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April 5 - April 11, 2022

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

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Focus
on
Pace
See Sports



Developer in Contract to Buy Thornwood Legionnaires Property

By Martin Wilbur

Wilder Balter Partners is expected to soon complete the purchase of the 165-acre Legionnaires of Christ property in Thornwood and submit a conceptual plan for a townhouse development geared toward older adults.

During a wide-ranging discussion of topics at a residents' forum Saturday morning at Town Hall, Mount Pleasant Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi revealed that the Chappaqua-based developer is in contract to buy the land. Fulgenzi said while details still need to be flushed out, it was his understanding that the project would contain about 160 units in attached structures, with Wilder Balter partnering with Toll Brothers on construction of the units.

He anticipated that an initial draft of a plan could be submitted in about a month. While

it may not be restricted to residents 55 years old and up, the size and layout of the units would be consistent with developments that would be attractive to empty-nesters, Fulgenzi said.

"Our focus has been from Day One to prioritize the senior population," Fulgenzi said. "We don't have enough seniors to fill all those units, but it's not like it can only be seniors. You may have older couples with no children that may want to downsize. I think the focus is more on 55-and-older development."

Town officials have continually pledged to attract developers to build housing for independent older adults who may no longer want the responsibility of maintaining a single-family house. However, there is no age-restricted housing in Mount Pleasant, although there are two assisted living

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Camping Out

PETER ROGOVIN PHOTO

Local residents lined up outside Pleasantville Village Hall early Saturday morning for a chance at buying a limited number of spaces for Tent City at this summer's Pleasantville Music Festival. The reserved spots sold out quickly, similar to previous years. The music festival returns this year on Saturday, July 9 at Parkway Field after a two-year pandemic-induced hiatus. The lineup of performers is expected to be announced later this month. For tickets and info, visit www.pleasantvillemusicfestival.com.

North Castle Schedules Town Board Work Sessions on Off Weeks

By Martin Wilbur

For the first time the North Castle Town Board will be holding work sessions on weeks where it does not hold regular meetings because of several looming issues that need its attention.

The board, which has traditionally held 22 meetings a year, typically meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, except if a regular meeting night falls on a holiday and in August and December when it has just one meeting. Work sessions, when needed, have been held prior to the regular 7:30 p.m. Town Board meetings.

However, with a series of key issues on the board's plate, the

members last week took the step to add Apr. 13, May 4 and May 19 to its schedule for work sessions. This month, the board had scheduled its two regular meetings for the first and fourth Wednesdays because of the approaching school spring break and the Easter and Passover holidays.

Supervisor Michael Schiliro said work sessions won't be automatically added but will be scheduled on an as-needed basis when the board's workload warrants it. The off-week work sessions are expected to begin at 6 p.m. and could last up to three hours, if necessary.

"Once we catch up, we may determine work sessions aren't

needed or needed as regularly and they don't need to be scheduled for as long as three hours," Schiliro said.

Among the matters that the board is facing in the upcoming weeks is a review of the mandatory state Uniform Building Code changes proposed for next year and discussions on the future of the former Mariani Gardens site, where a new partnership has taken over and is likely to submit a revised formal application but has also sued the town.

Discussion on the Uniform Building Code is likely to take multiple sessions, said Town Administrator Kevin Hay. The board will open its discussion on the subject at its work session

before this Wednesday's regular Town Board meeting.

However, adding work sessions will also be met with a couple of additional challenges. Mindy Berard, Schiliro's confidential secretary, said the first Wednesday of each month Town Attorney Roland Baroni is unavailable. The third Wednesday evening of the month, the Town Hall meeting room is taken by the Architectural Review Board for its meetings. That will force the Town Board to move to an alternate location, such as the Town Hall annex, the North White Plains Community Center or Hergenhan Recreation Center.

The work sessions will be broadcast on the town's website

with replays available.

Schiliro said the board will still hold some work sessions before its regular meetings and will try to avoid scheduling items that are likely to require Baroni's legal advice on the first Wednesdays.

Councilmembers Barbara DiGiacinto and Saleem Hussain said the board should aim for a 6 p.m. start for the work sessions for a maximum of three hours.

"I would prefer not to start later and I would really like to agree, as much as we can, on a finishing time, maybe nine o'clock," DiGiacinto said. "That's three good hours unless something, obviously, I'm not saying set that in stone, but I really think we know we need to be very productive."

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Developer in Contract to Buy Thornwood Legionnaires Property

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facilities that are expected to be built.

The developer would be buying the same Columbus Avenue property that another Westchester developer, Baker Residential, had proposed 73 single-family homes on. Baker Residential received final approval for that project in February 2018

but never commenced construction after it was believed the developer and the Legion squabbled over the sale of the land.

Fulgenzi said the town has talked to Wilder Balter about the town receiving 18 to 20 acres for additional fields to expand its recreation programs while saving money renting schools, churches and

other venues to house various activities. There would also be enough room for the town to build a structure to host some of the programs and the Recreation & Parks Department offices.

"We rent space all over town," Fulgenzi said. "We rent churches and schools and stuff like that and we spend a considerable amount of money, and we do get it back through the programs. Why not put that money toward building a rec building. That's something we'd like to do."

Pocantico Lake Development

During the roughly 90-minute forum, discussion also focused on other development matters and a host of issues raised by residents.

The supervisor said an applicant, who has proposed a 31-lot cluster subdivision in an environmentally sensitive area near Pocantico Lake, has expressed a willingness to sell the lower portion of the 36-acre property to remain as open space in perpetuity.

Fulgenzi said he spoke with ZappiCo Real Estate Development of Hawthorne last Thursday and they would be willing to part with the portion that is located in the wetland buffer. ZappiCo would still develop the cluster subdivision with 31 homes, he said.

Conservation Advisory Council member Steven Willard, who attended Saturday's forum, said about two-thirds of the parcel could be preserved.

One of the more outspoken residents

who has wanted the property preserved, Charles Sanders, said he was hopeful that there could be a compromise.

"There's no reason to litigate this, to waste everyone's funds and taxpayer money," Sanders said.

In other issues, Fulgenzi said he has been in contact with Con Edison about the utility potentially burying the power lines along Commerce Street from Cross Street in Hawthorne to the Four Corners in Thornwood.

"They didn't laugh at me and tell me no," Fulgenzi said. "They said they wanted plans to see what we're going to do and hopefully we'll move forward on that because any enhancement you do, when you bury lines that's storm hardening; when you do storm hardening, they get additional funding."

It's the same stretch where the town is considering adoption of a form-based code to revitalize portions of Hawthorne and Thornwood.

Fulgenzi, in an attempt to quell fears that the rezoning would spark in influx of residents and congestion, said the plan is to revitalize with modest mixed-use projects to allow property owners to invest and upgrade their properties.

The last time the town updated its Master Plan was 1970.

"I was born and raised here," Fulgenzi said. "Nothing's been done in 50 years. Nothing, no investments."

Kensico Cemetery to Offer Free Walking Tours in May

Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla is offering free walking tours of the grounds during the first two weeks of May. All tours will run from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and cover about a half-mile section of the cemetery.

The Tower Loop Tour, offered for the first time, is scheduled for Tuesday, May 3 and Thursday, May 5. Highlights include a subway surprise, a silent film director, two sculptures hidden in plain sight, a Titanic mystery, a Hungarian dessert, a runaway horse, a vehicle that was awarded a Purple Heart and a tribute to Twinkies.

The Ossipee Loop Tour, offered last year for the first time, will be repeated with new stops on Tuesday, May 10 and Thursday, May 12. Highlights include a baseball legend and his boss, two inventors, a movie theater mogul, a World's Fair mystery, a controversial circus connection, a scandalous scofflaw, a Sentimental Gentleman, a Broadway angel and one good witch.

The tour guides are Patrick Raftery, associate director and librarian for the Westchester County Historical Society, and Judith C. Mitchell, public relations consultant for Kensico Cemetery.

"We're expanding on the walking tours we introduced last year as our way of encouraging our neighbors to know and appreciate, as we do, the fascinating stories awaiting discovery throughout our beautiful grounds," said Kensico Cemetery President Matt Parisi.

Tour participants are encouraged to wear comfortable shoes and to follow current state mask-wearing guidelines. The tours are free, but reservations are required by e-mailing tours@kensico.org indicating tour date choice. Directions and details will be included in the confirmation e-mail.

Kensico Cemetery is a nonprofit membership corporation established in 1889 to serve the burial needs of the New York metropolitan area.



The Most Common Sexually Transmitted Disease: HPV

What you need to know about keeping yourself and your children safe

Ask the Doctor

Dr. Adina Keller
Associate Chief,
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Northern Westchester Hospital

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Q: What is the human papilloma virus (HPV)?

A: HPV is a sexually transmitted virus. There are approximately 150 strains of the virus and nearly 40 affect the genital area. Most HPV infections are asymptomatic, which means that you may never know you were exposed. The majority of HPV strains do not cause any issues and will eventually go away on their own. Some strains, however, can cause genital warts, cervical cancer, anal cancer and other cancers, including head and neck cancers.

Q: Who is at risk?

A: Studies have shown that almost everyone gets exposed to HPV at some point in their lives. Some studies have shown that up to 90% of college-aged men women have been exposed to HPV. If you're dating someone and they say they've been "tested," please know that men cannot be tested for HPV. The virus hides from our immune systems, so it will not show up on a blood test. Women can be tested for HPV by getting a pap smear, but there's no test for men.

Q: What's the best defense against HPV?

A: Condoms are the best defense against HPV, but even with condom use, the virus can still be transmitted to others. There is no cure for HPV, only prevention.

That's why it's so important for both boys and girls

to get vaccinated. Vaccines against HPV have sharply reduced infections in men and women and will likely cause major drops in HPV-related cancers. Parents should discuss the optimal time for the vaccine with their pediatrician. Some may decide to delay the vaccine until the middle teen years.

Men and women, up to age 45, can get the HPV vaccine.

The CDC recommendation now includes men and women up to age 45 – especially if they are dating, widowed or have a new partner. If you're interested in a vaccine, speak with your doctor.

Q: Does my child really need this?

A: The answer is yes. You're providing your children with something that will prevent cancer down the road. So, if anybody has any concerns that they're not doing right by their child, think again. We have to assume that our children will become sexually active as they get older, therefore they need to be vaccinated. The HPV vaccine has already been shown to markedly reduce the incidence of HPV infections in young adults.

Learn more about Northern Westchester Hospital, visit nwh.northwell.edu



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Wolffer '21 Summer in a Bottle Rose

Tasting Note: Bright shiny copper in color. The aroma is elegant with fine clean fruit notes of pears and apples but with a luxurious ripeness. The mouth-feel is vibrant and has lovely spiciness and a rich texture with fine tannins. It is livened up by nice acidity and a classic minerality and salinity. This dry rosé is very savory and has a long finish with creamy yeast and delicate chalk notes. This may be the most food-friendly Summer in a Bottle to date and is certainly the perfect summer wine!

