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# The White Plains Examiner

Covering White Plains, Greenburgh, Harrison

**COVID-19 Breakdown:**  
White Plains 3,950 (533)  
Greenburgh 2,499 (308)  
Harrison 1,310 (233)  
Scarsdale 669 (78)  
Elmsford 431 (60)  
County Deaths: 1,652

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December 29, 2020 - January 4, 2021

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 10, Issue 489

## WP Man Searches for Help After Life-Altering Crash

By Lindsay Emery

Throughout much of his life Greg Cohen never hesitated to extend a helping hand or write a check to help others. Now Cohen is in the difficult position of having to rely on others for assistance.

Cohen, 62, a resident of White Plains, had his life upended by a gruesome car accident in Bedford in 2008. Hit on the driver's side by another vehicle, the former Wall Street bond trader's car rolled over four times, and he was rushed to Northern Westchester Hospital. First responders, doctors and therapists have helped him survive the crash, but the extent of his injuries, which he is still receiving treatments for, and the financial devastation that followed

*'I care more about other people than I do myself but I'm in the same boat as a lot of others.'*

— Greg Cohen

transformed Cohen's life. During the past year alone, Cohen has spent 55 days in the hospital.

"I utilized every single asset I had," he said of his ordeal. "I borrowed from everyone. My children, my ex-wife, my mother, my friends. I applied to all the social services."

Early this year, Cohen exhausted all of his personal assets, and applied for early Social Security, which he began receiving in August. In January, he will start receiving \$400 a month from New York State Public Assistance. But he is still fighting for back Social Security Disability payments more than a decade later.

Having lost his Wall Street job in 2008 a week before the accident, Cohen saw many



Greg Cohen, who is in dire need of assistance after a serious auto accident in 2008 changed his life.

of the protections of being employed disappear.

"I was unable to receive any kind of income payments because of that," he recalled. "The insurance companies did pay my medical expenses; however, I was eliminated from, I was unavailable to have like a normal person, they would get the normal salary while they were injured. I was unable to get that."

When he was working, Cohen regularly helped others in need. From a young age, Cohen said that his grandfather stressed to him the importance of generosity. It's also what contributed to his financial position, he believes.

"I never lost that faith," he said. "It was instilled in me at a very young age and I think that's my problem; I gave away too much money."

After his accident, Cohen has been in and out of the hospital because of a variety of procedures, including operations on his anterior cruciate ligament and the lumbar region of his spine that have left him without any feeling in his legs. Another surgery, an anterior cervical discectomy, has made swallowing difficult.

"I went 20 days without eating any food whatsoever," Cohen described. "I lost 65 pounds. I went from 225 pounds to 160 pounds."

Since Cohen cannot drive, any extra money that he receives goes toward taxis to get to his doctors' appointments. Otherwise, Cohen has to try and walk with a cane or walker while in immense pain.

In 2012, he attempted to go back to work but couldn't handle the overbearing pain.

Cohen has searched for programs and grants that could provide him some financial relief, but many of those are on hold because of the pandemic.

Despite the troubles after his surgeries, there has been one constant in Cohen's life — his cat, Neil.

Named after singer-songwriter Neil Young, the black cat has four white hairs under his chin and big green eyes and keeps Cohen's spirits high. Neil can sense when Cohen is upset or not feeling well and comforts him.

Taking the stray cat in, may have been a sort of omen. Neil arrived at Cohen's apartment door during a 2010 snowstorm.

*continued on page 2*

## WP Schools to Start New Year with Remote Learning

By Rick Pezzullo

Students in the White Plains School District will be spending an extra week at home following the holiday break.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Ricca announced last week students are scheduled to return to the classroom on January 11 after a week of full remote learning, starting on Monday, January 4.

"We know that for many in our community, changes to the schedule such as these are unwelcome challenges," Ricca stated in a message to the school community. "Please know that we do not take these decisions lightly and we recognize the hardship that schedule changes bring. We also know that our families want us to continue to do all we can to mitigate the potential increase of COVID-19 in

our community."

While instruction is being done at home, Ricca explained the district will be reviewing local and regional COVID-19 data to determine if any further schedule adjustments will be required.

The district took a holiday pause from in-person learning following the Thanksgiving break when a large increase in COVID-19 cases among staff and students occurred,

Instruction has been conducted in a hybrid fashion for most of the school year, with Wednesdays being set aside students and teachers to interact from home.

"Going remote is not something we want to be doing. I don't do it lightly," Ricca said earlier this month.

"At the end of the day, we all want to be in school, we all want to be with our kids, and we will con-

tinue to push forward to be able to do that in the safest and healthiest manner possible."

A few weeks ago, a trio of unions representing teachers, administrators and civil servants urged Ricca and the Board of Education to switch the district from hybrid to all remote instruction, fearful of the impact Thanksgiving would have on rising COVID-19 case numbers.

# WP Man Searches for Help After Life-Altering Crash

*continued from page 1*

Before that, he was planning to adopt a cat from an animal shelter.

He fed Neil a can of tuna fish and decided that if Neil was around the next morning, he would keep him. The next morning, he opened the door and found Neil sleeping on his doorstep.

It also was the genesis of his friendship with Faile.

"We developed our relationship because of our cats," Cohen said. "She had three cats at the time and I had one cat. And we hit it off because of that particular situation. Because she loves cats and I love cats."

Like many others, Cohen has also been

facing food insecurity.

"I go days where I have to decide whether I'm going to feed him or feed myself," said Cohen, referring to Neil. "And it's heartbreaking."

Cohen is sympathetic to everyone who is going through the pandemic and is not receiving the relief that they need.

"What the human race is going through right now is really having a significant effect on me," he said. "I care more about other people than I do myself but I'm in the same boat as a lot of others."

If you would like to help Cohen, visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/dont-let-him-be-homeless> to donate.

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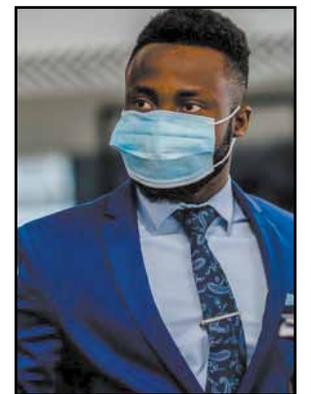
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# Officials Brace for Post-Christmas COVID Surge as Virus Cases Fluctuate

By Anna Young

While state and local officials anticipate a surge in COVID-19 cases over the next two weeks, Westchester County has seen active cases drop below 8,000 for the first time in nearly a month.

Following an expected spike of cases reported in early to mid-December after Thanksgiving, cases of COVID-19 have continued to fluctuate over the past two weeks, resulting in active cases steadily declining. As of Monday, Westchester had 7,957 active cases.

County Executive George Latimer said that number is encouraging after hitting a peak of 8,771 on Dec. 15.

"It's down 200 active cases from a week ago and down about 800 cases three weeks ago," Latimer said during his Monday briefing. "That does mean the testing positives over the two prior weeks were much greater than what we've had over the last week, so there's been a diminution in active cases, which is encouraging."

The daily test positivity rate is 7.42 percent, which is based on 7,426 tests taken on Saturday. Overall, there have been 1.3 million COVID-19 tests administered in Westchester County since March.

Coronavirus cases increased by 551 on Monday, bringing the total number of positives to 67,388 since the start of the pandemic.

While Latimer touted the decline in active cases, the death rate and number of individuals hospitalized due to COVID-19 has continued to rise since Thanksgiving.

The county reported nine more deaths, raising the COVID-19-related death toll to 1,652 since March. Over the last week, 41 people have died from the virus. Latimer said there has been a roughly 10 percent increase in deaths since last month, where weekly deaths were reported in the teens.

"That may represent the Thanksgiving spike, we can't be 100 percent sure of it," Latimer said. "Now that Christmas is a few days behind us we're concerned and worried we might see another spike over the next 10 days."

As of Dec. 26, there were 392 virus patients in Westchester hospitals, a number that increased by 39 over the last week. While the increase was cause for some unease, hospitalizations represent 4 percent of the county's current cases, which Latimer said is a "very good number."

Putnam County's total caseload has reached 4,577, according to the state, with 61 additional positive cases recorded on Monday. The county's daily positivity rate is 9.21 percent, with 662 tests administered Saturday, state data shows.

Putnam currently has 782 active cases. There have been 66 coronavirus-related deaths in Putnam. No new deaths were reported on Monday.

Statewide there were 10,407 new positive cases on Monday. The daily positivity rate is 8.33 percent.

The state recorded 114 additional COVID-19-related fatalities, bringing the death toll to 29,625 since March.

Total hospitalizations are at 7,559, an increase of 376 over the previous day, according to state data. Across New York there have been 932,552 positive coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Scams

With vaccine distribution well underway across New York State, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Latimer warned on Monday of coronavirus-related scams.

Officials stressed that anyone who calls or texts claiming you can get the vaccine sooner than expected for a certain price is committing fraud. Vaccines, which are being distributed in a phased approach, are free to the public.

"Consumers are not going to get phone calls from Social Security or Medicare or any other government agency," said Jim Maisano, Westchester's director of Consumer Protection. "Do not give out your Social Security number, your bank account information or your credit card information.

Delete the text, delete the e-mail, hang up the phone or slam the door in their face."

Residents who receive any correspondence from a possible scammer are asked to contact Consumer Protection at 914-995-2155 or ConPro@westchestergov.com.

Cuomo also indicated illegal acts among health care providers. The state is currently looking at one provider whose case is being referred to Attorney General Letitia James, he said.

With vaccine-related fraud expected to become more prevalent, Cuomo signed an executive order stating a provider, doctor,



nurse, pharmacist or any licensed professional could be fined up to \$1 million and have their state license revoked if caught.

"Vaccines are valuable and there will be people who break the law," Cuomo said. "Anyone who engages in fraud is going to be held accountable."

As of Monday, about 140,000 New Yorkers have received the first of two doses of the COVID vaccine. Vaccinations this week will expand to urgent care employees, individuals administering vaccines and residents of alcohol and substance abuse facilities.

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# Special Act School Bill, Hotel Occupancy Tax to Help Mt. Pleasant

State Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro) and Assemblyman Tom Abinanti (Pleasantville) announced Monday that two of their bills benefiting residents of the Town of Mount Pleasant have been signed into law by Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

One piece of legislation ensures that Special Act schools will face no financial penalty for reduced enrollment or operations because of the coronavirus pandemic. The other bill allows Mount Pleasant to impose a 3 percent occupancy tax for lodging facilities.

Harckham said he was grateful for Cuomo's support.

"These two new laws will help mitigate the ongoing financial challenges, both immediate and long-range, our municipalities are facing because of the pandemic," said Harckham. "We have to look for ways to protect and increase revenue meant to help residents, including students, and our focus on Special Act schools and a Mount Pleasant hotel lodging tax does exactly that."

The new law regarding Special Act schools affects nine public school districts

in the state – six of which are located in Westchester County and three in Mount Pleasant – that educate underserved students who are unable to attend public schools in their communities because of disabilities, illnesses or behavioral challenges. Students attend either day or residential programs, and costs are divided between the students' home school districts and their county's Department of Social Services.

The school budgets for the Special Act districts do not provide much leeway for unforeseen disruptions in aid, and legislation was needed to make sure these districts would not be penalized for missing mandated attendance criterion and instructional benchmarks caused by closings during the pandemic.

The three Special Acts school districts in Mount Pleasant are Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls, Mount Pleasant-Blythedale and the Cottage School.

An earlier bill signed by Cuomo had already protected the other public school districts across the state from similar penalties.

The hotel occupancy tax legislation authorizes the Town of Mount Pleasant to adopt a local law that will impose a room tax of up to 3 percent in hotels and motels outside of the town's villages. The added revenue, which is expected to significantly increase once the bioscience, technology and lifestyle campus opens on Westchester County's North 60 property in Valhalla,



Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti, left, and state Sen. Peter Harckham sponsored two bills that will benefit Mount Pleasant. Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed both pieces of legislation into law on Monday.

will generate much-needed tax revenue.

