. "It's incredibly impressive. You are not taking an easy road. It is a road full of meaning and full of purpose and I appreciate that choice and I am incredibly proud of you."

Rev. Martha Jacobs, Wright's pastor at the First Congregational Church of Chappaqua, said his family and the community is proud of his accomplishment.

"I'm so proud of the decision he has made," Jacobs said. "I really felt that we needed to somehow publicly acknowledge the sacrifices that he is making for the next part of his life."

Wright, who has a twin brother



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

William Wright is headed to Annapolis, Md. this week to begin his service at the U.S. Naval Academy.

and two older sisters, said when he arrives at Annapolis this week, he and the others reporting will be quarantined for two weeks as a result of the coronavirus. Then they will be subjected to plebe summer, which is basically boot camp, before the school year starts. Wright can expect 18-hour days, starting with daily 5 a.m. wakeup calls.

While many of his college-

bound peers will look toward their newfound freedom away from home, Wright is taking in the longer view, well beyond the next semester.

"There's always the lingering thought in the back of my head I will miss out on the college life of going out to parties and stuff like that, but (this is) something that I want to do to try and better my future," Wright said.



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# This is Me Foundation Awards 17 Scholarships to Area Students

More than a dozen local high school students were awarded a This is Me Foundation scholarship.

Since 2012, Lauren and Caitlin Brady, who founded This is Me Foundation, have given out 73 scholarships of \$500 each.

The Brady sisters were each diagnosed with alopecia areata, an autoimmune disease that causes hair loss, while in high school. It was often a struggle to deal with, but they always remained as positive as possible, yet never spoke much publicly

about their condition.

In January 2011, after watching Kayla Martell, Miss Delaware in 2010, take her wig off on national television and explain she would compete in the 2011 Miss America pageant wearing a wig also because of alopecia, the Brady sisters knew they needed to do something to inspire others.

Just three weeks later, on Feb. 12, 2011, This Is Me was established as a two-and-a-half minute YouTube PSA. The video was

created to not only raise awareness about alopecia, but to try and inspire anyone who faces any insecurity.

In January 2012, the Brady sisters began providing scholarships as part of the foundation. These college scholarships have been awarded to local high school seniors enrolled in college who have displayed leadership skills while having faced adversity of any kind or helped others through adversity.

"The scholarships are presented in honor of our dear friends Ryan Risco and Cait Chivonne Polhill who left this world far too soon, but forever instilled in us their support and kindness as we faced our own adversity," they said. "We face each day with them in mind and use their legacies to inspire us to help others."

## Local Scholarship

The scholarship is awarded to high school seniors at Hendrick Hudson, Walter Panas and Peekskill High School who have faced and overcome adversity or helped others through adversity and are pursuing advanced level education.

This year's winners are Jessica O'Reilly, Matthew Regueiro and Tyler Ryan from Hendrick Hudson High School; Milagros Morales, Samatha Saca and Inmay Weinstein from Peekskill High School; and Stephanie Bieder, Amanda Burfeind, Jason Keefe and Christina Miscione from Walter Panas High School.

## National Scholarship

The \$500 This Is Me Scholarship, inspired by Risco and Polhill, is awarded to graduating seniors in the United States who are currently battling alopecia or who have suffered from it and are pursuing advanced level education. This year's winners were Kaitlyn Krueger, Northern Guilford High School, North Carolina; Taylor Lipack, Comsewogue High School, New York; Kaia Lontine-Kearson, BigFish Learning Community, New Hampshire; Michael Roudik, Leon M. Goldstein High School, New York; Dominique Scerbak, Mary Help of Christians Academy, New Jersey; and Trey Wilson, Philo High School, Ohio.



## Flowers Are Blooming

If you've been in and around Pleasantville lately you may have seen some of the beautiful displays of flowers around the community tended to by the Pleasantville Garden Club. This one, near the recreation building, features a large assortment of roses as part of the club's Rose Project.

## A Spiritual View

By Rev. Nils Chittenden

Someone recently shared how overwhelmed and low she was feeling because of the way the pandemic has wiped out so much we used to take for granted. Her biggest concern was how (or, indeed, if) she was going to get to see her aging parents in another part of the country.

Even four months ago, we couldn't even have imagined such a dystopian scenario. Now it's the norm. So even though this was a totally reasonable justification for her feeling anxious, depressed and dazed, she felt that society expected her to be resilient.