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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

Wine of the Year

2020 Anne Pichon Grenache Noir



Take what you think you know about Grenache and throw it out the window. As this wine opens, initial dark berry flavors meld into a true jam flavor with floral notes and bitter cranberry. It has such a divine, full mouthfeel that tricks you into not initially noticing that it's more 'dry' than not.

\$21⁹⁷

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.

\$19⁹⁷

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Mt. Pleasant Voters Approve \$9.7M Athletics Facilities Bond

By Martin Wilbur

Mount Pleasant School District's \$9.7 million athletics facilities referendum that promises to markedly improve the high school and middle school complex's sports fields was resoundingly approved Tuesday night.

Passed by a 3-to-1 margin with an impressive turnout of nearly 1,600 voters, the community enthusiastically supported the project that will see the Westlake High School main field get artificial turf and lights, two other fields reconfigured to become regulation-sized playing surfaces along with improved drainage and improvements to the baseball and softball diamonds on the campus.

The final tally, including absentee ballots, was 1,191 voters supporting the bond with 398 opposed.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Peter Giarrizzo said he was elated at the level of community backing, likely, at least in part, to effective communication by the district that the bond would have not cause property taxes to rise by the time money is borrowed for the work. When debt service from the bond begins to appear in the district's 2023-24 budget, other debt will have been retired, offsetting the expense.

"I'm like overwhelmed by the margin," Giarrizzo said moments after the results were announced at the Westlake High School gym. "I think this is amazing. This really shows, it proves to me and shows me that we have a really strong partnership with our community."

Mount Pleasant had scheduled an identical



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Mount Pleasant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Peter Giarrizzo, center, is all smiles while others celebrate after results were announced last Tuesday evening that the district's athletics facilities referendum was approved by a 3-to-1 margin.

proposition two years ago, also scheduled for the last Tuesday in March 2020, but the pandemic forced school officials to cancel the vote. Only the cost of the project changed, rising from \$9,085,000 to \$9,770,000 since 2020.

However, Board of Education President Michael Horan said by waiting the two years

there would be no additional taxes added to residents' property tax bills, even temporarily. For Horan, that was likely a big selling point.

"I think (with) the two-year hiatus there was a lot of pent-up demand for it," Horan said. "People were upset that we had to make the decision two years ago not to go forward with it in the pandemic, and I think a silver

lining to the pandemic is that would have cost a couple of hundred (dollars) on your taxes. This is not going to cost you anything additional."

Donna Pirro, the district's director of physical education, health and athletics, said the results has her excited for the district, its student athletes and the future of Westlake High School athletics.

She said having to find alternate sites for practices, including asking neighboring school districts for use of their facilities, and having to play home games on the road and at neutral sites had become a burden for the district and its students. The community will have facilities that will be on par with other districts throughout Section 1.

After rain, the soggy fields have also posed injury risks to athletes playing the games, Pirro said. Westlake High School is one of only seven schools in the section, out of more than 70, not to have an artificial turf field.

"(They) just deserved to have pride in their school and this facility and be afforded every opportunity that they should rightfully have," Pirro said. "We're not asking for things tremendously out of the ordinary."

Under the schedule that the district has presented, work is scheduled to begin on the main competition field following the completion of next fall's football season and be ready for the 2023 season. Work will be done on the other five fields as next year's sports seasons conclude.

The district will need to submit its plans and receive approval from the state Education Department.

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Prominent Developers Discuss Future Growth and Challenges

By Rick Pezzullo

Several prominent developers in Westchester County discussed the state of the economy and challenges of building in a webinar last week moderated by Business Council of Westchester President and CEO Marsha Gordon.

“I’m sure you have all noticed the changing skyline and landscape of Westchester County cities and village and towns,” Gordon said. “These leaders in Westchester County are creating new jobs, new opportunities to live and to work and to play, and adding to the vibrancy of Westchester County.”

Participants were William Balter, president of WBP Development LLC and Griffon Construction LLC; Louis Cappelli, founder of the Cappelli Organization and chairman and CEO of LRC Construction; Joe Cotter, president of National Resources; Rella Fogliano, CEO, Macquesten Development; David Garten, senior vice president of corporate affairs for RXR; and Andrew Weisz, executive vice President of the RPW Group, Inc.

Balter described the eight current affordable and workforce housing projects his company has built in Peekskill, Tarrytown, Lewisboro, Irvington, Edgemont and New Rochelle.

“It’s really a very exciting time to be working in Westchester,” Balter said. “We look as a company to work in communities that are really actively engaged in

economic development, and then planning the growth of their downtowns.”

Cappelli talked about his success in New Rochelle, where he has 2,000 units under construction, and the four-year redevelopment of the former White Plains Mall that is expected to get underway in June.

“White Plains has the potential of being a larger development situation than New Rochelle,” he said. “White Plains is just coming into its own.”

Fogliano is working with Balter on a 76-unit affordable workforce housing project in Ossining.

“It takes a few dollars out of my pocket to use special materials inside and out, but I think that the rewards are tenfold,” Fogliano said. “I don’t want anybody to look at one of my buildings and say, ‘Oh, that’s affordable housing.’ People need affordable housing that’s beautiful. It’s a quality of life.”

Cotter discussed how National Resources is building the largest film and movie studio complex in the Northeast in downtown Yonkers that will bring 1,500 new jobs over the next three years. At the former IBM site in East Fishkill, National Resources repurposed the property for food manufacturers and is building a back lot operation for film and television production.

Cotter is working on a Master Plan in the Village of Brewster in Putnam County, but said it’s difficult for developers to get

traction outside the big cities.

“Sadly, there’s no places for workforce housing or young people in any of the better suburbs,” Cotter said. “Our aging population should be something of great concern. We can’t have senior, assisted-living projects in every wealthy community because they don’t want schoolchildren. What society is anti-schoolchildren? Our main streets are in desperate shape.”

Cappelli said the rising costs of materials and lack of supplies is going to have a major impact on future development.

“I’ve never seen anything like this in my life. Everything is going up,” he said. “It is absolutely a challenge. I’m afraid things will have to slow so there isn’t this frenzy for materials. It’s the biggest problem I see in the development of Westchester County and the country.”

Science Whiz Kids

Thirty-six Byram Hills High School students won awards at the Regeneron Westchester Science and Engineering Fair. Three of them, pictured from left, Edith Bachmann, Jack Blackmar and Gabriella Colabello, captured the top prize and advanced to compete in the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair in Atlanta in May.



BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PHOTO

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Fox Lane Students Face Disciplinary Action in 'Disturbing Incident'

By Martin Wilbur

Multiple Fox Lane High School students who engaged in "a very disturbing incident" at the school are in the process of being disciplined, Bedford school officials revealed last week.

Last Thursday afternoon Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joel Adelberg and Principal Dr. Brett Miller sent a joint letter to parents informing them of the incident, which they did not describe. The letter said the matter violated the privacy of some of students.

"We find what occurred reprehensible," a separate statement released by the district after The Examiner posed several questions to

the superintendent's office last Friday morning stated. "We have identified the students who are responsible and we are taking disciplinary action."

The Bedford Police Department declined comment on the matter because there is an ongoing investigation.

On Mar. 31, an image of a flyer was making the rounds on social media advertising a \$1,000 reward "for information leading to the person or persons responsible for taking inappropriate photos and videos of special needs students

on 2nd floor A WING Bathroom" in March and December. The Examiner called the phone number provided on the flyer and left a message, but did not receive a call back.

The district gave no indication whether the information contained in that reward flyer was accurate.

However, in the letter sent out by Adelberg and Miller last Thursday, it stated that the district is working with the families of the students victimized in the incident.

"We acknowledge how disturbing this is,"

the joint letter stated. "The families directly impacted by this incident have been notified so that we can work with them. However, we believe that the egregious behavior of this incident is one that our entire community needs to address."

The administrators added that the district is committed to working with the entire student community on exhibiting appropriate and respectful behavior to encourage "the inclusion and safety of EVERY member" of the school and the district.

Proposed P'ville Village Budget Raises Taxes 2.29%

By Abby Luby

Property owners in the Village of Pleasantville would see a 2.29 percent tax rate increase under the village's proposed \$17 million budget for 2022-23.

The average property owner would see their taxes increase about \$105. The budget is tax cap-compliant with a proposed tax levy increase of \$347,758, which is \$247,962 below the ceiling.

There is about a \$900,000 spending increase over the current year. There is also a projected fund balance of \$7 million.

The draft budget was presented at the Mar. 28 Village Board work session.

Inflation pressures were factored into the proposed budget that projects higher costs for village employee health insurance. That item jumped 12 percent for the current year's budget; for 2022-23, health insurance

is projected to increase a little more than 7 percent.

The residential refuse tax is estimated to increase \$1.50, bringing that annual cost to \$482.23 for single-family homes. Condo unit owners would pay \$361.67, two-family residences would be charged \$723.35 and three-family residences would be charged \$1,085.02.

Water rates is projected to increase 2 percent for all residential, business, non-district and bulk customers, adding \$1 or \$2 to the water bill. An appropriation of \$164,000 from fund balance would be applied toward maintaining affordable water rates.

The village approved a higher hourly pay rate for summer camp counselors so the jobs are more appealing and competitive with neighboring municipalities' camp programs.

Village costs routinely impacted by inflation has also added to spending,

including higher electricity rates for village facilities and gas for police cars, said Village Administrator Eric Morrissey.

"Costs (have) gone up but they will be offset by our revenue," Morrissey said. "Among those are the costs to run summer camp, which has gone up, and the higher Pleasantville Music Festival fees, which will give us more revenue coming in."

Morrissey added that village debt service has decreased to \$150,000.

"The village has continued to retire the debt over the past several years," he said.

The Village Board must adopt a budget by the end of April. The new fiscal year begins June 1.

A public hearing on the 2022-23 proposed budget is scheduled for the board's next regular meeting on Monday, Apr. 11 at 8 p.m.

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Dementia: What It Is and What It Is Not

Presented by Amy E. Matthews. Ms. Matthews has worked exclusively in the field of Alzheimer's and related dementia disorders for the past 30 years, holding various positions within the fields of Adult Day Care and Home Health. She was an Activity Director for the first dementia-specific assisted living community in the country, and later served as Executive Director for another Memory Care community. She worked for the Alzheimer's Association, Greater New Jersey Chapter for 14 years, providing both professional and community education and training. She currently consults with professionals and families on best practices and helping them create a plan of care for the future.



While we've come a long way in increasing awareness of dementia, there is very little understanding of what the term actually means. The term "dementia" is often used interchangeably with "Alzheimer's disease" and "vascular dementia."

However, there are conditions that can cause dementia symptoms, but with proper diagnosis and treatment, these symptoms can be managed or reversed. We'll discuss the meaning of the term "dementia" as well as the causes. We'll identify the steps to getting an accurate diagnosis, as well as things we can do to promote healthy aging.