Currently, Mount Pleasant's lone lodging facility is the Comfort Inn on Route 9A in Hawthorne.

Communities across the area and the state have also been granted the hotel occupancy levy. Towns in New York State must obtain special legislation approved by state lawmakers to impose the tax, unlike cities that can make that decision at the local level.

"The hotel occupancy tax gives Mount Pleasant residents the same opportunity to supplement revenues with a non-property tax source as other communities have," Abinanti said.

## Putnam Sherriff Warns of New Text Scam Circulating

A new text scam has the Putnam County Sherriff's Department warning residents to stay alert.

The text will say a concealed carry permit certificate is being delivered to you, with a link to download it and enter your personal details. The number it's coming from is 469-797-5450, as shown in a photo issued by the department, though it's unknown if the text will come from other various phone numbers.

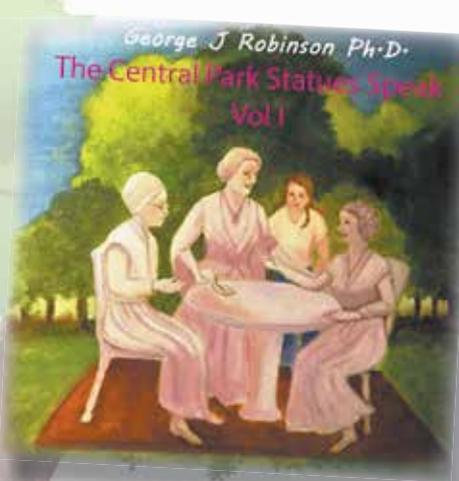
"It is unfortunate that these people have nothing better to do with their holiday than to scam the good folks out there," police said. "Two lumps of coal in their stockings from them."

Residents are urged not to click on the link or respond to the text. Instead, they should take a screenshot of the text on your phone and notify the Sherriff's Department at 845-225-4300.

--Anna Young

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# 2021

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# Local Immigrants Face Uncertainty Despite Hope for the Future

By Martin Wilbur

For all the immense difficulties 2020 has brought to families across the region and the nation, the plight of many immigrants this year has been especially dire.

The loss of lives and livelihoods, food insecurity and an uncertain future have been widespread throughout society. But the likelihood of immigrants working in service jobs that require actual and not virtual attendance and living in cramped quarters, often in multigenerational families, is far greater than the general population, exposing them in greater numbers to the ravages of COVID-19, said Carola Bracco, executive director of the Mount Kisco-based Neighbors Link, which provides services, classes and training to clients throughout Westchester and surrounding counties and advocates for immigrants.

Coupled with the aggressive and unceasing enforcement by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the often-changing immigration policies of the Trump administration, what has always been a difficult transition for newer arrivals has become dangerous in many instances.

"It's probably been the biggest challenge people have seen in their lives," Bracco said of the past four years for many in the local immigrant community. "Living in fear, not knowing whether or not there's going to be additional policies or reversal in policies that possibly had been supported in the past. So I think it has been a debilitating time period

these past four years, certainly made more horrifying by the pandemic."

In a recent interview with The Examiner, Bracco and Karin Anderson Ponzer, director of Neighbors Link's Community Law Practice, spoke of the challenges that immigrant families have endured, but also the hard-earned victories to make life more bearable and the hope that the United States will be a more hospitable place with the new administration.

The fear that has gripped communities with significant immigrant populations such as Mount Kisco, Peekskill, Ossining and White Plains has been real, Bracco said, not only for those who are among the estimated 11 million undocumented individuals, but their children who might have been born in the United States, their spouses, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients and even some naturalized citizens.

Ponzer said there have been hundreds of families in the lower Hudson Valley that have been separated and deported.

"The idea that they are criminal aliens is a myth," Ponzer said of a common attitude toward immigrants. "Sure, some have a criminal history. Some are U.S. citizens, some of them are foreign-born, but ICE enforcement targeted people that was easiest for them to find, otherwise law-abiding people that had immigration violations."

Just because someone may have committed an immigration violation does not mean they are eligible to be deported under



Carola Bracco, the executive director of Neighbors Link in Mount Kisco. The organization has helped immigrants throughout Westchester and surrounding counties deal with immigration nightmares and the pandemic.

the law, Ponzer said. Immigration law is complex and a strong immigration attorney is typically needed to make sure a person's rights are fully protected, she said.

What has made policies of aggressive enforcement difficult is that most families have members that are of different

immigration status, Bracco said. For example, members of the same family may have arrived at different intervals, so the process to potentially become citizens is at different stages. An older child could be a DACA recipient while a younger child born in the U.S. is a citizen.

"I can't think of a single family that doesn't have different statuses within the family," Bracco noted.

Having saved DACA from termination may have been one of the most important achievements of the past few years. In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court didn't uphold the program but instead outlined what the administration should have done to legally end the program.

Bracco and Ponzer agreed that comprehensive immigration reform is needed to protect recipients from the whims of an administration. Also, many of the roughly 800,000 DACA recipients are now adults, having been educated in the United States, building careers and families. There are now about 250,000 children belonging to those who received that status, Bracco said.

"DACA was such an important thing; it continues to be such an important lifeline for a large number of people," Bracco said. "(But) we have DACA because we couldn't make anything else work."

Comprehensive immigration reform must include a pathway for citizenship, Ponzer said. It doesn't mean that the country's undocumented population become citizens overnight, but it provides a mechanism for

*continued on page 6*

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# Local Immigrants Face Uncertainty Despite Hope for the Future

continued from page 5

many of those people to apply for and pursue citizenship.

"It's still a complex process that can take years, but understand there are barriers (today) that don't even allow them to apply," Bracco said.

With policy changes and a shift in enforcement priorities, she said that the incoming Biden administration can have a significant impact to help prevent those who are in the country from being deported, Ponzer explained.

What will be more difficult to change is to help those looking to immigrate to the United States, she said. During the past four years, refugee admissions have plummeted from the historical ceiling of up to 100,000 people a year when instituted about 40 years ago, to 15,000 for 2021. The current administration has also tried to discourage asylum seekers.

Another positive was New York State's 2019 passage of the Green Light Law, which allows undocumented immigrants to apply for a standard license so they can operate a car legally, which is safer for the general public, Bracco said. Those seeking the standard licenses can take drivers education, then look to pass a driving test and be required to obtain insurance, making the roads safer while also giving the undocumented population the ability to work more easily and transport their children, she said.

The standard license does not allow for

any other privileges, such identification to board an airplane.

The state has also prohibited ICE personnel from going to New York's courthouses to try and arrest immigrants who are appearing for tickets or other offenses or to testify in a matter, Bracco said.

With the new administration poised to take over in about three weeks, there are still landmines for immigrants and their advocates to navigate. Ponzer said President Trump has prioritized rescinding the current asylum system and promoting expedited removal. The latter is currently the law of the land, giving ICE officers the authority to pull people targeted for deportation off the streets, she said.

"The administration implemented in October expedited removal," Pozner said. "They haven't actually pulled the trigger on that yet, perhaps because of COVID, maybe because of staffing."

For Neighbors Link, the last four years, and in particular, the past nine months with the pandemic, has forced the organization to beef up its staff, Bracco said. The need to educate local immigrant families on how to protect themselves from the virus or working with them to narrow the inequities in access to technology so their children can attend virtual classes has been essential.

Neighbors Link has a roster of some 400 volunteers, but four new staff members were added this year along with bolstering its legal services.



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Neighbors Link on Columbus Avenue in Mount Kisco, which has helped the area's immigrant community manage sudden changes in immigration policy and the pandemic during the past nine months.

"In the past year, it's been these volunteers that have really allowed us to really serve the community in a very personal way," Bracco said.

Despite hopes that better days lie ahead, the Jan. 20 inauguration won't immediately change the situation for leery immigrants, she said. The ICE policies will still be in place until the new administration provides direction to the agency.

Then there's the ongoing economic uncertainty because of the pandemic.

"I think this continues to be very difficult times," Bracco said. "It will take quite awhile for our economy to come back. While there may be some hope, I think right now hope is a luxury that is very difficult to rely on. I think the people are struggling and I think this coming year is going to be harder for the families, that's for sure."

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## New Castle Historical Society to Offer Online Home Cooking Lecture Jan. 11

The New Castle Historical Society is continuing its virtual program "Food for Thought: A Tasty Exploration of Food, History, Culture and Community" in 2021. The program is intended to connect participants to the rich agricultural history of the area and examine the effect food has on our lives.

Whether it's through family recipes and traditions passed down from generation to generation, a new or rediscovered passion for cooking or baking, supporting local farmers and locally sourced foods or an interest in the food traditions of other cultures, food has the power to connect all of us.

A series of online lectures and discussions will be curated throughout the winter with historians and other individuals that will explore these and more fascinating food-related topics.

A third online lecture, "History and Home Cooking," scheduled for Monday, Jan. 11 at 7 p.m., will feature guest speaker Professor Megan J. Elias of Boston University. During her talk, Elias will discuss the history of home cooking as it relates to social changes over time in the U.S. and during the current pandemic.

Using the "Chappaqua Cook Book" (first published in the 1940s) as an example, she will address the many ways that our cooking can reflect our place in the world and in our local history. During the pandemic many people have discovered or rediscovered home cooking. Working from home has turned the frantic after-work cooking rush into a slow all-day multistage process. All the dishes we didn't have time to make before suddenly seem possible.

These new kitchen lives have also led people to reach out to family and friends for recipes. If we can't eat with people, at least we can share cooking ideas and tips. Many of these changes bring us closer to ways that people cooked before the industrialization of food in the 20th century, helping us understand our ancestors' daily lives a little better.

The lecture fee is \$10 and will take place via Zoom. Registration information can be found at <https://www.newcastlehs.org/events/> or by calling 914-238-4666.

## New Castle Creates 9/11 Committee to Plan 20th Anniversary Events

By Martin Wilbur

The New Castle Town Board approved creation of a September 11 Memorial Committee to plan special events for next year's anniversary, which will mark 20 years since the terrorist attacks.

Michael Wolfensohn was named by the board to chair the committee during its final meeting of the year on Dec. 15. The rest of the panel is expected to be named early in 2021 after applications are received from residents who are interested in serving. Residents can apply by completing an online application form on the town's website.

Wolfensohn, a former Town Board member who was instrumental in bringing the town's 9/11 memorial to Gedney Park, said officials were looking to have a special program for the 20th anniversary. The town has typically held a roughly half-hour ceremony at the park in the early evening featuring the community's first responders, elected officials and local clergy for its annual program.

"We're looking for residents, we're looking for representatives from first responders," said Wolfensohn, who also serves as a Millwood fire commissioner and is a member of the Recreation Commission. "It has become a day of service. I'm not sure how it's going to look or what the theme will be but we'll be looking for a way to tie in a day of service and do something around the community."

The eventual commemoration may also depend on how big a threat the COVID-19



First responders at New Castle's September 11 commemoration in 2019. Next year the town is hoping to make special plans to mark the 20th anniversary of the tragedy.

pandemic could still be, he said. Wolfensohn said there may be different programs planned that are on parallel tracks depending on what transpires.

He expects the committee may have about four or five members, although that will depend on the response from residents who may want to serve.

"I just want to make sure it's meaningful in a special way," Wolfensohn said.

Any town residents that wish to apply and be considered for the September 11 Memorial Committee, should complete and submit the online form by visiting <https://www.mynewcastle.org/FormCenter/Administration-4/Board-Application-Form-53>.

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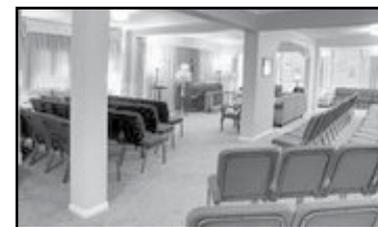
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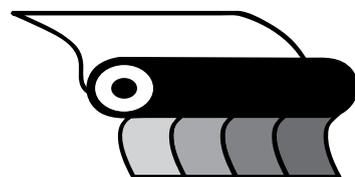
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We invite readers to share their thoughts by sending letters to the editor. Please limit comments to 250 words. We will do our best to print all letters, but are limited by space constraints. Letters are subject to editing and may be withheld from publication on the discretion of the editor. Please refrain from personal attacks. Email letters to mwilbur@theexaminernews.com. The Examiner requires that all letter writers provide their name, address and contact information.



