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January 18 - January 24, 2022

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 16, Issue 750

No. Castle Denies Mariani Gardens Permit Extension Citing COVID Changes

By Martin Wilbur

The North Castle Town Board denied extending a special use permit for the new owners of the former Mariani Gardens site in Armonk, delaying site plan review of a proposed 43-unit residential project and property clean-up.

The board unanimously agreed last Wednesday evening to re-examine shifts in traffic patterns near the 4.1-acre parcel on Bedford Road and a growing number of commercial and office vacancies in the hamlet. Both are apparently a result of changes caused by the pandemic since the permit was initially issued in October 2019.

Town Attorney Roland Baroni told the board the vacancies are significant enough to justify the board taking another look at the project.

"I think there has been a significant change in nearby properties," Baroni said.

"Many of the office buildings (on) Bedford Road, Main Street, MacDonald Avenue are increasingly vacant, office space is no longer something that's needed by many people. That's primarily due to COVID and a number of property owners have approached the town, at least informally, to see if there's a way the buildings can be repurposed to something else."

Despite receiving the permit more than two years ago, applicant 45 Bedford Road LLC never went to the Planning Board for site plan review because of personal squabbles among the three partners. One of those partners, Mark Mariani, went into bankruptcy in early 2020, and a settlement to pay off his 50 percent share of the mortgage needed to be completed.

That was officially done earlier in the day last Wednesday, said attorney Kory Salomone, who now represents the new six-member partnership that calls itself

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MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The grounds of the former Mariani Gardens site in November. The North Castle Town Board last week denied an extension of the special use permit, which the new owners of the property sought as they hoped to pursue site plan approval for a 43-unit residential complex.

P'ville Seeks to Control Nannahagan Pond Floods, Protect Pool Facility

By Abby Luby

Construction of a new Pleasantville village pool will begin at the end of the 2022 summer season, driving a concern to prevent flooding from the adjacent Nannahagan Pond that has previously damaged the existing facility.

At last week's Pleasantville Village Board meeting, Bob DeBruin of DeBruin Engineering in Westbury, N.Y., presented a detailed report on how to mitigate and offset future flooding from the pond.

Damage was sustained to the pool and pool house as a result of Hurricane Ida near the end of last summer. The hurricane,

categorized as a highly-destructive 100-year storm, forced the village to end the pool season just before Labor Day weekend. A previous major storm saw the pond overflow, dumping mud and silt into the pumps and pool building, which damaged the piping, filtration, treatment and electrical systems.

DeBruin told village officials that the dam over Nannahagan Brook was built in 1908 and caused the formation of Nannahagan Pond.

"The source of all the water contributing to the pond is from a watershed that is some 854 acres," DeBruin explained, showing an image of the watershed covering a vast area surrounding the pond.

Currently, water flowing over the dam discharges over two weirs,

or walls, and into an open channel between the lake and the walkway adjacent to the pool building. There are also two bypass pipes that, during a storm, carry the water from the lake and discharge it into the channel.

At the walkway, the channel flows into a seven-foot-wide by six-foot-high box culvert that runs under the pool building and parking lot before emptying into Nannahagan Brook, which then flows through the village and eventually empties into the Saw Mill River.

"The problem with a big storm, when the flooding starts, the water level rises and goes over the wall between the walkway and the building, seriously flooding the

pool area," DeBruin said.

He presented the village with a series of mitigation options that would protect the new pool and be able to withstand the flow of what has been considered a 100-year storm, now a more frequent event as predicted by scientists. The five options are estimated to cost from \$100,000 to \$1.1 million.

Mitigation includes dredging the pond to increase the pond's detention capacity, raising the walls and constructing a new culvert. DeBruin recommended raising the walls around the channel and constructing a new culvert around the south side of the pool building.

He proposed that the work be done in tandem with the new pool project, and suggested the culvert

be constructed in place using a poured-in-place concrete floor, gunite walls and pre-cast concrete top slabs. The culvert would be adjusted to measure eight feet wide by five-and-a-half feet high. The weirs at the pond would not be modified but could be at some point in the future.

The plan would cost about \$1 million, DeBruin said.

The village is planning to put the pool project out to bid by early May and award the bid in June. An estimate of 90 percent of the project's total cost is expected by early next month. Officials are planning to move forward with a bond resolution that gives them authority to borrow up to a specific amount.

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No. Castle Denies Mariani Gardens Permit Extension Citing COVID Changes

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NCD Acquisitions.

However, councilmen Matt Milim and Jose Berra, the latter being the only board member who voted against both the June 2019 rezone and the special use permit, raised the noticeable traffic pattern changes that have occurred during the past two years. With more people working from home and parents of schoolchildren more likely to drive their kids to school, it is not the same environment as it was in 2019, they contended.

"I think that these traffic pattern changes will not be just temporary," Berra said. "They're induced by COVID, that's been the catalyst, but they're continuing

from everything I can see. Nobody's got a crystal ball, but it really does look like the impact will really have to be considered."

Salomone countered that any potential change of uses at other properties in Armonk should not influence the board's decision because they are hypothetical. Furthermore, a right-hand turn lane from Bedford Road onto Maple Avenue would ease traffic congestion outside the site during peak hours, a point that the board agreed with in 2019.

"This is the same plan. We're ready to move forward with it right now," Salomone said. "If the Town Board wants to see this site cleaned up and the project comes to

fruition, now is the time to extend the application and let us get going, and we're ready to do that."

The property has laid fallow during the past two years while the financial and legal issues among the partners were being resolved. There are gaps in the fencing near the property's perimeter and the parking lot and former greenhouse have been deteriorating.

Since the board granted the permit, 45 Bedford Road LLC obtained a one-year extension from October 2020 until this past October and then a 90-day extension, while the bankruptcy proceedings were wrapped up. The 90-day extension expired last Friday.

At last week's board meeting, several opponents of the plan, who had argued the project was too dense for the parcel during the rezoning and special use permit hearings which could jeopardize the character of the historic district, urged the board to reconsider its position.

Banksville resident Sharon Tomback, the town's co-historian who was speaking only on her own behalf, appealed to officials to "stand on the side of historic preservation."

"The town's history assets are non-renewable, they can be lost piece by piece over time if you make the wrong decisions," Tomback said.

Armonk resident Kate Parker said the project would be at a crucial gateway to the hamlet and should be reassessed.

"This is our history, this is who we are and to put up a development like this right across the street devalues our history and it devalues our town, and that devalues us," Parker said. "So I think you have a choice and I think you can go one way and you can do a really thoughtful, thought-through development."

Salomone said many of the same arguments were made during the review of Armonk Square about a decade ago. Today, "it's the best thing in town," he said.

"Your board already looked at all the general and specific standards here," he said. "We're ready to go with the plan, clean up the site, get the project moving."

Supervisor Michael Schiliro said he agreed with his colleagues that concerns about changes in the town near the site were warranted.

"There are a lot of real things that have changed in how we operated our lives, especially in town, a small town like this," he said.

Salomone said his clients would return with the same plan in hopes of re-obtaining the special use permit.

P'ville Seeks to Control Nannahagan Pond Floods, Protect Pool Facility

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The new pool will mostly be funded by the bond, which would be subject to a permissive referendum. A modest increase in pool membership fees is expected to contribute toward the project's cost. Construction would begin in the fall soon after the swim season ends on Labor Day.

Mayor Peter Scherer said a decision on which mitigation option to pursue must be made relatively soon.

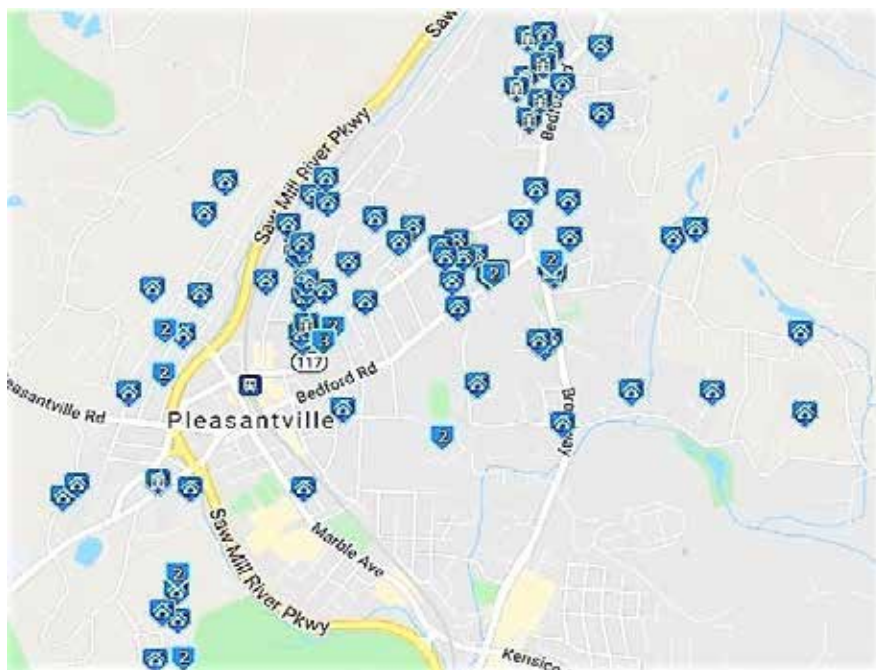
"It's going to be expensive whatever we do but we have no choice but to do it now," Scherer said. "One would hate to spend a lot of money on a new pool and have this (flooding) damage happen and affect the new pool and pool house."

Scherer said the cost of the flooding mitigation would likely be added to the bond.

"There may also be some infrastructure money floating around; whether we could compete for it is another question," he said.

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

These 2021 Pleasantville Sales Were Added To Loretta's Map!



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WINE OF THE YEAR

2020 Anne Pichon Grenache Noir

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\$14⁹⁷



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Dan's Wine of the Year

2014 Casa Santos Lima Reserva

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

\$11⁹⁷

Jason's Wine of the Year

2019 Oak Farm Tievoli Cabernet Sauvignon

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

\$14⁹⁷

Suburban's Sparkling Wine of the Year

NV Isotta Manzoni Prosecco Rose

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

\$13⁹⁷

Tom's Wine of the Year

2018 Laurent Combier Crozes Hermitage

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

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Progress Made in COVID Cases, Positivity Rate But Hurdles Remain

By Martin Wilbur

New York State has seen a significant drop in COVID-19 cases over the past week, giving officials hope that the worst days of this winter's surge fueled by the Omicron variant may soon be over.

Positive cases fell on Sunday to 26,772, for a 13.1 percent statewide infection rate, although the numbers may be somewhat skewed because there was about one-third to one-half the number of tests administered during the middle of the long holiday weekend, according to the state COVID-19 tracker. There were only 204,126 people tested, down from between 300,000 to nearly 400,000 each one of the preceding five days.

However, even before what could be a statistical anomaly, daily positives and the percentage of positive cases have declined from a high of 90,132 on Jan. 7 and a more than 22 percent infection rate to a low of 47,840 new cases on Jan. 13. The daily infection rate fell to 12.9 percent on Saturday and 13.1 percent on Sunday.

"This is a very positive trend and I believe we're going to be able to keep that going," Gov. Kathy Hochul said. "I want to thank New Yorkers, thank you for hanging in there with us through 2020, 2021 and hopefully not too much of 2022, and it's because you got vaccinated, you wear your masks."

However, the state is not out of danger just yet, the governor warned. COVID-19 hospitalizations are still very high at 11,751 as of Sunday, including 1,196 newly-admitted patients statewide. There were also 152 deaths



TOM STAUDTER PHOTO

Last week state Sen. Peter Harcham, right, delivered 1,000 boxes of COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test kits to community organizations throughout his district. He is seen with, from left, Darryl Francis, senior youth advocate of the Peekskill Youth Bureau; Tuesday Paige McDonald, executive director of the Peekskill Youth Bureau; and Peekskill Mayor Vivian McKenzie.

throughout New York on Jan. 16.

Additionally, available hospital beds were dwindling in several upstate regions that were near or below 10 percent as of Sunday, the threshold set by Hochul to suspend elective surgeries. The Finger Lakes region had just 5 percent of its hospital beds available while the Capital region availability stood at 9 percent. The Mohawk Valley had 10 percent availability with Western New York and Central New York at 11 percent each and the Southern Tier at 12 percent.