Resilience is one of those buzz words. Part of the wellness arsenal, it's a go-to expectation of the go-getting achievers. Westchester is famous for. Pandemic? Okay, challenge accepted! Opportunity to demonstrate resilience! Home-baking, family togetherness, killing it with online fitness regimes and never, ever falling apart at the seams.

But resilience isn't about not falling apart. Resilience is about

falling apart, but being able to draw on deep sources of strength such that, in spite of everything, there can still be an inner peace and hope that is unshakeable despite one's external circumstances.



All through the Bible, we see examples of this, from the prophet Jeremiah, ridiculed by his contemporaries, or Job, beset by every imaginable woe, or St. Paul, thrown into a prison cell in Rome. All of them lived lives that were often falling apart at the seams, yet they had a source of strength at their core that transcended everything they were going through. That source was the knowledge that God's love was there and always would be, and that nothing whatsoever in all of creation could take that away from them.

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

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## Have Fun this Summer With Yorktown Grange Fair's Online Contests

The Yorktown Grange Fair is getting an early start on the fun this year.

Keeping in mind that this summer is feeling a little strange for many in the community, the Grange Fair board concluded that it can do their part to keep children and families occupied by holding a virtual fair.

For the first time in its 96-year history, Yorktown Grange Fair contest entries can be submitted during the summer for online judging. Many of the competitions you know and love are open and ready for community submissions. From Lego lovers and junior bakers, to livestock raisers and budding gardeners, there is a contest for everyone at the Virtual Grange Fair.

Getting involved is easy. Visit [www.yorktowngrangefair.org](http://www.yorktowngrangefair.org) and peruse the numerous opportunities. Competitions include baking,

entertainment, Legos, gardening, livestock, needlework, photography, a pet costume contest, a rabbit costume contest and woodworking.

Keep in mind that there are multiple age groups within many of the contests. Then, get creative, get messy, get excited! It doesn't matter if you're a beginner or an expert, the virtual fair is for everyone.

Entries can be submitted via photo or video and posted to the gallery on the Grange Fair website for the community and the judges to enjoy.

While vacations and many camps may have been canceled, summer fun is still happening. Find joy and keep busy this summer by picking a competition and giving it your all. We can't wait to see what you come up with for the Virtual Grange Fair.

For more information, visit [www.yorktowngrangefair.org](http://www.yorktowngrangefair.org). See you online!

## No. Castle Revises Code to Allow Gas Stations to Modernize More Efficiently

By Martin Wilbur

North Castle officials last week passed local legislation that would make it less burdensome on gas station owners in the Commercial Business (CB) zone to upgrade and modernize their properties.

The Town Board approved a resolution that now makes gas and service stations a permitted use in the CB zone. Until now, the current operations were considered a pre-existing non-conforming use and required a special permit from the Town Board in addition to site plan approval from the Planning Board if the owners wanted to make improvements.

The issue arose because the owner of the Shell station at 375 Main St. in downtown Armonk has wanted to make key improvements, including landscaping and new sidewalks, to the parcel and it is one of the most visible corners in the center of the hamlet, said Town Attorney Roland Baroni. The work would also benefit the town, he said.

"It's very difficult to do that now, but if you change the zoning code to make it a permitted use, they then can go to the Planning Board for site plan approval without going through all the special permit criteria," Baroni said.

Gas and service station properties in North White Plains that are in the CB district are also included in the new measure.

Under the legislation, stations are permitted to have up to 12 fueling pumps or stations on a property.

In addition to amending the zoning code

regulating gas stations, the board created a new CB-A2 zoning district north of Bedford Road in Armonk to prohibit new gas stations from coming into the CB zone.

Before the board unanimously approved the legislation, Supervisor Michael Schiliro said the revision presents the town with a chance to see these stations improved aesthetically. He pointed to the Phillips station at 1 Broadway in Pleasantville as one of the best examples of a service station design that enhances an area.

"I think there's an opportunity here to really do it right," Schiliro said. "We're going to get the zoning right. Let's make sure we get nice structures and product."

The only skepticism was expressed by Councilman Jose Berra. The Shell station's plan include modernized pumps and a convenience store but it will discontinue its auto repair once the improvements are made. Berra posed to his colleagues whether to make having a service station a requirement.

However, the other board members weren't interested in making auto repair mandatory, even though downtown Armonk could be left without a service station. Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said she enjoys that convenience but didn't find it appropriate to make a service station a mandate, particularly as automobiles have increasingly sophisticated technology.

