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April 6 - April 12, 2021

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 15, Issue 709

Mount Kisco Weighs Restrictions on Gas-Powered Landscaping Equipment

By Martin Wilbur

Mount Kisco will consider the regulation of leaf blowers and other landscaping equipment after a plan proposed last week would limit months and hours of operation and eventually phase out a certain type of engine.

In a presentation by Village Trustee Peter Grunthal and resident Lilian Burlger, the initial proposal would ban all gas-powered equipment during the summer months, allow the gas-powered machinery to be used mainly during business hours and for part of the day on Saturday and prohibit the use of two-stroke engines after a phase-out period of several years.

The proposal also includes lawn mowers, chainsaws and weedwhackers.

"Coming back here and putting down roots, I really want my children to be able

to play outside, go for a walk on a Sunday in the fall and smell the leaves and enjoy the outdoors," Burlger said of her motivation for working on the initiative. "I want to be able to work from home and not hear this extreme stressor that's constantly distracting."

She said the majority of municipalities in Westchester now have leaf blower restrictions in place, which puts Mount Kisco behind many of its neighbors. Mount Kisco is the latest community in the area to pursue legislation. In recent years, Bedford and New Castle were among the local towns to have enacted regulations, passing varying sets of restrictions in hopes of limiting noise and reducing carbon emissions. Other places, such as Pleasantville, Greenburgh and Croton-on-Hudson, are also weighing limits on their use.

One goal behind the legislation would

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Quite a Milestone

Valhalla resident Frances Bliss celebrated her 100th birthday on Sunday. She and her husband, Herbert Bliss, a former Westchester County judge, raised their five children in the hamlet. She has eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild who helped her commemorate her special day.

Minimal Tax Increase Proposed in P'ville's \$22.4M Budget for 2021-22

By Abby Luby

Pleasantville residents would see a tax rate increase of less than 1 percent for the upcoming fiscal year in the village's proposed \$22.4 million budget for 2021-22.

Village Administrator Eric Morrissey reviewed the spending plan before the Village Board last Monday. The proposed budget would entail a modest .83 percent tax rate hike, which is about a \$30 increase for the average single-family homeowner.

The proposed levy is tax cap compliant – \$307,485 under the cap.

The budget presentation focused mainly on the general fund, the

largest portion of the village budget, at about \$16.5 million. Of that, \$11,885,000 will be collected through the property tax levy. There is \$539,000 that is expected to be taken from surplus, with just over \$4 million coming from other revenue sources, including parking and recreation program fees, mortgage tax and county sales tax.

Morrissey said the county sales tax has been a big question mark during the current fiscal year. Despite COVID-19 impacting various revenue lines, Pleasantville did collect nearly \$1.4 million in sales tax revenue in the 2019-20 budget, although the last two-and-a-half months included the pandemic. As of last month,

the village had collected almost \$790,000 in sales tax revenue, just below the budgeted \$800,000 for the current fiscal year.

The projected amount of county sales tax for 2021-22 is \$1 million.

"We feel that's a conservative estimate," said Morrissey. "That will make up about a quarter of the generated revenue in the budget."

The budget proposes about \$1.9 million for village government support, administration and department positions, assorted services, including the justice court, liability insurance, small claims and tax certioraris. Morrissey said the \$1.9 million is about a \$50,000 decrease from the

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No. Castle Police Reform Plan Makes Wide-Ranging Recommendations

By Martin Wilbur

North Castle recently approved the town's Police Reform and Reinvention Plan emphasizing improvement in transparency, community engagement and training and clarifying use of force and procedural justice policies.

The Town Board unanimously approved the document on Mar. 24 after work was completed by the stakeholder's group dating back to last fall. The group was split into various subcommittees and ultimately keyed in on a handful of broad areas.

Supervisor Michael Schiliro lauded the group's efforts for

its exhaustive review as well as highlighting the 32-officer department's many strengths.

"If any of you have reviewed it, this final document I think is an excellent document with some excellent recommendations in it, and these folks have been at it for about four months, I guess, through their meetings and public meetings and public comment periods, and you can tell the work that they've done based on the recommendations and the initiatives and the action plan that they provided to us," Schiliro said.

Adoption of the plan came just over a week before last Thursday's

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Mt. Kisco Weighs Restrictions on Gas-Powered Landscaping Equipment

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be to discourage the use of the two-stroke machines and encourage more residents to opt for the machines with four-stroke engines or electric blowers, Grunthal said. Leaf blowers with two-stroke engines average at least 80 decibels, compared to about 70 decibels for four-stroke engines, which do not burn oil, and 60 decibels for electric blowers.

Under the plan introduced last week, all types of gas-powered machines would be allowed from Oct. 1 through Apr. 30. They would be operated Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Their use for the remainder of Saturday and Sunday would be prohibited.

Use of two-stroke machines, which include oil along with gas that makes them cause greater pollution, would no longer be permissible for residents after Dec. 31, 2024. The village government and schools would have to phase out their use by Dec.

31, 2026.

Additionally, no residential property could have more than two machines operating at one time.

Grunthal said that with Mount Kisco having many residential properties smaller than most other communities in northern Westchester, it's imperative that the village places limits on the noise-producing and unhealthy equipment. The village's generally smaller lots should also make the use of electric leaf blowers more practical than in towns with much larger properties.

"I'm introducing it because the noise from leaf blowers is basically intolerable," Grunthal said. "If you're sitting at home, not only in your yard but inside your home with the doors and windows shut, you can still hear these machines and you can hear them at such a high volume that they can distract you from everything else."

Fines for the first offense would be \$25, increasing sharply to \$500 for the second offense and \$1,000 for the third and each

subsequent offense, Burgler said.

Other village officials agreed that there should be regulations enacted to curtail the noise and air pollution created by gas-powered landscaping equipment, but suggested revisions to the proposal presented last week.

"I think the legislation is a wonderful idea and very well-needed," said Trustee David Squirrell. "I do think it needs to be tweaked here and there, and I fully support the exception for the individual homeowner who is using a lawn mower."

Mayor Gina Picinich said she realizes a need to regulate leaf blowers in particular, but would like to see some modifications to hours and dates. Homeowners should have a greater chance to care for their property when they get home from work in the late afternoon and for more hours on the weekend. She also said the May 1 to Sept. 30 prohibition could start later.

"That limits an individual property owner's ability to do their yard work after 5

when they get home from work or anytime they choose to on a Saturday or Sunday," Picinich said.

Other suggestions came from Village Manager Ed Brancati who said the board could consider tying the use of the equipment to the village's noise ordinance. It may also need to make a distinction for the various condominium and co-op complexes that use commercial landscapers.

Village Attorney Whitney Singleton recommended to the board to keep the law as simple as possible. If there are too many exceptions and distinctions between the types of engines, for example, enforcement would be difficult.

"I think restricting or even prohibiting gas-powered leaf blowers, something very clean, is appropriate and enforceable," Singleton said.

Grunthal and Burgler said they would work on the proposal and return to the board with revisions at a future meeting.

Minimal Tax Increase Proposed in P'ville's \$22.4M Budget for 2021-22

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current year due to a projected decline in tax certioraris.

Another \$3.9 million is being allocated to public safety, which includes building code enforcement, police patrol, crossing guards, detective divisions and parking enforcement. Last year's budget included the hiring of one additional officer but the position was never filled because of fiscal uncertainties.

Morrissey said that the village recently received approval from the county Human Resources Department to hire two new officers in the near future. This will raise next year's allocation for uniformed officers to \$1.8 million.

Department of Public Works funding is expected to remain at \$1.5 million for the upcoming year. There will be significant upgrades at the Clinton Street Senior Center, including installation of an emergency generator and replacing the compressor for a walk-in refrigerator, costing about \$460,000. Those costs will be offset by money from a Community Development Block Grant, Morrissey said.

Village parks, recreation and library saw a decrease of about \$500,000 due to COVID restrictions. The total amount from the proposed budget allocated for these departments is \$2.8 million. The Panther Club is set to receive \$441,960; the amount has been rolled back because of expected COVID-19-related restrictions. Projections are the village will lose money on its day camp because of restrictions on enrollment. About \$202,000 is being allocated to the camp.

The village refuse fund is \$418,004 with the current rate for a single-family unit of \$479.67 to be increased to \$481.12. The proposed budget for the water fund is \$3.6 million. Water rates will remain the same for village residents as will the non-residents' district rate and non-resident out-of-district rate. There will be a separate bulk rate for Pace University.

Employee benefits are estimated to consume about \$4.5 million, which includes pension contributions, social

security, Medicare, workers compensation, unemployment and health insurance. Capital planning and equipment includes road resurfacing at \$200,000, \$50,000 on sidewalks and a new sanitation truck costing about \$85,000.

The village has realized a significant reduction in parking revenues, standing at about \$259,000 last month, below the budgeted \$413,000 for the current fiscal year but that didn't seem to make a huge impact on village funds. It is budgeting \$289,600 in

parking revenues for 2021-22.

"To say this has been a challenging year from a budget perspective is an understatement," Morrissey said. "We are still realizing the impacts of COVID. Overall, the village fared very well when looking comparatively at other municipalities in Westchester. It's because we are not reliant on any one revenue source outside of our real estate taxes."

Also, village property owners made investments, which saw building permit

fees increase about \$200,000. That number includes fees from the 70 Memorial Plaza development under construction and the approved residential project at 52 Depew St.

Pleasantville is to receive about \$800,000 in American Rescue Plan funds from the federal government to be received in two separate installments.

A public hearing for the tentative 2021-22 budget is scheduled for next Monday, Apr. 12 at 8 p.m.

No. Castle Police Reform Plan Makes Wide-Ranging Recommendations

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deadline for submission to the state following Gov. Andrew Cuomo's executive order last June. The order mandates that all municipalities with police departments complete a reform blueprint that eliminated racial inequities and better serve the communities and residents.

The stakeholder's group's focus on transparency centered on improving communication and accessibility. On its personnel evaluation policy, for example, it recommended making public the metrics that employees are being evaluated on so residents understand the standards that are used, provide for additional police officer training in areas where performance is poor and ensure complaints made against an officer are considered during the evaluation process.

Another suggestion was to make sure a personnel complaint can be easily completed. The department should add an online option for residents, according to the report, for easier accessibility as well as to consider other ways for the public to file a complaint. There could also be a procedure created to allow an individual to follow up or track a complaint remotely.

The stakeholder's group called on the department to include the definition of use of force in its Use of Force and Injury Investigations Policy.

Regarding communication, the group recommended posting a wider variety of information on social media platforms and to have a greater number of platforms to get information out to the public more effectively. It also suggested publishing the police blotter on the department's website and to send it out in a weekly e-mail. In the event the chief of police denies access to information, there should also be an appeals process.

For training, the group's report called for the use of body cameras to be explored by the end of this year. In last fall's 2021 budget presentation, Chief Peter Simonsen had requested funding for body cameras.

While the department participates in implicit bias training with the Division of Criminal Justice Services, it should ensure that it includes diversity in role-playing and live scenarios should be utilized.

Another recommendation was for officers to receive a robust peer support program, including where they can talk to one another and to experts about their experiences and the effects of police work on their mental health; additional training for officers on how to take care of themselves and address their mental and physical health; consider developing a wellness program for police officers; provide them with information concerning where they can receive support services; and consider designating two

department members as points of contact for officers who need assistance.

While 21 of the department's 32 officers are trained emergency medical technicians, the stakeholders stated that number should increase.

Making additions and clarifications in the use of force policy could help increase police officer accountability.

The Community Engagement Subcommittee asked that the department look for ways to include additional interaction with the public, such as adding a drug take-back box at the North White Plains Community Center.

Simonsen said he was pleased to work with the stakeholder's group who's members took their role seriously and made outstanding recommendations.

"As you can see, this was an extensive and a very thorough process," Simonsen said. "The stakeholders dug deep into everything and you can see that reflected in their recommendations."

Most of the recommendations are asked to be in place by the end of this year, except for the body cameras. If deemed necessary those could be implemented by the end of 2022.

The entire 18-page report can be viewed at https://www.northcastleny.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3581/f/uploads/adopted_police_reform_reinvention_plan_3-24-21.pdf

W'chester Investigates Reports of Pharmacies Charging for COVID Shots

By Martin Wilbur

Westchester County is investigating multiple reports of pharmacies in northern Westchester who have charged recipients for receiving one of the COVID-19 vaccines.

County Executive George Latimer said there have been the allegations revolve around members of the public being charged a \$20 out-of-pocket cost for the vaccine. He did not divulge the pharmacy or pharmacies that are the subject of an inquiry.

Latimer stressed there is never any cost for COVID-19 vaccines to anyone regardless of insurance coverage. If a person paid for a vaccine or was asked to pay any amount for a shot without receiving any other service, then that location should be reported to the county Department of Health.

"You don't get to take this pandemic and try to make money off of it or try to make some other point you want to make," Latimer said. "We're here to try and make people feel as comfortable as we can in what is an uncomfortable situation, which is getting vaccinated. It's not something we do, except that we have to do it and we don't want any complications along the way."

If there are any offenders, they would be reported to the state, which has the authority to crack down on the entity, including fines or being cut off from future shipments of doses.

COVID Case Counts Persist

Last week, Westchester health officials stressed the need for the public to continue to take precautions in hopes of warding COVID-19 infections, that have been steady or rising during the past few weeks.

Despite the increasing number of vaccinations across the county, Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler, along with Deputy Commissioner Peter DeLucia, urged residents to wear masks, social distance, wash hands, get tested if feeling symptomatic or believe they've been exposed and adhere to public health guidance regarding gathering limits. She also emphasized residents to sign up and receive any of the three available vaccines as soon as possible.

"Where this pandemic goes and what happens in our county is really up to each and every one of us individually," Amler said. "We all have responsibility for our health and we have responsibility for those around us, those who we care about, those we work with, and so we need to do our part in trying to keep the case count down."