The Mid Hudson Region, which includes Westchester and Putnam counties, had 17

percent of its hospital beds empty. New York City had 16 percent and Long Island 23 percent.

"They're still too high," Hochul said of the hospitalizations. "I mean 12,000 is not something we're saying is a positive news story. It is still very high, but this will hopefully catch up with the trend (of lower cases) that's happening."

She said the areas with the low hospital bed availability have among the lowest vaccination rates in the state. Hochul said the most alarming statistic was that 91 percent of newly hospitalized five- to 11-year-olds are

unvaccinated.

"It doesn't have to be that way," the governor said. "Unnecessary, preventable and that's what we're going to keep talking about, is how to make sure that we get our kids protected."

Westchester's positivity rate declined to 12.2 percent with 978 new positives on Sunday, down from 2,171 new cases on Saturday, although just 8,078 people were tested Sunday, just under half the number from the day before.

The state reported that Putnam County had 134 new positives, for a 17.3 percent rate on Sunday.

Despite the declining number of new daily cases in Westchester, active cases from the last update on Thursday, Jan. 13 reached 47,069, more than 11,000 additional cases from the previous reporting from Jan. 9. The county had not updated that figure since Jan. 13.

While the infection rate and the raw number of cases are declining, Hochul was non-committal last Friday about whether she will lift the statewide indoor public space mask mandate at the end of the month. She initially called for the mandate to start on Dec. 13 and run until Jan. 15, then earlier this month extended it through the end of January.

Hochul said state health officials will continue to monitor the situation and make the best call when a decision has to be made.

"They'll come a time when we assess this, we'll determine if any protections need to be put in place any longer, but in my opinion, the sooner the better to allow people to feel liberated from this pandemic and we'll be delighted to make the announcement at the right time," she said.

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Criticisms Continue for Proposed Mt. Kisco Cell Tower Application

By Martin Wilbur

Despite reducing tree removal and eliminating encroachment in the buffer, the Mount Kisco Planning Board heard sharp criticisms last week from residents and other interested parties against a proposed solar farm on a 25-acre parcel.

Public speakers at the continuation of the public hearing last Tuesday evening for SCS Sarles St. LLC's proposed solar array at 180 S. Bedford Rd. remained adamant that removal of the 546 trees, including 192 specimen trees, was excessive. Removing that number of trees on the 25-acre parcel would also threaten the habitat for a wide variety of species, some participants argued.

"There is a responsible way to do solar and it's not by trading green for green and putting a solar farm in the middle of a forest on top of a hill with steep slopes on every side," said Anne Niemann, a member of the neighboring Marsh Sanctuary's board of directors. "It must be done responsibly and that means on existing landscapes and rooftops."

Several speakers continued to call for the Planning Board to make a positive declaration under the state Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), which

means that a far more detailed analysis is needed because of potential adverse environmental impacts.

Nearby resident George Coppola said the proposed replanting of trees by the applicant would be inadequate in size and scope and called the proposal "a grotesque environmental and ecological rape."

"There is no way that the trees that they plant will come up to more than a percent of the biomass you'll be removing and that's what's important," Coppola said. "We'll all be dead before those trees that are planted are mature."

SCS Sarles St. representatives said they have listened to the concerns raised by the board and the public and have reduced the number of trees slated for removal from 684 living trees and 40 dead trees to 546 living trees and 33 dead ones.

Furthermore, the reduction of just over 100 panels and the reconfiguration of the stormwater facilities enabled the applicant's professionals to have no encroachment into the property's 200-foot buffer. Stormwater retention basins have been replaced with a subsurface system that will eliminate visual impacts.

William Null, the attorney for the applicant, said the project also preserves nearly 17 acres of the site as open space,

and his client will receive credit for specimen trees preserved under the village's code.

"We need to balance all these issues while understanding we're trying to minimize the extent to which trees are removed for a solar field," Null said. "Shade is not something that works. Obviously, it involves significantly less tree removal than would a residential development on this site, but we're dealing with what the impacts are for this particular project as well as understanding the context of the importance of a solar field for community solar being considered in the region and what the impacts are."

Most Planning Board members who spoke said they were encouraged by the revisions to the plan that seeks to limit impacts. However, board member Michael McGuirk was concerned that the tree mitigation plan was not compliant with the village's regulations.

While that doesn't necessarily stop the project for him, McGuirk said the village needs to decide how the mitigation is achieved, and if the applicant pays a fee, where else in the village would hundreds of trees be planted.

"I think everybody on the board and everybody on the applicant's team has to

know that trying to install a Tier 3 solar facility in the middle of a forest was going to be a much heavier lift than putting it on a couple of acres of a parking lot," McGuirk said.

Board Chairman Michael Bonforte reminded the public and fellow board members that a solar farm on at least 25 acres in the Conservation District is a permitted use.

"This development is still going to take down trees, okay, and if they replace them somewhere else or contribute to a fund, it's a separate issue," he said.

Complicating the issue is the status of the stalled Homeland Towers cell tower project for a different portion of the same parcel. Last February, Homeland Towers began searching for an alternative site to address the coverage gap along the Route 172 corridor. However, they have not kept up to date with their escrow fund and the board has refused to entertain the application under those circumstances.

If the cell tower application were to move forward, it could impact the board's decision on whether to make a positive or negative declaration under SEQRA.

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Q: Who is considered high-risk?

A: If you currently smoke or have a long history of smoking, you may be considered high-risk. Of course, even lifetime non-smokers sometimes get lung cancer. Exposure to second-hand smoke, asbestos, or a family history of lung cancer can all increase risk. For the safest approach, speak to your doctor about any of the above risk factors. If your physician recommends a lung cancer screening, don't delay.

Q: How are patients screened and treated?

A: Patients are screened with a noninvasive low-dose CT scan, which only takes a minute. It's a very sensitive test for diagnosing lung cancer. If the cancer is in the early stages, the most advanced treatment option is minimally invasive robotic surgery, which enables me

to move surgical instruments more precisely, so I'm not damaging healthy surrounding tissue. In addition, I'm able to make tiny incisions, so there's less bleeding and pain for the patient. At NWH, we also offer advanced ablation techniques, which use image guidance to insert a needle through the skin into the tumor. Other options include burning or freezing the tumor, or stereotactic radiosurgery, which uses radiation without an incision.

Q: What if surgery is too risky for the patient?

A: Some patients have advanced lung disease, very bad emphysema, or heart disease, and surgery is too risky. If the patient is too high-risk, the cancer is too advanced or the patient doesn't want surgery, an option is immunotherapy, a newer treatment. Immunotherapy is a targeted treatment that revs up the immune system so it's better able to fight the cancer. It's been remarkably effective. I have patients who are in complete remission. It's a wonderful advancement in the treatment of lung cancer. As part of the Northwell Health Cancer Institute, we're able to expand our ability to bring top-rated cancer specialists, state-of-the-art technology, leading-edge clinical trials and a full range of support programs so community members can get the best cancer care right near home, in Westchester. Patients who want the most advanced cancer care don't need to travel to New York City.

P'ville Schools Form Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

By Abby Luby

More than 100 Pleasantville School District residents have signed up to volunteer for the district's new Diversity Equity and Inclusion Access (DEIA) Stakeholder Committee.

The group met for the first time on Dec. 20, and according to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tina DeSa, looked at its mission and beliefs, the strategies in the district's strategic plan and the DEI resolution. It also engaged in discussion of equity and equality.

The Board of Education initially reached

out to the community last October requesting that residents interested in serving on the DEIA committee submit an application form to the district. The form asked whether each applicant was a current student, district graduate or community member; why they were interested in participating and what they hoped to contribute. Alumni were also sent the form. The district received 114 responses.

DeSa said the committee will work with the district in carrying out part of the district's 2026 Strategic Plan, a core document developed by more than 100 community members in 2013.

"The committee will partner with the

district to identify opportunities for all children to have windows and mirrors within our schools – mirrors that reflect a child's own culture and help them take pride in who they are and windows that allow for students to have a view into the experiences of people who are different from themselves," DeSa said.

The district's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging resolution was adopted last February.

Although school board members discussed placing a cap on committee membership in the fall, DeSa said all 114 applicants are now considered committee members and will be

invited to each meeting.

On Nov. 30, board member Jill Grossman was named board liaison to the DEIA Stakeholder Committee. Board President Shane McGaffey said the full committee will meet monthly and form smaller groups, each focusing on different equity and diversity issues. The meeting will culminate with each group presenting highlights of their discussions.

For several years, the district has partnered with a variety of outside organizations to bring age-appropriate instruction to students on topics such as bullying, hate, bias and the power of words. Working with the Antidifamation League (ADL), all three Pleasantville schools have participated in its No Place for Hate program that provided professional development training to faculty and staff and curriculum mapping. It also worked directly with students over a two-day intensive training session to develop student leaders.

The district has also been working with the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center (HHREC) in White Plains and the NYU Metro Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools. HHREC lessons about the Holocaust emphasize the importance of being treated with dignity and respect and encourages students to speak up and act against bigotry and prejudice.

Last January, nine Pleasantville Middle School students participated in the HHREC's Human Rights Institute for Middle School Leaders, serving as role models to their peers and defending marginalized students.

Thoughtful Art

A group of West Patent Elementary School fifth-graders recently collaborated on a vibrant large-scale mural in art class. Inspired by lid murals that can be found throughout the building, the students decided they wanted to create a similar piece of art. They unanimously agreed to create a Mood Meter, a tool used to help students think of emotions more concretely through visualization as part of the RULER approach to social-emotional learning.



Community Trip to Germany & Poland June 18-29, 2022

Join *Steve Goldberg*, Co-Director of Education, and *Gerrit Book*, professional tour guide, formerly of the Goethe Institut, on the **first** HHREC Community Trip to visit Holocaust museums and sites in **Berlin, Warsaw, and Krakow.**

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Former Longtime Westchester Democratic Chair LaFayette Dies at 69

By Martin Wilbur

Former Westchester Democratic Chairman Reginald LaFayette, one of the leading Democrats in the county, died early Saturday. He was 69.

A cause of death was not immediately known.

LaFayette, who served as the county's Democratic elections commissioner at the Board of Elections for the past 22 years, had a long and distinguished career not only in political circles but in municipal government in his home community of Mount Vernon. He had served as comptroller and deputy comptroller as well as city clerk in Mount Vernon before he moved up to White Plains to become elections commissioner.

"I can't believe he's gone," said County Executive George Latimer who was friends with LaFayette for more than 45 years since they both worked in Mount Vernon City Hall and coaching a Little League team together. "It's a shock to the system to think about it. Some of it is because we're complete contemporaries."

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins tweeted late Saturday afternoon that LaFayette was "an iconic trailblazer" and paved the way for many Democrats to

run for office throughout Westchester.

"He was a proud leader in our county and in our state," Stewart-Cousins said. "Reggie played a huge role in my life as he did with so many Democrats through his decades of service. I owe a tremendous debt to him for where I am today. He will be incredibly missed, but always remembered."

For 16 years he was chair of the county Democratic Committee, the longest tenure of anyone who led the party. He announced in 2020 that he would not seek another term and was replaced by Suzanne Berger of Greenburgh.

He had also served as president of the Mount Vernon Lions Club and was an executive vice president of the city's chapter of the NAACP.

Politicos in Mount Vernon and elsewhere in Westchester had repeatedly leaned on LaFayette to run for office, Latimer said. Specifically, he remembered him being asked to consider runs for city council and mayor but never did.

The Board of Legislators released a statement late Saturday after his death was confirmed, expressing shock and deep sadness at the loss. It said that he was devoted to having the electoral process run well and helped lead the county's elections

through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"He performed his many duties with passion and humor, the committee's statement read in part. "He was a personal friend to many of us and he will be greatly missed. We extend our deepest sympathies to his family, friends and colleagues."

"I am in utter shock," said County Legislator Terry Clements, chair of the Black Democrats of Westchester County. "Reggie was not only a friend, but a powerful figure in Westchester. Reggie was tough, hard-working, dedicated and passionate and I am going to miss my friend deeply."