RSVP by Monday, April 11th

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Thursday, April 14th

9:30 - 10:00 a.m. Registration and Breakfast
 10:00 - 11:15 a.m. Presentation and Q&A

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COVID Infections on the Rise as Hospitalizations Fall in Westchester

By Martin Wilbur

COVID-19 infections are steadily increasing the past few weeks but officials are hopeful that the high regional and state vaccination rate is protecting much of the population from serious illness.

On Sunday, Westchester County's infection rate clocked in at 3.9 percent, after back-to-back days of readings of at least 4 percent on Friday and Saturday, according to the New York State COVID tracker. The positivity rate stood at an even 4 percent on Friday but had risen to 4.5 percent on Saturday in Westchester.

County Executive George Latimer said while the infection numbers have been rising, the number of hospitalized patients as a result of COVID-19 has been declining. On Sunday, the 1,736 active cases in the county were just over double the total on Mar. 3 when there were 819 cases; however, COVID hospitalizations in that same timeframe have fallen from 56 to 35.

"So we see a couple of indicators moving in opposite directions, but the most important thing is are we keeping the fatalities low and are people staying out of the hospital, and if those numbers continue to show a low level of improvement, then that is the point we believe we can manage – in quotation marks – COVID," Latimer said.

The seven-day rolling average in Westchester was a 3.9 percent infection rate.

Last week, there were two COVID-19-related deaths in the county during the past week.

In Putnam County, Sunday's positivity rate was 2.9 percent, and 3.8 percent on the seven-day average. Percentages across the seven counties in the Mid Hudson region, which both Westchester and Putnam are part of, have been relatively consistent with the seven-day regional average at 3.1 percent.

However, there are counties upstate where the percentages have risen dramatically in recent weeks. The state's COVID tracker showed on Sunday that in the five-county Central New York region, four of the five counties (Cayuga, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego) had infection rates ranging from 11.8 to 16 percent.

Latimer said while the declines in hospitalizations and fatalities have been highly encouraging, it doesn't mean the pandemic has ended.

"What it may mean is that the high percentage of people that are vaccinated, while getting COVID, because being vaccinated doesn't mean you won't get COVID, it does mean you'll be less severely affected by it and it's the people who wind up being hospitalized for COVID that are the ones in the more serious situations," Latimer said.

During the weekly briefing, Latimer invited Byram Hills Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jen Lamia, who serves as president of the Council of School

Administrators for Southern Westchester. She said the county has been helpful by keeping the lines of communication open by arranging weekly virtual meetings, supplying test kits and other steps.

Despite the challenges of the past two years, Lamia said it has been uplifting for schools to have welcomed back their

students this year but districts are careful to take the necessary precautions to protect students and staff.

"Our schools are open, our schools continue to be vigilant regarding COVID and it's really due to the strength and support we received from the county," Lamia said.

Reaching the Pinnacle

Katonah resident Steve Wilson reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro last month for the second time in four years. On Mar. 4, the Westchester resident and a group of kidney donors from across the United States began their climb to raise awareness about donating an organ. Six days later, on World Kidney Day, they reached the summit. Wilson's message: "You can live a completely normal life – even climb a mountain – with one kidney." This Wednesday, Apr. 6 is Living Donor Day and April is Donate Life Month.



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Police Blotter

County Police/Mount Kisco

Mar. 27: A Malden, Mass. man was charged at 10:42 p.m. with DWI, a misdemeanor, after he drove onto the sidewalk in front of the Green Street precinct. Yonathan Ramirez-Javiel, 24, was booked at the precinct and released to a friend who lives in the village. He is due in Mount Kisco Justice Court on Apr. 7.

Mar. 27: Officers responded to Stop & Shop on North Bedford Road at 8:17 a.m. on

a report that a man was wandering around the store talking to himself and acting erratically. The man, who acknowledged he was not shopping, agreed to leave the store. He was given a ride to the train station after he told officers he was from the Bronx and wanted to return home.

Mar. 29: Officers responded at 9:20 p.m. to assist an elderly man who was having difficulty breathing at his Grandview Drive home. The Mount Kisco Volunteer Ambulance Corps transported the man to Northern Westchester Hospital.

Mar. 30: Report of a domestic dispute between a mother and her teenage son at a Spring Street residence at 2:45 p.m. The youth left the home prior to the officer's arrival. The boy's mother reported that her son had threatened her during an argument but the dispute did not get physical. A domestic incident report was prepared.

Mar. 31: Officers responded to a North Bedford Road gas station at 5:54 a.m. on a report that an employee at the cash register was unconscious and possibly needed assistance. It was determined that the man had fallen asleep but was otherwise fine.

Apr. 1: Report of a landlord-tenant dispute on Regent Drive at 10:51 a.m. A tenant who was moving out was refusing to leave the premises because his security deposit was not being returned. He was advised how to pursue the matter in civil court.

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Mar. 24: Patrols received a complaint at 3:45 p.m. alleging a fraudulent withdrawal attempt from the Wells Fargo ATM on Maple Street.

Mar. 27: At 11:11 a.m., report of a male riding the public bus back and forth through the village asking people for money and making people feel scared and uncomfortable. Patrols attempted to locate the bus but it was not in the village. New York State police were notified.

Mount Pleasant Police Department

Mar. 29: A resident reported that their vehicle was stolen from the driveway of their Thornwood residence located on a side street off of Nannyhagen Road. Several other residents reported their unlocked vehicles being entered during the early morning hours. Residents are urged to keep their vehicles locked and to remove the key fobs.

Mar. 31: Police responded to a reported assault at about 12:30 p.m. The victim, a 17-year-old Hawthorne resident, was followed by a vehicle and operator that he recognized. The victim eventually stopped his vehicle, and when he got out of his vehicle, he was struck several times in the face by the operator. He returned to his vehicle and continued to be followed by the same vehicle. When the victim stopped a second time, two other subjects got out of the original offender's vehicle. One of the passengers struck the victim with a vehicle steering wheel anti-theft device. Based on the victim's description, the Detective Division located the suspects' vehicle and took three New Rochelle males, 16, 17 and 18 years old, into custody, charging them with second-degree assault. The 16- and

17-year-old were processed as juveniles. The investigation is ongoing.

North Castle Police Department

Mar. 27: A Maple Way resident reported a possible intruder attempting to enter her residence at 10:57 p.m. The alarm was activated and the resident believes that she heard a door open. Police remained on the line with the caller until units arrived. The responding officers reported that the wind possibly caused the alarm system to activate; no emergency observed at the location.

Mar. 28: A complainant responded to headquarters at 3:06 p.m. to report that his recently purchased iPad Pro had been stolen from its delivery box either in UPS transit or at the U.S. Postal Service location where he attempted to pick it up. A report was taken at the dispatch desk.

Mar. 29: Report of an apparently stolen vehicle from a location on Hillandale Avenue at 5:56 a.m. The caller stated that they believe an unknown vehicle was left at their residence as well.

Mar. 29: New Haven, Conn. police notified North Castle police confirming that they located the stolen vehicle that was reported from Hillandale Avenue earlier this date. The vehicle was requested to be held for prints. It was successfully taken out of the e-justice system.

Pleasantville Police Department

Mar. 29: Report of an irate patron refusing to leave Pub Street on Wheeler Avenue at 8:51 p.m. The situation was corrected without incident.

Apr. 1: Report of a suspicious vehicle parked on Manville Road at 7:57 a.m. A white unmarked box truck has been parked for multiple days without moving. The vehicle was determined to have parked illegally.

Apr. 2: A female was observed walking in the middle of Manville Road at 9:41 a.m. and appeared to be disheveled. The woman was described as aggressive and yelling obscenities. Officers reported the subject was gone upon arrival.

Yorktown Police Department

Mar. 25: Linda Travis, 56, of Greenwich, Conn., was charged with driving with a revoked license and other traffic infractions after being pulled over on Route 6 at 7:20 p.m.

Mar. 28: Robert Yeager, 25, of Yorktown, was charged with driving with a suspended license and failing to register his vehicle following a traffic stop on Gomer Street at 4:43 p.m. for having excessively tinted windows.

Mar. 29: Nicholas Giardina, 51, of South Salem, was charged with third-degree criminal mischief at 5 p.m. after being involved in a road rage incident and punching the hood of a vehicle. The vehicle's hood sustained two dents.

Editor's note: The policy of providing names for people who have been arrested varies between each department.

Obituaries

Margaret Gallagher

Margaret Gallagher (née Naughton) Cartron, of Collooney Co. Sligo and formerly of Pleasantville and Rabane, Castleblakeney, Co. Galway, Ireland, died peacefully Mar. 16 at her home after a short illness bravely borne. She was 93.

Beloved wife of the late Michael Francis (Frank) and loving mother to her predeceased children Maureen and Gary; she is sadly missed by her sons, Michael and Brendan of Texas and Shawn of Florida; daughter Dawn (Delaney) of Caltra, Co. Galway; sister Delia and brother-in-law Gerry of England; and daughters-in-law, son-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives and many friends.

Following a visitation and funeral Mass in Ireland, Margaret is returning to Pleasantville to rest with Maureen and Gary. The family will receive family and friends for memorial visitation on Friday, Apr. 8 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Beecher Flocks Funeral Home, located at 418 Bedford Rd. in Pleasantville. Burial will



Margaret Gallagher

take place on Saturday, Apr. 9 at 10 a.m. at All Souls Cemetery in Pleasantville.

Jean Secor

Jean Secor, a resident of Yorktown Heights, died Apr. 1. She was 91.

She was born Dec. 6, 1930, in Peekskill. She was general manager and comptroller at the Yorktown PennySaver for 45 years.

Jean is survived by her daughter, Susan, and grandson Nicholas; daughter Cindy and son-in-law Tim; five grandchildren; and eight

great-grandchildren.

The family will honor her memory at a reception on Apr. 9 from 2 to 4 p.m. at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 1836 E. Main St. in Mohegan Lake.

In lieu of flowers, a donation may be made to St. Mary's Episcopal Church.



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SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

W'chester Offers Tuition Program to Increase Volunteer Fire, EMS Ranks

By Martin Wilbur

It's no secret that volunteer fire departments and ambulance corps face significant challenges in attracting new members to bolster their ranks.

Now, Westchester County has introduced a new incentive to entice community members, particularly young adults, to serve their communities and address a shortage of volunteers that has reached crisis proportions.

County Executive George Latimer announced last Thursday the Higher Education Recruitment and Retention Opportunity (HERRO) program, which would provide up to \$6,000 a year in higher education tuition or student loan payments for active members of a volunteer fire department or EMS service.

"Our initiative today is we're trying to show that we're thinking outside of the box and to see if we can come up with ways that will attract young people to become part of this lifesaving mission where people's lives do hang in the balance with the kind of emergency services that can respond when these crises hit," Latimer said during a trip to the Armonk Fire Department stationhouse to

publicize the new effort.

The program requires eligible candidates to have been active for at least a year, maintain acceptable volunteer and training levels and have their participation verified by a leader of the department they serve. Recipients would be required to maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average.

Late last year, Westchester County approved \$500,000 in the 2022 budget to fund the pilot program.