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## Editorial

### Time to Polish Off the Crystal Ball and See What's Coming in 2021

Well, the old crystal ball has certainly been tarnished. This time last year it was impossible to envision the upheaval and pain that was in store for so many of us.

There was too much loss – businesses, jobs, time spent apart from colleagues, friends and family, along with saying tragic goodbyes to too many people we knew.

The turning of the calendar can't undo the train wreck that was 2020, but there must always be hope for a better tomorrow, and in this case, a better 2021.

In keeping with the nearly annual Examiner tradition, we look to the year ahead and hope that a few of these wishes come true – with no cataclysmic surprises to blindsides us again.

For Congress to recognize that without helping the state and local governments there is no real economic recovery.

The need for reliance on food banks and pantries diminishes to far less than even

pre-COVID-19 levels.

That the COVID-19 vaccine is distributed equitably and without favor.

For enough people to actually take the vaccine when they get the chance.

An appreciation for scientists to be at least as revered for their accomplishments as celebrities are for theirs.

It may be a bigger reach than ever, but for downtowns everywhere to start attracting the tenants, businesses and shoppers needed to sustain healthy business districts.

The hope that no one loses their life because of the color of their skin.

For Horace Greeley High School and Chappaqua school officials to continue working earnestly toward improving the experience for students of color.

For enough people to recognize that members of the Lakeland High School student body and community have

legitimate complaints about racial bias.

For the town and residents of Lake Shenorock and Lake Lincolndale to someday have a permanent sewer solution.

A way to end drunk driving, which has needlessly stolen too many lives.

That people haven't lost their faith that elections are conducted properly in this country.

A little bit of wisdom, and perhaps most importantly, a lot of common sense from elected officials.

Nothing but success for all of the area's youth and high school athletes – when they get a chance to play.

For all first-responders to know how much they are appreciated, and all the local volunteers who give so much time and effort to improve their communities.

And to all our readers, advertisers and supporters everywhere, a happy, healthy and prosperous 2021.

## Letters to the Editor

### Critical Public Comment Period Open for Saw Mill Parkway Project

A long overdue public comment period has been opened by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for the Saw Mill Parkway construction project between Thornwood and Pleasantville. Comments are due to DEC via e-mail by Jan. 7 at DEP.R3@dec.ny.gov.

Currently a 1.5-mile stretch of the Saw Mill Parkway between Thornwood and Pleasantville is being reconstructed and raised to six feet above the existing grade. The parkway will also be widened over a section of the Saw Mill River that's designated a Class A wetland and a Class B trout habitat – two of the most environmentally significant designations. This section of the river is home to many types of animals (some rare) and its vegetation acts as a natural buffer for area residents.

This project has a \$60 million budget and the state Department of Transportation stated that no funds are allocated to replant, landscape or mitigate sound or environmental impacts. The state has also categorized this project as being exempt

from the state Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and not bound to mitigating negative impacts by claiming it is a "minor reconstruction or rehabilitation of an existing highway" with "minimal impacts to the environment." This project isn't a minor reconstruction and the impacts to the environment aren't negligible and must be considered.

The new raised configuration of the parkway and reduced buffer area will adversely affect area residents by increasing the line of sight and sound pollution. The impacts to the wetland and river will adversely affect the natural environment and damage this ecosystem that many types of animals call home.

There are low-cost, high-value solutions to mitigate the negative impacts imparted by the Saw Mill River Parkway construction project that will benefit area residents and the ecosystem. These include:

1. Use of a solid concrete barrier in lieu of open guardrails between the parkway and residents. This will dampen the sounds produced by tailpipes and tires.
2. Plant trees and other native vegetation

in the areas between the parkway and residents and in areas that the wetland and river are being paved over. This will replenish vegetation lost during past and present parkway improvements and will provide a buffer for sound and light pollution that's aesthetically pleasing for both motorists and area residents.

3. Implement erosion control measures that are up to the standard expected of construction projects that are in proximity to wetlands and rivers, including reinforced silt fencing and filtration of storm water discharges from the construction area into the river.

To anyone that believes in mitigating the negative impacts imparted by the Saw Mill River Parkway construction project, comments are due to Alysse Devine at the DEC by Jan. 7 at DEP.R3@dec.ny.gov.

More information about the project is available on the DEC Environmental News Bulletin at <https://tinyurl.com/y96ytsuh>

**Gibson Craig**  
**Pleasantville**

### MTA's Poor Fiscal Management Behind Much of its Financial Woes

Something was missing from the announcement from MTA Chairman Pat Foye and Metro-North President Catherine Renaldi that installation of Positive Train Control was based upon the most recent project recovery schedule and will meet the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) deadline of Dec. 31. What they conveniently left out was the FRA's original required completion date of Dec. 31, 2015, and financing for Positive Train Control.

The MTA paid for Positive Train Control on the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North by a \$967.1 million Railroad Rehabilitation Improvement Financing

loan from the FRA. It is a 22-year loan at a 2.4 percent interest rate. The loan will have to be paid back, plus interest, as part of the current \$51 billion 2020-2024 Five Year Capital Program and following four future capital programs.

One contributing factor to the current MTA financial crises is the agency's dependency on long-term borrowing. Annual debt service payments have grown to more than 20 percent of agency expenditures. Audits anticipate this will grow to a larger percentage in coming years.

The old-fashioned pay-as-you-go concept disappeared decades ago leaving

commuters and taxpayers stuck with the bills.

**Larry Penner**  
**Great Neck, N.Y.**

*The letter writer is a retired transportation advocate, historian and writer who previously worked for the Federal Transit Administration Region 2 New York office. This included the development, review, approval and oversight for billions in capital projects and programs for the MTA, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Roads, NYC Transit and MTA Bus along with 30 other transit agencies in New York and New Jersey.*

# One Dead, Two Injured in DWI Wrong-Way Crash in Peekskill

By Anna Young

A Yorktown resident whose wrong-way crash killed one and injured two in Peekskill last Wednesday night was charged with vehicular manslaughter.

State police said Mark Cope, 41, was under the influence of alcohol when he traveled the wrong way northbound in the southbound lanes of Route 9 in Peekskill. Cope was charged with first-degree vehicular manslaughter, a class C felony, police said.

Around 9:10 p.m. on Dec. 23, troopers responded to reports of someone driving on the wrong side of the road on Route 9 in the area of Main Street. Police said Cope was driving his 2018 Black Audi in the southbound lanes when he crashed into a 2020 Acura containing three people.

The driver, 32-year-old Ossining resident Shina McClam, was pronounced dead at the scene, while her six-year-old daughter and 18-year-old niece sustained serious injuries that were deemed non-life-threatening. The



The scene on Route 9 in Peekskill where a wrong-way driver who was drunk killed the driver of another car and seriously injured two others.

## One Dead in Fatal Three-Car Crash on Sprain Brook Parkway

By Anna Young

One person was killed after a fatal car crash on the Sprain Brook Parkway shut down all northbound lanes early Monday morning.

According to New York State Police, the three-car crash happened around 1:05 a.m. in the Greenburgh portion of the parkway between Jackson Avenue and Route 100B. All traffic was closed in that area until about 7:30 a.m. Police say the collisions were two separate incidents.

The events leading up to both crashes are still under investigation, police said.

The first crash resulted in the death of Randolph Castillo, 37, of East Boston, Mass. Police said he was pronounced dead at the scene.

According to police, Castillo was driving

his 2019 Honda Civic with passenger Brandon Glawson, 36, of Dedham, Mass. when he struck a 2014 Acura MDX operated by 30-year-old Haverstraw resident Emilio Alvarez-Alvarez. Both Glawson and Alvarez-Alvarez sustained non-life-threatening injuries and were transported to Westchester Medical Center.

The second collision happened when a 2009 Ford Fusion sideswiped Castillo's car. The two adult occupants were uninjured, police said.

Monday's incident comes just days after state police investigated a wrong-way crash that killed one and injured two in Peekskill.

It also comes less than a week after four 18-year-olds were killed in a crash in Yonkers. On Dec. 22, a car collided with the teens' vehicle during a police chase. The driver of that car also died.

niece was transported to Westchester Medical Center by ambulance, police said, while McClam's daughter was airlifted there for further care.

Cope was arrested at the scene once troopers discovered he was drunk, police said.

The Peekskill and Montrose fire departments and the Westchester County Medical Examiner's office responded to the scene. Route 9 was closed for several hours in both directions for investigation.

Cope was arraigned virtually in the Town of Cortlandt Justice Court and was remanded to Westchester County Jail in lieu of \$100,000 cash bail or bond. He was scheduled to appear before the Peekskill City Court on Dec. 29.

Police are asking for input from anyone who may have seen the crash. Witnesses are asked to contact New York State Police at 914-769-2600 and ask for the Cortlandt Bureau of Criminal Investigation. The case reference number is 9992275.



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## Obituaries

### Frank Bumpus

Dr. Frank Thatcher Bumpus died peacefully at home on Dec. 18, surrounded by loving friends Vinny Tamagna, Joseph Cook and Glonise Dutton, due to complications with Alzheimer's and dementia.

He is the beloved uncle of six nieces, Suzie Reed (Michael), Christina Wilson (Reed), Priscilla Tanase (Ted), Kathy Urquhart, Jane Nielsen and Marie Mentor. Frank was a compassionate loving partner to Lucio Petrocelli, who predeceased him in 2004.

Frank was born in Rochester, Minn. to the prominent Dr. Hermon Carey Bumpus Jr. (Mayo Clinic) and Helen Norton McBurnie of the Laird Norton Company (Seattle). Frank was a loving and supportive brother and was predeceased by his sister, Nancy Helen Bumpus-Buck, and brother William Norton Bumpus.

A resident of Cold Spring, Dr. Bumpus was the principal donor to a National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge grant that underpins the endowment of the Hudson River Valley Institute and established the Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Chair in Hudson

River Valley History, making him one of Marist College's most generous and transformational benefactors. His grandfather, Hermon Carey Bumpus, was president of Brown and Tufts universities and an academic philanthropic setting was commonplace for Frank.

His own education was interrupted when he had completed all but the last semester of his senior year at Harvard University when he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in 1942 as an aviation cadet-student bombardier. He trained as a bombardier and a navigator and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in November 1943. From 1944 to 1945, Lt. Bumpus flew 43 combat missions from bases in England as a member of the 410th Bombardment Group of the Ninth Air Force in Douglas A-20 Havoc



Frank Bumpus

bombers against targets in France and Germany. He was awarded seven Air Medals for meritorious achievement in flight and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Upon Capt. Bumpus's discharge from the United States Army, he graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and then from Tufts University Medical School as a doctor of radiology. Dr. Bumpus practiced at Memorial Hospital, now Memorial Sloan Kettering, in New York City for over a decade.

His philanthropic contributions span both coasts, and he devoted his life to good works at the Florida

Memorial Hospital, Key West, and Customs House in partnership with the Trust for Public Land and the Key West Art & Historical Society. Frank was a contributor to Tufts University and Marist College, where the Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Chair in Hudson River Valley Studies at the Hudson River Valley Institute will carry his name forever into the future.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to support his legacy and love of history to Marist College at The Hudson River Valley Institute.

Please visit [www.WhiteandVenutoFuneralHome.com](http://www.WhiteandVenutoFuneralHome.com) for live-streaming details as soon as they become available for a funeral service scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 29 at 3 p.m.

Arrangements are under the care of White, Venuto and Morrill Funeral and Cremation Service, 188 N. Plank Rd., Newburgh, N.Y. 12550.