Latimer reported that as of Sunday the active case count had edged up to 5,944, which has been nearly constant for much of the last month. The active cases, which had been up to more than 11,000 in mid-January, fell steadily for near two months, down to 5,233 cases countywide on Mar. 15.

He said the numbers bear close watching, even as the COVID-19-related hospitalizations remain relatively constant or are slightly dropping and the daily fatality count has dropped into the low single digits. As of last Saturday, COVID hospitalizations dipped to 238.

Last week there were 24 deaths linked to the virus in Westchester.

Latimer suggested that with an increasing percentage of county residents having been fully vaccinated is up to nearly 30 percent,

the health consequences of the virus for many have diminished.

"We'll have to see what that looks like over the next seven days and try to make judgments based on what the numbers tell us," he said. "There's always the fear that we're seeing another reignition of the virus that we have here, and so many of us are at the point of pandemic fatigue, where we don't want to wear the masks."

On Sunday, the Mid-Hudson region continued to have the highest positivity rate in the state, at 4.8 percent, edging out Long Island and Western New York at 4.4 percent each and New York City at 4.3 percent. Sunday's positivity rate was 3.6 percent in Westchester County, 4.8 percent in Putnam

and 5.1 percent in Rockland.

Putnam County as of last Friday had 228 active cases and 10 hospitalizations from COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic it has seen 90 residents succumb to the virus.

As of Monday, there have been about 225,000 doses of one of the three vaccines distributed at the County Center, the Yonkers Armory and the two county Health Department clinics in White Plains and at Westchester Community College.

Amler emphasized that gatherings must be limited to 10 people if indoors and 25



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

people if held exclusively outdoors. Amler urged anyone planning to attend a social gathering to get tested in advance so they are aware of their status.

Also, even if you've been fully vaccinated for COVID-19, continue to wear masks.

"I'm asking you to please help me, help the county executive, help your neighbors, help your family and to help stop the spread of this disease, that we can get to a point where we can have large gatherings and we don't have to wear a mask," Amler said. "That's the goal we're all trying to reach."

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Pace University to Return to a Full In-Person Schedule for the Fall

By Martin Wilbur

Pace University is planning a full return to campus for the fall semester with full in-person classes, activities and events at all three of its campuses, including Pleasantville and White Plains.

In announcing a return to a more traditional campus experience, Pace University President Marvin Krislov Thursday expressed gratitude for all of the hard work, dedication and resilience of students, faculty and staff who have worked through the global pandemic. He said that the decision to fully re-open campuses for in-person learning is being guided by federal, state and local public health guidelines.

"I'm very much looking forward to seeing all our students and faculty in person for the Fall 2021 semester, and seeing our campuses bustling again," Krislov said. "I've been impressed at how well the students, faculty and staff have adapted and succeeded through the last year of (the) pandemic, but I'll be even more pleased to see us all back to something close to normal Pace University life."

At the onset of the pandemic last spring, Pace quickly pivoted to remote learning. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued through the year and into 2021, the university adapted its operations with a combination of in-person learning, remote classes and hybrid options – all while adhering to the



Pace University announced last Thursday it plans to resume full in-person learning in the fall, although there will still be remote and hybrid options for students.

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most stringent safety protocols such as regular cleanings and disinfection; social distancing and mask wearing; and routine and consistent testing and monitoring aimed at keeping the campus community safe.

As Pace returns to as close to a normal and traditional college experience, many safety precautions will be kept in place while paying close attention to public health guidance – all with a goal of providing students a safe environment to pursue their education. There will also be online and hybrid course options. Additionally, New York State recently announced that universal eligibility

for vaccinations – including those 16 and older – would be effective starting Apr. 6.

"For so many students and faculty, campus life is an integral part of the college experience, which is why we are eager to return to a more traditional college environment," said Pace Provost Vanya Quiñones. "The lessons we've learned during the pandemic showed how adaptable we are as a community. We will use those lessons to complement our traditional experience, but I'm excited for a return to normal and seeing a vibrant campus."

FOMO

(Fear of Missing Out)

FOMO refers to the apprehension that one is either not in the know or missing out on information, events, experiences, or decisions that could make one's life better. FOMO could result from not knowing about a conversation, missing a T.V. show, not attending a wedding or party, or hearing that others have discovered a new restaurant.

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Advocates Applaud State's Marijuana Passage, Police Have Concerns

By Martin Wilbur

The state legislature's approval of the use of recreational marijuana for adults 21 and over last week was hailed by progressives throughout New York but was widely criticized by police for failure to consider public safety.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act into law last Wednesday, a day after the Senate approved the measure 40-23. The Assembly overwhelmingly approved the legislation 100-49. Its passage came after the third year of intense debate.

New York becomes the 16th state, along with the District of Columbia, to legalize recreational marijuana. It is likely that retail sales of marijuana will not occur until sometime later in 2022 after an office of cannabis management is established.

State Sen. Peter Harkham (D-Lewisboro) said the estimated \$350 million that will eventually be derived by the state from legalizing marijuana will be used for drug treatment and public education. The bill also contains community protections, including helping police with advanced roadside impaired driver enforcement training to evaluate methodologies and technologies for the detection of cannabis-impaired driving, according to the bill.

Harkham said 40 percent of the revenue derived from the industry will be used for education, 20 percent toward substance use disorder treatment and 40 percent for economic development in disenfranchised

communities.

Many of the concerns that had been raised by stakeholder groups throughout the Senate district and the state are addressed in the bill, including giving communities the ability to opt out of retail sales, he said. Up to three ounces of cannabis and 24 grams of concentrated cannabis is permitted under the law.

"This is a very thoughtful bill and one of the advantages of going last as a state is that we've learned from other states' mistakes," Harkham said. "You wanted it taken out of the budget and slowed down, we did it. It's been a three-year process, a very thoughtful bill, and this will be the most thoughtful bill in the nation."

Others saw it as the completion of victory for social justice that had begun with the substance's decriminalization a couple of years ago followed by the passage of the law last week. Melissa Moore, New York State director of the Drug Policy Alliance, said the law addresses the harms of overcriminalization and establishes one of the most ambitious marijuana legalization programs in the nation.

"Through this sweeping legislation, New York is delivering reforms that place community reinvestment, social equity and justice at the core of the law," Moore said. "At long last, victory is here."

However, many police chiefs and law enforcement organizations see it differently. A couple of local chiefs who weighed in on the issue stated that there is currently no test that can administered on the spot to help determine an officer's suspicions.



Mount Pleasant Police Chief Paul Oliva, formerly a president of the Westchester County Chiefs of Police Association, said the lack of a roadside test, similar to a blood-alcohol test, will present a problem for officers who suspect a motorist is driving impaired with marijuana.

Mount Pleasant Police Chief Paul Oliva, a past president of the Westchester County Chiefs of Police Association, said he and his colleagues have deep concerns about public safety, in particular safety on the roads. Officers will be in the uncomfortable situation of trying to assess whether a driver is operating a vehicle without a definitive test of such as the blood-alcohol readings for liquor, Oliva said.

With alcohol, a reading of .08 means that you're driving under the influence.

"The fact that there's no roadside test available at this point – I know that they're experimenting with saliva – but there's no real roadside test and/or definitive levels set by the legislature as to a level of intoxication for being under the influence of marijuana," said Oliva.

That's particularly important, he said,

because the potency of much of the THC today, whether sold legally or illegally, is generally many times greater.

Pleasantville Police Chief Erik Grutzner said while police aren't concerned about what people do in their own homes, there are going to be instances where residents consume marijuana at home and head out onto the roads.

"I don't think anybody believes that the legalization of marijuana is going to keep marijuana in people's homes," Grutzner said. "They're still going to end up on the streets and interacting with people and end up in people's hands. It seems like we put the cart before the horse on this and decided to legalize this before we can really prepare for what all the consequences might be."

State Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) had indicated over the past two years that she has concerns along with parents and law enforcement but that the law addresses many of those issue. However, officials will have to remain on top of the issue.

"Our existing policies surrounding marijuana have failed to live up to commitments," Mayer said in a statement. "They have not protected our young people or curtailed youth marijuana usage. Rather, they have generated a readily available illicit market that places young people at increased risk – both from dangerous, uncontrolled substances and from disparate law enforcement efforts – that have left too many, particularly young people of color, with criminal records that exclude them from student loans, employment and other opportunities."

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North Castle to Conduct Library Survey Starting This Week

By Martin Wilbur

North Castle residents will be asked to participate in a library survey starting this week to assess the long-term needs of the facilities and serve the public effectively in the future.

About every 10 years the library reaches out to residents for feedback, and the most recent long-term plan expired last year, said Library Director Edie Martimucci. She said that with the residents that use the libraries having to participate virtually over the last

year, it's an appropriate time to evaluate not only the programs and buildings but the databases and downloadable materials that the North Castle Public Library has available.

"So this was an ideal time to really get a good evaluation as to what people, what they saw, what they would like to see and a different way to use their library," Martimucci said. "I think the input's really important because it will tell us what direction we can spend our time developing and spend the resources accordingly."

A couple of weeks ago Martimucci and the

Library Board of Trustees unveiled a sample survey to the Town Board to inspect. The 14-question survey asks the public what library programs and materials they use, what they would like to see and their impressions of various services offered online and at the two branches in Armonk and North White Plains.

Supervisor Michael Schiliro said the survey was scheduled to be available as soon as this Wednesday. It will be on the library's website. Officials have planned to notify the public through the mail to look online for the

survey, although there are no plans to mail the survey, said Library Board President Scott Stopnik.

Stopnik said the survey is the best chance to obtain the information needed to understand what the community expects from its local library. Even when the library reopens fully when the pandemic is under control, the changes that have been made, particularly to technology, virtual platforms and e-books, will almost certainly still be sought, he said.

"This is kind of our census for our community in terms of our libraries," Stopnik said.

Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto commended Stopnik and Martimucci for the focus of the sample survey by keying in on important topics in hopes of getting critical information that will be useful for long-term library planning.

"I think it's a great survey," DiGiacinto said. "I think it's easy, as Scott has maintained, that someone isn't going to want to take a look at the questions and say 'I think you're going to get the responses that you're hoping to receive.' It's the simplicity that is really very important for people to respond."

Schiliro compared the effort to most other town, departments, committees and boards, such as Parks & Recreation, that typically reassess their direction at various intervals. By seeking that information, the town learns more about its residents and the needs of the community in order to best serve the public, he said.

Revision Made to Summit Club's Residential Golf Community Plan

By Martin Wilbur

The partners proposing a luxury condominium project at an Armonk golf course have eliminated one of seven buildings and will include most of the units in the six other structures planned for the site.

The Summit Club, formerly known as the Brynwood Golf & Country Club on Bedford Road, is still proposing 72 or 73 units, but the six buildings will now contain 12 units each, said Rich Granoff, the project architect. He said there is a possibility that one of the buildings could have a 13th unit if it turns out to be feasible.

At a previous meeting earlier this year, some North Castle Planning Board

members remarked how the seventh building appeared to be awkwardly placed and expressed concern that the views of the vista from the units could be blocked by the six other structures that were placed in a row in a slightly curved arrangement on the residential parcel.

"We feel that this is a positive move for all kinds of reasons and we hope that you look at it the same way," Granoff said.

Partner Jeffrey Mendell explained that there were some engineering and landscaping challenges that would have been incurred with the seventh building, so the decision was made to abandon that design.

Board Chairman Chris Carthy said it was a strong move to avoid those challenges,

adding that the modified plan appears more aesthetically pleasing.

The Summit Club has obtained approvals to house temporary structures on the grounds to operate the golf course for this season and next year. The front nine of the redesigned course is expected to open sometime this month, followed by the back nine shortly after.

Mendell said the course will be served by a trailer that will be home to the pro shop and the membership director. Adjacent to that will be a patio with food and beverage service with fire pits and music. Membership will be capped at 300 for the golf course of the next two years.

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Putnam Reaches 30,000 Residents Vaccinated, Officials Say

Putnam County reported last week that more than 30,000 residents have been vaccinated and officials, along with the majority of residents, hope the momentum of mass vaccination continues.

On Apr. 6, eligibility expands to include any resident at least 16 years old. This expansion comes a week after the age eligibility was lowered to 30.

Residents under 18 should be sure to schedule an appointment with a provider that has received the Pfizer vaccine, which is approved for ages 16 and up. Moderna and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have earned FDA approval for 18 and over only.

"Vaccination is our path to recovery for ourselves, our family and friends, our businesses and our community," said County Executive MaryEllen Odell, who recently received her COVID vaccine at a Putnam County Department of Health clinic in Brewster. "It is no secret that this pandemic has taken its toll, not just in terms of illness and death, but also with grave effects for our mental health and well-being, and an enormous toll on our livelihood and our business community. The fastest route to a full recovery is with high numbers of people getting vaccinated."

Health Commissioner Dr. Michael J. Nesheiwat said it is also promising that results from Pfizer's recent study show the vaccine is safe and effective for children age 12 and up.

"Share your vaccine story. Hearing about a smooth and safe vaccination appointment

can help friends and family members see that the overall experience, which may include some mild side effects, is well worth the expected outcome – personal health and a pathway to an even better normal," he said.

Studies have shown that people are strongly influenced by health advice from family and friends. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, trusted friends and family members are the second most valued source of health information for Americans after consulting a health professional.

Michael Piazza, commissioner of social services and mental health, highlighted the effects on residents' emotional well-being and mental health.

"The local mental health community

remains concerned about the number of people experiencing anxiety and depression as a result of the pandemic," Piazza said. "The continued use of alcohol and other drugs, especially opiates, is also of great concern. Given that the COVID pandemic has now lasted more than a year, this is not unexpected. Widespread vaccination and what is called herd immunity can have a clear impact on improving all of these conditions."