Latimer credited him with diversifying the county's judiciary by convincing many women and people of color to run for the bench and providing opportunities for others to run for elected office. LaFayette rose to prominence as Democrats went from being the minority to the majority party in Westchester.

"He understood, certainly in the African American community over these years, the striving of African Americans to gain greater equality in the county, certainly in Mount Vernon first and then later," Latimer said. "He was in the forefront of that in the political world...but it began with his humanity."



Reggie LaFayette, the former Westchester County Democratic Party chair who was still serving as elections commissioner, died suddenly last Saturday morning.

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Letters to the Editor

An Open Letter to Supervisor Becker on Cortlandt Quarry Property

Dr. Becker, I hope this letter finds you in good health. My family has been very fortunate so far and I hope the same for you.

I have some questions regarding the proposed Cortlandt Quarry Park property in Verplanck.

One: A 2014 press release stated that the property has been bought for town residents' recreation and to move the town garage to the property. The same press release also stated that the Public Service Commission approved the sale for community use. Are they aware of these three new proposals?

Two: Being that the Hendrick Hudson School District is going to lose millions of dollars in tax revenue, shouldn't school district residents have a say in what happens on the property? I'm asking since

the Lakeland and Croton-Harmon school districts are the ones mainly having a say in this project. So why isn't Hendrick Hudson involved?

Three: Can you provide example of another project the Town of Cortlandt has pursued in which millions of dollars have been used to subsidize private industries? If so, how were those projects pursued and how have they benefitted the community?

Four: Will the advisory committee be able to see an estimate on the annual cost for upkeep and infrastructure of this development? I believe it goes without saying that we have a right to know.

Five: One proposal for the quarry property was to make it into a town pool. Would it be possible to give an estimated cost of liability insurance for the residents?

Six: Are you aware of how much

commercial real estate is vacant in the Town of Cortlandt? It seems like you're putting all of your eggs into one risky basket, in the sense that there are clearly better options in other areas. Why here?

Seven: What is the average amount of time that a commercial property is vacant in the Town of Cortlandt?

Eight: At the last meeting, Martin Russo, the representative of the project Cortlandt Pitch, stated that it would cost him \$12 million to \$14 million to build his state-of-the-art facility. In previous meetings, we were told it would be \$40 million to \$50 million to build a town garage. Why is there such an enormous cost difference? Mr. Russo also stated that he would plant trees and shrubs to hide his facility. Why couldn't the same also be done for different proposals?

As you are well aware, I believe that the proposals given out so far have no benefit to town residents and will create problematic issues.

I still stand by my desire to have a recreational center with solar panels to be used in that area. Furthermore, I believe that the proper use of that land could benefit the community, and my proposal is the only one that I can see outdoing any others you have brought to me and the committee's attention thus far.

If you have a proposal that you could bring to our attention that helps our community, please let us know.

Thank you for your time.

Christopher Vargo
Cortlandt

Descriptions of January 6 Capitol Rioters Are Not Exaggerated

The facts are that President Biden received 81 million popular votes, 306 electoral votes and Donald Trump received 74 million popular votes, 232 electoral votes. It is a fact that federal and state judges dismissed more than 60 lawsuits due to lack of evidence of voting irregularities.

Why did Trump supporters go to Washington, D.C.? Their sole intention was to obstruct the certification of the election results so as to stop Biden from becoming our 46th President. How would they stop the process?

From Nov. 2 to Jan. 6, for 65 days, Donald Trump repeatedly and falsely claimed that the 2020 presidential election had been stolen. On Jan. 6, Trump told the crowd, "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore." He urged them to march to the

Capitol. On Jan. 6, his supporters did not walk quietly into the Capitol, instead they besieged the Capitol. The videos we've all seen are dramatic evidence of agitators storming the building causing havoc, causing violent public disorder. Jan. 6 was mayhem, bedlam, madness and death.

Thank you to those who seek to defend democracy and realize the full promise of the Constitution for all Americans. Everyone has the right to vote freely and fairly and to have their vote count. To downplay that infamous day is outrageous.

Linda Wildman
Peekskill

American Democracy is Teetering on the Edge of Ruin

Fear breeds fascism, and fascism is the enemy of freedom.

This equation has been written many times on the chalkboard of history, and is readily apparent in the Republican Party's continued endorsement of Donald Trump and his lies about the 2020 Presidential election.

It is disheartening to see conservative Americans being manipulated by mesmerized politicians seeking to institute a strong-man government by weakening the democratic electoral process.

The parallels to the rise of Hitler in Germany are obvious. Republican scapegoats – immigrants, minorities, feminists, LGBTQs and liberals – blind

the conservative electorate to the real enemies of the American Dream. Those enemies are the exponentially wealthy and the unscrupulous corporations – like the Trump Organization – that dodge their fair share of the tax burden.

It's alarming to see the United States teetering on the verge of becoming a nation like the one our parents and grandparents defeated in World War II. To willingly embrace the chains of fascism is not only stupid and selfish, it is also unforgivably un-American.

Jeff Hodges
Carmel

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Guest Column

Westchester Land Trust Fights the Clock to Preserve Open Space

The Westchester Land Trust is fighting the clock.

Westchester County is under threat of losing hundreds and possibly thousands of acres of land to commercial and residential construction.

“Roughly one-third of Westchester County is open space,” said Lori Ensinger, Westchester Land Trust (WLT) president. “We estimate that about half of that land is privately owned and not permanently protected.”

That means the land could be consumed by new home building or office construction.

The WLT is currently assessing dozens of projects to preserve the land, mitigate the effects of climate change and preserve habitat diversity and biodiversity.

“Once land is converted to commercial use, it is very difficult to convert it back to its natural state,” Ensinger said.

A big part of the land trust’s conservation push is based on helping to alleviate the effects of climate change in the area.

“We call it natural infrastructure,” Ensinger said. “Westchester County contains several areas that could suffer flooding in storms, from the Long Island Sound to the Hudson River.”

Preserving the land in its natural state allows Westchester’s towns and cities to reduce the severity of flooding from severe storms because the land acts as a



By Michael Gold

sponge in soaking up water.

“Climate change is increasing the severity and frequency of storms,” Ensinger said. Flooding is the most obvious, destructive result of this phenomenon.

Also, forests and wildlands “sequester carbon from the atmosphere, provide refuge for species to migrate under changing conditions, and provide cooling to communities in the form of shade and moisture retention,” stated Steve DiFalco, WLT’s land

project coordinator, in an e-mail.

The WLT completed a land purchase of 63 acres in North Castle in early November, with the town and New York State. The property sits by Byram Lake and Byram Hill roads. The acreage, with forest land, a pond and wetlands, will be permanently protected as a nature preserve, and feature walking trails for hikers.

In August, WLT purchased 125 acres in Cortlandt, which protects habitats for plants and wildlife. In two separate transactions last year, the land trust obtained 42 acres in Bedford. Additionally, WLT bought land next to Glenwood Lake in New Rochelle in January, which will be a public nature preserve.

The land trust’s criteria for purchasing or accepting land from private donors includes the acreage’s capacity for preserving corridors for wildlife, including

everything from amphibians to insects, as well as trees and plant life.

Even though WLT has accomplished a great deal, the organization is not resting.

“We have a lot of work to do,” Ensinger said.

Right now, the land trust is working on a diverse number of projects, including urban parklands, wetlands, meadows, forests and working farms.

Ensinger said WLT would also “be pleased” to work with golf courses to preserve sections of their properties.

The WLT models good land management practices on the 1,000 acres it owns outright. For instance, it does not use fertilizer and only uses pesticides or herbicides if invasive species are spreading, which can cause the death of native plants and animals and harm biodiversity.

About 8,000 other acres in Westchester and eastern Putnam counties are held under WLT conservation easements. A conservation easement means landowners still own their property, but voluntarily agree to preserve the land they own in a natural state in perpetuity.

The land trust is very supportive of renewable energy projects, but Ensinger said these each need to be assessed individually.

“Not every parcel should have solar,” she said. “We prefer solar development for areas that are already disturbed and under-utilized.”

For instance, an abandoned shopping mall is a good candidate for solar development. A wild forest is not.

Ensinger emphasizes that the land trust supports “thoughtful development, with preservation.”

“We’re not anti-development. We believe in balanced land use on a case-by-case basis,” she said.

Nassau County presents a case study in what Westchester wants to avoid. Nassau County, a quiet, suburban county 40 years ago, has turned into an asphalt nightmare, with sprawling networks of roads, constant traffic overflow and unbridled commercial development. The WLT offers residents here a way to prevent this from happening.

“The work we do cannot be done without the help of public support,” Ensinger said. “We are reliant on donors. We get no government funding.”

Impressed with the land trust’s work to preserve Westchester’s natural areas and open space, I recently made a small contribution to the organization.

“We are all interconnected,” Ensinger stated.

In other words, we’re all in this together, to help keep Westchester and Putnam counties naturally beautiful.

Pleasantville resident Michael Gold has had op-ed articles published in the New York Daily News, the Albany Times Union, The Virginian-Pilot and other newspapers.

On the Street

Letter to the Editor

Letter Writer Receives Kudos From Fellow Letter Writer

I just want to compliment Susan Kimble for a very well-written letter to the editor, (“Putting on a Mask is a Small Sacrifice That Everyone Can Make,”

Jan. 4-10, page 10), Susan Kimble of Putnam Valley. An excellent letter, very

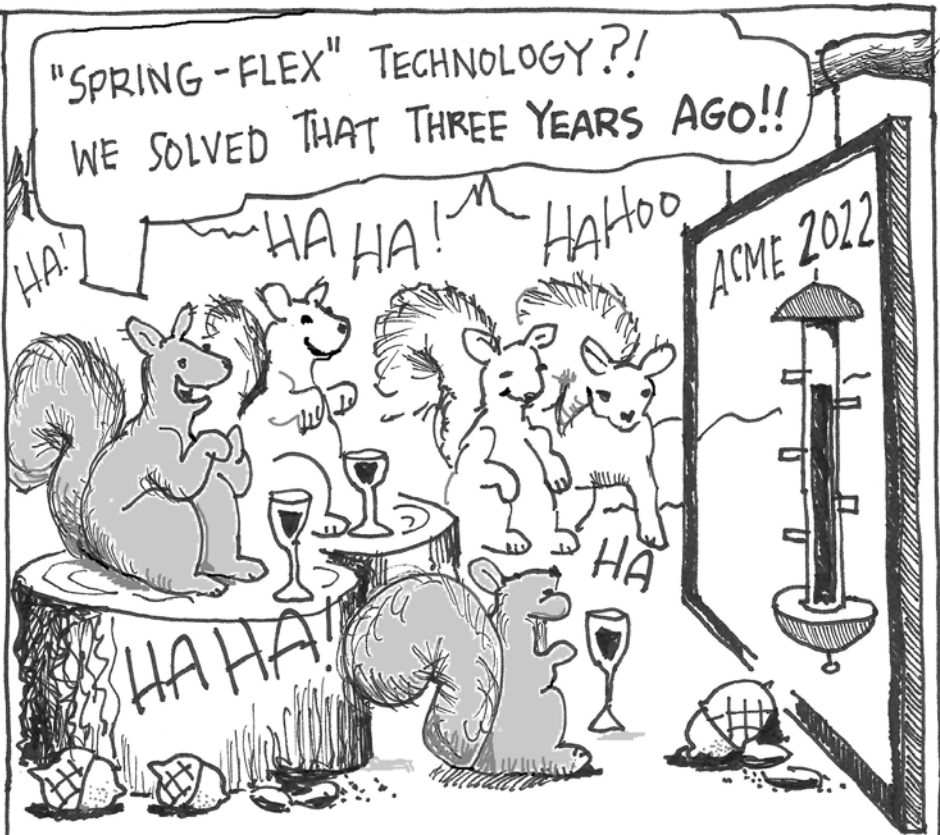
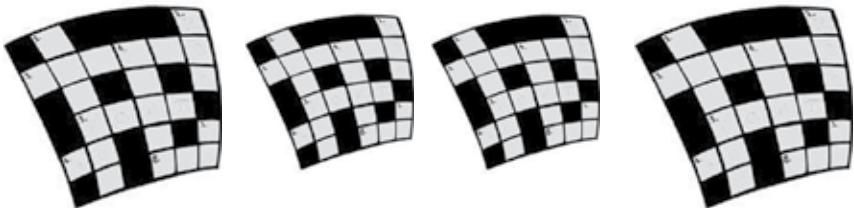
well-stated and to a very important point. Thank you!