County Department of Emergency Services Commissioner Richard Wishnie credited Susan Spear, his department's deputy commissioner, with proposing the program after they brainstormed ideas with Latimer to address the volunteer emergency service shortage.

"(It) is really going to make a difference in the number of volunteers that step up to the plate and stay with the services," Wishnie said. "That's the key, sign them up and retain them. We need desperately to have these volunteers serve their communities."

Money awarded could go toward tuition or student loan payments for undergraduate or graduate

school, trade school and certain types of training programs, Spear added.

In recent years it has been increasingly difficult to recruit and retain members, which threatens to dramatically escalate taxes for homeowners if departments are ever forced to consider professional firefighters or EMTs.

Chappaqua Volunteer Ambulance Corps Captain Kate Clough said the pandemic has hastened departures as many existing members cut back service for health reasons. As a result, there have been increasing mutual aid calls where departments respond to emergencies in other communities because there aren't enough volunteers locally to respond.

"We have a healthy youth corps program (in Chappaqua) with about 20 high school students who ride with us," Clough said. "Some come back to ride with us after school but they generally have to move away for work. Some of these corps (members) are in EMT schools and this will help encourage them to stay on through college."

Armonk Fire Chief Carlos Cano, whose department has about 60 members, said high school students initially join but there is



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Westchester County Executive George Latimer announced a new program that officials hope will entice younger community members to volunteer for their local fire department or ambulance corps by providing tuition or student loan payments of up to \$6,000 a year.

little incentive once they begin college. This program could help encourage them to continue their service when they return from school.

"A program like this will definitely help them to be able to stay longer and help out in the community," Cano said.

One member of Mount Kisco's Independent Fire Company, Madelyn Contreras, said she joined while attending Fox Lane High School. Currently in her sophomore year at St. John's

where she is studying homeland security and cybersecurity, Contreras was motivated to join after a boiler accident about eight years ago in her family's home knocked her, her cousin and her grandmother unconscious from carbon monoxide fumes.

For nearly four years, Contreras has been volunteering for the company that saved their lives and continues to serve while attending school full-time and holding two part-time jobs.

continued on page 12

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Letters to the Editor

There Are No Good Solutions in Siting a Cell Tower in Mount Kisco

The proposal to build a cell tower in Mount Kisco to address a coverage gap that affects Route 172 has come full circle. Several years ago, this tower was proposed for Leonard Park along with an alternative site on a hill in the nearby Chase residential neighborhood. Following balloon tests to assess the visibility of the tower from various locations and a public hearing, both sites were rejected.

After a period of time, the proposal for the cell tower popped up again, this time on a 25-acre property in Mount Kisco on Route 172 at the Bedford border. Also, a solar farm for community solar was proposed for the same property. This solar farm proposal has been intensively reviewed by the Planning Board for more than two years. Both proposals have evoked very strong opposition from the public. And now, after a search for a better site for the cell tower, once again there is a proposal to site the tower in Leonard Park, although in a different location than the original proposal.

Because of federal laws, Mount Kisco cannot reject the proposed tower nor can it consider any possible adverse health effects from the radiofrequency waves. Whether such electromagnetic radiation involving cell towers can produce any significant health effects has not been definitively proven but is still being investigated. So there are limits on what Mount Kisco can do about this proposed tower and what type of information can be used in making decisions.

With regard to the latest proposal to locate the tower in Leonard Park, there have been mixed opinions. Some residents are opposed to placing a commercial structure within the park but some are supportive because the Village Board is contemplating taking the 25-acre property through eminent domain and turning it into a park to compensate for the loss of parkland in Leonard Park if the tower is built there.

Because Mount Kisco cannot by law reject the tower, many village residents like myself are likely to be, to some extent, unhappy about the final result no matter what is decided. And for those living closest to the tower, they will be left to wonder whether or not the tower can affect their health. Cell phones are extremely popular but the cell towers that are needed for them to operate continue to plague communities.

Robert Liebman
Mount Kisco

Yorktown Councilman Was Wrong to Impugn Resident During Hearing

Why did the Mar. 22 public hearing in Yorktown about solar farms morph into a false accusation of “prejudice” against a community member?

Ask Councilman Tom Diana for the answer because he chose to fabricate this slanderous allegation against a respected citizen without factual basis.

The issues being discussed were tree removal and the adequacy of mitigation proposals for future solar projects. A speaker commented about the history of tree removal problems at a local gas station to illustrate the dangers of improper mitigation and lack of enforcement by the town.

Instead of acknowledging and providing future solutions to these valid tree mitigation issues, Councilman Diana chose to make a false accusation of prejudice by this citizen against the gas station owner. Mr. Diana then went on a vigorous diatribe in defense of the gas station owner. The citizen categorically denied knowing anything about the background of the gas station owner, but Mr. Diana never apologized for the disgusting accusation.

There is no evidence, whatsoever, in the public record, going back to October 2015 of any speaker exhibiting prejudice against the background of the gas station owner, including the person whom Mr. Diana accused. Mr. Diana created an issue of prejudice where none existed.

Councilman Diana’s accusations of prejudice are especially disingenuous and hypocritical given his past silence regarding the distribution of racist flyers against fellow councilmembers in 2017, Holocaust/ Nazi trivialization under former supervisor Michael Grace’s tenure and racist comments against two former councilmembers. That doesn’t include Mr. Diana’s personal online posts that have since been deleted.

Councilman Diana should provide evidence for his accusations or publicly apologize to the community member that was defamed by his irresponsible accusation. The Town Board represents all the citizens of Yorktown and should not be acting as cheerleaders for businesses, at the expense of slandering citizens.

Miriam D. Messing Curtin
Yorktown

Yorktown Deserves Answers Related to the Former Soundview Parcel

People want to know why so many backroom deals were made and corners cut to expedite approval for the former Soundview property on Underhill Avenue. Complicit, not cozy, better describes the relationships among current and former elected officials and Unicorn Contracting.

After being voted in and out of office, these politicians have either lobbied on behalf, worked for, provided services or directly profited from their collaboration alongside Unicorn Contracting. Revolving-door politicians have seamlessly transitioned from the public dole to a private pay day. It sure smells unethical.

Were official votes cast for any other reason than the public’s best interest? A long overdue investigation into this tangled web between Town Hall and Unicorn Contracting regarding the Soundview property is warranted. Yorktown deserves to know if laws were broken and if the public trust has been betrayed and by whom.

Stephen Brown
Yorktown Heights

Calendar Submissions

We’re happy to help spread the word about your community event. Please submit your information at least three weeks prior to your event and include the words “Calendar Submission” in your email subject line. Entries should be sent to Abby Luby at aluby@theexaminernews.com.

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Columns

Reconnect With Nature, the Cosmos and Each Other at Linwood Spiritual Center

Westchester and Putnam residents, harried to the edge of exasperation in their professional lives and consumed with their telephones, computers and TVs 24/7, may find release and reconnection with what's truly important at the Linwood Spiritual Center.

The center in Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, offers its 50-acre site as a place for people to unplug and commune with nature and the divine cosmos. Owned by the Sisters of St. Ursula, a 400-year-old Roman Catholic order, the center provides weekday or weekend retreats for people to interact with the natural world on the hills jutting over the Hudson River, with a view of the Esopus Lighthouse and the Catskill and Shawangunk mountain ranges in the distance.

"We recommend a lot of silence, to quiet the mind," explained Terrence McCorry, executive director of the center. "No TV, no electronics."

Instead, the property invites visitors to sit, walk and look at the natural world, by appointment.

"Electronics are not all that good for you," McCorry pointed out. "Turn your phone off. Take a walk with nature. Give quiet a chance."

"Watch the light dance off the river,



By Michael Gold

rather than looking at a screen," he added. "Your body and mind start to naturally unpack. You walk around the grounds of this beautiful landscape and a lot of things you tend to worry about go away. Before you know it, you're exhaling."

"This place is needed more than ever. All we have as Americans, all the things we consume and collect, it never fills us up. There is a growing sense of a lack of something, a lack of connection to one another – a committed path to peace,

love, compassion and consideration," McCorry explained. "Our message is inclusion, peace, love, acceptance and God in all people. Everyone is welcome to the table."

The center's theme for 2022 is "Stewards of Creation," emphasizing the connection between the human and the divine.

"Our intention is to deepen your experience of the sacred land," McCorry said.

Stewards of Creation, as called for by Pope Francis, emphasizes prayer and action for the benefit of humanity's common home, the Earth. Humans are to be stewards of creation, not dominate it, McCorry stated in an e-mail.

"The Sisters of St. Ursula naturally incorporate this awareness as an aspect of Catholic social teachings," he wrote. "We

increased our recycling efforts on site, minimize waste and open windows rather than use AC. We purchase green cleaning products and recycled paper products."

As part of the theme of stewardship, the center is planning in late September a retreat focused on planting seeds. Diane Wilson, author of "The Seed Keeper," a novel which emphasizes our relationship to seeds and our ancestors, will connect with retreat-goers via Zoom during the weekend.

The retreat will help raise awareness of the Lenape and other First Nations peoples who have lived in the area for millennia. Wilson herself is a descendant of the Mdewakanton people, and lives in Minnesota.

The Society's Sister Isaac plants seeds on the site every spring. The center grows tomatoes, eggplant and squash on the grounds and buys as much locally made food as possible, including yogurt, milk and cider.

"The Pope's Encyclical (Laudato Si, issued in 2015) was a wakeup call to help us understand how we were destroying God's creation, the environment, and people, the seen and unseen," McCorry explained.

"It's about how we affect one another," he said. "The poor are suffering by us not taking care of the environment. We're hurting one another. We're hurting our neighbors, more so those who don't have the resources."

McCorry worked for 14 years in film and

television production, before he changed his life, earning a master's degree in theology at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He served as director of ministry at the now-closed Marymount College in Tarrytown and the College of New Rochelle.

Explaining his philosophy, he said, "If you come with a small cup, only that small cup will be filled. Open up a larger space for yourself. I found my larger container. I felt I was always going upstream. As soon as I turned myself over to God, I was flowing downstream."

"Our goal is to heal and repair what's been broken, rediscovering what's been lost," McCorry continued. "We believe in the divine. We create the space to get people together with the divine."

"This is a place of privilege. You need to be able to make a difference. There's too many people hurting. There's too much suffering in the world for those of us who have plenty to not make a difference."

Linwood hosts retreats for high schools, inner city children and a variety of groups.

"Linwood can help you see the connection to one another," said McCorry, as two Bald Eagles glided on the wind, against a solid blue sky, outside his window as he spoke. "We're a house to all."

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

On the Street

Revisiting 'The Wizard of Oz' as an Existential Experience

We are all familiar with the 1939 American classic film "The Wizard of Oz," based on L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel.

For the sake of honesty, Baum was not a card-carrying existentialist, since it's a term that did not come into being until the mid-20th century. However, the movie's main characters are very existential in their quests to take themselves from mere existence to essence as they attempt to bring meaning to their lives.