Myths, rumors and misinformation circulate widely via social media and other less reputable sources, and all of these add to the stress and anxiety levels in a community. Anti-vaxxers in particular have found an easy, far-reaching platform on social media networking sites for dispersing many of

these untruths.

"Two of the most common suspicions I have heard raised in the early questions about the vaccines relate to their high rate of efficacy and the speed with which they were developed," Nesheiwat said. "Both these positive facts are related to the mRNA technology used to develop the two-dose vaccines. The truth is that this way of creating a vaccine has been studied for over a decade and has been used in highly successful cancer vaccines being developed and studied. And when the pandemic began, the scientific community foresaw the dangers ahead and pulled out all stops to develop a safe vaccine."

Mt. Kisco DPW Foreman Arrested; Placed on Leave of Absence

By Martin Wilbur

Mount Kisco DPW General Foreman Joe Luppino was placed on a paid leave of absence Monday two days after he was arrested by Westchester County police on a misdemeanor charge.

Police reported that Luppino, 49, of West Street turned himself in on Saturday to a detective at the Green Street precinct following an investigation into a complaint that he left a threatening voicemail message in connection with a personal matter. The matter is unrelated to village business, according to police.

Mayor Gina Picinich confirmed late Monday afternoon that on the advice of labor counsel he has been placed on paid leave. She said that no one should draw any conclusions about whether the turn of events is related.

There is no time frame for how long Luppino's absence may last, she said.

Mike Corsi was named acting general foreman of the department.

"I think the most important thing for the people of the community to know and understand is that DPW operations completely and totally uninterrupted," Picinich said. "There will be no changes

in service."

Luppino said Monday that the arrest is related to a personal matter with his wife, Sharon. The couple has been separated. He said the alleged incident that his arrest is based on dates back to last summer.

"I was told that I was being arrested for a complaint from an action in July," said Luppino, who said he was told he would be out until the investigation is complete.

Police said Luppino was released on his own recognizance pending a future court date.

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Police Blotter

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Mar. 16: A caller reported at 10:45 a.m. that her adult son just assaulted her and left her Maple Street residence. She provided a description of her son to the desk officer and stated he was possibly carrying a knife. Patrols were dispatched and reported the suspect was in custody a short while later. Croton EMS responded and transported the assault victim to the hospital. The defendant was charged with third-degree assault and criminal obstruction of breathing.

Mar. 16: A Van Wyck Street resident reported at 1:43 p.m. that her wallet was taken from her unlocked car in the Van Wyck Shopping Center on Mar. 13. She stated her vehicle, a blue Toyota RAV4, was parked in the first row of spaces by the post office.

Mar. 17: A Wells Avenue resident reported at 11:34 a.m. being scammed out of \$42,500 by an unknown person via the internet. He stated he was contacted by whom he thought was Microsoft regarding possible fraud on his computer, and in the course of speaking with the unknown person, he was told he would need to wire money to an account in Thailand. The victim went to his bank in Ossining and wired the money from his personal account.

North Castle Police Department

Mar. 26: A caller reported at 4:57 p.m. that a tree fell onto power wires causing a brush

fire in the area of 66 Windmill Rd. The call was transferred to 60 Control. The responding officer reported that the fire department was able to extinguish the blaze and will remain on the scene for Con Edison to arrive.

Mar. 27: A complainant reported at 5:42 p.m. that a nearby neighbor on Bonnie Hill Lane has multiple hot rods, which she reports are very loud and causing a significant disturbance when operated. While speaking to the complainant, the responding officer observed one of the associated vehicles being operated erratically and subsequently conducted a traffic stop.

Yorktown Police Department

Mar. 30: Jonathan Marinello, 25, of Pleasantville, was charged with driving while intoxicated after being pulled over on Route 6 at 9:40 p.m. for failing to stop at a red light.

Mar. 30: Jason Goldberg, 28, of Yorktown, was charged with first-degree assault, a Class B felony, at 11:55 p.m. after police received a report from Northern Westchester Hospital that a victim had arrived to be treated for a stab wound. An investigation revealed Goldberg and the victim became engaged in a physical altercation outside a Yorktown residence, which led to the victim being stabbed in the abdomen with a knife. The injury was not considered life-threatening. Goldberg was remanded to Westchester County Jail after being unable to post \$25,000 cash or \$50,000 bond bail set by Yorktown Justice Sal Lagonia.

Mar. 31: Luke Marji, 34, of Yonkers, was charged at 12:25 p.m. with four counts of

third-degree assault, two counts of criminal obstruction of breathing and six counts of endangering the welfare of a child in connection with a reported past domestic dispute. An investigation revealed that between Mar. 16, 2020, and May 22, 2020, Marji punched and kicked the victim and applied pressure to the victim's throat in front of a child less than 17 years old.

Obituary

Molly Sikorski

Molly Byrne Sikorski died peacefully on Mar. 26 with family around her. She was 89.

Born in Chicago on Aug. 9, 1931, she was the second of eight children of Mary Margaret (Farrell) and Emmet Francis Byrne.

A fast runner and a good swimmer as a child, Molly contracted polio at age 10, which weakened her left arm but never hindered her activities nor her willingness to try. With her strong and lifelong belief in education as motivation, she completed high school in three years and matriculated at Trinity College in Washington, D.C. at age 17, where she earned a degree in mathematics.

After several less satisfying post-college jobs, Molly joined IBM as a system service girl, early programmers who "wired" boards in computers. It was at IBM training that she met the love of her life, Tom Sikorski, while sharing a copy of her "80 column punch card deck" during a training class. They were married Apr. 4, 1959.

Molly and Tom devoted their 33-year marriage to family, their children in particular. Her first priority was raising Jane, Tom Jr. and John. She and her husband were a team who enjoyed travel, golf, tennis and paddle tennis, along with entertaining friends and family. They organized menus and prepared delicious meals for large family reunions, children's sports teams and tailgates. Sadly, Tom passed away too soon, shortly after his retirement in 1992 as they were planning a new life chapter at Jonathan's Landing in Jupiter, Fla.

Though heartbroken, Molly bravely set out on her own. Jonathan's Landing became a new happy place, first seasonally and ultimately as her permanent and sole home. She was embraced by the community where she was

Apr. 1: Pamela Audu, 23, of Yorktown, was charged with third-degree assault, harassment and resisting arrest at 9:01 p.m. following a domestic dispute. An investigation revealed Audu allegedly caused physical injury to a victim by punching and kicking and attempted to injure two others. She also allegedly spit in the face of an officer while being taken into custody.

an avid golfer, played bridge, enjoyed water aerobics and connected with many. A favorite evening adventure was a nighttime walk around the Crosswinds circle with visiting grandchildren, always including Oreos for all.

Molly was an early member of the Twigs of Northern Westchester Hospital, and as the children grew older, she worked at what were fondly known as "Molly's fun jobs," including tax preparation at H&R Block, retail sales positions at Skinners for Sports and at the Horace Greeley House in Chappaqua. Her final and favorite employment was at the Second Story Book Shop. An avid reader, she enjoyed recommending wonderful books to clients, friends and family members.

She is survived by daughter, Jane, and her husband, Angelo Santinelli, their children Caroline, Tom and Maggie and her fiancé, Craig Calhoun; son Tom and his wife, Helena, and their children Thomas and Merete; and son John and his wife, Linda, and son Johnny. She is also survived by two sisters, Pat Williams (husband Bob) and Lyn Kern (husband Bob); brother Duke Byrne (wife Kathie); and numerous nieces and nephews and their spouses.

Arrangements were made by Beecher Flocks Funeral Home in Pleasantville. She will be laid to rest next to her beloved Tom at a private burial for immediate family. Plans for a memorial celebration of her life are being considered for a future date.

Memorials to Jonathan's Landing Cares, 16823 Captain Kirlle Drive, Jupiter, Fla. 33477 are appreciated.

Her positivity and determination will be missed by all.

Mount Kisco Expands Tree Art Project

Mount Kisco's popular Arbor Day My Favorite Tree Art Project is now open to all youngsters under age 18. There is no entry fee. The deadline for submitting entries is next Thursday, Apr. 15.

"We have opened up the exhibition to all students in the Bedford Central School District (BCSD)," said Shonan Noronha, one of the event organizers. "This year, we're also accepting sculpture and musical creations. Young artists are encouraged to express their love for trees in painting, drawing, sculpture, essay, poetry, or song."

Submissions will be evaluated in three age groups: age 6 and under, ages 7-12 and ages 13-18. Selected entries will receive an award from Mayor Gina Picinich at the Arbor Day Celebration in Leonard Park on Saturday, May 1. All works of art will be displayed in Village

Hall this summer and in an online gallery.

"Mount Kisco has thousands of beautiful trees, and a wealth of walking trails and parks. The work of young artists can help us all to appreciate these treasures with new eyes and ears," said John Rhodes, chairman of the Mount Kisco Conservation Advisory Council and member of the village's Tree Preservation Board, which co-sponsors the Tree Art Project.

Entries or questions should be sent to MKArborDay@gmail.com. Participants, parents, teachers or other helpers should photograph or scan the painting or other work of art and send it by e-mail with the artist's name and age in the message area. Entries in the writing category should be e-mailed as well, and a link to song recordings can be sent to the same address.

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County, Local Races Take Shape for General Election

By Martin Wilbur

The races involving major party candidates for several county and local elections are set for this fall in Westchester with the deadline for filing petitions having passed on Mar. 25.

In a contest for the Board of Legislators, the District 2 race will feature Democrat Erika Pierce of Katonah will be taking on Somers Republican Gina Arena in November. Arena ran unsuccessfully two years ago against Legislator Kitley Covill, who has decided against running for a third term. The district also includes Mount Kisco, a portion of Somers and nearly all of the northeastern portion of the county.

County Legislator Vedat Gashi (D-Yorktown), who also has the Working Families line, has competition in his re-election bid in District 4. He will be opposed by Republican and Conservative Party candidate Robert S. Brower Jr. of Somers. The district takes in much of Yorktown, New Castle and a portion of Somers.

In District 3, Pleasantville Trustee David Vinjamuri had already announced he will be taking on incumbent Margaret Cunzio (C-Mount Pleasant) in the fall. The district includes predominantly Mount Pleasant and North Castle.

There will also be a contested Town Board race in North Castle. While Supervisor Michael Schiliro will have no Republican competitor in November for



Holly McCall and Lisa Katz will face off in a Democratic primary in June for the party's nomination for New Castle supervisor. There will also be a primary for each of the three Town Board seats.

a fifth term, incumbent council members Barbara DiGiacinto, a Republican, and Democrat Barry Reiter will be joined on the ballot by Republican challenger Matthew Milim.

In another development, longtime Byram Hills Board of Education trustee Ira Schulman, the current president, is running for North Castle town justice on the Democratic line against incumbent Douglas Martino.

As reported last month, the Town



of New Castle will have a Democratic primary this June. Councilwoman Lisa Katz will be taking on outgoing Chappaqua Board of Education Trustee Holly McCall. Meanwhile, four Democrats, party-endorsed candidates Lori Morton and Michael Weinberg will be up against Andrea Sanseverion Galan and Tara McAdam Kassel. In the race for the unexpired term on the board, Jennifer Bounds, endorsed by the town's Democratic Committee, will be up against Jennifer Louis-Jeune.

Katz, Galan, Kassel and Louis-Jeune announced in February that they would also be seeking entry on an independent line they named Unite New Castle. Independent line candidates must submit a petition between May 18 and May 25 to appear on the general election ballot, according to the Westchester County Board of Elections.

The only candidates to file their petitions in Mount Kisco are Mayor Gina Picinich and trustee candidates Ann Bianchi and Karine Patino, all Democrats. Trustee Anthony Markus is running for town justice and Trustee David Squirrel chose not to seek re-election.

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Putnam County to Honor Veterans Again This Year With Row of Honor

As Putnam County plans the upcoming Row of Honor to line the shore of Lake Gleneida in Carmel, County Executive MaryEllen Odell extends her appreciation to the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), whose stewardship of the lake has kept it pristine.

The DEP owns Lake Gleneida and the surrounding shoreline, which are part of the city's vast reservoir system.

"I want to thank the DEP for working together with the county to keep Lake Gleneida beautiful," Odell said. "The lake is the centerpiece of the Town of Carmel, and its shoreline is home to our twice-yearly Row of Honor salute to veterans and other celebrations that bring our community together. For those reasons, and the fact that it is part of the New York City watershed, we must all protect Lake Gleneida and treat it with care."

Legislator Carl Albano, whose district includes the hamlet of Carmel, agreed that the lake is a jewel that must be preserved.

"I look forward to the spring and seeing the trees trimmed on the shores of Lake Gleneida," Albano said. "Every season brings something new at the lake."

This year, the Row of Honor that lines the lakefront every Memorial Day and Veterans Day will feature at least 550 flags as memorials to veterans, the most since the



tradition was started nearly a decade ago. The flags, sold for \$100 to those who want to recognize a veteran, are flown every year.

"Each year the number goes up, as more and more people want to recognize those who have served their country," said Karl Rohde, director of the Putnam County Veterans Services Agency. "I know there will be more than 523 flags, because when I served in Vietnam, I served in the 523rd Signal Battalion and so I bought flag number 523 to honor those I served with."

Rohde said the county and the Putnam County Joint Veterans Council are also busy planning for the return of the Vietnam Travelling Memorial Wall, which will come to Putnam for a fifth time in the fall of 2022.

FEMA to Offer Assistance for COVID-19-Related Funeral Expenses

Beginning this month, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be providing financial assistance for funeral expenses of up to \$9,000 incurred after Jan. 20, 2020, as a result of deaths that were related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funding is made possible by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 as well as the American Rescue Act of 2021. Individuals who wish to receive assistance must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals or qualified aliens. The death must have occurred in the United States after Jan. 20, 2020, and must have been attributed to the COVID-19 virus as stated by the death certificate.