Andrew Campbell
Mahopac Falls

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at the top of the homepage
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Every January, Earl and Dorie Gray host a little get-together during ACME's unveiling of its new line of “squirrel-proof” bird feeders.

Obituaries

Dolores Zimmerman

Dolores Ann Zimmerman, born Nov. 5, 1935, in Peekskill, passed away peacefully at Lund Home Hospice on Jan. 4 in Gilbert, Ariz.

Dolores was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Allen "Gus" Zimmerman; son James M. Zimmerman; her parents, Camillo and Augusta Bondatti; and her brother, Camillo "Miller" Bondatti.

Dolores leaves behind her three children, Kevin P. Zimmerman, Kathleen Z. Leeds and Eric J. Zimmerman; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and her much-loved sisters, Mary Ann Bondatti Schlotter, Linda Bondatti Sapp and Carol Bondatti Bogdanowitz.

A loving wife and mother, Dolores resided in Garrison with her family for many years, raising her children and enjoying life in the country. One of the most cherished memories is picking berries and grapes and bringing them home for mom to make jams and jellies.

After retirement, Dolores lived in Cambridge, N.Y. with Gus, spending time with her mother and father and helping in her sister Mary Ann's sewing shop in the village. They also spent time traveling around the country in their RV, visiting her children and sightseeing in many states across the United States.

After relocating to Gilbert, Ariz. to be near her daughter, Dolores enjoyed painting, drawing, sewing, quilting and photography.



Dolores Zimmerman

She was quite talented, sewing clothes and costumes for her grandchildren and creating beautiful quilts for family and friends. She graced her home with many lovely paintings and photographs as well.

She will be laid to rest in the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona alongside her husband.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

GinaMarie Saggese

GinaMarie Saggese (DePasquale), a Walter Panas High School graduate, died suddenly on Jan. 10. She was 31.

She was born Feb. 11, 1990. She was the dearly loved wife of Matthew C. Saggese; the cherished daughter of Fiore and Maria DePasquale; beloved sister of Antonio (Julie); and treasured granddaughter of Antonio and Anna DePasquale. She was also the loving daughter-in-law of Jerry and Margaret Saggese and beloved by many aunts, uncles and cousins, and was also "mommy" to Gio the cat. She adored him.

GinaMarie was a very happy person who was a friend to all and loved by everyone. She loved to spend time fishing on their boat, gardening and growing some of the best vegetables ever. Her home was her happiness. Matt adores her and she adored him. Their love will be eternal. Gina enjoyed her job at CRP Sanitation. She was beloved there and part of their family.

GinaMarie will be missed beyond measure. Her husband and her parents are inconsolable. We are all lost. We will have to try to get through this tragedy together.



GinaMarie Saggese

It is going to take an eternity.

GinaMarie was an avid lover of animals since she was a little child. It would make her very happy if, in lieu of flowers, donations would be made to any non-kill animal shelters.

Lea Macdonald

Lea Macdonald was born a leap year baby on Feb. 29, 1948. She died much younger than she should have on May 21, 2021. She left behind her husband, John Macdonald; her daughter, Emily and spouse Andy; and her two beloved wonderful grandchildren, Austin and Skyla. She also left behind her sister, Nancy Doda and spouse David, and two nephews, Jonathan and Kyle Doda and their families. A memorial service was held on the beach, for immediate family and close friends on Sept. 11, 2021, at Elizabeth Carter Beach, Point Pleasant, N.J.

Lea has returned to her birthplace and is buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Mass., where her immediate family members are buried.

In her 73 years, Lea was a bright and shining light always lifting others up with her energy, laughter and smile. She was an exemplary teacher at Pleasantville Middle School for more than 25 years where she not only was a master teacher innovating in the classroom on behalf of her students, but served as a school leader supporting her school's achievement to



Lea Macdonald

extraordinary levels of excellence.

As an educator, her influence was far-reaching. She served on the New York State Middle Level Association's board of directors, wrote a regular column for that organization titled "Lea's Lessons" and provided countless professional development workshops to many in New York state's middle schools and in many middle schools across the United States. As a steadfast advocate for adolescents, Lea made a difference in the lives of so many young people.

She became ill with COVID-19 in November 2020 and died of complications due to an undiagnosed underlying health condition.

If you wish to donate in Lea's memory, consider giving to <http://giving.mountsinai.org/goto/andy> on behalf of her granddaughter, Skyla, and her nephew, Jonathan, who both have Crohn's disease. If you wish to contact her family, e-mail either Emily Perkowski at ewoodnyc@yahoo.com or Nancy Doda at dodainmiddle@gmail.com.

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Obituary

Mathilde van Perlstein

Mathilde (Til) Rica van Perlstein passed away on Dec. 21. She was 97.

A Pleasantville resident for 63 years, Til was born in The Netherlands in Heemstede on Nov. 29, 1924, and raised in Bloemendaal before emigrating to the United States to escape Nazi occupation. She is predeceased by her parents, Isedore Emanuel de Kadt and Betsy Arnolda de Kadt-de Jong; her sister, Josephine Hartog-de Kadt; her brother, Pieter de Kadt; and her husband, Hugo van Perlstein.

Til received a bachelor's degree in biology from Hobart and William Smith College in 1946. After graduation she became a medical assistant in doctor's and dental offices.

Til met her future husband through her mother, who had met him on the ship that brought him to the United States and bonded over their shared hometown, Arnhem. They were married in 1955. They lived in Hartsdale for three years and then moved to Pleasantville, where they raised their two daughters, Monique and Michelle, on "The Hill."

Til was an active parent in her children's education and extracurricular activities. She also enjoyed competitive Round Robin Bridge, bowling and participating in Girl Scouts, the Contemporary Club and the

Women's Club. Later in life, she worked in the parts division of the Savin Business Machine Company. She also liked to play competitive dominoes with her friends and her three grandchildren, Philip, Benjamin and Sara Stadulis.

After her husband retired, they traveled and made many friends through her husband's active participation in the Youth Exchange Program of Rotary International.

At age 15, Til and her family escaped Nazi occupation by traveling through France and Spain to leave on the Quanza, a ship departing from Lisbon, Portugal to the United States. In 2017, a descendant of those who escaped with the de Kadt family reached out to Til to ask about her visa to Portugal. We now know that Til and her entire family were saved by the Portuguese Diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes from his signature on her visa.

The family will have a graveside service at Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale in the spring when everyone can gather outside.

In lieu of flowers, kindly make donations to the Mount Pleasant Public Library, 350 Bedford Rd., Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570, the Clinton Street Center (Senior Center) at 1A Clinton St., Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570 or to the charity of your choice.

Board Denies Stipend to New North Castle Deputy Super

By Martin Wilbur

Half of the four voting members of the North Castle Town Board declined to approve a \$4,500 stipend for new Deputy Supervisor Barbara DiGiacinto at last week's board meeting.

DiGiacinto, a Republican, was asked by Democratic Supervisor Michael Schiliro to take on the role after he had gone the past two years without a deputy. Before that, Schiliro had appointed former councilman Stephen D'Angelo multiple times as deputy starting in 2014 and he initially received the same \$4,500 a year, before there were small increases.

However, councilmen Jose Berra and Matt Milim said they each had concerns about providing a stipend.

"It's not anything to do with Barbara or her ability to execute in the role," Milim said. "But given what I view the role as being, which is really to preside at these meetings in the rare event (the supervisor) might be absent, I just struggle to think that we should have a stipend for the role."

Berra added that everyone on the board works hard, and when each person runs for a Town Board seat, it's to serve the community. He said the town already has a town administrator, an assistant to the

administrator, who was hired at last week's meeting, and the supervisor and questioned why additional money should be spent for administrative purposes.

Each of the four councilmembers receive \$18,100 a year.

Since DiGiacinto recused herself from the vote, it created a 2-2 split on the board, which denied the stipend at least for now. Berra and Milim agreed to revisit the issue in three months and reassess whether a stipend is warranted.

Schiliro and Councilman Saleem Hussain voted in favor of the payment.

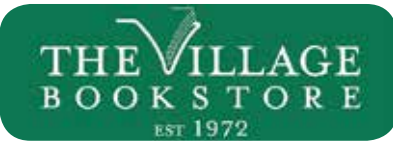
Schiliro said the deputy does more than lead a public meeting should he be unable to attend. There are times when a board member needs to represent the town at an event or governmental function during a weekday when he is working. Since DiGiacinto is retired, she could most easily fill that role.

"I have come to the realization that it is helpful to me," Schiliro said. "I appreciate that Barbara has accepted to serve as deputy where I need her."

When asked by Schiliro whether she would still serve without the stipend, she accepted the role.

"I'm certainly not accepting this for the money," DiGiacinto said.

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Photographer Takes Public Behind the Scenes on Broadway in Exhibit

By Martin Wilbur

Most of the work coming out of Chad Kraus's Pleasantville photography studio are the images he captures for couples and families on some of their most special days – weddings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and other celebrations and parties.

Starting this Sunday and continuing through Apr. 30, local residents and theater lovers will get to see a different side of his repertoire.

A 23-photograph exhibit titled "From the Wings: Broadway Behind the Scenes" will open in the Radius Gallery at Arc Stages in Pleasantville. It's a collection of both black and white and color photos that help tell the story of the process of putting together a Broadway production, from the first rehearsal to the final run-through, opening night, cast parties and other off-stage moments that most audiences don't often see.

"Definitely the initial vision was to give the viewers a look inside the making of a Broadway show and all of the people," said Kraus, who was introduced to the Broadway assignments through his younger brother who is a vice president of a New York City digital marketing firm that does work for many productions. "It takes a village, all of the people that go into it."

Kraus was approached by Stuart Vance, the creative director of Radius Gallery who has curated the artistic exhibits at the Art Stages space since before the pandemic. For Vance, a painter and graphic artist himself, the main mission of the gallery is to bring professional-



One of photographer Chad Kraus's images taken of the cast of "Jagged Little Pill." An exhibit of his photos from behind the scenes on Broadway will be on display starting Sunday and running through Apr. 30 at the Radius Gallery at Arc Stages in Pleasantville.

level work to local audiences.

Vance said it made sense for him to reach out to Kraus, whom he credits with having a great eye, along with the fact that the gallery is at Arc Stages, a professional community theater.

"In the case of Chad, it really was sort of a light-bulb moment for both of us, I think," Vance said. "Literally, this is sort of a perfect fit for the content. It is a little bit unusual for

what we have been doing. We've been more focused on what you would call traditional art forms, traditional content of art. But I think in this case it's really great, it's a great crossover because Chad has a really strong vision in the way that he approaches photography."

Images that will be on display are from "Wicked," "Pretty Woman," "MJ The Musical," which has had a postponed opening and is scheduled to debut next month, and "Jagged Little Pill."

It's also natural for Kraus to have an affinity for the theater and actors. A childhood actor who appeared in commercials, he is a graduate of the High School of Performing Arts in New York City and studied acting at a conservatory for the arts at Webster University in Missouri.

His photography work behind the scenes on Broadway has also highlighted the hard-working, yet famous actors he has interacted with, who have mostly respected everyone on the set. Kraus has worked with Tony Award winners Lin-Manuel Miranda, Ben Platt, Kristen Chenoweth, Lauren Patten and Katrina Lenk.

The nature of a live audience where there needs to be give-and-take between patrons and the actors is likely a big part of the reason



Chad Kraus

why that's the case, Kraus said.

"I've witnessed some really well-known actors and actresses who give of themselves really beautifully and always treating everyone with kindness and respect, whether it's the stagehand or the lighting designer or the costume designer or the photographer," he said.

Kraus said that over the past two years he looks at his work differently with Broadway having been shuttered for about 18 months from the start of the pandemic. During the swift emergence of the Omicron variant through the holidays and into this month, a number of productions have closed temporarily but some have been shut permanently.

On Sunday from 5 to 7 p.m. there will be an opening reception at Arc Stages, although the program has been somewhat curtailed. There will be a viewing in the first hour and a Q&A in the theater during the second hour. The originally scheduled food and drink has been eliminated, but Kraus and Vance hope to have a closing reception in April when the virus is hopefully waning.