"It's a business model that is slowly phasing out and I think it would unfair of us to put that as a mandate," she said.

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# Plenty of Action to Behold in the Sky on Warm Summer Nights

If you can believe it, the end of June brings us to the midway point through another trip around the sun.

This doesn't really change anything, but it's interesting to know that everything in space is always moving, including us. By the end of this week, we'll have more 2020 behind us than ahead.

Earlier this year, we talked about the great pleasure of seeing brilliant Venus shine in our evening skies before it moved into the mornings a few weeks ago. Venus isn't the only planet we can see in our skies, of course.

Tracking planets is a hobby that goes back to the ancients, who noticed some stars wandered and changed their positions among the others from one night to the next. In fact, the word planet comes from the Greek word for wanderer. They didn't know they were seeing those other worlds moving in their orbits through space, as well as us moving in ours.

As the second half of the year starts, Jupiter and Saturn, the fifth and sixth planets from the sun, are easy to see in the evening's southern skies. They're the two biggest planets, but they're also the two farthest things that most of us can see with the naked eye without leaving the solar system; about 500 million and a

billion miles away.

This means that while they certainly stand out – Jupiter's the fourth brightest object in the entire sky – they don't always shout at you the way Venus does. If you've never tracked down a planet before, it's surprisingly easy and a fun trick to share with friends.

First, get a feel for the ecliptic, the path the sun takes across the sky. All the major planets orbit around the sun's midsection, so the ecliptic also roughly represents the plane of the solar system. Just follow the sun during the day, and then imagine that path at night. All the planets are always somewhere near that line.

Also, planets don't twinkle the way stars do. Since planets are so close to us as these things go, we don't just see

them as one point, like the much more distant stars. Instead, we see them as many points, so their light seems much steadier. You may never have noticed, but you may even see them as small disks.

Once you've spotted something in the right place, with the right shape, follow it for a couple of nights. If it hops from place to place relative to other stars, congratulations! We'll keep an eye on this pair as the year goes along, but as it happens July is a fantastic month to watch them.

On July 5, the just-past-full moon slides by and makes a gorgeous upside-down triangle with the two giant planets: Saturn to Jupiter's left, with the moon below.



By Scott Levine

Come July 14, Jupiter will be directly opposite the sun from our point of view, an arrangement called opposition. Just a few days later, on July 20, it'll be Saturn's turn. Typically, opposition is when an object is at its brightest and easiest to see, so those are especially great nights to try to check them out.

Hunting down planets and imagining the constant motion of the solar system can be a great way to spend a few minutes on these short summer nights. I hope you'll take a look.

Scott Levine ([astroscott@yahoo.com](mailto:astroscott@yahoo.com)) is an astronomy writer and speaker from Croton-on-Hudson. He is also a member of the Westchester Amateur Astronomers, which is dedicated to astronomy outreach in our area. For information about the club, including membership, newsletters, upcoming meetings and lectures at Pace University and star parties at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, visit [westchesterastronomers.org](http://westchesterastronomers.org). Events are free and open to the public. Please note: All in-person club activities are suspended until further notice due to COVID-19.

## Clear Skies



Full Moon  
July 4



Last Quarter  
July 12



New Moon  
July 21



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July 27

This month's phases of the moon.



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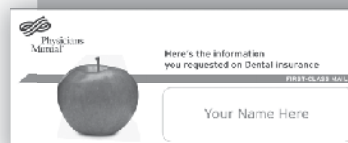
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# My Second Favorite Grape-based Alcoholic Beverage



By Nick Antonaccio

*I've been penning this column for over 12 years and I've enjoyed presenting readers with diverse wine topics. While rambling through my archived columns during this pandemic, I came across a column I thought might be enjoyable to my readers. Here is an updated version.*

What is my go-to beverage when wine is not appropriate for a particular situation? What do I enjoy as an occasional cocktail before a meal or at a social function?

Premium vodka.

But I have not been able to find a suitable tie-in between vodka and wine – until now. I have discovered a new vodka – one produced from grapes. Appropriately named Hanson of Sonoma Organic Vodka, it is distilled from a blend of organic grapes.

Employing literary license, allow me to expound on the shared characteristics and nuances of vodka and wine.

**1. The ingredients.** Of the 400 brands of vodka available in the United States, all but a handful are produced from wheat, rye, potato or corn. Each vodka is influenced

by geography, soil and local weather – the same “terroir” concept applied to wine. The other primary ingredient, water, is used for achieving the desired level of alcohol.