Existentialism is my no means a cure-all for life's problems, but rather an adjunct to traditional philosophy, religion and psychology. Regretfully, many people today erroneously believe existentialism is nihilistic. On the contrary, it is a response to our human frailty that makes many of us believe that life is meaningless. The objective of existentialism is to have people find meaning in their lives.

Existentially Speaking

If we take a look at Dorothy, the main character, she engages in freundeschaft, a neologism that means she has an empathic connection with the Tin Man, Cowardly Lion and the Scarecrow and shares their pain and meaningless of life.

When Dorothy befriends the three characters along the Yellow Brick Road as they journey to the Emerald City to see the wizard, they join her in the hope the wizard will be able to help them from existing in a meaningless state to that of finding meaning and essence.

We all know the storyline, when they meet the charlatan wizard who challenges them to kill the wicked witch of the west before he can grant their wishes. It is a task he believes they are unable to achieve, as well as a promise he is unable to keep.

Dorothy and her companions take up the task and find themselves incurring the wrath of the wicked witch, who

they ultimately prevail over. Bringing back the broom of the wicked witch to the wizard, the Tin Man, Cowardly Lion and Scarecrow are given token gifts by the wizard to fulfill his promise. They achieved their essence and meaning of life by successfully challenging the adversities of life. A truly existential experience.

As we can see in this story, when our attention is not focused on a task or conversation our mind begins to wander where the majority of our thoughts are negative. That hampers us from finding our meaning and essence in life. The underlying theme of the movie is that we are all existential by nature, whether we are aware of it or not, which plays an important role in finding happiness in life.



By Richard Cirulli

I will suggest that as adults we take the time to either revisit the movie or to reread the book in light of viewing it as an existential work. Of note, the movie did take some liberty with the book.

I am now headed down the Yellow Brick Road to find the Wizard of Oz in the hope he may cure my writer's cramp and carpal tunnel.

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

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

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Yorktown Preservation Chair Named to Revolutionary Route Group

The National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association, Inc., (www.W3R-US.org) Executive Committee announced the appointment of Yorktown's Lynn Briggs as co-chair of the W3R-US New York State Committee at its Mar. 21 meeting.

In this role, Briggs will partner with longtime W3R-US NY state chair and former National W3R-US Chair Janet Burnet and the W3R-US NYS Committee to further the goals of W3R-US and the National Park Service in initiating, coordinating and promoting programs to educate the public about the history of the American Revolution.

There will be particular emphasis on how France and the French people provided crucial aid to the Continental Army to win independence from Britain.

"I am thrilled to welcome Lynn as co-chair," Burnet said. "She will bring specific Westchester focus to this important historic endeavor. Her strong strategic thinking, programmatic creativity and sheer ability to get things done will be valuable assets as we continue to increase awareness of the American Revolution, the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail and New York State's important role during those crucial years."

The upcoming 250th anniversary of the founding of America (www.america250.org) in 2026 will provide additional opportunities for research, education and commemoration, Burnet added.

New York State passed legislation in February to join the national America 250th. The legislation was championed by state Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers).

The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route was designated a National Historic Trail by Congress in March 2009. This was a culmination of many years of study and efforts of the national organization, Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association (www.W3R-US.org), and its many partners in the United States and abroad. Preeminent historian Dr. Robert A. Selig performed the vital primary research that led to Congressional designation of the Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail (www.war.gov) in 2009.

New York State W3R-US committee members include Jeff Canning, W3R-US national recording secretary; Col. James M. Johnson, Ph.D., (www.Thayerleadership.com); Constance M. Kehoe, president of Revolutionary Westchester 250 (www.rw250.org); Susan Seal, president of Friends of Odell House Rochambeau Headquarters (www.odellrochambeau.org); Craig Long, Rockland County historian, and Scott Keller, executive director of the New York State Greenway Commission and Hudson River Valley National Heritage Commission.

New W3R-US members are always welcome and can join via the website at www.W3R-US.org.

"New York State and Yorktown have robust Revolutionary War history,"

Briggs said following her appointment. "Revolutionary War events, including the First Rhode Island Regiment Battle at Pines Bridge and the French encampments, both to and from the victorious Battle of Yorktown, occurred right here in our own backyard. I am eager to collaborate with Janet and the local municipalities in Westchester and Rockland counties to stimulate interest in the events of the Revolution, leading to increased New York State cultural heritage tourism and economic vibrancy as we approach the 250th anniversary of our independence."

Briggs' volunteerism is spread among many organizations. She chairs

the Yorktown Heritage Preservation Commission and the Yorktown 250 Committee. She is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Westchester County Historical Society's Board of Directors, Friends of Miller House/Washington's Headquarters, Inc. and co-chair of "This Man's a Spy!" a Revolutionary Westchester 250 initiative.

A native Californian, Briggs holds bachelors and masters degrees in business administration from the University of California at Berkeley and has domestic and international business experience with three Fortune 200 companies.

W'chester Offers Tuition Program to Increase Volunteer Fire, EMS Ranks

continued from page 9

A \$6,000 incentive would pay for nearly half of her annual tuition, she said.

"The generosity of a program like this would allow me to continue my education at St. John's University," Contreras said. "It would also continue to positively impact my future and help alleviate educational expenses without limiting my capabilities to volunteer my service to my community. I cannot express the gratitude that a program like this will bring to Westchester County's first responder community."

County Legislator Margaret Cunzio (C-Mount Pleasant) said she hopes that the

county will be able to make the HERRO program permanent and increase funding for it over time. She said it will help not only those in school but others who have completed their education and are paying off loans.

"What better way to say thank you to those who are giving freely of their time to help protect the community than with this program," Cunzio said.

The deadline to submit applications is June 3. For more information about the program and to submit an application, visit www.westchestergov.com/herro.

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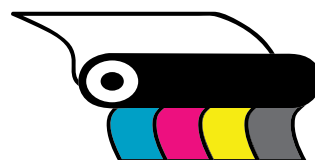
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Grants Given to Support Afghan Refugee Resettlement Efforts

By Bailey Hosfelt

Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration (WJCI) awarded eight microgrants to support efforts to resettle Afghan refugees throughout Westchester and Rockland counties, the Hudson Valley and the northwest Bronx.

Funded by the UJA-Federation of New York and The Shapiro Foundation, WJCI created a matching microgrants program, which will support the immediate needs of refugees as they restart their lives in the United States.

"The WJCI matching microgrants program is a substantial resource to advance refugee resettlement across and beyond the county," WJCI President Holly Rosen Fink said. "These strategic investments have so far helped to bring a significant number of Afghan refugees to Westchester, something our team is very proud of."

Guided by the Jewish teaching to "welcome the stranger," WJCI works with resettlement agencies HIAS and Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS) that train host group volunteers and provide case management for refugee families, the majority of whom lived on U.S. military bases after fleeing Kabul.

Neighbors for Refugees, a Larchmont-based nonprofit, acts as a consultant, providing expertise on resettlement issues.

Local volunteers from synagogues, churches, mosques, religious coalitions and other community groups have come together to form Host Groups, which have raised enough funds to support Afghan families and individuals for one year – or until they become acclimated and self-sufficient.

Within the groups, volunteers form committees to find and fund housing; furnish a new home and orient the family to their new neighborhood; help navigate and access federal and state benefits; enroll children in public school and tutor them in English; connect the family to medical services; hone interview skills and find employment; and provide transportation.

Host Groups that committed to sponsoring Afghan refugees were invited to apply for microgrants of up to \$5,000 per family.

"We started the Afghan Circle of the Hudson Valley from scratch to welcome, resettle and integrate Afghan refugees here," said Harv Hilowitz, Afghan Circle co-chair. "With the help of the community and WJCI's generous grant and guidance, we've been able to raise enough money to support a family until they can find work

and become self-supporting."

To date, WJCI awarded microgrants to the Jewish Community Center of Harrison (JCCH) Refugee Resettlement Committee; Congregation Sons of Israel in Briarcliff Manor; ReSET Westchester; Welcome the Stranger at The Reform Temple of Rockland and Islamic Center of Rockland; Northwest Bronx Coalition for Refugees; Afghan Circle of the Hudson Valley; Ossining for Refugees; and Scarsdale White Plains Refugee Resettlement Group.

"The Jewish Community Center

of Harrison's Refugee Resettlement Committee is so grateful to the WJCI," said Andrea Platte, committee co-chair. "The microgrant award has helped us to be ready to welcome two Afghan families, without financial limitations being a barrier to our sponsorship."

Last month, JCCH took part in Refugee Shabbat 2022, a HIAS initiative. An Afghan family the Refugee Resettlement Committee helped relocate shared their story during the special service.

Since the fall of the U.S.-backed government in Afghanistan in August,

an estimated 77,000 Afghans have been resettled in the U.S. Many were granted special immigrant visa status because they had worked for the U.S. military or American contractors.

In Westchester, new grassroots efforts and organizations have stepped up to help make refugees' transition to living in the U.S. a little easier.

Families have recently been resettled in White Plains, Yonkers, Ossining, Briarcliff Manor, Mount Kisco and Goldens Bridge. More refugees are expected to arrive in the coming months.

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Be Wise and Have an Inspection Before Listing Your Home for Sale

When my wife and I bought our first home in the country (well, the suburbs, actually, but after owning a home in the city, anything north of the Bronx seemed like deep country to us) we didn't call for an inspection before we made an offer.

Or after, for that matter.

We fell in love with the charming features of our historic home, built in 1734, with two additional wings added in 1791 and 1861, and blindly made an offer to buy, at full price no less. I definitely didn't qualify to be The Home Guru at that time. Boy, were we dumb, especially considering that we were buying a home that old.

During our first week there, the roof leaked into one of our bedrooms and the plumbing failed when the waste pipes in the basement, suspended by wire hangers, which should have been a red flag, fell to the floor.

In our defense for lacking basic intelligence about having a home inspection before making an offer, I would say that we had experienced a free ride when we bought our first home in New York City. It, too, was an historic home but had been excellently renovated and maintained before we bought it and we never had so much as a lick of trouble or any surprises while living there.

There is no rule that says you must have a home inspection before selling, but ordering a pre-sale home inspection is a good idea, especially if you're someone who doesn't like surprises and wants to get the best possible



By Bill Primavera

price.

As familiar as you may be with your home, there are often issues that you will be unaware of. Home inspectors are trained to identify these issues, which can give you a leg up on problems that might kill a sale.

Understanding what to inspect before selling a home will put you on the right track to a successful sale.

Selling a home can be a stressful experience, even when everything goes right. There is a lot to do and complications often pop up. While your real estate agent can help you navigate the process, there is one thing you can do to greatly simplify things – get a pre-sale home inspection.

An inspection will let you know the condition of your home. With this knowledge you can decide what to fix to avoid any surprises as well as maximize your home's value. You can also go into the sale fully aware of issues that may concern buyers. Getting rid of problems before a buyer's home inspection is just plain smart.

Many of the steps listed below are issues that could cause your sale to fall apart. By addressing these common concerns, you'll increase the odds of not losing a buyer.

A general home inspection should include a review of all the fundamental structural and mechanical features of your home. A thorough home inspection should be paramount to making sure you catch any issues. Your real



estate agent should be able to provide some excellent references.