"After almost two years of COVID and people feeling a lot of isolation, it's really refreshing to bring people together, especially around the arts, which has really struggled around COVID, the whole arts community, not just Broadway but artists in general and just that overall sense of coming together that has been lacking for almost two years, the more we can do with that the better," Kraus said.

A portion of the proceeds of any of Kraus's framed prints sold during the exhibit will go toward Arc Stages' various programs.

Radius Gallery is located at Arc Stages at 147 Wheeler Ave. in Pleasantville.

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Get Ready for the Puppy Bowl on Super Sunday

Television's cutest sports competition and the original call-to-adoption TV event, the Puppy Bowl, returns on Sunday, Feb. 13 for the biggest, most exciting game to date.

Paws Crossed Animal Rescue in Elmsford is thrilled to announce they have one very special pup who made the final roster in the adorable competition taking place on football's biggest day. Paws Crossed's Chozizo will go paw to paw with dozens of other puppies from animal shelters across the country to win the Chewy "Lombarky" Trophy.

"We cannot wait to celebrate and cheer on our little Chozizo when he hits the field

on Feb. 13," said Julie Potter, business and development director for Paws Crossed.

Chozizo may be small in stature, but he sure makes up for it by being large on good looks, athletic skills and yes – ears. He originally hails from North Carolina. He came to Paws Crossed through their transport partners, the Shelter Dog Transport Alliance and Rusty's Legacy.

The Puppy Bowl can be found watch on Feb. 13 at 2 p.m. on the Animal Planet. It will also be streamed live on Discovery+.

For more on all of the game day action at the Puppy Bowl, visit <https://www.discovery.com/shows/puppy-bowl/see>.

Furniture Sharehouse Adds Three New Board Members

Furniture Sharehouse, established in 2006 and Westchester's only non-profit "furniture bank," has expanded its Board of Directors with the recent appointments of Maureen Zaback, Gail Fattizzi and Stephanie Giroux.

"Each board member brings their unique skills, personal and professional connections, experiences and strengths to help direct Furniture Sharehouse's strategic objectives and enable us to better serve our neighbors in need," said Kate Bialo, Furniture Sharehouse's founder and executive director. "We feel fortunate to add the talents of Maureen, Gail and Stephanie to complement those we already have on our board. Each has already contributed to our mission and goals."

Zaback holds a bachelor's degree in economics/accounting from the College of the Holy Cross. Her professional career includes time in public accounting in Boston and as an internal auditor at Reader's Digest.

A longtime Sound Shore resident, Zaback has led and volunteered for various PTA committees as well as the St. Ignatius School scholarship benefit, County Harvest and Furniture Sharehouse as a volunteer personal shopper.

Fattizzi, of Goldens Bridge, is the regional manager for ERA Insite Realty



The three newest members of Furniture Sharehouse's board of directors, from left, Stephanie Giroux, Maureen Zaback and Gail Fattizzi.

Services, a residential brokerage firm serving Westchester, Putnam and Fairfield counties. She served as the 2020 president of the 13,000-member Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors and is the president of the HG Realtor Foundation for 2022.

In addition to organizing dozens of volunteer projects for the foundation to benefit nonprofits throughout the

community, Fattizzi has served on the advisory board for The Bridge Fund of Westchester as well as Back-to-School Clothes for Kids.

Giroux, a chartered financial analyst, is currently the market president for BNY Mellon's suburban New York and New Jersey wealth management business. Across her 30-year career, she has

advised high net worth and foundation and endowment clients using customized planning solutions and managed client advisory teams.

Giroux is a member of the Estate Planning Council of Westchester County and Impact 100 Westchester, a women's philanthropic organization. She lives in Rye and is a graduate of Tufts University.

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The Right Time to Share Info About Fire Safety at Home

As soon as I read about the apartment building fire in the Bronx that killed 17 people, I went to the door of my condo at Yorktown's Trump Park, opened it and assured myself that it closed shut on its own. That's because New York City Mayor Eric Adams said that the door to the apartment where the blaze started may have failed to close as it was supposed to, allowing thick smoke to spread.

Soon after I moved here, a neighbor named Dan Potter introduced himself to me as a retired New York City firefighter. He said he had read a column I wrote about "Fireman Joe," a local retired firefighter who instructed schoolchildren about fire safety in the home.

Dan told me not to forget about seniors who have a much higher risk of dying from fire in their homes than the general population and that he had led educational programs for them on the subject. I told him that I wanted to know more because as much as I try to avoid the thought, I am definitely a senior citizen.

Dan had been at the World Trade Center on 9/11, arriving between the times the first and second planes hit the towers. His wife, Jean, was working on the 81st floor



By Bill Primavera

of 1 World Trade Center, and for some hours he didn't know whether she had made it out of the building.

After searching at the site and at his apartment just a block away and not finding her, he collapsed on a bench in despair and a passing photographer captured the moment. That photograph appeared around the world and now is featured in the 9/11 Memorial Museum next to Dan's helmet with his ladder number "31" which he wore that day.

When Dan and I met, we started our interview with a pop quiz: "Do you know why Fire Prevention Week is the first week in October?" he asked. When I confessed that I had no idea, he informed me that it was enacted by Congress after the Great Fire in Chicago, which had happened at that time of year.

"So tell me more that I don't know about fire safety," I asked.

"While most people have smoke detectors in their homes, the batteries are frequently dead," Dan said. "Or they can be cooking, the alarm goes off, they might take them down, take the batteries out and not put them back," he continued.

But some really surprising information followed.

"Citizens over 65 are twice as likely to die in a fire than the general population," Dan said. "And once they reach 85, they are five times as likely to die in a fire as the general population, and in the same room in which the fire starts."

By that age, a senior has less mobility, they don't have the same sense of smell, may be on medication and not as alert or they may smoke in bed, be careless in their dress, be cooking and their clothes catch fire.

Dan's next question caught me off guard. "Have you ever been in a fire?"

"No," I responded.

"Do you think you really know what fire is? Do you think it has sound? Do you know how fast it is? How hot it is?"

I didn't have answers for him. He took out his computer and showed me a controlled demonstration of a sofa catching fire. Within 30 seconds, there was intense heat. Within one minute there was no way that a person could stand. Within two minutes, the room was engulfed in flames and within three minutes there was total conflagration. All the while, there was silence, not the crackling of wood and the roar we would expect from a fire.

"When we hear stories about expecting a

parent to run back into a house to rescue a child, sadly the heat is so intense, so much more than anyone has ever experienced," Dan said. "It just doesn't happen." I remember thinking that that is what happened at the World Trade Center when those poor souls had the terrible choice to make of being burned alive or jumping to their deaths.

It's scary to consider the number of people who live in multi-unit condos and apartments that are of combustible construction. I would urge readers to be aware of escape instructions, and for those

of you living in single-family dwellings, check every smoke detector in the house and, again, be prepared in an emergency to get out.

For more information about fire safety, visit www.nfpa.org.

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). His real estate site is www.PrimaveraRealEstate.com. To engage the services of The Home Guru and his team to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.



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New Castle Secures Funds to Help Pay for New Electric Car Chargers

By Martin Wilbur

The Town of New Castle has secured a state grant that will pay for the majority of the cost of 10 new electric vehicle chargers at public parking lots throughout the town.

The charging stations, all considered Level 2, which enables the operator of any electric vehicle to use them, will be at five different locations throughout New Castle, said Assistant Planner Kellen Cantrell. Six of the chargers will be at the Chappaqua Metro-North train station lot along with one each at Millwood Park, Amsterdam Park, Town Hall and the Woodburn public parking lot in downtown Chappaqua, he said.

Currently, the town has six chargers, including three at the train station and one each at the Allen Place lot, Gedney Park and the Woodburn lot. The new charging station for Woodburn, which will be placed not far from the electronic message board closest to South Greeley Avenue, will replace an older model that is behind the stores.

A NYSEDA grant will pay for about two-thirds of the cost of the units, with the town picking up the remainder of the expense, Cantrell said. To help offset as much as 90 percent of the infrastructure costs, the town has applied for the Con Edison Power Ready Reimbursement, he said.

Cantrell recommended to town officials that they charge a fee for the use of the

new chargers when they are installed. He said previous town boards likely offered the service for free as an incentive to have more residents buy electric vehicles.

Fees are typically by the kilowatt hour to offset the cost of the electricity to the municipality, Cantrell said. The existing chargers have cost the town about \$19,500 in electric costs in the several years since they were installed.

He suggested a 22-cent per kilowatt

hour cost, which is what some other municipalities in the area charge.

"I think it's a good guideline to set because the rates at each site may vary depending on electricity," Cantrell said.

Town Board members agreed that the town should try to recoup the expense of providing the electricity but to start off at a relatively modest rate.

"Given that we on the Town Board are the fiduciaries of taxpayer money, I

absolutely think we need to be charging for that," said Supervisor Lisa Katz. "Also, it will incentivize people to have a place to charge their cars."

Councilman Chris Hildenbrand that he has looked into various rates set by other communities, which generally range in the high 20s to more than 40 cents a kilowatt hour.

"I think 22 cents is a good starting rate," he said.

Bedford Board of Ed to Schedule Public Info Sessions on Bond

By Martin Wilbur

The Bedford Board of Education will soon be holding public information sessions related to the major facilities bond the district is contemplating for this May.

Trustee Alexandra White said that over the next month the board is going to schedule meetings at each of the district's seven schools as part of a community conversation.

"We're hoping to get feedback from folks in the community related to the very wide variety of possible items that could go into the bond, so please stay tuned for these dates to be shared soon," White said.

District officials are considering a referendum that could be as high as \$70 million that pays for infrastructure

improvements at each one of the schools and enhances the facilities at the middle school and high school. Upgrades to the athletic facilities at the middle school-high school campus is also on the table.

Between now and March the board is expected to set a final list of items to be included in the bond. A vote would occur on May 17.

At last week's board meeting, Trustee Steven Matlin called on his colleagues to consider holding one information session off of school grounds in each of the municipalities that the district covers. Matlin said there are many taxpayers in the communities that don't have children in the school and district officials should make an attempt to include them in the feedback.

"While I appreciated that (the school

meetings) are open to everybody, I would like to see more community outreach so those who don't have kids in the school because these people vote and they pay taxes and they're entitled to have a say," he said.

Vice President Ed Reder responded that community members should get to see the schools and know what their money would pay for if the bond is successful.

"There are positives to have the community members actually see the facilities related to the bond ask," Reder said.

Between the work on the bond and the 2022-23 budget, the Board of Education has meetings scheduled for 10 of 11 Wednesdays starting Jan. 26. The only week off is the week of Presidents' Day.

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Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Jan. 6: A Truesdale Drive resident reported at 8:54 a.m. that a man and woman were walking a small black dog off its leash. The caller reported that he told the man he was breaking the law and the man said, "I break a lot of laws." The complainant stated he lost sight of the couple and dog. Patrol was dispatched but reported the subjects gone on arrival.

Jan. 8: A Whelan Avenue resident reported at 9:42 a.m. that her neighbor directly behind her has been pointing laser lights into her windows. Patrols walked around the house and did not see anything. Patrols attempted to contact the caller to determine the proper house but she was not at home.

Kent Police Department

Jan. 10: Officers were dispatched to Route 52 at about 2:30 p.m. for an active order of protection violation. Upon arrival, officers spoke with Jessica Goodwin, 28, of Carmel, who stated that she was arguing with her boyfriend, Guillermo DeJesus, 39, also of Carmel. Officers determined a full stay-away order of protection was in place protecting Goodwin. DeJesus was arrested and charged with second-degree criminal contempt. He was processed at headquarters and arraigned by Judge Douchkoff. DeJesus was ordered to appear

in court at a later date.

Jan. 10: Officers were dispatched to Route 52 for a criminal mischief complaint at about 5:15p.m. Officers spoke with Guillermo DeJesus, 39, of Carmel, who stated that when he returned home his bathroom window was broken and his PlayStation 4 was missing. Officers interviewed a third party who spoke with Jessica Goodwin, 28, of Carmel, who told him she broke into and robbed his house. The third party was able to have Goodwin call him, and on the call, Goodwin admitted to breaking the window and taking the PlayStation, which she claimed was hers. While officers were securing statements, Goodwin turned herself in at headquarters. She was charged with third-degree criminal mischief, processed at headquarters and arraigned by Judge Douchkoff. Goodwin was ordered to appear in town court at a later date.