### Antoinette Emerson

Antoinette (Toni) Emerson, 89, died on Dec. 26 at Waterview Hills Rehabilitation & Healthcare in Purdys. She was the daughter of Santina and Michael Aucello.

Toni was employed at IBM for many years in public relations. Upon retiring from IBM, she joined Vincent & Whittemore and later Houlihan Lawrence as a real estate agent. During her time there, she served as president of the Westchester County Board of Realtors. She had a great concern for the residents of Pleasantville and volunteered her time in various organizations including the Lions Club, the Pleasantville Farmers Market



Antoinette Emerson

and the Chamber of Commerce. She was also president of the Pleasantville Country Club. Toni was always willing to do whatever was needed.

Toni is survived by her two sisters, Beatrice Centonze of Stamford, Conn. and Connie Jakola (Al) of Katonah; her niece, Allison Centonze, and nephew Michael Centonze (Dolly), whom she adored; cousins Grace Baer and Maria Aucello; along with other family members and close friends Lydia and Michael Petrizzelli.

Due to COVID restrictions, funeral services will be private and a memorial service will be scheduled at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital at [www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org).




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### Stephen Schablien

Stephen Jerome Schablien Jr. of Bowie, Md. went to be with the Lord on Saturday, Dec. 5 at his home. He was 80 years old.

Known to his friends and family as Jerry, he was born in Peekskill on May 7, 1940. He was the middle of three children born to the late Lillian Keller and Stephen Jerome Sr.

Jerry served honorably in the United States Navy. Later in life he served as a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. In his younger years, he served as scout master with his lifelong friend Denis Pisanello. Jerry was a great storyteller who liked to entertain everyone with his many stories of his life and experiences.

Jerry was a devoted husband, father and grandfather who took pride in his family. He worked hard to provide for them and supported them in every way. Jerry had many different occupations in his life, with teaching history to high school students being his favorite. He was Sir Knight in the Knights of Columbus and served in a ministry in his

church. Jerry was an active member of his church and considered many of his friends there as family. He was the family historian and spent many hours researching the family history.

Jerry was preceded in death by his parents; his sister, Jean, and brother-in-law Ben Giarrusso; his brother, John Schablien; and his nephew, Danny Schablien.

Jerry is survived by his wife of 55 years, Marie Helen Schablien; his four children, Kevin Schablien and his wife, Pam, of Pittsville, Md.; Jerome Schablien of White Haven, Pa.; Kim Query and her husband, Michael, of Oklahoma City; and Stacey Duffy and her husband, Earl, of Odenton, Md. He was the proud grandfather of eight grandchildren, Tuesday, Justin, Brandon, Bryce, Jared, Stephanie, Ashley and Lexi; four great-grandchildren, Logan, Melanie, Lily and Landon; and numerous brothers and sisters-in-law and nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, send donations to St. Pius X Catholic Church, 4700 Annapolis Rd., Bowie, Md. 2015.

## Police Blotter

### North Castle Police Department

**Dec. 21:** A Stone Hollow Way reported at 2:32 p.m. that he is the victim of a scam and lost \$400. The responding officer gathered the information and a report will follow.

**Dec. 22:** A caller reported at 2:31 p.m. that a "watermelon" sized rock was in the middle of Middle Patent Road between Thornewood Road and Route 22. The responding officer reported removing the rock from the roadway.

### Yorktown Police Department

**Dec. 22:** A 27-year-old Mohegan Lake man was arrested at 12:05 p.m. and charged

with first-degree burglary and first-degree robbery, both Class felonies. Police said the suspect, Anthony Vukel of Strawberry Road, voluntarily surrendered at Yorktown police headquarters. On Nov. 1, Yorktown police responded to a residence on a reported assault, where Vukel is alleged to have unlawfully entered the home, stole property and injured the victim. Initial attempts to locate the perpetrator were unsuccessful, forcing authorities to seek and receive an arrest warrant from the Yorktown Justice Court. Vukel was arraigned in front of Town Justice Gary Raniolo and a Temporary Restraining Order was granted on behalf of the victim. The suspect is due to appear in town court on Jan. 5.

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# Briarcliff Rezones Business Campuses Leaving a Developer Perplexed

By Martin Wilbur

Five Briarcliff Manor business campuses have been rezoned to encourage more varied use of the properties that officials hope will spur greater investment in the community but without including residential uses for the sites.

On Dec. 15, the Village Board revised its zoning from Business (B) to Complementary Transitional (CT) for the parcels at 345 Scarborough Rd., the former Philips Research campus, 600 Albany Post Rd., 320 Old Briarcliff Rd., 555 Pleasantville Rd. and 333 Albany Post Rd. There had been a moratorium in place for the last year-and-a-half at the sites to allow for the board to make its zoning decision.

Mayor Steven Vescio said because only 6 percent of Briarcliff's tax base is commercial, one of the lowest percentages in Westchester County, the goal was to prevent the loss of commercial properties. Another goal was to increase business districts that add vitality to the community.

Furthermore, the village wanted to avoid overburdening various services that are typically associated with residential developments, particularly the Ossining School District, Vescio said. Four of the five properties are zoned for Ossining schools, which are already stretched thin, while only the Pleasantville Road parcel is in the Briarcliff School District.

"We are looking at keeping them as commercial because having a healthy mix of commercial to residential taxpayers reduces the overall tax burden on residents," Vescio said of the parcels. "So we're looking to not only salvage the small amount of commercial tax base we have, we're updating the zoning to increase additional commercial development, which will ultimately reduce the tax burden on residents."

However, a New Jersey-based developer that bought the 94-acre Philips site in 2017, by far the largest of the five parcels, and has plans for a 180-unit age-restricted townhouse community criticized the village not just for its zoning decision but its refusal to sit down with him and his representatives to consider what his team could offer Briarcliff Manor.

Jonathan Grebow, president and CEO of Ridgewood Real Estate Partners whose company reportedly bought the property for \$12.2 million, said at a time when many corporate campuses in the region are empty and the demand for housing in the suburbs is exploding, it's frustrating and bewildering why the village wouldn't at least listen to his proposal.

No formal application was submitted because of the moratorium, Grebow said.

Elsewhere in Westchester, towns are clamoring for residential communities for adults 55 and up with amenities, including a proposal his company is pursuing in Greenburgh, he said.

"There really is no corporate campus market in Westchester, especially one in northern Westchester not on a highway," Grebow said. "There really is nothing north of Greenburgh where Regeneron is now. There really isn't much. There's a lot of vacancy in offices.



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The entrance to the former Philips Research site off of Scarborough Road in Briarcliff Manor. The village rezoned the property, along with four other corporate campuses, leaving the owner of the property pondering legal remedies.



A rendering of a proposed layout for 180 townhouses at the corporate campus at 345 Scarborough Rd.

"We had approached the village and our initial impressions that residential uses was a better use for the property, and an active adult community is usually welcomed with open arms because it generates tax revenue, it has no school-age children, it's a less impactful use."

Projections by Ridgewood Real Estate Partners pegged the total revenue to all taxing entities at \$3,232,117, including just over \$2.3 million going to the Ossining School District. Grebow said he would commit to not having any school-age children live in the community.

Another \$489,597 would be generated for the village, \$287,121 to the county; \$67,215 to the Town of Ossining and \$84,572 for sewer and water district.

But Vescio said it's not how much tax revenue is generated but what a community nets after the cost of services associated with a residential plan are factored in that counts.

Officials also pointed to a long list of potential uses that are now allowed under the new CT zone other than offices. The village's documents list conference

centers and event space; medical offices; research laboratory and biomed facilities; fitness clubs and training facilities; recreational and self-storage facilities; hotels; institutions of higher learning; nursery schools; light manufacturing; arts; retail; and mixed-use development with commercial as the primary use.

Plus, the village will be able to more effectively monitor development because special permits will now be required, said Briarcliff Manor's planning consultant Patrick Cleary.

"All of these new uses in the CT (zone) are established as special permit uses, and for all of these uses there are additional requirements that are general to the special permit process and specific regulations for each of these uses," Cleary said.

Vescio pointed to the tax incentives the village is offering as an attraction. Any of the property owners investing at least \$50,000 in one of these commercial properties will only pay the village half of the additional taxes the first year. The balance would be phased in over a 10-year period.

While the mayor acknowledged that it will take time to entice tenants, there will be changes in a post-pandemic economy, including companies that may have satellite offices in the suburbs closer to more of their employees' homes.

"I think the tenants are out there but none of these properties are under village ownership," Vescio said. "So, it's really up to the owners to try and do their best to market it and offer it for rent at a reasonable price. If you're asking \$100 a foot, you're not going to get anybody, but if you're asking (for) a more reasonable number, you'll probably get somebody tomorrow."

But Grebow said his company's proposal would provide the tax revenue that communities like Briarcliff need. Plus, there would be less traffic on Scarborough Road than what the village is looking to do. A development that includes medical or professional offices would significantly overstress the road, while his preliminary traffic studies point to 36 additional vehicles generated for the morning peak and 47 for the afternoon peak.

Grebow mentioned he is weighing legal options against the village but wasn't prepared to discuss that matter further.

"Frankly, this is the first administration in a community that has ever been unwilling to sit down and have a conversation," Grebow said. "I've actually been told no before. As developers we've all been told no. However, we've been surprised there's been no willingness to sit down, there's been no conversations about residential use at all."

## Westchester COVID-19 Memorial Moves Indoors for Winter

Westchester County has moved the Ribbons of Remembrance, a memorial dedicated to those lost to COVID-19, from the Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers to the main floor of the Michaelian Office Building in White Plains.

Visitors can still view the rope structure and ribbons collected from surrounding trees in the display

case next to the entrance of the Department of Human Resources. Ribbons are available for those who have recently lost a loved one and are interested in adding their name to the memorial.

The Michaelian Office Building, located at 148 Martine Ave., is open to the public Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

# Westchester, Putnam Police to Continue Enforcement Through New Year's

Increased enforcement in Westchester and Putnam counties to curb speeding, aggressive driving and driving under the influence will continue through New Year's Day.

With more wet weather in the forecast for New Year's, Westchester patrol officers will also be deployed to close parkways or sections of parkways that become flooded. Additional Emergency Service Unit officers will be on duty. These officers carry equipment that can be used to clear downed trees that are blocking parkways and are trained to conduct rope rescues and swift water rescues of persons trapped by flooding.

"Our goal as always is to do everything we can to keep Westchester's parkways safe for those who will be traveling on them during the holiday season," Commissioner Thomas A. Gleason said. "There is zero tolerance for drivers who put others at risk

by speeding, driving aggressively or driving while impaired."

Westchester County police have observed an increase in speeding and other aggressive driving this year because traffic volume has been lighter due to the pandemic. Police have continually conducted enforcement throughout the year, issuing more than 13,000 summonses for violations of Vehicle & Traffic Law.

The Department of Public Safety and other agencies in Westchester are participating in a STOP-DWI enforcement campaign that will continue through Jan. 1. County police will be increasing its enforcement of Driving While Intoxicated laws along the Bronx River, Cross County, Saw Mill and Hutchinson River parkways.

The county's Office of Drug Abuse Prevention and STOP-DWI assists in coordinating joint law enforcement initiatives such as the current enforcement

campaign. It also conducts numerous programs for schools and community groups to educate the public about the dangers of impaired driving, the increased certainty of arrest and the serious penalties faced by drivers convicted of DWI.

In Putnam County, Sheriff Robert L. Langley Jr., Town of Carmel Police Department Interim Commanding Officer John Dearman and Kent Police Chief Kevin Owens have their departments participating in a special enforcement effort to crackdown on impaired driving. They are coordinating the statewide STOP-DWI Crackdown effort, which started Dec. 17.

Research shows that high-visibility enforcement can reduce impaired driving fatalities by as much as 20 percent. Sobriety checkpoints play a key part in raising awareness about the problem.

While STOP-DWI efforts across New York have led to significant reductions in

the numbers of alcohol- and drug-related fatalities, too many lives are being lost because of crashes caused by drunk or impaired drivers. Highly visible, highly publicized efforts like the STOP-DWI Crackdown Campaign aim to further reduce drunk and impaired driving incidents.