Here are the basic issues to be addressed:

Plumbing

Buyers are going to want a functional plumbing system, one that can be relied on to work well for an extended period of time after they buy the house. The inspection should check all faucets, toilets, sinks and showers, as well as the pipes that are accessible throughout and underneath the home.

Heating

The furnace is a major concern of home buyers, and for good reason. Replacing an HVAC system is not cheap. Most systems have a lifespan of 20 to 30 years, something to consider about your own system. Buyers will be very interested in the condition of the heating system, so it makes sense to verify the status for yourself prior to listing.

Electrical

The electrical system needs to be functional and safe. If your home's electrical system is old enough, you may run into issues with buyers

who want something capable of handling the load of today's digital lifestyles.

Roof

The roof is of most importance to buyers. It seals the home and protects everything inside, so it makes sense to ensure that it is fully functional. Roofs are also expensive to replace, which is why buyers are going to want to

know its exact condition before they make an offer.

Foundation

A strong foundation is obviously necessary for the home to be livable. Foundation issues can be costly to fix and most buyers will not want to take on such problems if they can avoid it. An inspection can tell you if there are issues with your foundation and which, if any, you need to fix. If issues exist, it will be smart to take care of them quickly rather than after you get an offer.

Having a clean bill of health on all of these items is a major reassurance to any prospective home buyer.

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). To engage the services of Bill Primavera, The Home Guru, to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.

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Spa Celebrates 10 Years of Helping People Look Their Best

By Martin Wilbur

When Kerry Scardino decided to open her spa Skinchanted in Peekskill, she hoped that she could perform about 10 facials a month, a good foundation that would pay the monthly bills and stay in business.

On Monday, the 10th anniversary since Scardino's leap of faith, has yielded so much more than that. In the decade she's been in business, Skinchanted has seen about 3,800 clients.

"So business is good, and right now, the challenge is finding good estheticians that are like-minded and want to work hard and to educate people on skin health," Scardino said.

Many people are aware of the importance of skin health, but properly achieving that goal can sometimes be a bit more elusive. That's where Scardino and Tara Bartelini, Skinchanted's two full-time state-licensed estheticians, come in.

For Scardino, it's much more than just what treatment might be best for someone's skin to look their best. There are factors that come into play that go far beyond the surface.

"It's kind of like a puzzle," she said. "Someone comes in and they've got these issues and we like to see the body as a whole. So it's not like, okay, use this stuff, it's probably good for someone with your skin type. It's okay, let's talk about your diet, your water intake, about your hormones, what's your sugar intake like, things like that. What's your stress level like? Your



Kerry Scardino, the founder and owner of Skinchanted, a Peekskill spa that helps its customers maintain healthy skin. Scardino is also an esthetician.

sleep. So all of these things make the skin react."

Both Scardino and Bartelini have their areas of concentration, as do part-timers that also help out. Scardino specializes in facials, is an oncology-certified esthetician and is trained in oncology facials, lymphatic drainage massage, reflexology and corrective airbrush makeup.

Meanwhile, Bartelini helps educate clients on full-body wellness with organic and natural ingredients and to minimize inflammation. She is a reiki healer and an Ayurvedic practitioner.

Growing up, Scardino was one of those young ladies who would help her friends, and even some guys, trim their eyebrows

after school. After going to college for communications and public relations, she started off in that role for Estee Lauder before getting into the field of esthetics.

After her formal training was complete, Scardino performed laser liposuction in a Hartsdale physician's office. By the time she opened Skinchanted in 2012, she became an oncology-trained esthetician, helping people undergoing cancer treatments to cope with changes in their skin or hair. There are also clients that come to Scardino's spa for Botox and, of course, waxing.

There are also plenty of clients that seek help for sun-damaged skin, the number one reason for prematurely aging skin. Scardino urges anyone who spends any time outdoors to use sunscreen, even in winter, on their face. Some of the worst sun damage also occurs on overcast days, she said.

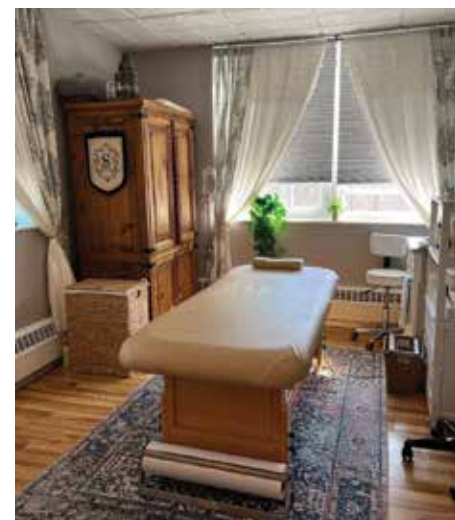
Furthermore, if someone is driving a lot, they should put on sunscreen on their face, particularly the left side, because of the glare.

"All of these things have an effect on our body and our skin, the biggest organ on our body," Scardino said.

Blemishes and various skin conditions are often indicators of other problems in a person's life. For example, a patch of eczema on the eyelids can be a response to stress while a breakout of acne on the jawline can be a hormonal reaction.

Perhaps a bit surprising to some, is that as much as 30 percent of Skinchanted's clientele are men.

"I tell people that skin is gender neutral,"



One of three treatment rooms that clients visit when they come to Skinchanted in Peekskill.

Scardino said. "Everyone's got skin, so everyone has skin issues. Men, especially, don't wear makeup to cover up skin issues, so it's even more important for them to have good, healthy skin."

About five years after Skinchanted opened, Scardino was forced to move into a larger space, a more than 1,000-square foot location on the fifth floor at 2 Stowe Rd. in Peekskill. It has two treatment rooms, one of which Scardino is currently renting.

For more information on Skinchanted, call 914-930-1421 or visit www.skinchantedspa.com.

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Phelps Hospital Opens \$8.4M Cancer Imaging Suite

Phelps Hospital announced last week the opening of a new high-tech imaging suite equipped with a PET/CT scanner built by Siemens Healthineers.

The \$8.4 million, 3,746-square-foot space realizes the hospital's commitment to provide patients of the Northwell Health Cancer Institute at Phelps Hospital everything they need – from diagnosis through treatment – under one roof.

The suite includes several rooms designed to optimize patient comfort and safety – from private registration and scheduling stations to comfortable waiting areas, private patient rooms, a radiopharmaceutical hot lab, PET/CT scan room and other features. Until now, Phelps' patients in need of PET scans had to travel further and have long wait times.

"The PET/CT suite is one of the most exciting projects that I've gotten to work on in my career at Phelps," said Eileen Egan, executive director of Phelps Hospital. "It's the missing link in the circle of care for radiology patients, who can now eliminate unnecessary travel and get the services they need right in their own backyard. As we were designing this space, the most

important concept for us was the patient experience – their privacy, safety and comfort."

PET/CT imaging is the use of simultaneous PET and CT scans to create a singular advanced and comprehensive image. PET scans utilize radiopharmaceuticals (tracers) that are injected intravenously and absorbed into the body. The rate of metabolic breakdown of the tracers within the body reveals one's cellular activity. Combined with CT imaging, this enables an accurate evaluation of organs and tissues and early detection and diagnosis of diseases and/or other conditions.

"We opened the doors of the Northwell Health Cancer Institute at Phelps Hospital five years ago," said Dr. Anna Komorowski, Phelps' medical director of hematology and medical oncology. "As our services continued to expand, we knew that this was a crucial step for us. PET/CT is a powerful diagnostic tool in oncology with multiple applications. It helps us detect cancer, identify where it resides in the body and which area is best to biopsy. We can also better understand the prognosis of the patient, assess the effectiveness of the treatment and determine if the cancer has returned."



NORTHWELL HEALTH PHOTO

Phelps Hospital held a ribbon-cutting event last week to unveil its \$8.4 million cancer imaging suite. Pictured, left to right, are Dr. Anna Komorowski, medical director, hematology and medical oncology at Phelps Hospital; hospital Executive Director Eileen Egan; Mary L. Melvin, donor and cancer survivor patient; Michael Glennon, assistant vice president, Phelps Hospital; Kevin Beiner, senior vice president and regional executive director, Northwell Health; and Dr. Anthony Febles, chief of radiology, Northwell Health.

PET/CT scans are used for patients with lung cancer, breast cancer, melanoma, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, neuroendocrine tumors as well as certain pancreatic, colon and metastatic prostate cancers. They can also be extremely beneficial for the diagnosis and treatment

of dementia and other cognitive disorders as well as for seizure and cardiac patients.

"While many people who've heard of PET/CT associate it with oncologic conditions, another very impactful use is for patients with cognitive disorders," said Dr. Anthony Febles, chief of

radiology at Phelps. "Having these capabilities here at Phelps is going to be instrumental in our geriatric practice. It's often extremely difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of a patient's dementia; PET/CT gives us an effective modality to do just that."

The new suite was funded, in part, by capital investments from Northwell Health, New York State's largest health system, as well as through philanthropic contributions. One of those generous supporters is Mary L. Melvin, a lung cancer survivor who was diagnosed and treated at Phelps.

"Phelps has something to fill every bill," Melvin said. "One is inclined to think that only at a big-city hospital do you get top-notch doctors. I would say you cannot beat Phelps. I can't believe the care in a big-city hospital could be any better than at Phelps. And here you get the love, attention and nurturing from the nurses and everyone. Phelps is a very special place in my eyes. Words cannot describe how blessed I feel – and I want to say thank you by giving back."

For more information, visit <https://phelps.northwell.edu/cancer-institute>.



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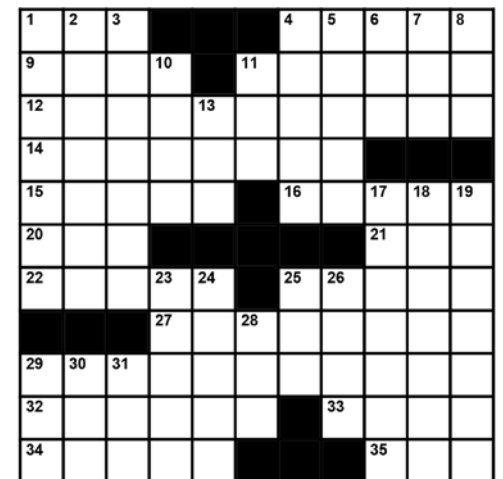
Crossword

Across

1. Biological pocket
4. Sufficient
9. "The ____ that bind" or where to go for your lumber needs in Putnam, Mahopac Railroad ____
11. Takes the gun away
12. Musical score, for example
14. Huge city in China
15. Prefix before -pathic
16. Apply anew
20. The NY Manning
21. Judge's highest rating, on "Dancing with the Stars"
22. Coffee order
25. Submersible warship
27. Italian for "Joseph" or Yorktown Gourmet supermarket, Uncle ____
29. French to Chinese, perhaps
32. Look for again
33. Male deer
34. More than "you" in slang
35. Jeanne d'Arc's title, briefly

Down

1. Put away
2. Opening in the ice
3. Made from clay
4. "Keep ____ to the ground"
5. Mrs. Eisenhower
6. It means before



7. K-O connection
8. Abbr. on a cornerstone
10. Not crazy
11. Yuck!
13. Doctors Without Borders, e.g.
17. Promised lands
18. Harbor town
19. Understanding between governments
23. Patron saint of girls
24. Red signal flare
25. Canadian neighbor
26. Alcott heroine
28. Class
29. Essay
30. Classic car
31. Tempe inst., abbr.