North Castle Police Department

Jan. 7: Multiple callers reported observing a middle-aged woman, who appeared to be disoriented, walking in the roadway on Route 128 at about 11:40 a.m. One of the responding officers reported locating a female subject in need of assistance on the shoreline of Wampus Pond just north of the parking lot. The officers had to enter the water to remove the subject when she re-entered the water. An ambulance and additional units were requested to assist carrying the female

up to the roadway. The Armonk Fire Department responded and transported the woman to Northern Westchester Hospital's emergency room for treatment. The woman's husband was located in the area of the pond. He reported that his wife has an altered mental status and wandered from their home a short distance away.

Jan. 8: Report of an attempted larceny on Evergreen Row at 9:07 a.m. A caller reported that a subject in a white Porsche Cayenne exited from the passenger seat and entered his vehicle in the driveway. The caller stated that it appeared that the subject tried to start the vehicle, and when he couldn't, he left in the white Porsche. The complainant checked his vehicle and stated nothing was taken. The Porsche was last seen traveling in a northerly direction toward North Lake Road. A hotline message was transmitted to surrounding agencies. Westchester County police reported a stolen vehicle (New Jersey registration W23N2P) matching the caller's description was observed on northbound I-684 at Barnes Lane at about 8:15 a.m. Bedford police reported observing the involved vehicle get on I-684 southbound at Exit 4. County police initially pursued the vehicle when it entered the Hutchinson River Parkway, but terminated when it entered New York City.

Jan. 8: An Emmalon Avenue resident reported at 6:16 p.m. that she let her nephew borrow her vehicle in October. She reported that when she asked her nephew about the whereabouts of her vehicle today, he replied that he had changed the VIN number and registered the car in his name. The caller stated that she wants to pursue charges against her nephew. Officers responded and depositions were secured. A report will follow.

Jan. 9: Report of a stolen vehicle on Upland Lane at 2:57 p.m. A caller noticed that their rental car was no longer in their driveway and believes it was stolen within the last few hours. Officers responded and

video surveillance from the complainant's residence confirmed the vehicle was stolen from the driveway at 11:30 a.m. today. Depositions and video footage were secured.

Pleasantville Police Department

Jan. 12: A 25-year-old man was arrested for criminal possession of a weapon no Marble Avenue.

State Police

Jan. 10: William E. Mancusi, of Carmel, was arrested and charged with three counts of third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance and three counts of third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, all Class B felonies. Following a non-fatal overdose in the Town of Southeast, a state police investigation determined Mancusi was selling heroin in the Carmel area. Mancusi was arraigned in Town of Carmel Court and remanded to the Putnam County Jail without bail. He is scheduled for a Jan. 24 court appearance.

Yorktown Police Department

Jan. 8: Max Nieves, 23, of Peekskill, was arrested at 9:51 p.m. and charged with second-degree aggravated harassment, a Class A misdemeanor, for allegedly threatening a female and she became fearful for her safety. Nieves was arrested by Peekskill police and transported to Yorktown for processing.

Jan. 11: Richard Harris, 40, of Peekskill, was arrested and charged at 7:49 p.m. with aggravated unlicensed operation and operating a vehicle while using a cell phone. Police received a report from Westchester County police that a vehicle wanted by the New York City Police Department regarding a robbery investigation was traveling north on the Taconic State Parkway.

Mount Kisco DPW Foreman Arrested Again in Incident With Wife

Mount Kisco's DPW foreman was arrested last month on charges following a complaint by his wife that he violated an order of protection against her, the second time in less than a year he has been arrested.

Westchester County police said that Joe Luppino, 49, was charged on Dec. 20 with second-degree criminal contempt, a misdemeanor, and second-degree harassment, a violation, stemming from an incident earlier that day.

The complaint from Sharon Luppino alleged that he drove past her home in Mount Kisco twice on the morning of Dec. 20 and yelled and cursed at her, police said. The order of protection bars him from communicating or contacting her, according to police. The couple is separated.

Police said after he was contacted by officers, Luppino agreed to come to the

Green Street precinct in Mount Kisco for booking. He was arraigned in the Town of Bedford Justice Court.

Last April, Luppino was arrested on a misdemeanor charge in another matter related to his wife. He was placed on a paid leave of absence before being reinstated by the village.

There was no action taken by the village concerning the latest incident.

When reached last week at his office, Luppino declined to comment.

Mayor Gina Picinich said the village had determined that the incident stems from personal issues and would not comment further.

"If it was something related to the workplace it would be something that I could comment on but it's not," Picinich said.

— Martin Wilbur

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SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Religious Leaders, Grandpas United Discuss Dr. King's Legacy

By Bailey Hosfelt

The White Plains Youth Bureau Grandpas United hosted a virtual panel discussion between Bet Am Shalom Synagogue Rabbi Lester Bronstein and president of The Ministers Council and Vicinity Rev. Erwin Trollinger to discuss the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The hour-long event, "The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – A Drum Major for Justice," was held on Zoom and attended by the group's grandpas and members of the public.

"I love to be with the grandpas of the Youth Bureau and any time we can honor the legend Dr. King and learn from his inspiring message," Council President and Youth Bureau Board Chair Justin Brasch said. "It begins with treating everyone with dignity and respect, to judge people by the content of their character."

Trollinger noted the special bond between the African American and Jewish communities, specifically between rabbis and Black clergy during the civil rights movement, which sometimes goes missing in the legacy of King's life and work.

"Dr. King and his work is the reason why Rev. Trollinger and I have been on each other's pulpits, spoken in each other's houses of worship and have this partnership," Bronstein said.

Bronstein noted that in teaching Jewish children about the ancient prophets in religious school, many children highlight that the prophets' actions and messages sound like King's.

"When Martin Luther King opened his mouth and out came those biblical phrases, suddenly we saw the corruption, racism,



Rabbi Lester Bronstein, left, and Rev. Erwin Trollinger led a virtual discussion last week on the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the lessons his message holds for today.

neglect, poverty and segregation," Bronstein explained. "A lot of our rabbis hearing those words, they decided to get out there, put on their walking shoes and marched with Dr. King."

Trollinger emphasized that when King spoke the prophetic word, his message transcended color, race, age, gender and even nation.

"Dr. King was a man that was able to tap into the real humanity that's inside of all of us to do what is right, even when it's not popular to do it," Trollinger said. "Even when there is no praise in doing it, even when your house is burned, even when your wife and children are being threatened, even when people are setting you up."



In celebrating King's legacy, Bronstein underscored the importance of not just reading his "I Have a Dream" speech and closing the book.

Instead, Bronstein said, it is important to analyze King's words line by line and put them in conversation with contemporary issues, asking "To what extent does this speech speak to our horrendous neglect of one another and our society right now?"

Bronstein added that it is also crucial, especially for younger generations, to understand the history of both courage and fear when it came to the civil rights movement.

"Part of the legacy that we have to teach our children is not just the greatness of Martin

Luther King as the drum major, but that when he stood up, a lot of the other members of the band ran in the other direction," Bronstein said. "We have to give ourselves the courage to run in the right direction, follow that drum major, and, of course, give our children the courage to be the drum major in this generation."

Frozine Reece-Smith, whose husband is a Grandpas United member, asked Bronstein how when young children see the parallels between the ancient prophets and King, he has them reflect further.

"Because that's where we are today, trying to get the young people to understand the era that we were living through, that we saw," Reece-Smith said.

Bronstein encouraged that when teaching today's youth, he often asks them to think about injustices happening in the world today, specifically in their school or city.

By asking them to reflect on contemporary issues, while, at the same time, asking questions like "What was Dr. King marching for? What was he marching against? What were the problems of the time?" children start to identify parallels between the civil rights movement and racial or social issues that persist today, he said.

"We have to teach our children and share the stories," said Frank Williams, executive director of the White Plains Youth Bureau. "These stories are living in us. History is a part of who we are and what we've been through."

"Most people don't want to be uncomfortable. We want to be easy and relaxed, but we can't because the future of our children and nation is at stake," Williams concluded.

Five Valhalla Boy Scout Troop Members Reach Pinnacle With Eagle

Valhalla Boy Scout Troop 1 celebrated five of its members becoming Eagle Scouts recently, the highest and most prestigious rank in scouting.

Alexander Bonanno, Joseph DiFalco, Alex Mattoni, Francisco Tadeo Quellet and James Torres attained the honors on Jan. 8 after having spent the last 11 years working their way through scouting's ranks together, going on hikes and earning merit badges.

The five high school seniors celebrated their achievement during a joint ceremony at the Mount Pleasant Community Center in Valhalla.

"When we started in first grade, none of us could have imagined achieving this goal," Bonanno said.

Scoutmasters David Torres and Marcelo Quellet said it's rare for five scouts from the same troop to receive their Eagle Scout rank in the same year. Normally, Eagle Scout Court of Honor ceremonies are held individually, but these five boys decided to be recognized together.

"Since we all began Cub Scouts together in first grade, we wanted to celebrate this accomplishment all together," Francisco Quellet said.

"It's been a lot of hikes in the rain, camping on top of mountains and volunteering in our community," James Torres added. "It was hard work, but it was absolutely worth it."

Attaining the rank of Eagle Scout

requires scouts to earn 21 merit badges as well as plan and implement a community service project.

"Teenagers have other commitments like jobs, sports and schoolwork," Mattoni said. "Achieving Eagle was a challenge, but it was a big accomplishment, especially with my other responsibilities."

Each scout gave back to their local community in different ways. Bonanno replaced an old flagpole and flag at the troop's charter organization, American Legion Post 1038 in Valhalla. DiFalco's love of reading sparked his idea to build a "free library" for students outside the Kensico School in Valhalla. Quellet installed a flag retirement receptacle at Mount Pleasant Town Hall while Torres designed and installed a garden bed for special needs children at Easter Seals, also in Valhalla. Mattoni blazed over three miles of new trails at the Hardscrabble Wilderness area in Briarcliff Manor.

To achieve every rank there are several tasks that each scout must complete, said Lisa Stelling, committee chairwoman for Troop 1.

"Only 4 percent of scouts reach the rank of Eagle Scout and most take five to seven years to complete all the requirements," she said.

DiFalco smiled when he was asked recently about his scouting experience.

"What began as my wanting the free ice



Pictured, left to right, are the newest Eagle Scouts from Troop 1 in Valhalla: Alexander Bonanno, James Torres, Alex Mattoni, Francisco Quellet and Joseph DiFalco. They were honored at a ceremony at the Mount Pleasant Community Center on Jan. 8.

cream at the recruitment fair for Valhalla Cub Scout Pack 111, turned into 11 years of learning how to tie knots, cook, start campfires, mentor younger scouts and

challenge myself in ways not possible outside of scouting," he said. "I couldn't have done it without these guys and our amazing leaders."

Cold Spring Resident Offers Virtual Nutrition, Wellness Service

By Abby Luby

These days it’s all about reducing stress and staying healthy. And because the two go hand in hand, having a coach to personally guide individuals to care for themselves and for others eases the challenge to maintain optimal health for mind and body.

Enter certified nutritional therapy practitioner Kat Selman and her new virtual nutritional and wellness coaching service, Stone Flower Wellness. Selman lives in Cold Spring with her husband, Stephen, and her two young children, a newborn and a three-year-old. Selman said it was her own life experiences that led her to seek solutions to lessen stress and deal with dietary issues.

“For me, it started back in high school with stomach pain, bloating, weight gain and chronic acne, which I still had in college,” Selman recalled.

Selman pursued a master’s degree in music and ended up teaching at a music school in Brooklyn. When she lost her job due to the pandemic, she experienced a good dose of anxiety.

“It was stressful,” Selman said. “I had been teaching music there for six years.”

Another experience that motivated Selman to check out the health-nutrition connection was in 2007 when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She and her mother researched cancer-fighting foods and immune-boosting diets. Today, her mom is cancer-free and Selman wanted to learn more about the connection between disease

and nutrition.