"It's difficult enough for families to deal with the emotional repercussions of losing someone in the midst of a pandemic," said Matthew Fiorillo, owner of Ballard-Durand Funeral & Cremation Services. "Add to that the financial toll of unexpectedly having to pay for services, and you are placing an enormous burden on families who lost a loved one to the virus."

Applicants must be able to supply a variety of official documents in order to receive aid, including but not limited to a death certificate and funeral expense documents such as receipts and contracts,

as well as proof of funds received from other sources that were specifically used for funeral costs.

Application appointments will be conducted over the phone with a FEMA representative. Those found eligible will be able to receive their assistance via a check by mail or direct deposit. Funds are limited, so applications should be submitted as soon as possible.

Though, of course, this small gift cannot replace the loved one who was lost or assuage the grief left behind, FEMA hopes that this initiative will lift some of the financial burden caused by the pandemic. The government agency continues to look for ways that it can support the nation following this extremely challenging time.

"We were all affected by this virus, directly or indirectly," said Joseph Schuka, funeral director at Libby Funeral & Cremation Services. "In the funeral profession, we're used to seeing families in crisis, but this was something different. No one was prepared to deal with this level of tragedy, and we're just glad to see that measures are being taken to help one another get through it."

For more information about the assistance being offered and how to apply for it, visit ballarddurand.com/fema/ or fema.gov.

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Mount Kisco to Refurbish Early 20th Century Downtown Statue

By Martin Wilbur

A more than century-old Mount Kisco statue will receive a makeover this year as the Village Board and a municipal committee are committed to making the investment for its refurbishment.

The D.F. Gorham Memorial Fountain, known more widely as Chief Kisco located at Jeff Feigl Square near the village's American Legion post, will be temporarily removed from its base later this month and taken to a New York City artisan to be repaired and repainted, said Laurie Kimsal, a member of the village's Landmark and Historical Preservation Committee.

It was dedicated on Sept. 7, 1907, and stood for the next 18 years near the intersection of Main Street and Moger Avenue, until it was hit by a truck in 1925, Kimsal said. After repairs it was moved to its current location in 1927, she said.

David Fletcher Gorham, a successful local businessman, bought one of an undetermined number of Indian chief statues from a catalogue, Kimsal said. It was made by J.L. Mott Ironworks in New York City. The pedestal and fountain were likely produced by Gorham's marble and granite business in the village, she said.

Kimsal said at the time, statues reflected growing urbanization, and public artwork signified that a community was gaining in importance.

Over the years the statue has been painted repeatedly – the last time in 2003 – she said, but the chief has fallen into

disrepair since then.

"Now 18 years later it is in very poor condition, which you can notice even by driving by without even taking a real close look," Kimsal said. "So why I'm here today is we need to restore this statue that has become a symbol of our town."

The project, including signage, would cost \$19,575 – \$16,075 for the repairs to the statue and \$3,500 for the signs, she said. That was the lowest of the three quotes received by the committee.

Work will include removing all paint and shoring up of its structural support. The project will also replace three of the statue's missing fingers with the arrow held in place by caulk. The bow and arrow assembly will be refurbished to match what was originally there, Kimsal said. The arrow had been replaced with a metal rod. There will then be a one-color finish.

There are only believed to be about 20 of this catalogue statues remaining in the United States, with another in South America, she said.

"Restoring the statue to a one-color finish will eliminate the erroneous personification of the Indian chief, as it was called in the catalogue, and bring it back to an original historical finish that was offered in the catalogue that it was purchased from at the time," Kimsal said.

One small lion head, one of the openings where water originally spouted, will also be replaced. The statue will then be placed back on the pedestal with new bolts.

Kimsal said a critical piece of the project

is to educate the public that the statue is a mythical figure and is not representative of the Native Americans who lived in the area.

One of the proposed signs will contain information by a local student who has completed research on local Native Americans, along with a historical marker that would relate the history of the piece and how it came to Mount Kisco.

Scheduled later this month for repairs, it would return in time for a rededication ceremony around the time of the 114th anniversary for the original dedication in September.

"If we're going to have a statue, continuing to have the statue in town, and I sincerely hope that it will continue, I think it's disrespectful to let it deteriorate, and I also think it reflects poorly on our town to have a statue that is in such poor condition in such a prominent position in town," said Village Trustee Peter Grunthal.

Mayor Gina Picinich agreed with the importance of restoration.

"Obviously, restoring this back to its original (condition) is critically important because of its historical significance," Picinich said. "I think the education, the awareness piece, I think is really important, and further being able to highlight Native Americans who settled in the area" is equally crucial.

Kimsal said the Landmark and Historical Preservation Committee will fundraise as much as possible to offset the costs of the project. The board committed to spending



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The D.F. Gorham Memorial Fountain, which includes a statue of a mythical Native American chief, will be removed and repaired this year as part of a project by Mount Kisco's Landmark and Historical Preservation Committee and the Village Board.

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Guest Column

Thanks to the U.S. Postal Service, the Check is in the Twilight Zone

By Michael Gold

Have you ever had a wonderful friend for scores of years, who is extremely reliable, then goes completely off the rails and you never hear from him again? Or hard whiskey that suddenly stops getting you drunk?

That's the way I feel about the U.S. Postal Service.

The Postal Service used to be one of those things you never had to think about.

Remember that old phrase, "the check is in the mail?" That meant you were going to see your letter in a reasonable and predictable amount of time, no matter what. You didn't need to worry. The post office was as reliable as day coming after night.

Not anymore. The U. S. Postal Service is damaged. On Mar. 14, I sent a check in the mail to Stamford, Conn., 25 miles away. As of Mar. 25, it had not arrived. That's not a very long way to go nowhere fast.

I now have to think about where the letter is, which I never had to do before, ever.

Is the letter enjoying a martini in the Cayman Islands? Or meeting the British prime minister to discuss the future of NATO? Maybe the letter is hitchhiking to the Arctic Circle to watch the Aurora Borealis.

I may never find out.

People in general don't send letters anymore and now they have even more reason not to. I still send letters. It feels more human to me than e-mail. But now, I have to wonder, is my letter ever going to arrive where I want it to go?

People now often receive their pharmaceuticals in the mail. Also, important financial information is delivered

by mail, from the IRS, banks, insurance companies and brokerage houses. We need the Postal Service to work extremely efficiently.

But now, the post office has become as unreliable as a television wrestler asked to teach kindergarten.

The Pony Express worked far better.

What to do?

We could recruit the world's fastest land animal, the cheetah, to run with the mail to our needed destinations.

Cheetahs can run 70 miles an hour, but only for about 30 seconds a shot. So, they'd have to work in a relay system to deliver the mail. Of course, training them could take some time and you'd need body armor to do it.

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy has proposed expanding the amount of time needed to deliver a first-class letter, raising prices and cutting costs. He also wants to cut the number of hours local post offices are open.

Wait a minute. You want me to pay more for worse service? Are you serious, Mr. DeJoy? (Was there ever a man more misnamed?)

If you lengthen delivery times, you will make the Postal Service even more unreliable (and it's pretty shaky right now). Fewer people will want to mail things. Higher prices will also help cut down your customer base.

People who can afford to will turn to alternative, private methods. The postal service will be forced to cut services and lengthen delivery times and increase prices as its customer base deteriorates.

Which may be the postmaster general's goal.

This is the same guy who threw out hundreds of postal sorting machines

last year, before millions of people were sending in their absentee ballots during the Presidential election. He also forbade late or extra trips by carriers to deliver the mail. He removed some mail collection boxes from the streets.

DeJoy's former employer, New Breed Logistics, may have overbilled the Postal Service \$53 million for contracting services, such as delivering the mail, according to the Postal Times.

DeJoy owns stock in XPO Logistics, which bought New Breed. He has shares worth anywhere from \$30 million to \$75 million in this company, which has current contracts with the Postal Service to deliver mail in the U.S.

The USPS has paid \$286 million to XPO since 2013, according to The New York Times. XPO's revenue from the Postal Service increased \$14 million in just 10 weeks last fall, about three to four months after DeJoy became the postmaster general.

XPO is paying DeJoy about \$2 million a year for office space he owns in North Carolina, through 2025.

This all adds up to a T-Rex-sized conflict of interest, does it not?

DeJoy's tenure doesn't even begin to pass the smell test. He has skunk smell all over him.

As far as my lost letter, I may wander off in search of the little runaway.

I'll start with Las Vegas. You can always count on a slot machine to take your money without giving anything in return. I don't need the Postal Service to do it.

Pleasantville resident Michael Gold has written op-ed articles for the New York Daily News, the Albany Times-Union and other newspapers.

Letters to the Editor

Answering the Call During the Darkest Days of the Pandemic

When the pandemic hit last March, all our medical offices essentially ceased to function as far as seeing patients. Even if we were open to people coming in, nobody was coming in.

So we used use a lot of resources from the offices and transferred those to the hospital. With the surge in patients, it quickly became like a war zone. And everybody felt it.

But the most miraculous thing that we saw was how people stepped up. From physicians, to the nurses, to the PCTs, to everyone who was on those floors, the willingness to put themselves in harm's way was incredible.

With a couple of my colleagues, I worked to identify how to supplement the hospitalist team with our outpatient providers. We put a call out for people who were comfortable on the floors, and within

one day had 26 providers saying, "I'm happy to leave what I do in the office, walk through the floors and take a full service load."

I've been at NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley since 2008. I've never seen anything like the level of coordination we achieved, to work together as a team, from inpatient and outpatient and across every level, from administration and operations to the providers, to the nurses, to the medical assistants, to the PCTs, the pharmacy to IT. As disheartening it was to see the tragedy that was going on, I've never been so proud of watching this team.

We know we're not out of the woods, but as those numbers improve and vaccines get out there, we do feel like we're finally back to the point where we can do what we've signed up to in this profession – and that's make people better and help get the

world back to that normal life where your seven-year-old doesn't have to use the word quarantine.

I am proud to be part of an organization that can work together. And I truly hope our memories aren't short-lived. As we return to normal, I hope we can start focusing on the productivity and build on those relationships and the understanding of what we can do when we all work together.

Dr. Craig Hametz
Chief, Department of Medicine,
NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley
Hospital
Medical Director, NewYork-
Presbyterian Medical Group Hudson
Valley

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Guest Column

Searching for Ways to Straighten Our Crooked Timber of Humanity

This is my first of a series of columns that will take a tongue-in-cheek approach to applying philosophy as a means to help us improve our mental outlook on life in the hope of using humor to unite us in our divided and perilous times.

I will forewarn my readers: I have a disdain for clichés when people resort to them for making serious life decisions, though will insert them for the purpose to make humorous observations on our, at times, frail and fickle human condition.

Many philosophers, author included, believe philosophy is medicine for the soul, to be prescribed along with psychology and psychoanalysis. Existential philosophy, in simple terms, is a tool to help us chart a life project to transmute our life from mere existence to that of essence. No easy task for sure. Though we can approach existential philosophy as a kind of guide for our perplexed minds.

To make it through this gauntlet of life, maybe we should take the time to

contemplate by looking through the many windows of our minds to examine our interior self to ask ourselves what am I really looking for in life? Where am I looking? What am I seeking and what is my ideal?

In light of the fact that our emotions stick to us as shadows, forever setting up obstacles to our logic, rationale and at times truth. Emotions that are comprised of the seven capital vices – pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth. Not to mention the fact humanity at times can be ungrateful, fickle, fake, cowardly, covetous, selfish and hypocritical – just to name some. It doesn't get better than this.

Well, it does make us want to think at times that the term humanity in itself is a bit of an oxymoron, existentially speaking. We are human, but do we always act with a sense of humanity to our fellow humans?



By Richard Cirulli

To prove my point, take good old Torquemada, the grand torturer of the inquisition. I must confess, if I found myself on his heretic's rack, I would be hard-pressed to imagine how I can transmute this painful existence into essence. Though on second thought, I could find my essence by being stretched to more than six feet tall, have a tapered waist and have a great BMI thanks to a diet of stale bread and water. I could patent it and call it the Waist Wasters Diet. (Weight Watchers look out!) Nothing like a little competition to help find our essence.

Then I could bring out a line of designer sack cloths for repentant heretics complete with designer ashes to apply to my scarred body. Ok, I know it's a stretch, but I did make the point. Well, the devil does wear Prada.

And just take a look at good old Joan of Arc, war hero and saint. For her noble deeds,

the English held a barbeque in her honor. Holy Smoke! I hear Rouen is a real hot spot for heretics and existentialists. Well, I have to admit, I still carry a torch for her.

I guess in life, we all at times, in our attempts to find our essence in life, run into a grand inquisitor or two. I'm sure Dostoyevsky has something to say about this. Well for some, their essence is found in trying to straighten our crooked timber of humanity.

Philosophy is a tool that we can use to help straighten our crooked timber of humanity, as opposed to using our frail human condition as a tool to construct stakes to impale our human advancement on.

Be safe! Be well! Be happy! Be nice! Amor fati!

Dr. Richard Cirulli is a published author, playwright and retired professor. His body of works can be viewed at www.demitasseplayers.com. He looks forward to your comments, and can be reached at profrcirulli@optonline.net.

Letters to the Editor

Legitimate Concerns Associated With Legalization of Recreational Marijuana

Throughout my time in the Assembly, I have consistently embraced opportunities to lift burdensome restrictions on medicinal marijuana, but have also contended it should remain a controlled substance.

We know there can be medicinal benefits from cannabis, but its use should be a decision made between a patient and their doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant. Like many in the medical community, including the Medical Society of the State of New York, I have also consistently opposed efforts to legalize marijuana for recreational use and voted against the Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act (MRTA).

That said, understanding over the last several years that legalization was likely to pass, I made myself available to listen to colleagues and advocates to try and

help ensure guardrails were put in place to better protect public health and safety should legalization eventually occur. Unfortunately, it is my determination that many of the guardrails our state needed to safeguard public health and safety were absent in the MRTA.