Answers on page 26

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Does Medicare Cover Nursing Home Care?

Most people receive very little practical education during their formative years. Subjects like investing, home purchasing, relationship management, college planning, career planning and estate planning are usually learned – or not learned – the hard way, through trial and error.

Medicare is one such subject. Medicare is a fundamental benefit available to adults 65 and over as well as disabled individuals. Its purpose is to provide payment to healthcare providers for services, equipment and prescription drugs. Medicare also covers limited stays in nursing rehabilitation facilities. However, long-term nursing home care is not covered under Medicare.

When a person develops a serious illness or sustains an injury that requires hospitalization, a process begins that maps out the plan and timing of treatment. Hospitals are designed to address acute health issues with a short duration. Once a patient is stabilized, then the hospital will seek to discharge that patient.

The nature of the discharged patient's rehabilitation should be apparent. Short hospital stays with limited interventions may allow for a patient to return home with a manageable care plan, some outpatient therapy or even some visiting nurse services.

Often with older patients, longer hospital stays impact mobility. Rehabilitation in a facility with dedicated physical and occupational therapy staffs may be necessary to build strength. Medicare covers sub-acute rehabilitation stays in a facility. The first 20 days are usually

covered 100 percent with the next 80 days covered at 80 percent. Supplemental insurance plans offered through AARP or Blue Cross/Blue Shield do pick up the remaining 20

percent not covered by Medicare for these rehabilitative stays.

A 100-day stay in a rehabilitation facility as regulated by Medicare is not guaranteed. If a patient's progress plateaus prior to the end of the 100 days, then Medicare may not pay for the remaining days. The patient

and their authorized representatives should receive documentation informing them that Medicare will no longer cover their stay in the rehabilitation facility.

Appeals for more rehabilitation are allowed under Medicare. Successful appeals allow the care to continue. Unsuccessful appeals will still provide an extra day or two before Medicare is cut off.

Once rehabilitation ends after 100 days or Medicare cuts off, a patient can be transitioned to long-term nursing care or discharged from the facility. Medicare will not cover long-term nursing home care. Payment options include private payment, long-term care insurance and Medicaid.

Private pay means care is funded from a patient's funds or by their family. Long-term care insurance policies pay for long-term care at home, assisted living or nursing homes. There is usually a lifetime maximum amount that the policy will pay. Set daily rates are also delineated



By Alan D. Feller, Esq.

in the policy. Ninety-day exclusionary periods are common.

New York Partnership Plans are insurance plans that cover three years of long-term care and then allow the covered individual to receive Nursing Home Medicaid without requiring asset transfers for eligibility. Medicaid has financial eligibility requirements and a five-year lookback

on all financial transactions. Medicaid Nursing Home recipients have their income used to pay the nursing home with Medicaid picking up the balance of costs.

It is important that we educate ourselves on the systems that govern our health, finances and legal rights. Understanding how Medicare works and what services are covered should be required on everyone's syllabus.

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

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Brownie Points

How one Westchester bakery hires people “no questions asked,” proving that with the right opportunity, training, and support, anyone can thrive regardless of their background



By Bailey Hosfelt

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.

Greyston Bakery founder and Zen Buddhist Bernie Glassman created the company's open hiring business model back in 1982 by asking a simple question: How do you give people, especially those who face barriers to meaningful employment, hope?

“He believed you start by just giving them a job,” Joseph Kenner, President and CEO of Greyston Bakery, says, explaining the company's hiring approach that's been

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A selection of brownies from Greyston bakery (Facebook/Greyston)

in place for four decades.

Unlike other companies' application processes, Greyston doesn't require any resumes, interviews, or background checks. Instead, individuals seeking employment simply fill out a brief form to get on the waitlist, no questions asked.

Open hire positions are offered on a first-come, first-served basis, and after someone's name is on the list, they wait to receive the phone call that they're hired.

After being hired, new employees go through a two-day orientation followed by a six-month training process, which gives them an introduction to both the hard and soft skills they'll need to succeed in their new roles at Greyston.

“The open hiring is an opportunity to give a lot of individuals the chance to prove to themselves that they can come back to the workplace,” Director of Human Resources Abigail Saunders, who has been overseeing the company's onboarding process for six years, says.

Where many HR professionals are trained to look narrowly at relevant prior work experience or a specific educational background, Saunders and the leadership team instead see potential in each and every person, regardless of their past.

But Greyston's inclusive processes don't end after hiring. By meeting individuals where they are and providing them with the support they need to successfully navigate life circumstances through an onsite social worker, Greyston works to help its employees achieve self-sufficiency and stability.

“[Open hiring] is how we bring people in,” Kenner says. “But once they get here and get their training, do they feel safe? Do they feel supported? Do they really feel like they're a part of a team?”

For Kenner, taking a holistic approach to

sourcing and nurturing employees is an important part of Greyston's business model. “That's what inclusive employment is, and open hiring is the appetizer to that,” he says.

“One of the best things that we do here is trust that you have the potential,” Saunders explains, highlighting that not only are Greyston's employees eager to work but they're also like sponges, working hard to absorb and hone new skills.

At Greyston, being formerly incarcerated, overcoming a substance abuse problem, recently immigrating to the country, or returning to the workforce after a gap in employment doesn't diminish the company's trust in an individual's ability to thrive moving forward. “They might come here thinking this is just your average job, but it's much more ...

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



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Wine Lists Are Evolving Into Broader Beverage Lists



By Nick Antonaccio

Remember the wine lists of the 20th century? It was as if an invisible hand created the lists of every Italian neighborhood restaurant, every French bistro and every American steakhouse.

This monotonous uniformity fit the moment in Americans' wine education: offer them that with which they are comfortable. Don't undermine their selections with wines contrary to their preconceptions and fixed mindset.

I am pleased to report this is no longer the landscape for many restaurant lists, whether presented on a printed sheet or a QR coded card. The focus of the lists has changed dramatically in this first quarter of the 21st century. More and more frequently, restaurant patrons are presented with a "beverage" list that is far-ranging. I am seeing lists expanded to include wines from far-flung lands and wines with stratospheric prices, including escalating markups.

More revolutionary is the expansion into other alcoholic beverages. Today's beverage list increasingly includes cocktails, craft beers and global whiskeys.

'Today's beverage list increasingly includes cocktails, craft beers and global whiskeys.'

Many patrons find it difficult to navigate these new lists. Understanding the nuances of the choices presents an additional dilemma. In this evolving era, restaurants are employing a new strategy. More than ever, they are hiring certified, deeply knowledgeable sommeliers.

This new generation of "somm" is infusing new life into restaurants. By personally crafting and curating beverage lists, this new breed offers diners the opportunity to experiment and seek out their next favorite wine.

Baby boomers, Gen Xers and millennials alike are becoming more wine savvy, resulting in more sophisticated wine and food palates. They are willing to spend more for the right wine to accompany a special meal, and they are not hesitant to seek guidance. Why

fumble through a list of unrecognizable and unpronounceable names when your friendly sommelier can be your personal guide through the maze of today's restaurant fare?

A wine and spirits bar is also an excellent venue to expand your epicurean palate. Look for the grand opening in the next few weeks of Westchester's newest, Raconteur Bar &

Kitchen in Pleasantville.

A new wave of expanded beverage lists is creating quite a buzz for many restaurant-goers.

1. Pre-dinner cocktails, both traditional and those concocted by the new wave of highly inventive mixologists. Combining exotic ingredients (herbs, spices, fruit nectars), they can set up one's palate for the dinner course or be enjoyed as an after-dinner digestif. If you've brushed past this section of a beverage list, take a moment to pause and peruse the offerings.
2. Artisanal beer selections were generally non-existent on past lists. Today, with the proliferation of highly crafted beers, somms are pairing them with food menus. My personal experiences have validated the compatibility of a number of dishes with finely crafted beers. My current favorite: Platinum Dragon on tap at Soul Brewing in Pleasantville, paired with Ma Betts Old Clothes shredded brisket tacos from Falafel Taco across the street.
3. Whiskeys are gaining a foothold on restaurants' beverage lists. Scotch offerings are increasing, while small-batch American bourbons are growing in popularity for pre-dinner imbibing. In a surprising move toward throwback

spirits, small-batch Tennessee whiskeys are gaining traction. (I recently enjoyed George Dickel Barrel Select – with one ice cube.)

Along with expanded and upgraded lists come higher-priced wines. Curated lists may focus on European fine wines not available in wine shops, with prices in the three-digit stratosphere. For those seeking a higher level of dining, wine prices may not be a constricting factor. However, there are far more consumers who can't (or won't) open their wallets for more than three or four Andrew Jacksons. And relief is not on the way.

Over the years, I've learned to budget my disposable income for restaurant dining toward higher priced wines without sacrificing my family's nutritional needs or wardrobe expansion. However, I do object to the high markups on many of the wines I see on today's wine lists.

The goal of every restaurant should be to find the perfect fit for your palate and your wallet. After all, a contented customer is a returning customer.

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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Rockefeller Preserve Gallery Resumes Art Exhibits With Focus on Nature

By Martin Wilbur

Over the past two years, hundreds of thousands of visitors took advantage of the open space at Rockefeller Park Preserve, the opportunity to safely spend time outside after being cooped up at home.

What had been missing at the park, however, was the schedule of art exhibits in the park's popular gallery that have often featured local or emerging artists, many of them focused on aspects of nature.

Last month the wait for its return ended. The gallery is hosting "Symbolic Images of Nature," featuring five artists – Mimi Kim Gutschmit, Michael Garber, Elaine Dalto, Alain Diot and Dorothy Gillespie – each expressing their interpretations of the natural elements.

"We're all, in one way or another, trying to find some peace of mind, some peace within ourselves and bring it into our gallery because we have a lot of individuals trying to get away from everything that's going on, and just to be able to come to a place where we can find some relief, just relief, and I think we've done that," said gallery curator Audrey Leeds.

Last Saturday, Gutschmit, who had more than a dozen sculptural paintings in the gallery for the exhibit, and Garber, a photographer whose current works features birds, were on hand for the reception for the exhibit.

Gutschmit's and Garber's artistic endeavors come as a later-in-life career, both having retired. Gutschmit, who has always

loved art, spent many years in international marketing while Garber was the director of The New York Foundling Hospital, a New York City child welfare agency.

The move to Tarrytown two years ago, where Gutschmit's husband was raised, helped inspire her artwork with the daily view of the Hudson River. The life of the river is always changing, Gutschmit said, which has inspired her to create so much artwork that not only has she needed to rent storage space locally, but she has rented a studio in Tribeca where she now commutes to do her painting.