The STOP-DWI Holiday Crackdown is one of many statewide enforcement initiatives promoted by STOP-DWI NY and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee. The campaign also targets the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Super Bowl weekend and St. Patrick's Day.

The public can help to make a difference by downloading the mobile app "Have a Plan" to find a safe ride home at [www.stopdwi.org/mobileapp](http://www.stopdwi.org/mobileapp).

## Obituaries

### Myrtle Sorenson

Myrtle C. Sorenson, a Croton-on-Hudson resident, died Dec. 20. She was 94.

Sorenson was born Sept. 30, 1926, in Greenfield, Mass. to Roy S. and Myrtle E. (Atcherson) Alford. She loved children. She was a fun, positive person to be around. Sorenson enjoyed baking, gardening and working alongside her husband of 53 years. She was generous with her time, love and assets and will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Sorenson is survived by her loving children, Noreen Walsh and her husband Edward, Karen O'Riley and her husband David and Fred Sorenson and his wife Lynn and June Sorenson-Jenney; her caring brother, Thomas Alford, and his wife Lois; adoring grandchildren Edward Walsh Jr., Jonathan Walsh, Sheila O'Riley, Theresa O'Riley, Jessica Sorenson, Matthew Sorenson and Michael Jenney; and 12 cherished great-grandchildren, Jayde, Jeremy, Joshua, Jace, Tyler, Samantha, Nathaniel, Miranda, Brooklyn, Jonah, Lynn and Daniella.

She was predeceased by her beloved



Myrtle Sorenson

husband, Fred A. Sorenson; brothers Roy Alford and Steve Alford; and grandchildren Timothy O'Riley, Andrew Sorenson and Jennifer Jenney.

### Robert Trimpe

Robert "Bobby" C. Trimpe passed away peacefully in his sleep on Christmas Day. He was 91.

Bobby was born in Mount Vernon on Mar. 22, 1929. It was there that he married his sweetheart and devoted wife of 66 years, Janet Trimpe, in September 1954. In 1963, they moved to Thornwood where they created a loving and enduring home, a home that played host to every Christmas, Thanksgiving, birthday and graduation celebration for their large and growing family, and remains filled with love, warmth and lasting memories that Bobby can be proud of.

A dedicated member of his community,

Bobby served in the U.S. Army, was a parishioner at Trinity Lutheran Church and a member of the Yorktown Diamond Thistle Lodge #555 in addition to serving the Westchester County Parkway Police. In 1990, he retired with honors from the force after 37 years of dedicated service.

Bobby is remembered by his family as a dedicated father and grandfather who always put the needs of others above his own. He was soft-spoken and forever let his actions speak louder than words. Bobby's family hopes that those who knew him will remember his quick wit, his love for life and his willingness to lend a helping hand to whoever needed it.

A teetotaler until the end, please raise a glass of milk with your favorite cookie or slice of cake and crack a joke, as that's how

### Robert Morabito

Robert R. "Bob" Morabito unexpectedly passed away on Dec. 27. He was 69.

Bob, born on Aug. 4, 1951, was affectionately known as "B-Boy" or "Beebs" and grew up in the Bronx, which will forever be his home. He spent his childhood playing stickball on the block, playing and coaching baseball and playing in a number of bands. Bob graduated from Cardinal Spellman High School in 1969, and shortly after joined the U.S. Army and served in the Vietnam War. He was honorably discharged after obtaining a number of commendations including the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. He then attended classes on the GI Bill at The Juilliard School in New York City.

After college, Bob worked in the medical field. He was a pharmacy technician at Montefiore Hospital in New York in the 1970s. He attended a Local 1199 training program to be a radiation therapy technician and went to work at Vassar Brothers Medical Center after graduation. He worked at Vassar from 1980 to the early 1990s.

His passion in life was his music and he

composed a number of pieces, many of which can be found on Soundcloud under his name Bob Morabito (<https://soundcloud.com/bob-morabito>). Bob wrote contemporary, atonal music. His most recent piece was "The Din and Rabble of Political Chicanery," which he wrote amidst our turbulent political times. He hoped someday for a symphony to perform some of his work. He was also very active online in music and political forums.

He lived in Highland, N.Y. for the past 20 years.

He is survived by his oldest son and daughter-in-law, Robert and Liz Morabito, of Pleasantville; his younger son and daughter-in-law, Mark and Reesa Morabito, of Framingham, Mass.; five grandchildren, Anthony and Daniella Morabito of Pleasantville and Lucy, Cole and Miles Morabito of Framingham, Mass.; his brother and sister-in-law, Anthony and Susan Morabito; nieces Susan and Chrissy Morabito and their families; and his best friend since he was five years old, Albert Attianese.

Bob was a fighter above all and faced and beat many health challenges in his life. He will always be remembered in our hearts and through his music.

### Marilyn Svec

Marilyn Victoria Svec, a White Plains resident, died Dec. 22 after a brief illness. She was 82.

Svec was born in the Bronx on Dec. 13, 1938, to Concetta and Alfred Sacco. She graduated from Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx, attended NYU on a full scholarship majoring in math and earned a master's degree in education from Fordham University.

She had a passion for teaching math at Port Chester High School. She was the first teacher selected for Teacher of the Year. She loved animals, especially cats. She will be remembered by all.

Svec is survived by her husband, Walter Svec; cousins Carol Grugett, Eva Deninger and Arthur Sacco; and several nieces and nephews.

Donations can be made in Marilyn's name to the SPCA in Westchester.

# Montrose VA Pantry Supervisor Looks to Help Veterans in Need

By Lindsay Emery

The Montrose VA food pantry's motto is "We proudly serve those who served our country with pride."

The pantry's supervisor, Duke A. Searles, invites all veterans who need assistance to come and collect food from the pantry that is brimming with donations. Searles has been thankful that organizations and vendors such as ShopRite have donated more than 10,000 pounds of food since May.

The pantry was founded in 1995 by VA psychiatrist Regina Tracy, who decided to operate it separately from the hospital. After Searles' admission to the VA with post-traumatic stress disorder and drug addiction in 1999, he became a driver for the food pantry. Tracy soon asked Searles to take over as supervisor and he has been in charge for the past 21 years.

The pantry started in a broom closet and now spans a large room in Building 13 of the VA hospital. Despite its expanse, the hospital has been forced to scale back food distribution because of its strict COVID-19 guidelines. Before the pandemic, the food pantry would serve between 150 and 200 families a month; now it can only help about 50 each month.

"Now, we're far from it because of the pandemic and they're restricting very much the movement of people outside the hospital," Searles said, "which is causing us to not be able to give food that we've received from ShopRite."

Searles wants to get the word out to all

needy veterans and their families across New York that they can come and receive food. They just have to bring a veteran's photo ID card.

In order to make it more accessible, Searles has placed parking spaces in front of the pantry front doors so those arriving for donations can pull up and receive their food. In addition to the parking spaces, Searles has teamed up with the American Legion to help reach veterans in the area.

"There are hungry families out there and I'd like to get my food to them," Searles said. "It's not doing me any good sitting on my shelves."

During this holiday season, the pantry has partnered with the American Legion post in Valhalla to try and reach additional veterans. The post has been serving area veterans on Monday since the start of the holiday season.

"We assist the Montrose VA pantry every year and also on a monthly basis," said John Creskey, commander of the Valhalla American Legion post. "So every year we run a local food drive, thanks to our community, for the food pantry, but we also send cash every month too so they can buy wholesale. There's certain food items that they have to buy fresh."

Searles said he is grateful that the Montrose VA pantry has grown to be considered a choice pantry, which means that in addition to a normal nutritional bag that everyone receives, people can also opt to choose other items. The nutritional bag contains two fruits, three vegetables and pasta. From the choice pantry, the options range from beans, soup and ravioli, to peanut butter, tuna fish and coffee.



VETERANS ADMINISTRATION PHOTO

Montrose VA Pantry Supervisor Duke Searles, second from left, with some of his volunteers, wants to help veterans who can use food assistance. The pantry helps former servicemen and their families.

The pantry is open three days a week. Searles wanted to make the pantry available as often as possible so that it could be accessible. It is closed this week and will reopen after the New Year's weekend.

Searles said veterans should never feel shame coming to the pantry. Searles understands what it feels like to be too proud to ask for help. When he returned from Vietnam, Searles didn't want help either.

"Ego will not feed you," he said. "It will not fill your stomach. So put your pride and ego in your pocket and come get some food."

Searles had to decline the Valhalla American Legion annual food drive through the Thornwood ShopRite because there's too much food at the VA pantry. He also didn't want to jeopardize the safety of his volunteers

who collect the food.

Searles hopes to notify veterans that the food at the pantry is for them and that he wants to give it away. He would be happy if his shelves were a little less full.

"I hope that we can be of some help to people getting the food that is available to them by getting it in their hands and their mouths, on the table, because that's where it should be," he said. "Not on my shelves."

The Montrose VA Food Pantry is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The Valhalla American Legion Post at 27 Legion Drive will also continue to serve veterans on Mondays from 9 a.m. to noon. For contactless pick up, pull into the parking lot and drive the orange corn. Blow your horn and stay in your vehicle.

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# The Pandemic Has Prompted 'Stay-at-Home' Projects

When I was younger and forced by lack of money to be a do-it-yourselfer around the house and in the garden, I dreamed of the day when I could employ others to maintain and upgrade everything that needed to be done.

That day came a long time ago, and I considered myself lucky that I had more time available to pursue other dreams.

But confined at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, isolated and on the verge of a depressed jag, I've been itching to find a handyman project to do. That would have been very easy in my last home, an 18th century farmhouse that came with a long list of projects just to keep it functioning.

But now I live at Trump Park in Yorktown where everything is shiny new, in great working condition and serviced by a great staff whenever I need something done, from unclogging a drain to changing a lightbulb.

Since the onset of the pandemic, I was itching for something to do around the house. More than just itching. Starving.

As it happens, when we moved, I brought with us a small Shaker-like pine night table that was stored in our attic years ago and forgotten. Its surface was badly worn and needed to be refinished. A perfect pandemic project, I thought.

It had been more than 30 years since I had refinished furniture. In those days, I was a



By Bill Primavera

purist, insisting on the method of refinishing known as French Polish, where the old surface would be stripped paint remover.

After being sanded, the surface grain would be "filled" and sanded again with fine sandpaper to make it perfectly smooth. Then, it would be coated with several coats of shellac or varnish that required a long time to dry, again being sanded with fine sandpaper between each coat to remove imperfections and to create a better bond for the next coat. After three coats, I would finish the surface with two layers of Butcher's Wax, buffed to perfection.

The process took forever to accomplish because of the drying time between each coat and the sanding required to remove the imperfections caused by the brush and dust.

Shellac can take up to 36 hours to dry and, if you do the math, a project of refinishing would take forever. Even though the pandemic has given us all a lot more time to attend to forgotten chores, who wants to spend weeks on a simple job like refinishing a tabletop.

With the method outlined above, a small tabletop could take me a couple of weeks of part-time effort to accomplish. My interest span doesn't last that long in my more senior years, so my first decision was to think about whether I wanted to make that leap from



shellac or varnish finish to polyurethane for a surface.

Let me explain the difference. Polyurethane is a thermoplastic that combines the best features of plastic and rubber. It has gained popularity due to its ability to form a thicker and stronger film than coatings like varnish and shellac. It requires less coats, time and effort. Oil-based polyurethane typically dries in 24 hours, while water-based only takes six or less. I'll take the water-based, thank you.

First, I gathered the required materials from my storeroom: a pint of paint remover; a half-pint of Minwax Wood Finish (in Colonial Maple); a half-pint of water-based, fast-drying polyurethane; two 3M Sandblaster sandpaper blocks, one medium grade and one fine; a cheap two-inch brush to apply the stripper; and a good one-and-a-half-inch brush to apply the polyurethane. I was prepared as a weekend project warrior.