**2. The process.** Vodka ingredients are fermented, filtered and sometimes blended, similar to the winemaking process. The major departure is the distillation process (heating and condensing the fermented ingredients), in which flavors are refined. Filtering is applied in wine production to remove impurities. With vodka, multiple steps of filtering (as many as 10) are employed using charcoal and for certain brands, diamonds.

### 3. The end result.

Depending on the finer elements of the above two factors, an individual vodka will be distinct from its brethren. My criteria for evaluating a brand have always been a pleasant, herbaceous aroma, a nutty flavor and a smooth finish. I've tasted

many vodkas – many harsh, medicinal and non-descript – before settling on my two current favorites: Crop Organic (produced in the United States) and Grey Goose.

With my discovery of grape-based vodkas, my focus is changing. A significant factor to consider is that, unlike the grain-based vodkas that dominate the market, these are gluten-free; for the first time, my gluten-intolerant friend Rick can join me

in clinking martini glasses. Here are four that I've found in my research, with notes culled from various sources.

a) Ciroc, produced from Mauzac (Gaillac region) and Ugni Blanc (Cognac region) grapes grown in France. A slightly grapey flavor, smooth with a mild aftertaste.

b) Idol, produced from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes grown in the Burgundy region. A slightly fruity aroma, silky smooth and an aftertaste that is more like tannins than alcohol.

c) Roth, produced from a blend of six grapes grown in California, including French Colombard and Chardonnay. Faintly sweet bouquet (even though distilled five times), highly aromatic, velvety smooth, delicate finish.

d) Hanson of Sonoma, produced from a blend of organic, non-GMO grapes grown in Sonoma County. Founded and operated by an eponymous family of six, it is distilled seven times in a hybrid pot and column still. Hanson also offers additional offerings infused with organic Meyer lemon, cucumber, ginger, mandarin orange or habanero.

**4. The final step.** Consumption. Here's my interpretation of the perfect vodka martini:

- Sipped from a martini glass.
- Straight up – no rocks to dilute the flavor.



- Extra dry – just a whiff of white vermouth to enhance the aromatics.
- Old is the key: a vodka martini that is not ice cold risks tasting like lighter fluid.
- The martini glass must come straight from the freezer, next to the bottle of vodka.

- Must be shaken, not stirred; when shaken, a perfectly prepared martini has tiny slivers of ice coating the surface area.
- Add three olives; any garnish other than olives (onions or lemon twists) are for gin.

Ah, it's my 15th week of sheltering in place. I need an appropriate drink. Excuse me while I head for the freezer.

*Nick Antonaccio is a 40-year Pleasantville resident. For over 25 years, he has conducted wine tastings and lectures. Nick is the co-chairperson of the Wine Media Guild of wine journalists. He also offers personalized wine tastings and wine travel services. Nick's credo: continuous experimenting results in instinctive behavior. You can reach him at nantonaccio@theexaminernews.com or on Twitter @sharingwine.*

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## Sports

# MLB Baseball set to Return; Cuomo Overrides NYSPHSAA Startup



By Ray Gallagher  
Examiner Sports  
Editor @Directrays

Upon its return in late July for an abbreviated 60-game sprint to the postseason, Major League Baseball just saved the day for many, not to mention its own rump. For a sport that is losing some appeal among youngsters, MLB had to salvage some form of a 2020 season, no matter the potential consequences regarding COVID-19 and its potential spikes.

Truth be told, I'm more worried about the potential consequences MLB might suffer should its players take a knee during the national anthem. That might put baseball on life support for good with its core fan base, which is an older generation steeped in patriotism. Attendance would surely sag amongst these specific fans if the flag and/or anthem is disrespected in any way for any social justice movement, and TV ratings will likely plummet, too. So MLB and Commissioner Rob Manfred is walking a fine line here. MLB is not the NFL, which would likely survive this issue. Professional baseball may not.

Can't we come to some form of compromise on this kneeling issue so nobody's feelings are hurt and everyone respects the issues at hand? How about a moment of silence just prior to the anthem, so that players in every sport can kneel arm in arm to protest injustices around the globe? Then, we remove our caps and rise as one brotherhood/sisterhood for the playing of our national anthem: Message received! That's win-win, if you ask me.

We must proceed with caution here and hope like heck that one month from now we aren't back at square one, with no baseball and the economy shut down again until Nov. 3. MLB reserves the right to make changes to the format and procedures for the season as things occur. With an ever-evolving virus, plus protests and riots likely sparking a spike in cases in cities across America, obstacles will emerge, but the fact that Mets fans get 60 games worth of 2019 Rookie of the Year Peter Alonso is the best news they've had all summer.