Arguments highlighting years of social injustice were largely addressed years ago when the state repealed many of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, and more recently with last year's decriminalization bill. As it stands, last year's bill, which may have been very well-intentioned, already went too far when it eliminated the additional violations that were previously enforceable against a person who smoked cannabis in public spaces.

This problem has only worsened now that cannabis has been fully legalized. Today, under the MRTA a person can

smoke marijuana outside anywhere they can smoke tobacco, including some public parks frequented by our youth. Tobacco and cannabis are inherently different and should be regulated as such. I have written to the sponsor of the MRTA advocating again for reforms that would better enable local governments to regulate and restrict cannabis use in public spaces.

While legalization will most assuredly bring in some new tax revenue, we know it will also increase costs that affect our state and local budgets as well as put the health and well-being of our families at greater risk. To me, whatever fiscal benefit may exist from the MRTA is simply not worth the price tag.

**Assemblyman Kevin Byrne
Mahopac**

Comments By Putnam Sheriff GOP Candidate Were Appalling

I was disturbed and angered recently when I watched a YouTube video called "Police Off the Cuff." It was an interview with a candidate for Kent Town Board, Robert Hyer, and the Republican candidate for Putnam County sheriff, Kevin McConville.

While the hosts of the segment and Hyer engaged in casual and bluntly racist chat, the Republican candidate for sheriff sat nodding in agreement. They ridiculed those suffering from addiction and shared thinly veiled anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant sentiments that were cruel and frightening. The disdain for those who do

not share their particular worldview was on full display. Democrats and liberals were labeled as "lefties," "weirdos" and "nuts." It was appalling coming from those who wish to be in public service.

The yukking it up about the good old days when you could "beat 30 people" with "Louisville slugs" on a given night was truly disgusting, especially in light of this past year in which the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, among others, sparked a social movement against police brutality. Equally disturbing was the contempt for those who cared enough to peacefully protest against such brutality.

Putnam County needs a sheriff who will stand for up justice and will voice objection in the face of injustice, not someone who will just laugh it off with the good old boys in full public view.

I am voting for Robert Langley who has done an excellent job as sheriff during his tenure and respects his constituents, regardless of their political leanings. We need a sheriff who will serve and protect all of us, including the "nuts," the "lefties" and the "weirdos."

**Sonia Rzy-Ryski
Cold Spring**

Congress Must Continue Addressing the Nation's Most Pressing Needs

When Joe Biden and Kamala Harris became the leaders of our country, I breathed a huge sigh of relief. But Democratic activists like me said, "No time to waste. We have to start making a case that the divisive and dysfunctional approach of the previous administration cannot be repeated."

President Biden quickly went into action to help repair our country. The American Rescue Plan, passed by the U.S. Congress and signed by the President, represents a colossal investment to rebuild our economy and protect public health so threatened by COVID-19.

Building on the CARES Act and two other bipartisan bills passed in 2020, the American Rescue Plan is a bold initiative that extends unemployment benefits, supports small businesses, funds state vaccination programs and helps schools to re-open.

In 2020, congressional responses to the pandemic received broad support. The CARES Act passed last March with nearly unanimous, bipartisan backing. There is also wide-ranging support in both parties for proposals to address the country's massive infrastructure needs, to help the Dreamers and to help climate change.

Compromise and serious negotiation are the challenge congressional leaders now face if we are to move forward on solutions to these problems. Will our representatives rise above partisan divisions? I sincerely hope so.

The American Rescue Plan shows that government action can help people. If Congress can continue to earn the trust of all citizens it can also heal our divided nation.

**Karen Sevell Greenbaum
Croton-on-Hudson**

Scarsdale Golf Club Looks to Install 'Bubble' to Boost Membership

By Anna Young

The Scarsdale Golf Club is looking to cultivate membership by erecting a seasonal structure that would provide coverage to two outdoor tennis courts on the grounds of the Hartsdale facility.

While a formal application hasn't been submitted to the Town of Greenburgh, individuals representing the facility went before the Town Board last week pitching the idea of the enclosure. Scarsdale Golf Club General Manager Bill Minard said the dome-like structure would be essential to remaining relevant in a competitive market.

"Clubs must provide first-class amenities to keep their competitive edge and we believe a tennis bubble is an essential component to retaining and recruiting new members," Minard said during the Mar. 30 work session. "It's our goal to provide a year-round tennis program to clearly add value to membership experience and further position Scarsdale Golf Club as the premiere club in the metro area."

Minard added that the club currently offers a "very robust" racket club that includes both tennis and paddle tennis for members of all ages. He noted a seasonal tennis bubble wouldn't be an unusual request to the town with one currently installed at East Rumbrook Park on Dobbs Ferry Road.



The Scarsdale Golf Club in Hartsdale hopes to receive approval from the Town of Greenburgh to place a seasonal dome over two of its outdoor tennis courts.

The conceptual plan includes placing the enclosure on the lower end of three tennis courts on Club Way, said project engineer Zac Pearson, of Insite Engineering, Surveying, & Landscape Architecture. He added that with another set of courts south of where the bubble is being proposed sitting at a lower elevation, the proposal would include raising those tennis structures nearly three feet to keep it level with the other courts.

Pearson explained this would ensure the fire department could travel on Club Way and access the enclosed structure in an emergency.

Representatives added the enclosure would likely be most visible to the commercial area of Hartsdale Avenue and would have no influence on the golf range at the club's facility. However, officials recommended the applicant begin discussions with nearby neighborhoods,

associations, parking districts and merchants regarding visibility.

Those involved with the project said they wanted to first review the plans with the town before speaking with the public.

With a water course sitting between East Hartsdale Avenue and Scarsdale Golf Course, Councilman Ken Jones questioned the potential risk the bubble would pose to that area. Flooding and debris are already issues, he said.

Representatives for the applicant said a stormwater design will be associated with the project to mitigate runoff.

Officials said the enclosure's review process could last up to six months, with the proposal requiring approvals from the Planning Board and certain variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The proposal could also require a wetland permit and environmental review under the state Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

Town officials said they would work with the applicant to coordinate with the necessary boards and community members to move the project forward.

"I think the most important thing is really to reach out to the civic associations first to meet with them," Supervisor Paul Feiner said. "Some people may have some questions from the immediate neighborhoods."

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The Trade-Offs and Compromises in Buying a Home

When my wife and I were seeking to move from New York City to the "burbs," our checklist of must-haves was very limited. Actually, there was just one item on the list: we wanted an "old" home, having enjoyed the experience of living in an 1826 Federal-style townhouse in Brooklyn Heights as our first home.

Our first experience with a realtor in Dutchess County, where I was working at The Culinary Institute of America, was not a good one. I hadn't communicated well at that time before the internet about what an "old" house meant. In those days, we got our first glance of a property from printed sheets and photos from a particular real estate office, and only of their in-house listings, before the current MLS system where every listing is shared by every real estate office.

The first showing the realtor got me for an old home was with one built in 1940. You just can't imagine how old that made me feel. The house reminded me of the one I grew up in, which was nice, but in no way met the historic criteria that I had to educate him about. I suppose we also wanted a nice property, but that was about it in seeking our dream home.

While working with several realtors (which I would never recommend today. Find a kindred spirit and stick with her or him;



By Bill Primavera

you won't have to keep educating your realtor about what you want), we weren't having much luck in finding a property we liked. Those that were close to a town center didn't have enough property and the more remote choices seemed too isolated for us.

But then one day I saw an ad in The New York Times for an historic property in a place I had never heard of before: Yorktown Heights. It was to be the last showing of the day for us. Since it was a FISBO (for sale by owner), there was no realtor involved.

When we arrived at the home, we were disappointed to find that, while protected by woods

on two of its three streets surrounding the property, it backed up to the parking lot of an industrial looking building, which we learned was a telephone switching location for Verizon. That will never do, I thought, and was prepared to not get out of the car. My wife said that not keeping the appointment would be rude (which is right, of course), so I reluctantly went to the back door, which faced the parking area, and knocked.

We entered into a back parlor of the house, which seemed nice enough, then proceeded to the front parlor, then the central hallway, all the while getting no positive or negative feedback from my wife's expressions.

But when we entered the kitchen, which had just been fully renovated with



handmade cabinetry and new appliances, my wife's eyes rolled back in her head. We had currently been operating basically out of a city galley kitchen. I knew that this was the place for her.

(Reminder to readers of a point I've made several times: Most often women make the house-buying decision, and what do women relate to most? A great kitchen! Just this week, a past client thinking of selling his house in a couple of years asked me if I considered it a wise investment to update his kitchen. I quickly replied, yes!)

To deal with the adjacent parking lot – which in the real estate business we would call an "incurable defect" – I simply built an eight-foot-tall fence along my property line, getting a special variance from the town to go two feet over the allowed height.

As I write this, I am aware that my knees are a bit sore, and I suspect it is from a visit to a home yesterday where the driveway was

very steep; in fact, it was one of the biggest slopes I have encountered for a driveway. Well, I thought, that's certainly what would be called an "incurable defect."

But when I got to the bottom of the driveway, the house was delightful in every way. The current owner at first demurred about descending that driveway on her first showing, but she's raised a big family there very happily and probably maintained good health by ascending and descending that hefty slope.

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

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Lakeland Grad Eager to Toe the Mound in Summer Olympics

By Rick Pezzullo

Over the last few years, Jonathan de Marte has experienced the highs and lows associated with being an athlete.

The 2011 Lakeland High School graduate had his share of injuries while playing Division I baseball at Richmond and then played with several independent minor league teams while pursuing his dream of making it to Major League Baseball.

In 2018, de Marte, 27, who grew up in Yorktown Heights with his parents and triplet siblings, obtained his dual Israeli citizenship. Two years later, he qualified for the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo on Israel's national team, only to have the Olympics canceled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When COVID hit no one expected it to last so long," de Marte said during a recent interview. "The most devastating thing was hearing the Olympics were canceled. That really hit me very hard. Qualifying for the Olympics was the coolest thing I have ever done in my life. Then the biggest thing you have ever accomplished is canceled."

On Feb. 26, 2020, de Marte reached the pinnacle of his baseball career to date, signing a minor league contract with the Chicago Cubs.

However, with the pandemic forcing the postponement of the minor league season last year, de Marte never got a chance to toe the mound for the Cubs or any of its minor league affiliates. And a few weeks ago, de



Yorktown native and Lakeland High School graduate Jonathan de Marte will be the closer for Israel's national baseball team in the upcoming Summer Olympics in Tokyo. The pandemic postponed the Olympics for a year and also cost de Marte a chance at pitching in the Chicago Cubs organization in 2020.

Marte received a call that every professional athlete dreads: he had been released.

"I never threw a pitch for the Cubs. I thought I would get a chance to throw a few innings before any decisions were made," he said. "Hopefully, I'll have other opportunities in pro ball."

But with the Olympics back on, de Marte is looking forward to being on one of six teams that will be competing for an Olympic medal. As one of 24 players on the Israeli squad, de Marte is slated to be



the team's closer.

"It's everything we have been training for the last two years," de Marte said. "That is something that has pushed me and kept me going."

Eric Holtz, owner of Game on 13 in Elmsford, is the manager of the Israel Senior National Team, which lost in the European Championship to Austria last January. He was the head coach for the 2017 Gold Medal winning USA team in the Maccabiah Games in Israel.

Holtz is counting on de Marte to be a key contributor on the Israeli team in the Olympics, which get underway in July.

"Jonathan has really established himself as our closer," Holtz said. "Two years ago in Europe in the qualifying tournament he really stepped up. He's an incredible human being, a great clubhouse guy, a great teammate. He's the kind of young man you would want to marry your daughter. He's truly been like a son to me."

Holtz said he would not be making any predictions on his team's chances, but is grateful to get an opportunity to return to the diamond.

"For me it's kind of surreal. It almost seems like it's not real because of the delay," Holtz said, noting Israel was the first team to qualify for the Olympics in September 2019. "As it gets closer, I'm getting very excited. It's an amazing opportunity. It's something I will cherish the rest of my life."

For de Marte, whose love of the game began in the Shrub Oak Athletic Club, he's hopeful of winning a medal and getting another chance to eventually realize his dream of reaching the Major Leagues.

"I've had an absolute blast traveling for baseball. I love seeing new cities and experiencing new cultures," de Marte said. "I (understand) every year how hard it is to get there (MLB). I have noticed steady gains in my on-field performance. My confidence level has gone up. I really enjoy the whole process and the routine. I like all the pieces that go into making a complete athlete. There are other ways to make a career out of baseball."



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White Plains Wing Weeks Begins This Sunday

From Apr. 11 through May 8, taste the flavors of chicken wings in downtown White Plains and rate them to determine the 2021 restaurant with the best flavor. Join the White Plains BID and the City of White Plains for four weeks of wings. Savor a dozen wings of a special flavor from up to 15 different restaurants at your convenience. Rate the flavors for a chance to win a \$50 gift card to the winning restaurant.

Here's how it works:

- Purchase your contactless Wing Weeks tickets from wpbid.com/wingweeks.
- For \$30, you will receive four Wing Weeks passes in your e-mail.
- Each Wing Weeks pass gets you an order of a dozen wings at one of the participating restaurants of your choosing from Apr. 11 through May 8.
- Be sure to mention Wing Weeks when ordering. You may take out or enjoy

outdoor or indoor dining dependent upon restaurant availability. (Additional food and drinks are available for purchase separately.)

- When receiving your order, show the pass on your phone to restaurant staff. They will give you their unique redemption code for your dozen wings. (Please consider tipping as gratuity is not included and restaurants are still struggling through the pandemic.)
- Enjoy your wings and rate them on your phone through the link on your redeemed pass for a chance to win a \$50 gift card to the winning restaurant. All votes must be received by 10 a.m. on Monday, May 10.

"We are excited to defend our title of best wings in downtown White Plains as awarded from the 2019 Wing Walk!" said Lucas Petrone, general manager of Lazy Boy



Saloon & Ale House.