In my open foyer area, I spread an old sheet on the floor, and with my cheap brush, covered the tabletop, legs and drawer front

with the stripper, let it do its thing for just 15 minutes, then wiped it off with old rags. After sanding with first the medium grade sandpaper, then the smooth, I stained the wood with Minwax, and let it dry for an hour.

Then I simply applied the polyurethane. After less than four hours, it was completely dry. With the fine sandpaper, I rubbed down the imperfections, which did a pretty good job on all the flat surfaces. For the turns on the legs, I used fine steel wool.

The end product looked so good that I thought I could be ready for the finishing wax coat, but I realized that I had forgotten to buy Butcher's Wax.

My favorite secret weapon around the house for repairing scratches is also a wonderful final refinishing coat, too. That is Kiwi Shoe Polish! I lathered on brown wax in two coats, and the results were deep and luxurious.

Now I have a very sweet, shiny end table with an all but impervious surface. But more than that, I've enjoyed a way to have the pandemic hours pass more productively.

While both a writer and publicist, Bill Primavera is also 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](http://www.PrimaveraPR.com)), specializing in lifestyles, real estate and development. To engage the services of The Home Guru and his team to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.

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# Westchester to Dole Out Second Round of COVID-19 Aid for Businesses

The Westchester County Office of Economic Development is issuing a second round of funding for county-based small businesses and nonprofits facing challenges as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

The county has secured \$4 million in additional funding to support 175 eligible organizations seeking relief. In addition, 20 of the county's chambers of commerce applied for and were each awarded a grant to be used for providing business services.

Funds are part of Westchester County Business FIRST (Financial Investments for Recovery and a Sustainable Tomorrow), a grant program designed to offer immediate financial relief to organizations in Westchester County that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

In November, the county awarded \$10 million to 262 county-based small businesses and nonprofits. Based on the substantial number of applicants, the county expanded the program to enable additional awards to eligible organizations that had applied to the initial program. Businesses did not need to submit a second application.

"Due to the tremendous response we received for financial assistance, we knew we needed to expand our Business FIRST grant program," said Westchester



Bridget Gibbons, Westchester County's director of economic development, announcing earlier this month that the county has secured \$4 million in additional funding to support nearly 200 small businesses, nonprofits and chambers of commerce that have been hurt by the pandemic.

County Executive George Latimer. "We are so pleased we were able to secure additional funding to assist even more small businesses and nonprofits and our chambers of commerce as we work together toward a sustainable future."

The grant program, launched in September, was open to businesses and nonprofits with 99 or fewer employees. Eligible entities could apply for up to \$49,000 to cover expenses such as rent or mortgage payments, employee salaries or

benefits, working capital, equipment and other COVID-19-related expenses. The 262 recipients in the first round of funding comprised industries such as restaurants and food service, the arts, entertainment and recreation, social services and education. A full list of awardees will be made available once each awardee has signed their grant agreement.

Westchester County Business FIRST is being administered by the County Office of Economic Development through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The county is currently working to secure additional funding for the program.

"It is so important to provide a financial boost now, to enable these organizations to work through the difficult times so they can plan for a better tomorrow," said Bridget Gibbons, the county's director of economic development. "As the catalyst for economic growth and vitality, the Office of Economic Development is committed to supporting our business and nonprofit sectors and getting our economy back on track."

For more information on available county programs and assistance, visit <https://westchestercatalyst.com/business-first-programs/>.

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# Yorktown's Veterans Road to Close for Bridge, Culvert Replacement

Veterans Road in Yorktown is scheduled to close on Monday, Jan. 4 for about 10 to 12 weeks while contractors replace the Hill Boulevard Bridge and the culvert over the Hallocks Mill Brook.

The Hill Boulevard Bridge work involves the complete replacement of the span that carries Hill Boulevard over a Barger Brook tributary, while the Veterans Road culvert work involves its complete replacement that carries Veterans Road over the Hallocks Mill Brook.

Yorktown's Highway Department will post detours for alternate routes.

"We understand that this road closure will be an inconvenience, but it is necessary work to ensure the safety of our local roads," said Highway Superintendent Dave Paganelli. "This is an important project that will finally improve an essential corridor for our residents."

Yorktown received two grants for the work from the New York State Department of Transportation under the BridgeNY program. The grant for the culvert replacement was for up to \$820,000 and the grant for the Hill Boulevard Bridge was for up to \$2,600,000.

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

"The Town of Yorktown remains committed to remediating failing infrastructure and the start of this project is an important step in our progress toward ensuring safe roads for everyone," said Supervisor Matt Slater. "I ask all our residents to be respectful of the work crews and any traffic control they provide."

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

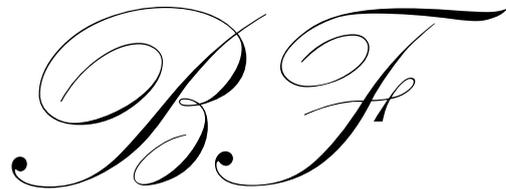
Transit Construction Corp.'s current project in the county is at the Westchester Joint Water Works in West Harrison, where the company is removing 1,100 feet of existing turbidity curtain and replace it with 1,200 feet of an interim curtain.



## A Community Fixture

In November, state Sen. Shelley Mayer presented John DeCicco, pictured with his wife, Marie, with the New York State Senate 2020 Empire Award. The award cited the DeCicco's & Sons store within Armonk Square "for outstanding contributions and dedication to the growth and prosperity and betterment of their community and New York State."

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# Dabbling in a Style of Wine Growing in Popularity



By Nick Antonaccio

A number of consumers don't fit the accepted wine drinker's profile – as if there is such a standard of universality. Their palates, which are comprised of unique nerve endings on the tongue and unique olfactory

senses, may prefer lighter-style wines, but haven't come upon any they care for.

I've seen a rising popularity for sweeter wines in the local area and nationwide. Not the concentrated sweet dessert wines like Sauterne, Port or Sherry, but a more generic, much lighter style, very appealing for quaffing or food pairing. Examples include Italy's Lambrusco (a slightly sweet white Lambrusco was a big hit at a pre-COVID wine tasting I conducted), Rieslings and Moscato.

In fact, there is a general movement among younger consumers to move to sweeter wines, especially Moscato.

Of course, there are influential forces at work here also. Hip-hop artists have embraced Moscato as their drink of choice and that has worked its way into song lyrics, YouTube videos and other social

*'Why Moscato? Very simple: it has three components that satisfy Americans' palates.'*

media postings. It has become über-cool to party with the wine of choice of the rich, famous and notorious. This has created a new wine demographic: the I-don't-particularly-care-for-wine-but-I-love-Moscato consumer.

Moscato sales have continued to grow over the past five to 10 years, although market share is still miniscule. Is it The Next Big Thing in wine? Just ask my friend's wife or my pony-tailed tech

consultant and you'll get a "glass up" from both.

Let's delve into Moscato.

The underlying grape is Muscat (Moscato in Italian). The wine may be still or lightly sparkling (called frizzante in Italy, "spritzzy" in California). It may be slightly sweet (aperitif style) or full-

on sweet (dessert style). It may also be produced as a fortified wine (Beaumes de Venise, from the Rhone Valley in France).

There are a number of hybrids grown and a number of styles produced, including Moscato d'Asti, Moscato Bianco, Muscat Canelli, Moscato Gialli or other hybrids across the winemaking world. The most highly prized are those from Italy (Piedmont's Moscato d'Asti).

Why Moscato? Very simple: it has three components that satisfy Americans' palates. It tends to be semisweet, typically fizzy and low in alcohol (as low as 5 percent). And it tastes great when chilled.

The Moscato d'Asti from Piedmont is considered the standard-bearer. It is typically frizzante, slightly sweet, with a refreshing balance of fruit and acidity.

It has a creamy texture, aromas of ripe fruit and honey and flavors of apples and citrus.

When I'm inclined to quaff a lighter-style aperitif wine or to pair an off-dry wine with a dessert or a ripe cheese, yet am seeking a slightly sparkling style to refresh and clear my plate, one of my go-to Moscato favorites is from the Asti region, Michele Chiarlo Moscato d'Asti Nivole. Its aromas include notes of peach and apricot with a hint of grapefruit. It has very fine carbonation yet imparts a silky texture on the palate. I particularly enjoy the

refreshing finish, which sets up my palate for the next sip or clears my palate for the next taste of a creamy Comte cheese.

Is Moscato for you? There are so many styles of Moscato there is surely one that will please your palate. If you like sparkling wine but find it too

dry, the but try Moscato. If you like dryness of sparkling wine not the intense bubbles, try Moscato. If your physiology can't handle more than one glass of wine without inducing a headache, try the low-alcohol Moscato.

If you like dessert wines but find them cloyingly sweet, try Moscato.

If you're ready for The Next Big Thing in wine, ask your local wine merchant for a Moscato

that suits your palate. For under \$20 you too can be über-cool.

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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# What's in the Skies is Often in the Eye of the Beholder

The other night I was looking up and thinking about the star patterns we see. One of the most interesting things to me is not just the stars, though they're certainly fascinating, but the asterisms they're in.

"That's a dragon. That's a telescope. That's half a bull." But that's not what I mean.

We, people, are incredibly good at finding patterns where none exist. How many times have you seen guests on the "Today" show (I prefer "Live with Kelly and Ryan") with a bunch of potato chips that look like former presidents or The Beatles? There's even a word for seeing patterns where none exist: pareidolia.

So, when we look up, we see stars and decide they're a group, even though it's all just an optical illusion, a trick of perspective. Most of the time, they're unrelated and are just in the same general direction as we see them from here.

If we were in some other neighborhood of the galaxy, the stars of the Orion or Boötes would be arranged completely differently – if we could see them at all. What patterns does someone living in those other, far-away places see? Is the sun – are you and I – in any of their asterisms?

Just as we ring in the new year, the enormous ring of very bright stars called Winter Hexagon, with Orion in the middle, takes over the southern skies. It's a great example of this illusion. Nearly all these stars are close by as

these things go, and we can use them to mark moments in a person's life.

Look south, find Orion, and then draw a line through his famous belt, down toward the horizon. There's Sirius, the brightest star in the entire night sky. It's about eight light years away, so distant that its light has been traveling to your eye for about the lifetime of a third-grader. Bright yellow Capella's light has been traveling for about 45 years, the length of my lifetime. Aldebaran, a retiree's life.

## Clear Skies

Now, Orion's brighter foot, the icy blue-white Rigel is very far away, around 700 light years, a Yoda life. In fact, and this is the part that always gets me, all of Orion's bright stars are much farther than the Winter Hexagon's even though they all appear close together to us. The whole of Orion is behind the Winter Hexagon! It's like looking at a far-off clutch of trees through a window. Alnilam, the middle star in Orion's belt, is



By Scott Levine

among the farthest stars we can see with the naked eye, about 2,000 light years.

Here we are at the intersection of science, which doesn't care what we see, and humanity, which does. Some far, some near, some big, some small. Yet, to us, they're all a group – connected, together. That helps me feel connected to them, to other people and even to the people who spent their nights looking at these patterns and passing them along for thousands of years.

That night I stared at Capella again and again, bright, yellow and welcoming. I wondered what was going on there. Maybe someone there is seeing our sun from so far away and wondering. If you can tonight, maybe have a look, too. Who knows what you'll see?

Happy New Year, everyone.

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



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January 6



New Moon  
January 13



First Quarter  
January 20



Full Moon  
January 28



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# Examiner Sports

## 2020 Top Moments & Leaders of the Pack



By Ray Gallagher  
Examiner Sports  
Editor@Directrays

It was an unconscionable year, a year most of us would rather put in the rear-view mirror and never see again. That said, our local athletes lifted the lid on some of the most legit accomplishments before, during and after the coronavirus pandemic, an outbreak that will forever stain 2020.

Doing a 2020 year in review piece -- minus a cancelled spring season -- is like the Beatles riffing 'The End' without Lennon. It's worth a read but it won't measure up to expectations. Like Steph without Clay, like Kobe with no Shaque, like Spongebob with no Patrick.