The fact that Yankee fans get a look at \$36 million-man Gerrit Cole on the bump in pinstripes changes everything about the summer of 2020. Baseball fans like myself have reason to smile because there's nothing like a nightly game or a day at the beach with a Mets/Yankees baseball game on the portable radio. (Wait, what's a portable radio, my kids ask while streaming games off their phones?)

### No Go, Says Cuomo

Since Gov. Andrew Cuomo can't make a reasonable decision regarding the use of school facilities for the varsity and junior varsity sports programs, he's moved the goalposts and tread upon the sports terrain,

which, I reckon, opens up the door for me to have at it.

Look, nobody is denying how serious or dire the situation is regarding COVID-19 and the need to follow guidelines until we get a better hold of it. But Cuomo made a puzzling decision when he told the New York State Public High School Athletic Association's (NYSPHSAA) school districts last Thursday to hold off on allowing off-season practices for their high school athletes on their respective campuses. They were supposed to re-open for students to train during Phase 4 on July 7.

But in response to NYSPHSAA guidelines that indicated student-athletes would be allowed to begin off-season training on campus when its region entered Phase 4 of the reopening plan, the governor now says that the authority to permit on-campus sporting events lies with his office, not NYSPHSAA.

As a result, all school-related, on-campus events are now on indefinite hold. However, in the very next breath Cuomo said schools can allow "outside groups" — like the Greater Hudson Valley Baseball League, for instance, or even beer league softball — to access their fields, which is good for those groups but difficult for many to comprehend. The NYSPHSAA on Friday explained that to its many school administrators, who are miffed by the decision.

"It doesn't make any sense," Putnam Valley High School Superintendent Jeremy Luft said. "None!"

Essentially, Cuomo is okay with entrusting Uncle Louie with the keys to the kingdom, but the schools that provide certified coaches and trainers that will follow the mandated guidelines and protocols — or lose their jobs if they don't — are prohibited from using their own facilities. "Outside teams" will do what they can to comply — and I'm all for it! — but many of these volunteer coaches are shorthanded, untrained in protocol and have enough on their plate as is.

Many travel teams have already gone rogue and ignored school- and town-issued mandates against teams holding formal practices #Facts. The Putnam Valley School District was forced to park a truck on home plate of its most accessible field last week when rumors of a 10/11-U scrimmage ran rampant.

This all comes down to politics, money and insurance, if you ask me. Outside groups need to show proof of insurance at schools to compete on school fields. High school athletes are under a different insurance umbrella, state coverage, and New York State fears lawsuits if a player tests positive for COVID-19 on school grounds after receiving government approval to proceed.

Outgoing Mahopac High Athletic Director Frank Miele tweeted this: "This is unbelievable. Outside groups will not use our facilities. This gets worse not better."

Byram Hills football Coach Doug Carpenter offered this: "So non-board of ed. approved coaches can work with athletes on school facilities, but BOE approved coaches (many of which are educators too) cannot. Huh?"

Cuomo's decision is confusing to say the least. He is driving additional nails into the coffin for getting schools to open this September. We could wind up with a generation of depressed, addicted teens with no sports in their lives should this keep up.

NYSPHSAA Executive Director Robert Zayas thought the plan his task force had put together was well-thought out and backed by the national governing body. It provided a number of safety measures for schools, athletes and coaches to abide by, but unfortunately, we're at the mercy of Cuomo. Maybe coaches should organize a riot prior to the start of practice, perhaps tear down the statue of Sybil Ludington to make these gatherings legal in the eyes of Cuomo.

My guess is that come Nov. 3, things will magically open up again, but even that is dependent upon the results of the 2020 presidential election.

## Direct Rays

## Mahopac Honors Former Greats



BILL KENNEDY PHOTO

Former MLB players, C.J. Riefenhauser and Dave Fleming, had their Mahopac jersey numbers retired during a rainy ceremony last Saturday on its plush new field. Other Mahopac baseball greats — former MLB player Ted Lawrence, Chris Tantalos, and outgoing athletic director, Frank Miele — had their retired numbers recertified and affixed atop the scoreboard. Current Indian Coach Myk Lugbauer and former Coach Frank Moloney were also on hand, as were Tantalos family members in memory of the departed Chris Tantalos.





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