Mayor Tom Roach, who originally brought the Wing Walk idea to White Plains said, "We

have a lot of great wings in White Plains and this is a great opportunity to try them all while supporting our restaurant community."

Participating restaurants include Alex Lounge Bar & Grill; The Banh Mi Shop; The Brazen Fox; Cantina Taco & Tequila Bar; Delicias del Jireh; Freebird Kitchen & Bar; Hudson Grille; Lazy Boy Saloon & Ale House; Lilly's; Mario's Pizza & Restaurant; Ron Blacks Beer Hall; Sundance Kitchen & Cantina; Tepe's Kitchen; TVB by Pax Romana; and Wolf & Warrior Brewing Company.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit wpbid.com/wingweeks.

There is a limited availability of tickets. The winning restaurant will be announced on Monday, May 10 via @whiteplains.bid on Instagram and White Plains BID on Facebook.

New Castle Historical Society Annual Meeting April 18 to Feature Head of NWH

The New Castle Historical Society will hold its 55th Annual Meeting and Lecture on Sunday, Apr. 18 from 3 to 4 p.m. This year's meeting will be held via zoom, and as always, is open to the public.

Following the brief business meeting, the guest speaker will be Derek Anderson, executive director of Northern Westchester Hospital, who will present a fascinating talk, "Northern Westchester

Hospital: Caring for the Community for More Than a Century."

Anderson will explore some of the history of Northern Westchester Hospital and how it has grown and responded to changing community needs. He will also discuss how the hospital has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Registration is required for this free program and information can be found at

<https://www.newcastlehs.org/events/> or by calling 914-238-4666. Registrants will receive an e-mail with the Zoom link prior to the program.

For information on this or upcoming New Castle Historical Society programs, contact Executive Director Jennifer Pluck at director@newcastlehs.org or 914-238-4666.

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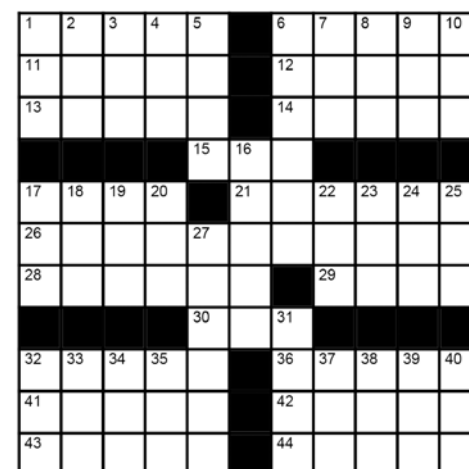
Crossword

Across

- Storage area
- USPS purchase
- Fine dinnerware
- Person who has title
- 13-19 year olds
- Scouts' "Be Prepared," for one
- Identifiable period
- Earthworm's habitat
- Seniors
- Deliberate
- Perfume sampler
- Nervous
- Seek the support of
- Critical
- Saw
- Medical amounts
- Garnish for a martini
- Hard work
- Roll over, as a subscription

Down

- Play division
- Popular article
- Draw
- Homey hostel
- Carryall
- Kenyan's neighbor
- Time for a late lunch, maybe
- Colony insect
- Came across
- PGA contestant
- Earlier style back in fashion
- "Make yourself comfortable"



- "The loneliest number"
- Tag chasers
- Do-over, in tennis
- Anonymous Jane
- Objective
- Sponge alternative
- Cunning
- Latest
- Eaters
- TV support system
- Milk producer
- Wear and tear
- Beverage
- Bar order
- Altoids holder
- Christmas
- Morning moisture

Answers on page 24

Youth Ballet Company Looks to Continue Flourishing After Pandemic

By Martin Wilbur

The past year has been difficult for so many, but hundreds of arts, theater, music and dance organizations have in many instances been stretched to the limits in hopes of surviving.

Westchester Ballet Company (WBC) is no different. The acclaimed Ossining-based nonprofit organization noted for its youth ballet training and high-quality productions, has for years provided the dancers for "The Nutcracker" each December at the County Center.

But what was supposed to be a 70th anniversary celebration in 2020, turned into a year where no tickets were sold, no fundraising galas were held and no performances for the students ranging from elementary school through high school were scheduled.

Aside from having little revenue, the company also had to manage the disappointment of so many young dancers who had worked for years to earn their shot on the big stage, said Amy Harte, WBC's board president.

They were able to present a free virtual performance of "The Nutcracker" last holiday season,



Adia Biem, left, and Kyra Dunham are two of the roughly 100 dancers for the acclaimed Westchester Ballet Company.

which gave the dancers something to work toward, although it featured less half of the company's 100 dancers.

"I think our dancers have always, and "The Nutcracker" is so important to them, but now I think they appreciate it even more, and I think they realize, as so many of us do, we can't take anything for granted," Harte said. "We can't just go through our lives thinking everything will be there for us, it'll be there for us

forever. We don't know that, so we need to cherish the events."

The ballet company, its board and supporters are working hard to make sure that it will be there for generations of dancers to come. Starting last Friday and continuing through the end of April, it is holding its WBC@70 Spring Fundraising Campaign in celebration of its 70th year. The goal is to raise \$70,000 to support more dance scholarships, strengthen community outreach to diversify its dancers and audience and to maintain affordable tickets.

Harte said raising the money, like so many organizations, will be the lifeblood for WBC and it is trying to appeal to a wider audience, not just ballet lovers and family and friends of the dancers. They have also produced its own documentary "Why We Dance"

"We can't step on the stage again unless we're in a position to pay our bills," Harte said. "We also need to make sure we can fulfill our mission fully, so that includes our community outreach and making sure we are connecting with the community, making sure that what we are doing is accessible."

For seven decades, WBC has been providing opportunities for



Ballet dancer Adia Biem. She has danced with the Westchester Ballet Company since kindergarten.

young dancers like Adia Biem. The Fox Lane High School senior and Mount Kisco resident has been dancing with WBC since kindergarten.

Biem said she enjoyed the benefits of the physical activity of dancing and also met other youngsters whom she would have otherwise never met. They have become some of the most important people her life, she said.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, having earned a lead role in the virtual production of "The Nutcracker," may have been the most memorable time for her over the past 10 years.

"I think this year, even though it's been so crazy, this has been the best role I have had," Biem said. "Even though I wasn't on a real stage...I just felt a real sense of accomplishment when I got to dance that part, even though it was in the studio, they made the best situation, which I think is really, really great, that we had this opportunity at all to begin with."

Harte said some of the dancers go on to professional dance careers, but many do not and go on to other pursuits. But the experience of working together as a team and meeting other students outside each youngster's bubble has been beneficial for so many WBC alums, she said.

"We need to make sure we are solid for the future," Harte said. "I hope I can help this organization celebrate its 100th."

For more information on the Westchester Ballet Company or to donate, visit www.westchesterballet.org and click on "Donate!"

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Stepinac Seniors Honored With Scholarship Named for Late School Alum

Two Stepinac High School seniors, Julian Mueller of White Plains and Shawn Vembenil of Tarrytown, were honored recently as the first recipients of the Xavier E. Flores Memorial Scholarship Award, established in memory of the esteemed Stepinac alumnus who tragically passed away from COVID-19 last April at the age of 49.

The students each received \$2,500 in recognition of their extraordinary community service contributions.

Evelyn Flores of Cortlandt Manor, Flores's widow, noted that "in going beyond meeting the needs of the hungry and homeless, especially during the height of the pandemic, Julian and Shawn truly exemplified the spirit of commitment and service that Xavier lived by."

"We congratulate these outstanding students for achieving this honor and wish them success as they prepare to continue on the path to post-secondary success, inspired by Xavier Flores' legacy of giving back to the community in ways that make a tangible difference in the lives of people who most need it," said Stepinac President Fr. Thomas Collins.

Flores, who graduated from Stepinac in 1988, was actively involved in his alma mater, helping

to raise funds for school programs and serving as co-president of the Crusader Men's Club. He was also honored with the Block S Award bestowed on individuals whose contributions had a meaningful impact on Stepinac. His son, Xavier M. Flores, graduated from Stepinac last year.

In response to his untimely death, Xavier's family and friends and Stepinac agreed to honor his compassion, intelligence, sincerity, patience and service by establishing the educational scholarship.

In essays they submitted with their applications for the scholarship, the students shared their experiences and reflected on the deeper meaning of community service in their lives.

Recalling the sudden devastation that the pandemic had on the pantry in March 2020 Mueller wrote: "Not only had the number of needy families doubled overnight, but food items were tough to come by."

He immediately decided to launch the "Front Door Food Drive" in which he overnight mobilized friends, family members, neighbors to donate desperately needed food items. His efforts paid off. "The pantry could not believe what had been accomplished in such a short period of time."

Reflecting on what the



Pictured, from left, are Evelyn Flores, widow of Xavier E. Flores; Shawn Vembenil and Julien Mueller, Stepinac High School students who were the first recipients of the Xavier E. Flores Memorial Scholarship Award; and Fr. Thomas Collins, Stepinac president. Vembenil and Mueller earned the scholarship named after the 49-year-old Flores, an alumnus of the school, who succumbed to COVID-19 last April.

experience has meant to him, Mueller says it opened his eyes that hunger exists in places you'd never expect it like Westchester County. "I would encourage all young people to get involved in service work. It's just so rewarding to put the effort in knowing I contributed to those families. It's a feeling that's hard to describe... but it's a good one!"

Vembenil's defining moment that inspired him to do all that he could to help the homeless occurred at age 14 when he performed some tasks for St. John Evangelist Church in White

Plains, one of which was locking up the church and school buildings at night. During one occasion, he had to ask an elderly, poorly-clad man, who apparently was seeking warmth and shelter from the cold, to leave the premises.

"I couldn't fall asleep in my warm bed, wondering where that homeless, elderly man was, whether he was warm or safe. I got up, Googled homelessness in our city, and read all night about what resources were available for our city's homeless," he wrote.

He joined the Campus Ministry

at Stepinac, which conducted "Jesus Runs," bringing food and clothing to the homeless in New York City and focused on the White Plains homeless population "who were in desperate need of help". To assist them, he established the school's A Helping Hand Club which he served as its founding president.

"We identified Lifting Up Westchester, a local nonprofit that helps the homeless at two shelters as well as Grace's Kitchen, as a valuable resource that could benefit from our club's help."

The onslaught of the pandemic created unprecedented demand for funds for Lifting Up Westchester to answer the call of "increasing numbers of our neighbors who needed help." We created a GoFundMe fundraiser and raised nearly \$3,000 for Grace's Kitchen.

Vemdenil's group also collected and delivered about 2,000 face masks and 123 hand sanitizer bottles to the homeless.

"I am thankful for Stepinac's Campus Ministry for helping me get started on my journey and the many opportunities it provides Stepinac students like me to serve our community and put our faith into practice," he said.

FAMILY COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

In the Matter of

ROSARIO ESQUIVEL-GARCIA
ANGEL ESQUIVEL-GARCIA

SUMMONS

Docket No. NN-07345-20
NN -07346-20

F/U No. 143336

A Children Under Eighteen Years of
Age Alleged to be Neglected by

ANGEL ESQUIVEL-MANCILLA,
Respondent.

NOTICE: PLACEMENT OF YOUR CHILD IN FOSTER CARE MAY RESULT IN YOUR LOSS OF YOUR RIGHTS TO YOUR CHILD. IF YOUR CHILD STAYS IN FOSTER CARE FOR 15 OF THE MOST RECENT 22 MONTHS, THE AGENCY MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW TO FILE A PETITION TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS AND COMMITMENT OF GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY OF THE CHILD FOR THE PURPOSES OF ADOPTION, AND MAY FILE BEFORE THE END OF THE 15-MONTH PERIOD. IF SEVERE OR REPEATED ABUSE IS PROVEN BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE, THIS FINDING MAY CONSTITUTE THE BASIS TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS.

UPON GOOD CAUSE, THE COURT MAY ORDER AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE NON-RESPONDENT PARENT(S) SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A RESPONDENT; IF THE COURT DETERMINES THE CHILD SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM HIS/HER HOME, THE COURT MAY ORDER AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE NON-RESPONDENT PARENT(S) SHOULD BE SUITABLE CUSTODIANS FOR THE CHILD; IF THE CHILD IS PLACED AND REMAINS IN FOSTER CARE FOR FIFTEEN OF THE MOST RECENT TWENTY-TWO MONTHS, THE AGENCY MAY BE REQUIRED TO FILE A PETITION FOR TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THE PARENT(S) AND COMMITMENT OF GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY OF THE CHILD FOR THE PURPOSES OF ADOPTION, EVEN IF THE PARENT(S) WERE NOT NAMED AS RESPONDENTS IN THE CHILD NEGLECT OR ABUSE PROCEEDING.

A NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT HAS THE RIGHT TO REQUEST TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT CUSTODY OF THE CHILD AND TO SEEK ENFORCEMENT OF VISITATION RIGHTS WITH THE CHILD.

TO: ANGEL ESQUIVEL-MANCILLA

The petition under Article 10 of the Family Court Act having been filed with this Court alleging that the above-named children are neglected children;

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to appear before this Court at 111 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., 3rd Floor Annex, White Plains, New York, on the **10th day of MAY, 2021, at 2:30PM**, in the forenoon of said day for the purposes of an Inquest hearing to answer the petition and to show cause why said children should not be adjudicated to be a neglected children and why you should not be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Article 10 of the Family Court Act.

PRIOR TO YOUR COURT APPEARANCE, please contact White Plains Family Court at (914) 824-5500 for confirmation that the matter will still be heard virtually and not in-person at that time OR for further instructions on how to appear virtually.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE, that you have the right to be represented by a lawyer, and if the Court finds you are unable to pay for a lawyer, you have the right to have a lawyer assigned by the Court.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE, that if you fail to appear at the time and place noted above, the Court will moved forward with the Inquest Hearing and determine the petition as provided by law.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE, that Federal and State law may require the Commissioner of Social Services to file petitions to terminate parental rights when children have been in foster care for fifteen (15) of the most recent twenty-two (22) months.