Before Gutschmidt retired from the corporate world, she could never imagine waking up at 4:30 or 5 o'clock each morning. Now she can't wait for the sun to rise to start painting.

Her Riverwood collection is being shown at the gallery's current exhibit.

"The Hudson is just amazing," Gutschmit said. "The way it changes every day, looking at the water, the lighting. It's just so magnificent, and of course, my husband wanted to live by the Hudson because he wanted to fish and kayak, but I'm not really an outdoorsy person. It's, for me, just looking out my window, that's just good enough of an inspiration."

Garber had always been an amateur photographer, snapping images of people, nature and landscapes. But after his retirement, he enrolled in the International Center of Photography, which offers photography education programs.



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Photographer Michael Garber, left, and structural painter Mimi Kim Gutschmit at last Saturday's reception for the Rockefeller Park Preserve gallery exhibit "Symbolic Images of Nature."

For the Rockefeller gallery exhibit, Garber focused on close up images of birds. He was inspired by his wife, Stephanie, a Rockland Audubon Society member. The couple lives in Blauvelt.

"She was on the (Audubon Society) board and so she loves birds, and I always loved them, too," he said. "But it was more her interest and that was something I could do with her."

Garber said he looks for shots that capture

the personality or the character of each bird, because similar to humans, they're all different. Then the right lighting and a healthy dose of luck also comes into play.

Two of Garber's photographs in the exhibit were taken at Rockefeller Park Preserve. His wife helps identify the species.

Since the pandemic, the Rockefeller State Park Preserve has become one of the most popular state parks in New York, said Peter Iskenderian, the park's manager. In each of the past two years, annual attendance has swelled by an eye-popping 50 percent, from 400,000 to about 600,000 visitors, he said. The park has 1,800 acres and 55 miles of carriage roads.

Last Saturday, the parking lots were overflowing and a long line of cars were parked on the shoulder of Route 117.

"Our trails are 16 feet wide, they're all carriage roads," Iskenderian said. "People can social distance on our fields, so that's what made it an ideal location, plus we have Phelps Hospital right next door and we have all the doctors and nurses coming here after their work, during their lunch break just coming in walking."

"Symbolic Images of Nature" will be on display through May 1. The gallery is located at 125 Phelps Way (Route 177) and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission to the gallery is free; parking for the preserve is \$6. For more information, call 914-631-1470 ext. 0 or visit <https://www.friendsrock.org/art-gallery>.

Westchester Nonprofit Helps Match Owners With the Right Pets

By Martin Wilbur

Juli Cialone saw firsthand the therapeutic benefits pets could have on people in a rather unexpected scenario.

Cialone had previously worked as a rock n' roll photographer, capturing images of bands in concert. As she followed the musical artists, she noticed that there seemed to be a steady supply of pets as part of their entourage.

"I noticed they had a lot of animals with them as therapy and as buddies on the road and we were working helping out a lot of rescues in our community just by being active volunteers and we wanted to figure out a way to help out in a different way," she said.

In 2002, Cialone founded Rock n' Rescue, an organization that rescues animals and finds families to adopt them.

By 2017, Cialone decided to devote most of her time to the much-needed rescue and adoption work and registered the South Salem-based organization as a nonprofit. There are massive numbers of animals, particularly in the South, where spaying and neutering remains uncommon, shelters are overrun and operators must put down animals.

While most adoptable dogs are often able to have homes found for them, the same hasn't been true of felines. That is why Rock n' Rescue's matching service predominantly involves cats, although it also finds homes for dogs, guinea pigs and other small animals when needed, Cialone said.

"The numbers of euthanasia down South were so significant when it comes to cats, the sweetest of the sweet were being destroyed alongside ones that were unadoptable," Cialone said.



Not only does Rock n' Rescue, a South Salem-based animal rescue and adoption nonprofit organization, help find happy and safe homes for more than 2,000 animals a year, it also focuses on matching pets to help owners improve their physical, psychological and emotional health.

At least 90 percent of Rock n' Rescue's animals come from the South, said James Scova, the organizations director of communications.

What helps set Rock n' Rescue apart from other pet adoption services is its matchmaking abilities, that its rescued animals don't live in shelter cages but get acclimated to homes by going to volunteers' residences until an owner is found and the organization's emphasis on

how animals can help their owners' health.

The temporary foster homes helps Cialone judge which pets may be compatible with young children, seniors or other dogs or cats.

Several years ago, Cialone met and brought aboard Marla Valentine, who has helped promote the benefits of pet therapy. Valentine, a longtime social worker, said the pandemic exacerbated depression, anxiety, eating disorders and suicide indicators, particularly among young adults, and the presence of a loving pet can help someone psychologically, physically or emotionally.

"I was a director of social services in nursing homes; 30 years in social work and I left that to join forces with Juli so we can bring animal-assisted therapy into our program here," Valentine said.

Rock n' Rescue has partnered with Ann's Place in Danbury, which provides, comfort, support and resources to people with cancer and their families. It also has various other therapeutic programs involving animals.

"We will go to their center and do kitten therapy with their clientele who either have cancer or have lost someone to cancer or are dealing with it in the family," Valentine said.

After Rock n' Rescue became a nonprofit, its reach expanded. But demand for pets has soared during the pandemic, increasing from about 1,400 adoptions a year to more than 2,000 annually, Scova said. It has found homes for pets throughout the Northeast, but Westchester, Putnam and Fairfield counties is its base.

One outgrowth of the pandemic has been curbside adoptions over the past two years. Cialone said prospective pet owners can visit Rock n' Rescue's website to look at photos of

the cats, dogs and other animals available for adoption.

If someone has found a pet they are interested in, a meet-and-greet will be arranged. Cialone said by the time it reaches that stage, the chances of adoption are overwhelming. To a cat or a dog, someone's car gives them a good sense of what their potential adopter is like.

"I know it sounds weird, but it actually ended up being a COVID policy that we've been doing and now it's so popular that we're keeping it," she said.

Any adopted pet will be up to date with its shots to the extent that their age allows.

Rock n' Rescue also is eyeing an expansion, looking for a suitable location for a welcome and wellness center, where the meet-and-greets and therapy sessions can be done.

For more information on Rock n' Rescue, visit www.rnrpets.org.

Crossword Answers

1	S	A	C			4	A	M	P	L	E			
9	T	I	E	10	S	11	U	N	A	R	M	S		
12	A	R	R	A	13	N	G	E	M	E	N	T		
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Girls High School Flag Football Ready to Kick Off Inaugural Season

By Abby Luby

A cold wind and rain didn't deter about 200 high school girls from suiting up and practicing on the Somers High School football field last Friday.

It was the Section 1 jamboree to celebrate the arrival of flag football at the high school level in New York State. Playing tips were shared by a pair of New York Giants – quarterback Daniel Jones and linebacker Blake Martinez.

Flag football, a popular alternative to traditional American tackle football, could become a varsity sport for girls in New York within the next two years. The game is attractive since it is a non-contact version of the sport and players are less likely to sustain serious injuries compared to tackle football.

There is no diving, blocking, screening or fumbles, in addition to the prohibition on tackling, making it safer while reducing the chance of head injuries.

"This is fun for everyone and we're all very excited," said Lina Brown, a Somers High School junior. "I grew up watching football and to actually play is a real rush. It's empowering that we can do what the guys have been doing for so long."

For some, practicing at Somers High School was their first chance to play on a football field. Unencumbered by the traditional protective gear, players wore belts with two flags hanging from their sides, and many used eye black. Instead of tackling the ball carrier, the defensive player tries to take one of the flags off of the player's belt to stop their forward progress.

For a few exhilarating hours, players scrimmaged and practiced passing and receiving.

This year the New York State Public High School Athletic Association's (NYSPHSAA) flag football pilot program was launched within six of the state's 11 sections. The NYSPHSAA is partnering with Nike, the Buffalo Bills, New York Giants and New York Jets. Section 1 flag football is sponsored by the Giants.

There are nine teams that will be competing in the section when the season opens later this month for a six-game



ABBY LUBY PHOTOS

New York Giants quarterback Daniel Jones, left, and linebacker Blake Martinez, with his young daughter, speak during last Friday's Section 1 kickoff jamboree for high school girls' flag football at Somers High School.

schedule. The participating teams are Brewster, Greenburgh-North Castle, Hastings, Lakeland, Mahopac, Walter Panas, Peekskill, Scarsdale and Somers. All nine schools were represented at last Friday's jamboree.

The enthusiasm was infectious as girls encouraged one another.

"There is an awesome collaborative environment here on the field," said Devon DiMichelle, a Somers High School senior. "This is an amazing sport and I love how different it is from (tackle) football. It's new, revolutionary."

Coaches also provided instruction, support and encouragement.

"This is a chance for our girls who never had the opportunity to now play football," said Lakeland flag football Coach P.J. Nyberg, who was accompanied by Panas High School flag football coach Brandon Thomas.

"The energy for us is great," Thomas said. "We have girls that quit other sports to play flag football."

In January, the New York Giants



Brewster and Scarsdale high schools' flag football teams scrimmage last week at the Section 1 kickoff jamboree to introduce the sport.



Peekskill and Somers high schools' flag football teams scrimmage last Friday during the Section 1 kickoff jamboree for high school girls' flag football at Somers High School.

announced a \$60,000 donation to the NYSPHSAA to support the inaugural flag football season in Sections 1 and 4. Nike will provide a \$100,000 stipend split between all participating teams in the state for equipment and uniforms.

Somers flag football Coach Katie DiChiaro initially laid the groundwork for the sport to take root. Along with Jennifer Kisslinger, DiChiaro co-founded the Somers Youth Sports Organization (YSO) and started an all-girls flag football league in 2018, which has become a wildly popular town recreational program. The program has grown to a 22-team, 188-player all-girl league, for girls five years old and up, and is a part of the NFL FLAG program, the official flag football league of the NFL and the largest youth flag football organization in the U.S.

Under the NFL FLAG rules, there are generally five players per team on the field for each play, although there can be up to 10 on each side. The field is 30 yards wide and 70 yards long between the goal lines with two 10-yard end zones.

In the three-year period ending in 2018, the number of six- to-12-year-olds playing

had increased 38 percent nationwide, to more than 1.5 million, according to a New York Times report. That's 100,000 more than the number of youths playing tackle football, the Sports & Fitness Industry Association reported.

An impressive number of girls have signed up to be on their school's flag football roster in Section 1. In February, about 45 Lakeland High School girls and 52 at Panas attended a flag football meeting. Other schools attracted 40 to 50 hopefuls to try out for their teams.

The Lower Hudson Valley high school league is planning for each team to play six games starting in mid-April, with a final tournament to be held before the end of May.

From the sidelines, Denise Galgano watched her daughter Grace scrimmage with her Brewster teammates.

"Grace plays varsity basketball for Brewster High School and will be playing next year at college," Galgano said. "She was excited to accept the coach's invitation to play flag football. She is a big Giants fan."

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