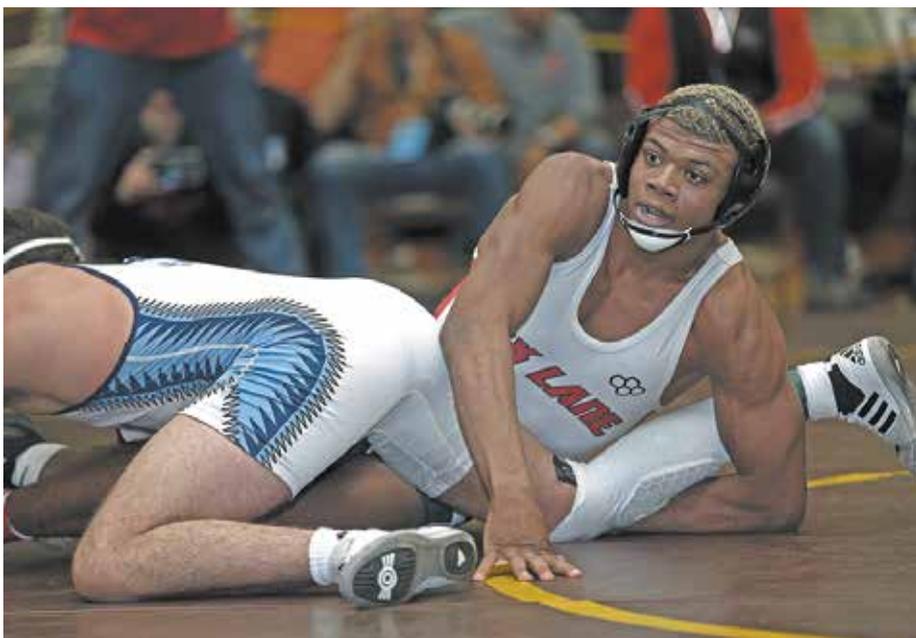
The spring season is when we usually let the cats out of the bag in this neck of the woods; when Yorktown and Lakeland/Panas flex its lacrosse muscle up north; when the Evan Berta and Joey Vetrano-led Lakeland Hornets were poised to three-peat as Class A sectional baseball champions for the first

time ever; when Class AA Mahopac had its sights set on Notre Dame-bound pitcher Shannon Becker delivering the program's first sectional title; when boys' lax Coach Al Meola's Briarcliff Class B Bears were set to punish the wannabe's throughout NYS.

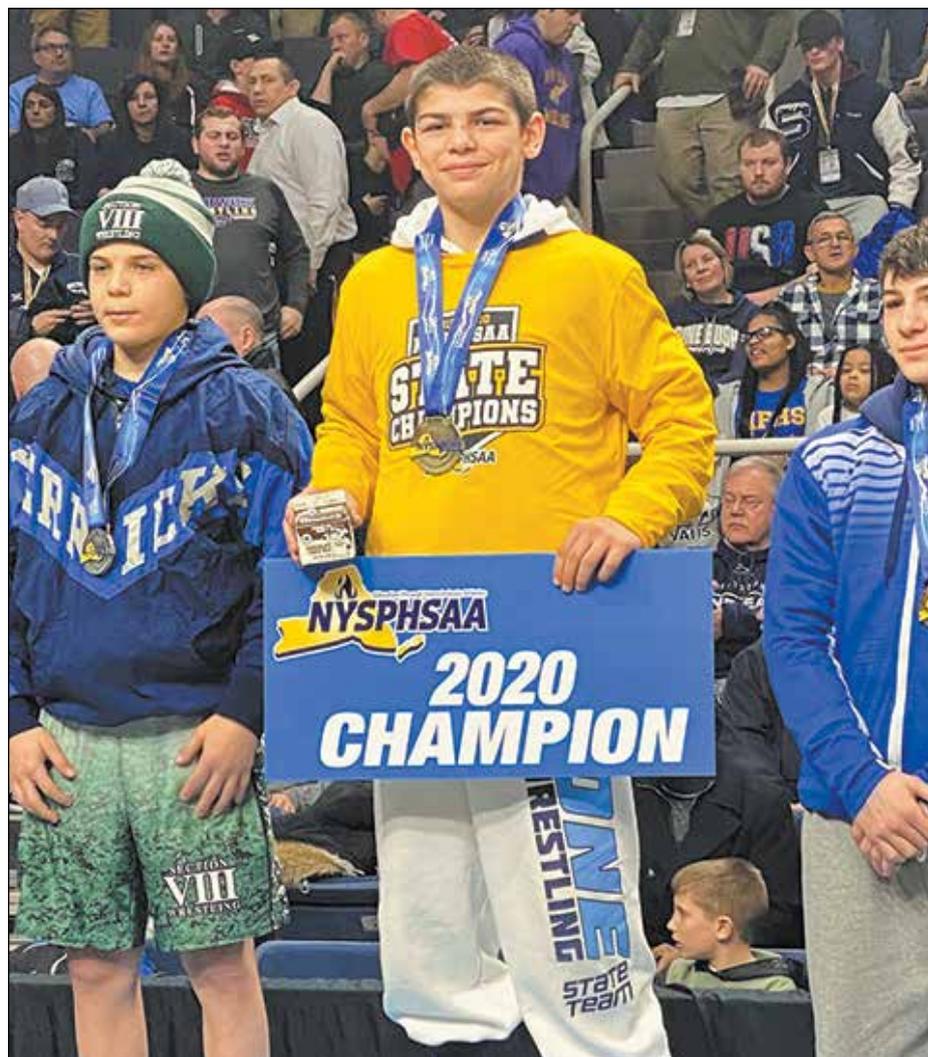
There was so much damage to be done in the spring of 2020 until COVID-19 was unleashed, but through dogged resolve we managed a fall season to accompany a winter campaign that was cut short in early March when our political leaders told us "two weeks to flatten the curve" was all it would take to cover our issues.

We now know that wasn't the case but administrators and athletic directors worked their tails off to ensure a regionalized fall season came to fruition. There were some incredible performances before the pandemic hit home, but perhaps the finest individual performance came from a Carmel kid named P.J. Duke, who, as just a seventh-grader, became New York's youngest large-school division state champion last February. At all of 99 pounds, Duke emerged undefeated and barely scored upon in a rookie season that included a Section 1 championship, a title at

### Direct Rays



Fox Lane's Quincy Downes won the Section 1 170-pound title and placed second in NYS, enhancing the time-honored tradition among Foxes.



RAY GALLAGHER/ANDY JACOBS/ALBERT COQUERAN PHOTOS

Carmel wrestler PJ Duke gave the No.1 performance of 2020 by becoming the first 7th-grader to win a state title.

the prestigious Eastern States Classic and a state crown. It was unlike anything we'd ever seen before because it actually had never happened. We'll just go ahead and label this the individual performance of the year, if not the decade: a 49-0 record without allowing a single point scored against him in the Section 1 and NYSPHSAA tournaments.

Duke's rookie season at Carmel, the finest in school history, will be his last, though, as he transferred to Section 9's Minisink Valley to continue his career.

Fox Lane's Quincy Downes, as mean and lean as they came, took second in the

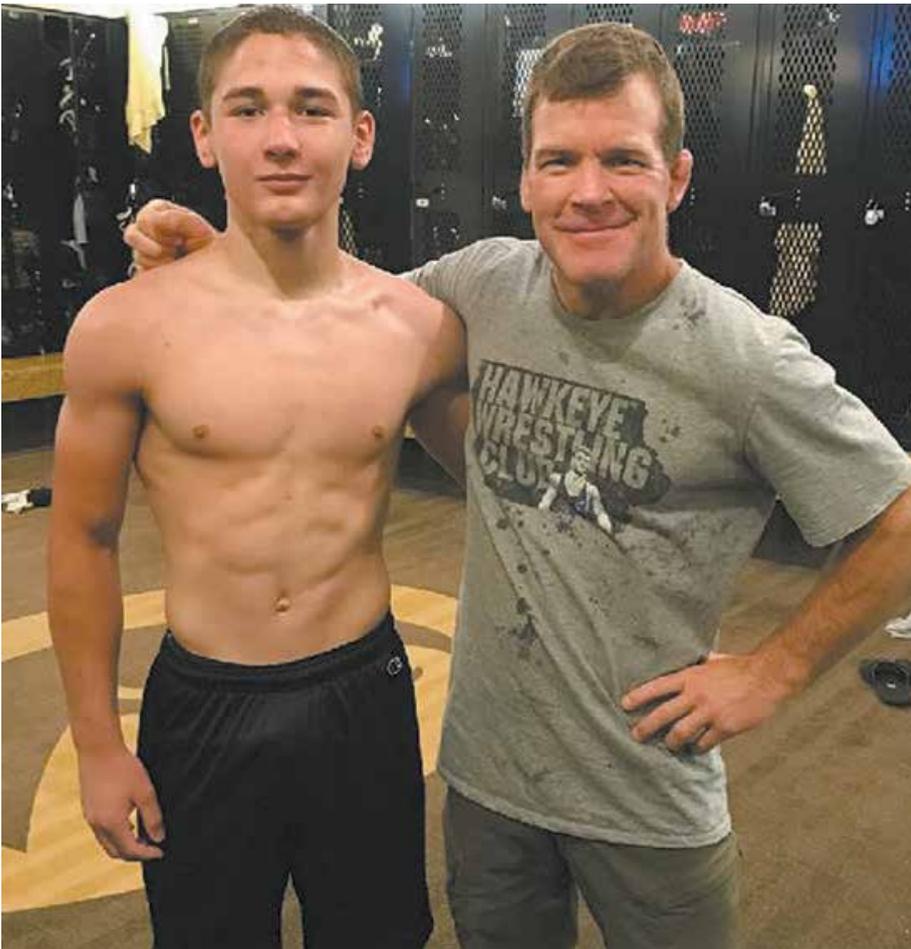
170-pound final of the NYS Division I (large school) Wrestling Championships. The Fox Lane senior was unable to master John Jay-East Fishkill's Tyler Albis, who he had defeated in the sectional finals. Nonetheless, Downes led the Foxes to their third consecutive Section 1 team title during one of the finest careers in Fox Lane history. Fox Lane had seven finalists and 10 top six place-finishers. Since New York adopted the large school, small-school format for the 2003-04 season, Fox Lane won a Section 1-leading

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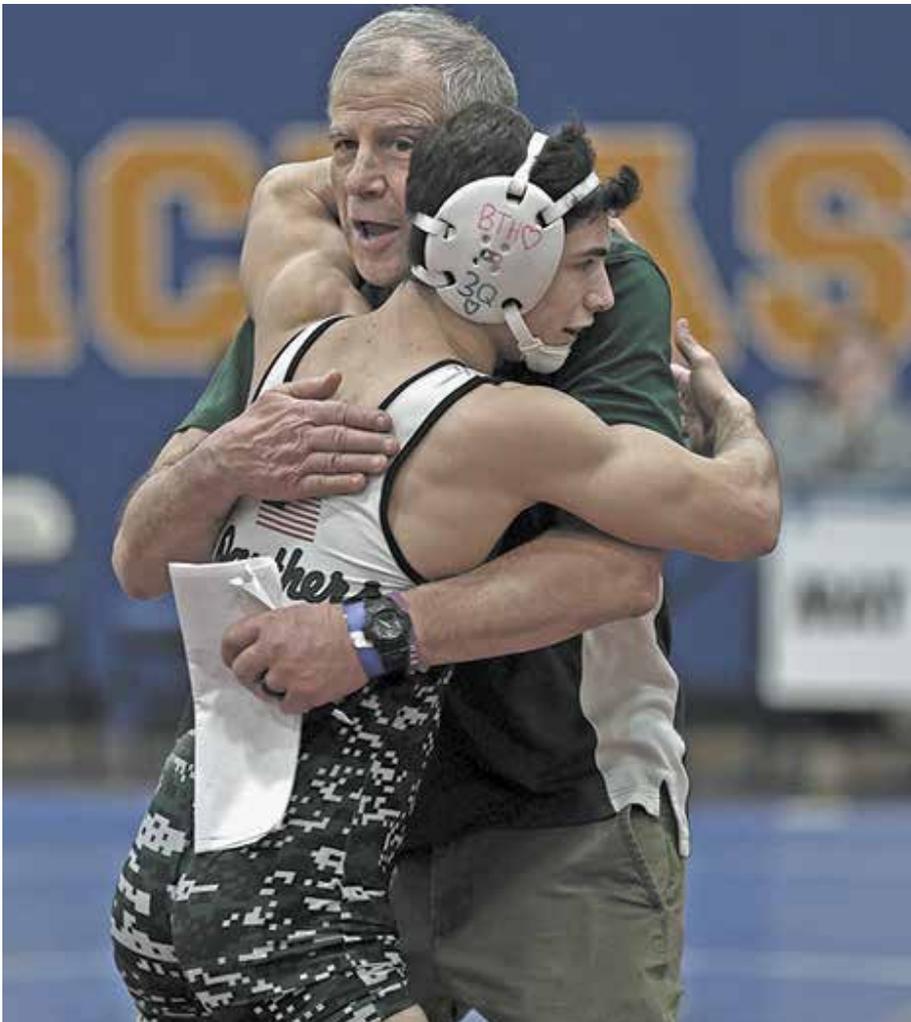
# Sports

# 2020 Top Moments

continued from previous page



Iowa-bound Putnam Valley wrestler Will Carano will be mentored by legendary Coach Terry Brands upon completion of one of the most prolific careers in PV grappling history.