Dated: March 16, 2021

BY ORDER OF THE COURT

/s/
CLERK OF THE COURT

Open Door Renames School-Based Health Centers in Lowey's Honor

Open Door Family Medical Center's School-Based Health Center Program will become known as the Nita M. Lowey Center for Health in Schools.

The program provides primary health care services for students in elementary, middle and high schools in Port Chester and Ossining. Services are available regardless of a family's ability to pay and there are no out-of-pocket costs.

"The name change pays tribute to our long-standing partnership with Congresswoman Lowey, who has been a major supporter of the Open Door since the program's beginning," said Lindsay Farrell, president and CEO of Open Door. "She has been instrumental in securing the funding for the launch and growth of our School-Based Health Center program over many years."

Lowey represented parts of Westchester, Rockland, the Bronx and Queens in Congress from 1989 until her retirement in January, and most recently served as chair of the House Appropriations Committee. Before serving in Congress, she was assistant secretary of state in New York State for 13 years.

"I cannot believe that it has been more than 20 years since securing federal funding for the School-Based Health Center at Thomas Edison elementary school," Lowey said.

Congressman Steny H. Hoyer and Lowey had the idea to bring community health centers into local schools, creating full-service community schools that would ensure every student had access to the healthcare they need to succeed.

"These children will lead our community for years to come and inspire me every day," she said.

Open Door's Care Team of doctors, nurse practitioners, nutritionists, medical assistants and health educators work collaboratively with school nurses to provide comprehensive medical services to students where they are enrolled. Services include physical exams, laboratory tests, nutritional counseling, immunizations, sick care, management of chronic illnesses like asthma and diabetes, mental health screenings, dental screenings and sports physicals.

School-Based Health Centers emerged in the 1970s in recognition of the increasing number of children and adolescents who lacked access to health care but also needed care that was age sensitive, confidential, safe and geographically accessible.

Studies have shown that School-Based Health Centers reduce inappropriate use of emergency rooms and increase appropriate use of medical and mental health services. In addition, they have been shown to positively impact the mental health of



Former congresswoman Nita Lowey was recognized last week by Open Door Family Medical Center, which renamed its School-Based Health Center Program after the 16-term lawmaker, who retired at the end of last year.

support high need students by providing personalized medical care and counseling.

Staff knows the students and the school's culture and can address health and wellness issues from an insider's perspective. They assist with assessments and treatments of some learning-related disorders.

Open Door Family Medical Center's mission has remained consistent since 1972 – to provide high-quality health care that's affordable, accessible and efficient.

Today, Open Door cares for more than 1,000 adults and children every day in Westchester, Putnam and Ulster counties – with more than 300,000 patient visits and over 400 babies delivered annually – regardless of one's ability to pay.

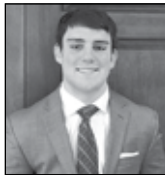
In addition to medical, dental, pediatric, women's, podiatry and behavioral health care offered in its Ossining, Port Chester, Sleepy Hollow, Mount Kisco, Brewster, Mamaroneck sites, there are seven School-Based Health Centers in the Ossining and Port Chester school districts; a mobile dental; and dental practice in Saugerties.

Open Door promotes wellness, good nutrition, stress reduction and physical activity to help families stay healthy. Open Door was recognized as the top New York State Health Disparity Reducer and a leading Access Enhancer by the Health Resources Service Administration.

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Somers Woman Writes Book on How to Navigate the Caregiver Experience

By Martin Wilbur

Marsha Berman's life was turned upside down in August 2013.

At the time, while she was enjoying her golden years and her two young grandsons, her son Brad, at 37 years old and in the prime of life, suddenly found himself in the fight of his life.

On Aug. 4 nearly eight years ago, Brad suffered a hemorrhage from a brain arteriovenous malformation (AVM), a tangled mass of arteries and veins that a small percentage of people are born with, typically in the brain or spine.

A lawyer and a marathon runner, having been placed in a life-threatening situation was not something anyone was expecting, including Marsha, said Linda Spear, a close friend of hers.

"It took years to get him back to normal, and when I say normal, he's back to working, he's raising his children, he's doing something that a man now in his 40s should be doing," Spear said.

To detail her experience and to help others suddenly thrust in the role of caregiver, Marsha Berman, who lives in Somers, has written a book about the experience, "The Possibilities Are Endless." It highlights her and her family's story and how to navigate the difficult caregiver experience.

Spear said her friend wrote the book and had it recently released because she is a natural caregiver who loves to help people. Berman is the caregiver to her now 95-year-old mother-in-law, she said.



Marsha Berman details the trying times of becoming a caregiver to her 37-year-old son in her new book "The Possibilities Are Endless."

"She's my best friend, and she is a very loving, kind person and cares for people," Spear said. "Not paid caregiving. I'm just talking about if a friend needs her, she's there. When it came to this, she felt like she needed to reach out further to write a book to explain how families and friends care for people that have serious situations and how that can make as much difference as neurologists and neurosurgeons and other doctors combined, and that's what

the book is about."

Brad Berman said he spent five weeks in an induced coma in Westchester Medical Center. When he was sent to extensive rehab, first at Helen Hayes Hospital in Rockland, followed by Burke Hospital, the prognosis wasn't encouraging.

"I was told, you will not walk, you will not work, you will not drive, but I've learned how to do all of these things," he said. "The thing I had in my head was so huge that most people who had what I had don't survive it."

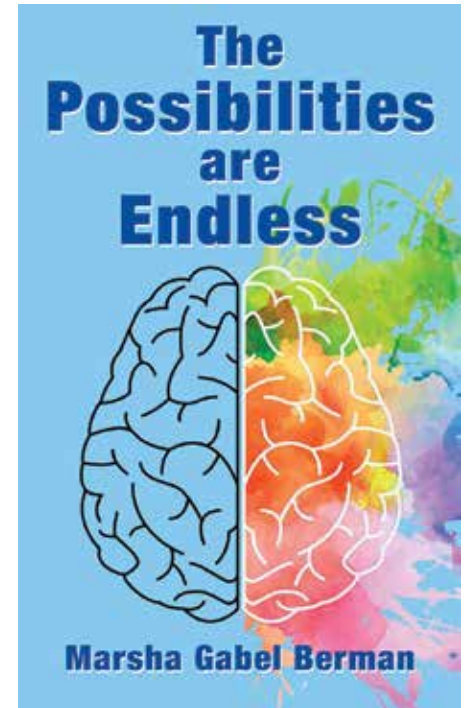
Being in outstanding physical shape, along with receiving excellent medical and rehabilitative care and family members who cared deeply about him, including his mother, helped pull Brad Berman through.

Brad recalled how his brother was extremely helpful and that his parents were at the hospital every day. Jessica, now his ex-wife, for all intents and purposes moved into the hospital.

Less than two years after his hemorrhage, he was back at work at General Electric part-time. Eventually, he would return full-time before he was transferred to Price Waterhouse Cooper.

Brad, who lives in New Rochelle, wrote the forward to his mother's book, and said given the fact that she had no writing experience, it was a major accomplishment for her.

Caregiving is also a topic that so many people now experience in their lives that the book could help many others. No matter how much a family may be prepared, it's a difficult road, even if the



caregiver is a child or younger person.

"I'm very proud of her," he said. "Life is great, but no matter how great it is, everyone ends up going through a tough time at some point. So what she did kind of helps people understand that and gives people a tool."

To learn more about the family's plight and to buy "The Possibilities Are Endless," visit www.marshaberman.com. It's also available at Barnes & Noble and on Amazon.

Free Virtual Symposium to Highlight Younger Dementia Caregivers' Needs

Cody Medina, community engagement manager, diversity specialist for the Alzheimer's Association Hudson Valley Chapter Medina is the organizer of the Hudson Valley Chapter's younger caregiver symposium, "A Glimpse into the Life of a Younger Caregiver," which will be held virtually from 5 to 7 p.m. this Wednesday, Apr. 7.

Medina said it is a common assumption that younger people are less affected by dementia.

"Whenever people think of caregivers, they automatically assume it is someone who is a bit older...generally individuals over 45. With the younger caregiver symposium, we're essentially tailoring our focus to individuals 18 to 45," Medina said.

He said the symposium's purpose is to let people know that they aren't alone, that there's an entire community near them going through similar situations.

The virtual symposium will include presentations from three featured panelists. Amy LaFleur, a speech language pathologist for the New York City Department of Education, will talk about the millennial caregiving experience; Teresa Santos, behavioral health care manager for the Memory Disorders Center and Montefiore Center for the

Aging Brain, will speak on fears millennials have about Alzheimer's; and Dr. Jessica Zwerling, associate director of neurology for Montefiore Center for the Aging Brain, will speak about healthy aging and caregiver stress.

There will also be an educational presentation on Healthy Living for the Brain and Body.

LaFleur got involved with the symposium through her work as president of the Young Professionals Alzheimer's Council (YPAC), an organization affiliated with the Alzheimer's Association Hudson Valley Chapter for people under 40 who are devoted to the cause. YPAC holds networking events, fundraisers and other activities to help those living with dementia and their caregivers.

LaFleur's presentation will highlight demographic information on millennial caregivers as well as some of the challenges younger caregivers face socially, financially and educationally.

Caregiving became important to LaFleur, both from a personal and career standpoint in 2012, when her mother was diagnosed with Primary Progressive Aphasia. Since then, she and her father have been active caregivers.

LaFleur said it can be difficult for younger caregivers to find a balance between their life and

caregiving for a loved one in need.

"Millennials are most likely to be working while caregiving," LaFleur said "Younger caregivers are less likely to share with their employer that they are spending all this energy and time – on average over 20 hours a week – caring for someone in their family."

She added that this can result in decreased time management skills, leading to negative feedback professionally, such as being passed over for promotions. But she also noted that millennials are resilient and comfortable finding assistance online.

"As a whole, millennials are more willing to seek out resources, look for more information and formulate their own social circles," LaFleur said.

Since the symposium is virtual for the second consecutive year, younger caregivers are able to easily access it online.

"You can access the event on your phone, laptop, iPad. It's a very adaptable type of platform to utilize," Medina said.

To register for the symposium, call the Alzheimer's Association Hudson Valley Chapter at 800-272-3900 or visit alz.org/hudsonvalley.

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Info and Recommendations to Help Youngsters Who Specialize in a Sport

Some time ago participation in sports was driven by comradery, enjoyment and a need to pass time while staying active and out of trouble.

Athletics have evolved massively, both physically and mentally, with strength programs and practices for athletes being highly structured, focused and intense. This shift has led to bigger, stronger, more skilled athletes as competition to participate at the highest levels has intensified.

People have long studied the idea of what makes a better athlete, and while physical stature, attributes and genetics play a large role, time on task is potentially an even greater factor. Simply put, the more hours spent on a specific sport, the more likely that child or athlete is to become elite.

People who define sport specialization agree that these athletes start at a younger age, dedicate full athletic commitment to a sport and increase their level of participation.



By Dr. Tyler Fallon

Some athletes perform multiple sports at a high level year-round and are not included in this group.

Sport specialization gradually increases each year as adolescents age, and its definition differs from sport to sport. For example, tennis, figure skating and ballet dancers have higher rates of sport specialization than soccer or lacrosse and begin at younger ages.

These two bigger questions remain: Is it worth it to specialize in a sport? What is the price to pay?

Generally, the more an athlete practices and hours spent performing a certain skill, the better he or she will be at the skill, and this applies to both team and individual sports. Diversifying an athlete's sports, especially at a young age, could potentially provide the athlete with valuable physical and cognitive attributes.

While not proven, exposing an athlete to many sports early in adolescence, followed

by specializing at about 15 or 16 years old, may lead to better social attributes within the athlete, more enjoyment, less risk of burnout, higher skill or performance level and potentially fewer injuries.

Burnout and psychological stress caused by high demand of performance and success contribute to children dropping out of sports. Years and usually thousands of dollars spent on transportation, team fees, equipment and training can all be wasted if the child has had enough. When a child specializes before adolescence, and with an inadequate off season or rest time, the risk for burnout is likely higher.

Risk of injury always exists for all athletes. Unfortunately, with sport specialization, higher injury rates are often found. There are many reasons for this. Some risk factors that may lead to repetitive use injuries include higher competition level, higher demand of intense practice time, reduced off-season time or insufficient rest.

A way to combat this is to develop a strength and conditioning program in the off season and a maintenance program during the season. The program utilizes research

to predict common repetitive use injuries and looks biomechanically at the athlete in order to stabilize areas and add mobility to others.

There is no special formula to ensure a child's success in a sport. A strength and conditioning program, however, can help athletes in many ways, including improving performance and reducing the risk for injury.

A physical therapist, with a background in strength and conditioning, can combine the knowledge of common repetitive use injuries and pathology in order to create a preventative program that will promote the athlete's success.

So, if specializing in a sport is in the cards for your athlete, be sure to have them take good care of their bodies both physically and mentally.

Dr. Tyler Fallon is a physical therapist at ProClinix Sports Physical Therapy & Chiropractic in Pleasantville. For more information about this article or about ProClinix, Fallon can be reached at 914-202-0700 or at tfallon@proclinix.com. You may also visit www.ProClinix.com.



Volunteer Safely at Home or in Person During Global Volunteer Month

April is Global Volunteer Month, a time to recognize the power of volunteers to tackle society's greatest challenges.

Launched last year by Points of Light, the world's largest nonprofit dedicated to accelerating people-powered change, Global Volunteer Month serves to activate volunteers and support the most vulnerable populations. And over the past year, volunteers have joined the ranks of frontline workers and first responders to fight against COVID-19, support the vaccination roll-out, address systemic racism and ensure equity and opportunity for all.