She checked out various nutrition certificate programs and eventually enrolled in a one-year intensive program with the Nutritional Therapy Association, a nationally known vocation nutrition school since 1997.

Selman said that being a professional musician and teacher has informed her of how listening is key to tune in to one’s body.

“It’s important to listen to your body to know when you are not feeling great,” she said. “I can help people connect to what’s going on in their body and the need for supportive, nutritious foods.”

Part of Selman’s nutritional therapy is being mindful of one’s eating habits.

“I take a gentle positive approach when I meet with clients to see where they are willing to change,” she explained. “It’s important for us to slow down, especially when we sit down and eat. We need to take a couple of deep breaths before the meal, not answer the phone. Put your fork down between bites.”

Selman focuses on whole foods plus hydration, mindful habits and a healthy lifestyle. In order to tailor different nutritional and health plans for her clients, Selman said she needs to understand certain eating habits by asking a short series of questions.

“I ask why someone wants to stop eating sugar and the answer is to lose weight and have better energy. The next question is usually ‘What would you do if you had extra energy?’”



Kat Selman, a certified nutritional therapy practitioner who just opened her service, Stone Flower Wellness.

Selman said the answer usually is being able to enjoy a specific activity. Ultimately the connection is made between eating less sugar and the ability to be active.

“It’s a way I have of identifying some of the barriers someone may have to certain eating

habits,” Selman said. “People build habits differently. I tailor a plan and a regimen that one could easily adjust to.”

Selman believes food should sustain one’s health, but that doesn’t mean one should be on an eliminating diet.

“You need to enjoy your food and find foods that work for you,” Selman said. “Never having bagels, lox and cream cheese again, what kind of life is that?”

As for high cholesterol levels, Selman said there are bad fats and healthy fats.

“I take a look at what a client is already eating, have them fill out a five-day food and mood journal to get a snapshot of their eating habits and mental health,” she said. “Then I can suggest a diet I have tweaked especially for them.”

Selman had a soft launch of Stone Flower Wellness a couple of days after Thanksgiving, and saw a handful of clients asking for her guidance. She offers a one-month Kickstart package for \$250, a three-month package for \$550 and a six-month package for \$750. She just recently launched her service.

“For people that prefer a DIY approach, the simple package is a good fit,” she explained. “For people that like accountability, which I’ve found to be very powerful, the three- or six-month packages are better and include more follow ups and support.”

Nutritional therapy sessions are also available now. Sessions are virtual. For more information on nutritional therapy, visit www.stoneflowerwellness.com.

THERE’S A WORD FOR IT

A vocabulary-building quiz By Edward Goralski

The Newest Releases. The Wayne State Word Warriors have just released their 2022 “list of eminently useful words that should be brought back to enrich our language.” Now beginning its 13th year, the Wayne State Word Warriors promote “words especially worthy of retrieval from the linguistic cellar.” These selections that, “will add color and depth to conversation,” are also the subject of the quiz this week.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. elflock (n.) | A) a small opening | B) matted hair | C) a missing item |
| 2. malapert (adj.) | A) awkward | B) boldly disrespectful | C) unsuited for use |
| 3. collywobbles (n.) | A) intense anxiety | B) small river stones | C) coal miners |
| 4. foozle (v.) | A) to make a fool of | B) make a habit of | C) make a mess of |
| 5. desiderate (n.) | A) a set of instructions | B) a formal request | C) required things |
| 6. otiose (adj.) | A) serving no purpose | B) unsteady | C) other worldly |
| 7. fudgel (v.) | A) to pretend to work | B) make fuller | C) loll indoors |
| 8. cacoethes (n.) | A) an ornamental receptacle | B) bad spelling | C) an irresistible urge |

- ANSWERS:**
- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. B. Hair matted as if by elves | 2. B. Boldly disrespectful to a person of higher standing | 3. A. Intense anxiety or nervousness, especially with stomach queasiness |
| 4. C. To fumble, bungle, or make a mess of | 5. C. Things that are required or wanted | 6. A. Serving no practical purpose or result |
| | 7. A. To pretend to work when in reality one is not | 8. C. An irresistible urge to do something inadvisable |

What a Sight!



Four families won prizes for their holiday decorations in the second annual Yorktown Holiday Light Fest sponsored by the Yorktown Lions and the Town of Yorktown. The contest received 29 entries submitted through the town’s website. The Lions Club chose the winners. Finishing first was the house of Richard Giannasca, pictured above. He received a \$100 restaurant gift certificate. Also receiving prizes were Frank Ploger, \$50 restaurant gift certificate; James Gumbs, \$25 restaurant gift certificate; and Joseph Freda, \$25 restaurant gift certificate.

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A Q+A with Westchester D.A. Mimi Rocah

From COVID-related fraud and domestic violence prevention to DUIs, the county's top law enforcement official is vigorously pursuing a wide agenda.



By Sherrie Dulworth

You are reading this week's excerpt of an article from our Examiner+ digital newsmagazine. To read the entire article and others like it, visit www.examiner-plus.com and join our community as a member.

Miriam "Mimi" E. Rocah was sworn in as the new Westchester County District Attorney in January 2021. Before that, she served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney with the Southern District of New York for 16 years and as chief of the White Plains division for the Department of Justice. Rocah, 51, is also a former MSNBC legal analyst. Examiner+ sat down with Rocah to talk about her work since she assumed office.

Examiner+: What do you feel have been your biggest accomplishments since you became the new Westchester District Attorney?

Rocah: It's hard to choose because the whole team really hit the ground running.

We got out in front of the rise in violence that's occurring in other parts of the

country, and even in the state. We formed a gang and gun violence prevention task force with many of our law enforcement partners: the County Police, the Yonkers Police, the New Rochelle Police, Mount Vernon Police, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, and the FBI. It has increased collaboration and intelligence sharing.

E+: That initiative has been described as using precision policing and precision prosecution. Can you explain what that means?

Rocah: It takes a targeted approach that starts with the police and relies a lot on intelligence gathering. It's not about taking a giant net and arresting a whole lot of people. The people who commit the violent crimes — shootings, murders — are a small group of offenders that we are going to aggressively pursue through

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SHERRIE DULWORTH PHOTO

Miriam "Mimi" E. Rocah

investigation and prosecution. When you get those people off the streets, there is a chilling effect on others. It also takes the repeat offenders, those who drive that kind of violence, out of the community. We had a recent case in Yonkers that was a very violent gang assault case. We arrested 14 individuals, three of which were minors. In speaking with the Police Commissioner,

since the arrest of these gang members, they've seen a downtick in incidents of violence in that community.

E+: What other priorities you have been focused on?

Rocah: I increased resources in our public integrity and law enforcement integrity bureaus. These prosecutors investigate crimes of public officials, including police officers, and prosecute those if warranted. I am proud of the fact that we are looking at this problem as seriously as we are, with accountability.

We increased diversion programs to try to come up with much more innovative restorative justice type approaches to low-level, non-violent offenses, for things like shoplifting or trespass, and that offer those people an opportunity to try to not get caught up in the criminal justice system. We started with a pilot program in Greenburgh and White Plains called Fresh Start and, hopefully, we

To read the rest of this article, and others like it, visit examiner-plus.com and click subscribe. We hope you've enjoyed this week's excerpt from Examiner+. We love honest feedback. Tell us what you think: examinerplus@theexaminernews.com

Four Byram Hills Seniors Named Top Scholars in Science Competition

Four Byram Hills High School seniors have been selected as top scholars in the prestigious Regeneron Science Talent Search, an honor that recognizes their independent research conducted in the school's Authentic Science Research Program.

The students, Derek Araki-Kurdyla, Edith Bachmann, Sydney Levy and Emily Pizzorusso, are among the 300 top scholars chosen from about 1,800 students at 603 high schools in the United States and abroad.

The students won \$2,000 each and advanced to the next round of the science and math competition. Byram Hills High School will receive \$8,000 for STEM-related work.

"We are so very proud of these four students," said Stephanie Greenwald, director of the school's science research program. "They have conducted exemplary research, overcome obstacles and produced outstanding work."

"These students represent our 41 incredibly talented seniors who have done tremendous research that will have a great impact on our world," she added.

The Society for Science, which has run the competition since 1942, stated that the scholars were chosen for "their exceptional research skills, commitment to academics, innovative thinking and promise as scientists."

The students' original work was judged by leading experts in their fields.

Byram Hills High School Principal



BYRAM HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT PHOTO

The four Byram Hills High School seniors who were recently named top scholars in the Regeneron Science Talent Search. They are, pictured from left, Emily Pizzorusso, Sydney Levy, Derek Araki-Kurdyla and Edith Bachmann.

Christopher Walsh congratulated the students.

"I am so happy for these students and the entire Authentic Science Research Program," he said. "These individual achievements are supported by an amazing program, department, school, district and community. It's a great day to be a Bobcat!"

This Thursday, 40 of the 300 scholars will be named finalists. They will compete for more than \$1.8 million in prizes at a weeklong competition in March. The top

award is \$250,000.

The competition aims to identify, inspire and engage promising young scientists who are working to solve the world's most urgent problems. Alumni of the program have won the most prestigious math and science honors, including 13 Nobel Prizes, 11 National Medals of Science, 22 MacArthur Foundation Fellowships and two Fields Medals.

Here is a closer look at the work of the Byram Hills scholars.

Derek Araki-Kurdyla: Through a field study, Araki-Kurdyla explored the characteristics of the coastline soil where seagrass grows to identify the optimal environments for reducing carbon dioxide in the ocean. Identifying natural ways to reduce ocean CO2 is essential as high levels are detrimental to ocean ecosystems.

Edith Bachmann: She investigated working memory and the sustained attention of fourth-grade students. For her study, Bachmann compared students who practiced storytelling, the act of retelling a story from memory while maintaining eye contact and students who practiced story reading or reading from a book and showing the pictures as visual aids. Her online experiment, which she created and conducted, provided worthwhile data confirming the need for both storytelling and story reading as part of a child's development.

Sydney Levy: Levy studied mitral valve prolapse, a heart valve disease. Through a lab investigation and sequencing data analysis, she explored the condition's relationship with scar tissue formation in the human heart. Her identification of an important cellular pathway could lead to therapies for preventing the scarring that results from the condition.

Emily Pizzorusso: Pizzorusso explored sex differences relating to synesthesia, a neurological condition in which the senses become intertwined, like for example, seeing colors when hearing music. Her research sheds light on this critically understudied condition.

Tips to Keep Little Ones Moving and Active

Children need lots of physical activity to develop their motor skills and grow up healthy and strong, and you can foster your toddler or preschooler's love of movement by making playtime active.

To get started, consider these indoor and outdoor playtime toys, games and ideas.

- **Ball toss.** For little ones, beach balls are a fun, easy and gentle way to play catch and other simple games. Raise the stakes with "Beach Ball Lava," where the object of the collaborative game is to keep bouncing the ball upward so that it never touches the ground.

- **Get riding.** Ride-on toys are a great way to get your child comfortable with the idea of a tricycle or bicycle. Look for one with pizzazz, such as the Sort & Recycle Ride-On Truck. This lean, green recycling machine will not only get children active, but also encourage them to recycle. Made from 90 percent reclaimed plastic, the truck includes play pieces that represent plastic, metal and paper. Kids can drive around, and at the same time, learn about recycling and reusing everyday objects.

- **Bounce around.** Give little muscles and minds a mini workout with the



There are lots of activities and games available for parents to keep their young children active and develop their motor skills.

Bounce & Discover Llama, which promotes gross motor skills, strength and balance. With a sturdy, stable base and an easy-grasp handle, children can

safely bounce and turn side to side while activating buttons that teach colors, shapes and numbers.

- **Move to the beat.** Whether you're

just having fun simply dancing around the room, using musical instruments like egg shakers and handbells or you're playing a game like "Freeze Dance," one of the best ways to get people of all ages moving is with music. To play Freeze Dance, turn on the music and instruct everyone to dance. When the music is turned off, everyone must freeze until the music is turned on again.

- **All aboard.** The best toys are those that grow with your child's physical and cognitive abilities. For example, the 4-in-1 Learning Letters Train from VTech takes kids from floor play to walker push toy to ride-on to pull cart. Featuring 16 activities that help build motor skills while teaching about letters, numbers, places and more, children can visit new locations in the travel book, explore the 13 double-sided alphabet blocks and even build a tower on the pull cart.