Pleasantville's Len Balducci and coach Bob Bernarducci share hug after his grappler four-peated as section champ.



Horace Greeley players celebrate after winning the Section One championship on Sunday by defeating Mt. Vernon at the Westchester County Center.

eighth team title. The first five were under former Coach Joe Amuso, perhaps the best coach in Section 1 history, while the last three were under Anthony Rodrigues, a former Amuso disciple. Yeah, Fox Lane knows how to wrestle. When you have a ton of club wrestlers in your grappling room and a head coach that knows how to utilize the year-round club guys, your program thrives.

Plus, a winning tradition is a contagious mentality; such is Fox Lane.

In the small school division, Pleasantville had a tournament-best six wrestlers reach the finals, with three wrestlers claiming titles, including Christian Perleshi (99 pounds), Aidan Canfield (152) and four-time champion Len Balducci (120), an absolute

*continued on next page*



Stepinac's R.J. Davis finished with double-double 18 points, 11 boards and 8 assists in NYCHSAA AA championship win over Mount St. Michael.

# Sports

continued from previous page

# 2020 Top Moments



Valhalla G Sebastian Pacheco had 18 points, eight rebounds, four assists and five steals in Section 1 Class B final loss to Hastings.



Putnam Valley Coach Kristi Dini (R) guided Eva DeChent (L), Kelli Venezia and Tigers to 1st gold ball ever before COVID-19 ended season.



Westlake's Joe Ragusa and teammates took Wildcats to County Center Final 4 for 1st time since 1978.



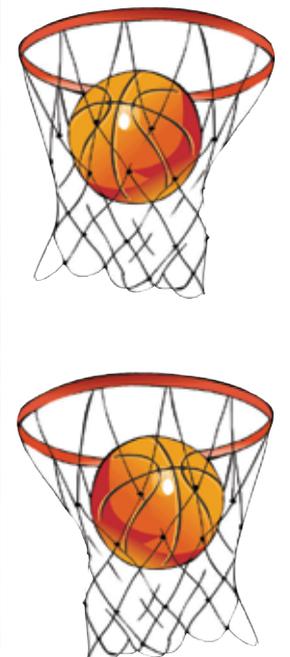
Putnam Valley senior G Kelli Venezia and then-freshman G Eva DeChent kissed first gold ball in school history.



Caitlin Weimar-led Hen Hud Sailors celebrated first Section 1 girls' hoops title in history.



There's nothing quite like a tip-off at Westchester County Center Final for Section 1 student athletes and their fans.



# Sports

continued from previous page



A near-empty Putnam Valley gymnasium hosted the final game of Section 1 hoops season when fear & reality of COVID-19 hit in mid-March.



ROB DIANTONIO PHOTO

Byram Hills had much to celebrate on the pitch this fall after winning regional title.



Haldane girls' hoops won its seventh-straight gold ball last March at County Center.



White Plains reached the Southern Westchester large school regional title before being eliminated by Mamaroneck.

# 2020 Top Moments

first five-time All-Section wrestler in school history and three-time All-NYS qualifier. If we don't wrestle in 2021, Iowa, yes, legendary Iowa, awaits this humble yet bruising beast, who runs a 4.16 mile.

While Duke's effort was the top individual performance of the year, Horace Greeley boys' hoops got the nod for top overall T-E-A-M effort after first-year Greeley Coach Matt Simone's Quakers secured a 46-35 Section 1 Class AA championship victory over perennial power Mount Vernon to hoist the coveted gold ball at the Mecca, the Westchester County Center, for the first time in 40 years. It was anything but easy, though, as a 17-point fourth-quarter lead was cut to eight with the Quakers pushed to brinkmanship. Horace Greeley, in need of an adrenaline shot, got what the doctor ordered when, out of the left corner, just beyond the 3-point arc, senior guard Christoph Sauerborn answered the call. Although then-sophomore C Nick Townsend was a deserving MVP, it was Sauerborn who allowed the Quakers to create the necessary separation when his fifth three-pointer of the day, with 3:42 on the clock, all but ended the Knights' fourth-quarter comeback. Sauerborn finished with a game-high 20 points, while Townsend added 17 to go along with 13 rebounds as the Quakers earned a berth in the state tournament's opening round against Section 9 champ Newburgh where Chris Melis' buzzer-beater gave Horace Greeley a 50-48 win in the state NYS Class AA regional round just before COVID-19 ended the season, perhaps the finest season in Greeley history. Townsend went on to transfer to the Hotchkiss School, a prep school in Connecticut, for his junior season, effectively ending what might have become the finest career in Greeley history.

The Hen Hud girls were crowned Section 1 Class A champions for the first time ever after a thrilling 46-45 victory over Harrison, doing so behind senior Caitlin Weimar, who has gone on to win three MAAC Rookie of the Week honors at Marist College. Harrison held a 45-43 advantage with just 19.7 seconds left, but on the ensuing possession

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beast who became just the 18th wrestler since 1961 to four-peat in Section 1.

P'Ville, with a tournament-best 258 points, finally steered clear of the agony of back-to-back second place finishes in 2018-19. Edgemont (222.5), Nanuet (215.5), Putnam Valley (194.5) and Pawling (129.5) followed.

Putnam Valley's Will Carano earned the Most Outstanding Wrestler award in the small school division. The Tiger junior, who dominated as the top-seed of the 160-pound bracket with two quick pins, won a second Section 1 title and further cemented his legacy as a top grappler in school history. Carano, if not for COVID-19, would have set the school records for wins set by Mikey Bruno and Kyle Sams while becoming the

# Sports

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Greely field hockey players locked down a second-straight sectional title with a large school Putnam-Northern Westchester crown.

Weimer passed out of a double team to find Mylene Smith on the baseline. Smith then sank the biggest bucket in Hen Hud hoops history (boys and/or girls), a game-tying bucket and-one, converting on a go-ahead free throw that put the Sailors up for good. However, instead of competing in the state playoffs for the first time ever, hearts were broken when COVID-19 forced the cancellation of the NYSPHSAA tournament. History, though, will show Coach Ken Sherman's 2020 Sailors as the best in program history.

Similarly, the 2020 Putnam Valley girls snagged the first gold ball in program history under Coach Kristi Dini when a gutsy defensive effort and the biggest shot in program history from then-junior F Arianna Stockinger in the waning moments produced a dramatic 52-49 Section 1 Class B title victory over Irvington, the premier girls' hoops program in all of Section 1. PV went on to play a fanless game in the NYS tournament, which turned out to be the final game of the season, a 66-49 thumping of Section 9's Marlboro, who got tuned up

by then-Tiger freshman Eva DeChent. The D-I prospect put on an historic show in a near empty gymnasium, dropping 39 points, snagging 12 rebounds and grabbing four steals in a state Class B regional semifinal.

Valhalla's Class B boys' hoops championship bid nearly came to fruition when Viking Sebastian Pacheco tied the game on a three-point, fourth-quarter play. However, his heroics left Hastings with one final shot, which it hit. Valhalla (19-5) couldn't get a shot off on the final possession, the top-seeded Yellow Jackets escaped with a 56-54 victory at the County Center to give Hastings its first Section 1 title since 1999. Pacheco had 18 points, eight rebounds, four assists and five steals in the losing effort.

Westlake was alive and well for Section 1's Championship Week after the Wildcats earned a berth to the County Center after a stirring 49-47 Class B quarterfinal over rival Pleasantville to secure the program's first Final 4 appearance since 1978. Carter Falkenberg, who led the team in scoring at 18.7 PPG and 7.6 rebounds, gave it his all

but Hastings withstood a late charge from Westlake to earn a berth in the Section 1 final after a 57-52 semifinal win.

Stepinac's RJ Davis led the Crusaders to the NYCHSAA AA Archdiocesan Championship in a 73-68 over St. Raymond's at Mount St. Michael during a year when the Stepinac senior became Westchester's all-time scoring leader when he passed Danya Abrams, who set the previous standard in 1993.

Along with Duke-bound teammate A.J. Griffin, a consensus top-10 wing in the country, the Crusaders were poised to do damage on a major scale. Davis, who averaged 26.5 points, 8 rebounds and 5.3 assists, and Griffin, couldn't finish their senior year or the Crusaders' postseason due to the outbreak of COVID-19, but both are setting the collegiate hoops world on fire.

Davis, the first McDonald's All-American from Stepinac, finished his storied career with 2,466 points, the fifth-most CHSAA history, just 175 behind record-holder Kenny Anderson.

The fall season had many interruptions

and was divided into six regional playoff brackets to keep travel to a minimum during the throes of the second COVID-19 wave. Players and coaches were thrilled to take the field in low-risk sports, despite the fact fans were granted limited access to home games and none as visitors. The fall football season was cancelled and coaches are beginning a strong push to play this spring.

Coach Matt Allen's Byram Hills soccer club continued its sectional mastery despite a 14-day quarantine. The Bobcats came back hungry and won the Putnam-Northern Westchester small school regional title, the seventh crowning in Allen's 20 years on the sideline. White Plains and Carmel both placed second in their respective large school regional divisions; Carmel doing so in historic fashion having gone undefeated through the Rams' first 10 games.

As they have done over much of her history, Lakeland field hockey Coach Sharon Sarsen's Hornets hoisted yet another championship plaque after Lakeland blew through the Putnam-Northern Westchester small school regional behind the play off four All-NYS players, including seniors M Keirra Etere (33G, 10A, 76P, a lethal finisher), F Emma Fon (19G, 10A, 48P), D Emily McGovern and versatile junior M Mia Smith (10G, 11A, 31P). Lakeland's amazing string of 211 consecutive wins over Section 1 foes ended in a two-goal loss to Class A heavyweight Mamaroneck.

Horace Greeley did likewise, winning the large school regional crown, edging Carmel for the title behind four more All-NYS players, including Colgate-bound senior M Lily Schoonmaker (31G, 6A, 68P, 6 hat tricks), senior M Natalie Laskowski (12G, 11A, 35P), senior Caroline Flannery (7G, 11A, 25P) and senior D Emma Terjesen, who led, perhaps, Greeley's finest three-year run under Coach Suki Sandhu.

We're certain to have skipped a few beats in this parade through 2020, but hats off to all of our student athletes and coaches who have endured trying emotional times and a lack of physical activity that has led to depression in some cases. Our genuine respect for y'all is through the roof.

Happy New Year, everyone... it can only get better from here.



Lakeland kept its strong field hockey tradition afloat with a Putnam-Northern Westchester small school regional title win.

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