"We launched Global Volunteer Month last year during a time of great uncertainty that made it even more important for us to find ways to unite communities and connect people despite distance," said Natalye Paquin, president and CEO of Points of Light.

A recent survey demonstrates that despite all the obstacles, 2020 marked one of the most civically-engaged years in history. Fifty-two percent of Americans surveyed volunteered for the first time during the pandemic. However, seven out of 10 respondents reported that while the effects of COVID-19 on their community made them more eager to volunteer, they've hesitated due to safety concerns.

To volunteer safely during Global Volunteer Month and beyond, consider these ideas and tips from Points of Light:

1. Offer vaccination assistance. Scheduling vaccinations can be tricky, particularly for those who aren't web-savvy or don't speak English as a first language. Whether you work with individuals in your extended network or volunteer with organizations helping to centralize vaccination information, there are many ways to be involved from home. On-site opportunities to help people navigate their vaccination appointment also exist, and your assistance may be especially needed if you're



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multilingual. Vaccination distribution centers follow all CDC social distancing guidelines to ensure the health and safety of volunteers.

2. Give rides to medical appointments. Seniors without transportation often need rides to life-sustaining medical appointments. With the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine, this need has increased. Connect with a local organization near you that follows protocols to keep drivers and the elderly safe.

3. Support food distribution. The concurrent medical and economic crises have made grocery shopping dangerous for some, and unaffordable for others. Drive-through food distribution centers and contactless drop-off services are essential social protection programs you can support. As more people get vaccinated, an increasing number of in-person volunteer opportunities will likely open up and be needed in food banks.

4. Comfort the grieving. Those who are grieving often need critical emotional support. While some organizations are searching for licensed counselors to make comfort calls, others are looking for anyone with a big heart

and a listening ear.

5. Maintain public spaces. As warm weather arrives, communities are looking for volunteers to beautify and improve the local environment of public parks and spaces.

6. Help students succeed. Even in normal years, many families need assistance with school supplies and homework help, and the pandemic has only exacerbated these issues. Help students succeed by providing virtual tutoring through a homework helpline or by contributing to or hosting a donation drive for school supplies.

7. Support health initiatives. After facing long periods of isolation, there is a growing demand to help build strong communities by supporting local fitness and nutrition programs. Virtual and in-person opportunities abound for people of all professional backgrounds and skillsets, ranging from coaching youth runners to widening access to nutrition information in low-income neighborhoods.

8. Show gratitude. Recognize and thank first responders, volunteers and frontline

workers. Many say that handwritten letters are the most cherished items received in care packages. This is also a great way to get kids involved!

9. Make connections. During the pandemic, homebound people have been more isolated than ever. Organizations are looking for volunteers to make regular phone calls to provide companionship and determine if individuals are in need of additional assistance.

10. Just volunteer! Visit pointsoflight.org/volunteer to find a local affiliate in your area, search the world's largest digital hub for volunteering and community engagement opportunities, as well as to find tips and best practices for safely volunteering from home or in communities. And be sure to inspire others to uplift their communities by sharing your experiences using #GlobalVolunteerMonth on social media.

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Crossword Answers

1	A	T	T	I	C	6	S	T	A	M	P
11	C	H	I	N	A	12	O	W	N	E	R
13	T	E	E	N	S	14	M	O	T	T	O
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17	S	O	I	L		21	E	L	D	E	R
26	I	N	T	E	N	T	I	O	N	A	L
28	T	E	S	T	E	R		29	E	D	G
					30	W	O				
32	A	C	U	T	E			36	D	A	T
41	D	O	S	E	S			42	O	L	I
43	S	W	E	A	T			44	R	E	N

The Importance of Trusts and How They Can Help Families

The COVID-19 crisis has exemplified how loss of control can destabilize families. Besides work and school interruptions, institutional shutdowns complicated the regular flow of legal and transactional activity.

Estate plans reliant on court intervention or bank authorization faced delays in their implementation and administration. The passing of a loved one is difficult enough, but if barriers exist that thwart the smooth transition of one's legacy, then the impact can be damaging.

Wills and trusts are the two foundational estate planning documents that direct how a person's assets are handled and by whom. The instructions laid out in a will do not go into effect until after the will's creator dies and the will document is accepted by the appropriate court.

Probate is the process by which a will is reviewed by the court and the necessary parties connected to both the decedent and the will itself are identified and recognized. Courts require specific accompanying documents to complete

the probate process, including petitions, waivers and consents, affidavits and sometimes family trees. Document issues, unreliable family members and unanticipated delays will stymie efforts to wrap up an estate.

Revocable trusts and irrevocable trusts bypass the probate process following the death of the trust creator.

Revocable trusts may be changed, amended or revoked by the trust creator up until their passing. Irrevocable trusts grant powers to a trustee chosen by the

trust creator and the trust may not be materially altered. Irrevocable trusts offer increased asset protection while revocable trusts allow for greater flexibility.

Within both types of trust documents are instructions for carrying out an estate plan without the need for court approval. Control is maintained by a named trustee. By stressing speed and simplicity an estate plan buttressed with trusts can usually ensure that one's legacy is carried out with fewer interruptions.

One illustration of the differences between a will and a trust is how a house is transferred. A homeowner having sole ownership of the property may leave the home to an adult child in the will. Following the homeowner's passing, the will must be located and the named executor must complete a probate petition. Every distribute or heir-at-law of the decedent must execute a waiver and consent, while parties named in the will receive a Notice of Probate.

An estranged adult child may not want to execute the waiver and consent. This is not an uncommon occurrence. A citation will be issued with a return date to allow the estranged child an opportunity to appear in the matter. If there are no further issues, then the court may grant Letters Testamentary.

Once the estate is opened, creditors have a seven-month window to file against the estate in a manner which would hold the executor liable should estate assets be prematurely distributed



By Alan D. Feller, Esq.

without satisfying valid debts. By the time an executor's deed transfers the property to the adult child named in the will, the process will have taken many months.

For trusts, the property deed will be directly transferred from the existing owner to the trust itself, accepted by the named trustee. The property's ownership

will remain in the trust until such time that the trust directs its transfer to a named party or directs it to be sold with proceeds distributed. Court approval is not part of this transfer.

The stark contrast between wills and trusts in terms of legacy planning highlight the importance of utilizing trusts to maintain control and efficiency in turbulent times.

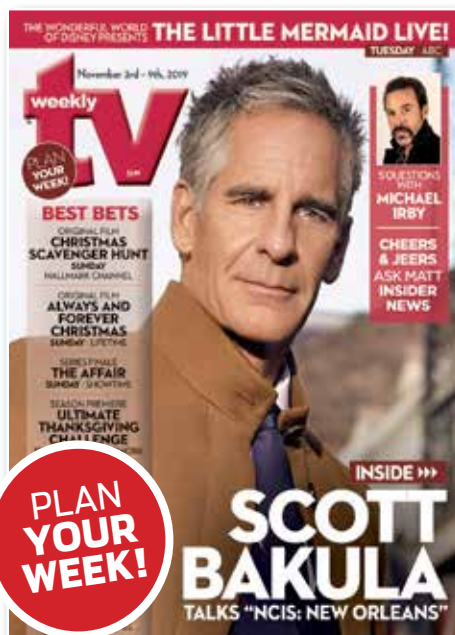
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The Influences on Purchasing a Bottle of Wine for Your Table



By Nick Antonaccio

You sit down to a meal with a bottle of wine on your table. Have you ever thought how that bottle of wine arrived in your home?

We've become accustomed, in this 21st year of the new century, to high-speed logistics and high-pressure marketing. With greater sophistication and a refined awareness of global choices, Americans are spending their wine budget dollars more selectively than ever before. And many have taken full advantage of the new social media resources bubbling up in the last decade.

Consumers now have so many choices for good wine at great prices – and many more channels to pursue for obtaining these wines and prices. For most of the last century, walking into a local wine shop was the primary means of purchasing wines. Today, opportunities to purchase wines have expanded. One can order directly from wineries in certain instances, order from flash sales sites through internet subscriptions and enroll in local, regional and national wine clubs.

The emergence of these new channels has raised questions of propriety and compliance

with government regulations. Wines have been traditionally marketed through three tiers of government-mandated channels: wineries sell to wholesalers (distributors or importers) who in turn are the exclusive source for retail wine shops.

There are positive and negative aspects of this government-mandated hierarchy.

For wineries, it provides a valuable channel into retail shops they otherwise could not afford to tap. Distributors have broad logistics networks, marketing programs and advertising budgets to promote winery offerings they elect to distribute.

But not all is rosy for wineries. Have you walked into wine shops across the county and noticed how many similar wine labels adorn shelves and displays? Retail shops are handcuffed in their choices of wines by relying on larger distributors who can dictate selections and can control shelf space by setting favorable prices (within regulations).

Smaller wineries, with smaller production levels, can't offer enough product

into the distributor food chain to make it worthwhile for distributors to market their wines. (Consumer demand must be met. If a wine is successful, repeat sales requests must be able to be fulfilled. Small producers don't fit this business model.)

For consumers, reliance on large-scale monolithic distributor channels denies a willing retail purchaser the opportunity to



discover excellent wines that may not fit the large distributors' business model. Have you ever read of a highly-rated wine produced in small quantities or visited a small winery tasting room and been bowled over by a wine, only to find they aren't available in local retail shops? It's economy of scale at work in a free market worst case.

But the market control by distributors noted above is theoretically, if not practically, offset by government oversight.

The three-tier system is a carryover from the Temperance Movement of the post-Prohibition era. It has dictated how wine travels from local winery sources to the consumer's table since the end of Prohibition in 1933. This system was created in part to thwart illegal trafficking in the delivery of wine to previously wine-deprived consumers, and in part to stifle the menacing threat of organized crime to control the industry.

These regulations are mandated at the federal government level but are carried out by state bureaucracies, who act unilaterally in setting individual regulations within a state's borders – and who have been somewhat

lethargic when policing wine sales.

Advances in technology are changing the landscape of the three-tier system. Do the rise of Internet wine sales and cross-border wine clubs conform to government regulations? Are many of these new channels in violation of such regulations? And most importantly, can state bureaucratic agencies keep pace with such rapid changes?

Are the 21st century channels in compliance with the nearly 100-year-old government mandates? As one might expect, capitalists and entrepreneurs constantly push the envelope of legal requirements, while governmental bureaucrats are slow to react.

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

You Heard It Through the Grapevine

The Rock of Lisdarush: A Long Journey Home

My grandfather, Frank McGowan, left Ireland in 1890, to seek his fortune in America. He was a post-Famine Irishman, raised on his parents' memories of the Gorta Mór, or Great Hunger, of the 1840s, when millions of Irish starved to death in the wake of a recurrent potato blight.

Post-Famine Ireland offered little for its children, and they fled in the millions. He returned to Ireland on a trip in 1923, years after his parents had died. A photo shows him, his wife and several relatives in front of the mud-walled, white-washed, thatched roof cottage where he had been born. How often I gazed at that photo as a boy, knowing only that the house was somewhere in Leitrim, in a townland called Lisdarush.

With that information, I set out early on a Monday morning 22 years ago from Galway, on my first trip to Ireland, to do two things. First, to meet my father's 99-year-old cousin Paddy, the last of my family still living in Ireland; and second, to find where that cottage hopefully still stood. It was several hours drive, without benefit of a morning cup of coffee, but as I drew closer to my destination, I felt a strong sense of belonging, like I was coming home.



Irish Eclectic

When I reached the market town close to my grandfather's birthplace, I was directed to Collins's Pub, a small place "up the road" where I was sure to find a cup of coffee. On the way there, I spied a road sign pointing up a narrow track that climbed into the

surrounding mountains: "Lisdarush." Intriguing, but I pushed on to Collins's anyway, where I met a young farmer named Michael, his wife and five-year-old daughter, enjoying a late morning pint.

"A tourist, are you?" asked Michael. "What are you doing out here, in the back of beyond?"

My Irish raised up. I explained that in the rest of Ireland I might be a tourist, but here in Leitrim, I was coming home. In fact, I told him, I had seen a road sign pointing up a hillside to Lisdarush, where my grandfather was born.

"Why, that's my townland!" Michael exclaimed. He asked my name again, and I gave him a thumbnail sketch of the family history, and how the house and small plot of land had been sold in the 1940s when the next generation of the family moved to England. Michael's eyes went wide.

"You won't believe this, but my father

bought that farm from your relative, and it is indeed up that road, and I live next door," he said. "The place is all a ruin now, though if you had been here 12 months ago the walls would still be standing, only my brother Henry came back from England, and he knocked the place down to build a big house across the road. I told him it was a sacrilege to do that, to knock down someone's home."

Michael promised he would take me to the site, and I was happy beyond belief.

Just then a big fellow walked in and passed us with a grunt. Michael was silent. The barmaid pulled the big fellow a pint.

"That there is my brother Henry," Michael said loudly. "Henry," he continued. "You knocked down this man's house, and he's come all the way from America to find out what you're going to do about it."

You could have heard a pin drop in the silence that followed.

"It's sorry I am," said Henry, "that I knocked down your house. But it was of no fecking use to me."

Now, "fecking" is a common term in Ireland, more along the lines of "bloody," and not the foul language we strive to avoid here.

I told him it was all right, and if I could



By Brian McGowan

just get up there and retrieve a stone from the ruin, I would be happy.

"Ah, if you're after stones, sure, that's all there is there. It's why they all left in the first place."

The rest of the day was magical. I worked a flagstone from what remained of the kitchen floor, and carried it, hidden in a knapsack, onto our return flight without being searched and

questioned. I met cousin Paddy, who was a gem. And I still have that stone, which the voices of my ancestors have echoed upon for at least several hundred years.

When I go back for my next trip, early next year, I just may stop by there again, and have a coffee at Collins's Pub, where the strangest twist of fate once brought me home.

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

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