Different kinds of movement are important, so be sure to introduce a range of toys and games into the mix to ensure your child gets a variety of physical activity at playtime.

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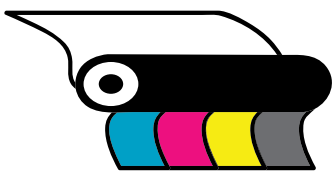
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Year of the Tiger: Get Ready to Indulge in Lunar New Year's Feasts

During the pandemic, many Chinese and Asian restaurants closed off their dining rooms and pivoted to take-out only. Some are still in that mode, so check ahead if you plan on dining in. Take-out and delivery remain a good way to go.

Here are some suggestions. Follow current COVID-19 protocols and stay safe!

The Chinese Lunar New Year celebration begins on Tuesday, Feb. 1 and will last for two weeks. Many Asian eateries will be marking the festivities with special dishes and menus. Be sure to check ahead for exact dates, times and pricing.

Aberdeen Seafood & Dim Sum (3 Barker Ave., White Plains, in the Residence Inn, 914-288-0188). The staff told us they would be offering special New Year's banquets. You can also celebrate with their popular dim sum or from the regular menu. Visit www.aberdeenwhiteplains.com for more information.

David Chen's (85 Old Mount Kisco Rd., Armonk, 914-273-6767) is a sprawling spot in a free-standing house serving Cantonese cuisine to the community for more than 25 years. Its specialties include the 10-ingredient fried rice, pan-fried noodles and seafood pot. Visit www.davidchens.com.

Ku Asian Bistro (480 New Rochelle Rd., Bronxville, 914-668-8877) has a fine hand with its regional Chinese fusion specialties. "Ku" is Chinese for fantastic, so let chefs Wang and Qiu surprise you with their delightful Asian fusion flavors. From the Chinese kitchen try the spareribs, shrimp with long bean, moo shu pork, kung pao chicken and General Tso's chicken. Visit www.kuasianb.com.

Mister Chen (265 Mamaroneck Ave., Mamaroneck, 914-777-1212). This Cantonese restaurant serves wonderful house-made soup dumplings and buns, chicken lo mein and tasty honey-glazed barbecue spareribs. Visit www.misterchenyny.com.

Omandarin Chinese Cuisine (361 N. Central Ave., Hartsdale, 914-437-9168) will be serving some of the classics: Peking duck, assorted hot pots and hearty Mandarin pork shank in their beautifully decorated dining room. Visit www.omandarin.com.

Goosefeather (49 E. Sunnyside Lane, Tarrytown, 914-829-5454) is located in the Tarrytown House estate where Chef Dale Talde has reimagined upscale Hong Kong cuisine with modern twists. Take-out or dine-in only during operating hours. Visit www.goosefeathernyny.com.

Peking Garden (56 Main St., Brewster, at the MTA train station, 845-279-4006). You can take out such reasonably-priced retro-Chinese specialties as egg rolls, shrimp chow mein, vegetable chop suey and beef lo mein. Visit www.pekinggardennyny.com.

Vietnamese, Korean and Tibetan Communities in Vietnam, Korea and Tibet also mark the Lunar New Year. Here are some local venues to check out.

Jewel of Himalaya (751 Central Park Ave., Scarsdale, 914-874-5506, and 34 Triangle Center, Yorktown Heights, 914-302-



By Morris Gut

2886). A tasty fusion of Tibetan, Indian and Nepali cuisines serving momo dumplings and stir-fried noodles. Visit www.jewelofhimalayany.com.

Saigonese (158 S. Central Ave., Hartsdale, 914-288-9088). A good spot for spring rolls, a big bowl of pho and delicious bun vermicelli bowls with lettuce wraps. Visit www.mysaigonese.com.

The Banh Mi Shop (148 Mamaroneck Ave., White Plains, 914-686-6888). Len Dang's specialties include grilled short ribs, a variety of Banh Mi sandwiches, great Brussels sprouts with lemongrass and garlic and grilled pepper shrimp. Visit www.vn2ny.com.

Vietnam's Central (694 Central Park Ave., Scarsdale, 914-723-7222). Tom Bui's tasty bites include fried pot stickers, satays and jasmine fried rice. Visit www.vietnamscentral.com.

Bibille (14 Main St., Tarrytown, 914-372-7677). Owners Junho Kim and Joohyun Kang operate a whimsical Korean fusion spot where you can build your own bowl. Try the Korean fried chicken. Visit www.bibille.com.

Want to Cook Yourself?

If you are an intrepid home cook and want to pull the old wok out of the closet and oil it up, you may want to visit big, bustling H-Mart for a wide variety of pan-Asian products. There is dine-in and take-out, too. H-Mart is located at 371 N. Central Ave. in Hartsdale (914-448-8888). There is another H-Mart in Highridge Plaza on Central Park Avenue in Yonkers. Visit www.hmart.com.

Though smaller, New Golden Village Oriental Market (365 Central Park Ave., Scarsdale, 914-437-9795) would also be a good bet for ingredients. Enjoy a fresh bubble tea while there.

The Asian markets in Flushing and Manhattan are great but would be more of a trek. We recently shopped Asian at H-Mart and prepared a satisfying pot of pho with pork, shrimp and Bok choy. A warming precursor to the Lunar New Year.

Archie Grand Opens

It has been in the works for months. Archie Grand, a 130-seat, chef-driven "New American" restaurant has opened in White Plains in the former James Joyce space. It is owned by seasoned hospitality veterans Vincent Ninzatti and Brazen Fox owners Declan Rainsford and Rory Dolan. Dolan also owns the highly popular Rory Dolan's on McLean Avenue in Yonkers.

Took a sneak peek recently and the design and décor were quite dramatic. I would be willing to bet there will also be a touch of the Irish, too. At this writing, they were open for cocktails starting at 5 p.m.

Archie Grand is located at 166A Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains. Visit www.archiegrandwp.com.

Super Bowl Feasting

A celebration of another kind, Super Bowl LVI on Sunday, Feb. 13, will be marked by many area pubs, taverns and restaurants with hearty food, beverage and spirited conversation.



If you're looking to celebrate the New Year at home, H-Mart in Hartsdale and Yonkers is a great place to shop. Don't forget the large variety of Asian dumplings that are available.



The mouth-watering honey glazed barbecue spareribs at Mister Chen in Mamaroneck, one of many outstanding choices to celebrate the Lunar New Year that begins on Feb. 1.



A home-made bowl of pho.

If you think gourmet dining and Super Bowl Sunday is an oxymoron, check out chef and restaurateur Peter X. Kelly's plans. At his Restaurant X and Bully Boy Bar in Congers, Rockland County, and at X20 Xaviars on the Hudson in Yonkers, there will be a Super Bowl brunch with the "X" factor. The three-course brunch will run from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and include tableside hors d'oeuvres and unlimited house cocktails. It's \$48 per person, excluding tax and gratuity. Reservations are suggested.

For additional information call 845-268-6555 for Restaurant X. For X20 Xaviars on the Hudson, call 914-965-1111 or visit www.xaviars.com.

By the way, Super Bowl Sunday nearly coincides with Valentine's Day, so Kelly will be serving pre-Valentine's dinner specialties on Feb. 13 from 5 to 9 p.m.

La Cremaillere Reopens

A group of investors have rebooted and brought classic Country French dining back to the area. Venerable La Cremaillere Restaurant, in a vintage 1750 house on Bedford-Banksville Road in Banksville, has reopened and will be serving dinner Wednesday through Sunday from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The executive chef is Thomas Burke, who had previously worked with Farmer & the Fish locations in Westchester and New York City, Le Bernardin in Manhattan and The French

Laundry in Yountville, Calif. in the Napa Valley.

Prix fixe menu options include two courses for \$75, three courses for \$85 and four courses for \$125. A chef's tasting menu will be announced shortly. Look for such specialties as Hudson Valley foie gras, Dover sole "a la meuniere," Long Island duck breast "a l'orange" and crème brûlée.

La Cremaillere is located at 46 Bedford-Banksville Rd. in Banksville. Info: 914-234-9647 or visit www.lacremny.com.

BLT Steak Closes

BLT Steak, one of Westchester's premier steakhouses, has permanently closed. The restaurant was operating for the past 14 years out of a lush space in the Ritz-Carlton in White Plains. Reports indicate they lost their lease.

The buzz is that outside restaurateurs are already sizing up the prime location. Until late last year, BLT Steak had been competing with Morton's Steakhouse on Mamaroneck Avenue and the newer Fogo de Chao Brazilian Steakhouse on Main and Church.

Morris Gut is a restaurant marketing consultant and former restaurant trade magazine editor. He has been tracking and writing about the food and dining scene in greater Westchester for 30 years. He may be reached at 914-235-6591 or gutreaactions@optonline.net.

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Reminiscing Pre-COVID Times; Anticipating Post-COVID Travels



By Nick Antonaccio

If you've traveled to Western Europe and enjoyed a particular wine along the way, you may have had an experience similar to one I've had several times.

In preparation for a planned trip to Tuscany this summer (with all of the obvious COVID uncertainties and caveats in the forefront of my psyche), I've been reminiscing about prior trips to Italy and the food and wine experiences I've enjoyed.

My wife and I have fond memories of a simple meal, on a patio alongside a narrow two-lane road in Tuscany, quaffing from an unlabeled bottle, taking in the fragrances at the table and in the air, relaxing in our seats and enjoying the camaraderie of the local patrons sitting nearby. We've forever captured the experience of a thousand-year-old lifestyle and a cuisine married to the land on which we tread.

As much as we've explored the food and wine of Italy in the United States, experiencing the cuisine at its historical source is dramatically different. The

ingredients seem fresher. Not in terms of the harvesting moment, but rather in the crunchiness of a pepper, the pungent aroma of basil and rosemary and the distinctive texture of the cheeses.

And the wine. Why does it seem so refreshing, so simple yet satisfying? The house wines, rarely bearing a bottle label, were likely produced at a winery just a few kilometers from our table at the local trattoria. We've enjoyed Italian wines many times at home, but the wines produced locally, which may never reach American shores, influence our senses and our memories.

Why is this?

1. The locally grown grapes, those nurtured by the local Mom and Pop winemakers, are influenced more by their locale than their counterparts that are exported to the United States. Many of these winemakers cater to local restaurants and wine bars. They are not concerned with pleasing consumers in international markets or the aging potential of their wines. However, other local winemakers may craft their wines for export, to satisfy American or British palates, which typically have a broader cuisine-focused palate.
2. The wines taste fresher to some. In many cases, they are. Local wines tend



to be from the most recent vintage. Their exported counterparts seem more complex due in part to their longer aging cycle. What the local wines may lack in complexity and silky tannins is offset by their youthful vibrancy.

3. A number of indigenous grapes are not widely produced for export. I've enjoyed Falanghina in Campania, Vernaccia in the walled Tuscan town of San Gimignano and Trebbiano in the ancient city of Orvieto, all white wines that are best drunk young and have aromas and flavors that pair well with a number of Italian dishes.
4. Many of the local, artisanal wines that tourists enjoy have been produced without herbicides, pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or chemical additives for generations. While a number of Italian wines are produced organically, others continue to be subjected to chemicals in order to preserve and enhance yields. I believe organic wines have distinctive aroma and taste profiles that a trained

palate is able to sense from the first sniff.

5. Wine is not a very stable product. Oxidation and spoilage are threats to its stability as it ages. The primary agent for preserving wine is sulfur dioxide. If drunk young, this is not a major concern. Seemingly counterintuitive, sulfites are added to wine to preserve its freshness (shelf life), yet wine without sulfites tastes fresher when consumed young.
6. It's in our heads, not in the glass. Enjoying wine is a sensual experience, influenced by our surroundings and the "in the moment" impression. Our memories vividly capture the combined elements of our experience. It's never as good as the first time; enjoying a wine in that Tuscan trattoria is unique, not readily duplicated anywhere else.

When we next travel to Tuscany – and other Western European towns – we will once again savor the moments of our dining experiences. Then cherish them for a lifetime. I encourage you to do the same.

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

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