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SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

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## Impending Marijuana Sales, Consumption Decision in WP Debated

By Bailey Hosfelt

Are marijuana dispensaries and on-site consumption lounges coming to White Plains? The White Plains Council of Neighborhood Associations (WPCNA) discussed this topic at length during its Oct. 12 meeting.

To date, White Plains Mayor Tom Roach and the Common Council have not taken a public position, nor have they invited members of the public to express their views on the issue. Should the city choose to opt-in, they do not need to take a formal vote, as

opt-in happens by default. If a municipality chooses to opt out, they must do so ahead of the Dec. 31 deadline.

Councilman Justin Brasch was in attendance at the meeting, as well as two candidates vying for a seat on the Common Council in the upcoming election: Allan Grafman (R, Common Sense) and Rich Payne (D).

"We're here to express opinions so that our elected officials can hear what the people in this room have to say but also to inform us," said Mike Sanchez, President of the Rosedale Residential Association. "I think

that everyone here, whether you agree with [dispensaries] or not, wants the city to hold public forums so that they can hear what the residents have to say."

Harrison residents Carla and Michael Bowers, who own The Green Room WP, a CBD store on Mamaroneck Avenue, fielded many questions from attendees at the meeting on the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act, New York State's cannabis law approved by former Gov. Andrew Cuomo and state lawmakers last spring.

"The Office of Cannabis Management just met for the first time last week," Carla Bowers said. "We don't know what [the regulations] will entail yet, but the members of the [Cannabis Control] Board have finally been named and the regulations will be forthcoming."

While language in the law has legalized possession of three ounces of cannabis for people over 21, the regulations for localities, the licensing process and social equity provisions are still being laid out.

"You are allowed to smoke marijuana in White Plains and throughout the state anywhere you smoke a cigarette," said AnneMarie Encarnacao, President of the Highlands Civic Association. "So thinking about opting out is not stopping that."



Councilman Justin Brasch

Michael Bowers said that opting in would generate more revenue for all White Plains businesses.

"Yonkers and New Rochelle are going to opt-in and they're big cities, so why wouldn't White Plains?" Bowers said.

*continued on page 2*

## Open for Kiddies in White Plains



Kiddie Academy White Plains recently opened its newest educational facility at 222 Bloomingdale Road in White Plains. Kiddie Academy is a national organization with over 280 franchise locations across the country. Franchise owners Leah Tomberlin and Ricardo McDonald transformed traditional office space into a unique educational and learning environment with the help of the building owner Celestial Group, the architect Cardarelli Design Group, and the construction firm Scully Construction. Kiddie Academy White Plains offers educational and learning programs for infants, toddlers, and pre-school children. The new facility is outfitted with specialized learning environments, bathrooms designed for young children, a kitchen area for freshly prepared hot meals, as well as an outdoor playground and changes to the parking lot to facilitate safe drop-off and pick-up throughout the day.

## WP Mother Pleads Guilty to Trying to Drown Her Child

By Rick Pezzullo

A White Plains woman who tried to drown her infant child at the Coachman Family Center in White Plains, where she was a resident, shortly after making verbal and online threats. Ward was stopped by another resident who forced her out of the bathroom, allowing the child to come up for air.

According to Westchester County District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah, La'Quanaya Ward, 30, pled guilty on October 14, 2021, to Attempted Murder in the Second Degree, a felony. She faces a range from a minimum of five years to a maximum of 25 years in a state prison when she is scheduled to be sentenced on January 20, 2022.

On December 3, 2019, Rocah said Ward

attempted to drown her two-year-old child in her bathtub at the Coachman Family Center in White Plains, where she was a resident, shortly after making verbal and online threats. Ward was stopped by another resident who forced her out of the bathroom, allowing the child to come up for air.

The Westchester County Department of Public Safety investigated the incident and arrested Ward on December 11, 2019.

The case is before Judge Barry Warhit in Westchester County Court and is being prosecuted by Child and Elder Abuse Bureau Senior Investigative Counsel Mary Clark-DiRusso.

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# Westchester Distributes 10,000 Masks to Child Care Council

By Rick Pezzullo

Westchester County has partnered with the Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc., to ensure the most vulnerable population in the county remain protected against COVID-19.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer visited the Family Services of Westchester Head Start Program at the Rochambeau School in White Plains last week to deliver some of the 10,000 masks provided to the Child Care Council.

"We know child care is a priority and of top importance to the community," Latimer said. "Our youngest population is our next generation and although they are not yet eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, we can continue to do our best to keep them safe and protected. Our child care programs went above and beyond during the pandemic to care for the children of our essential workers and we thank them for all they continue to do."

The county has procured more than

200,000 child-sized masks for children up to 12 years old. The Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc., received 10,000 child-sized masks which will be distributed to programs all over the county.

Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc., Executive Director Kathy Halas said: "While this time of COVID has been so very difficult, Westchester County has supported the child care sector not only with this key donation but also by the Department of Social Services' use of state and federal dollars to mitigate some of the financial losses caused by COVID," said Kathy Halas, Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Westchester. "We are deeply appreciative."

Director of Programs and Policies, Childcare and Education Roseanne Finizio added, "Although the last 18 months have been difficult and challenging, children are resilient. We want to help them go to school and go to school safely. These masks are another layer of caring for our children and keeping our youngest residents safe and healthy."



Westchester County Executive George Latimer (right) visited the Westchester Head Start Program at the Rochambeau School in White Plains.

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## Impending Marijuana Sales, Consumption Decision in WP Debated

*continued from page 1*

Bob Friscia, President of the North Street Association, posed a question on whether cannabis use is a gateway drug, leading people to use higher-level drugs.

"I'm not an expert on this, but it's my understanding that marijuana is not a gateway to worse or stronger drug abuse," Brasch said. "That's what the studies that I have seen said."

Although studies of large populations of people have found that those who use marijuana are more likely to use other drugs, these studies show correlation without causation. While marijuana use may correlate with harder drug use, alcohol and tobacco use, as well as underlying socioeconomic factors, can too.

"I've seen a lot of hardworking therapists work with folks that have problems with substance abuse, and that's a reality," said Payne, who works at St. Vincent's Hospital. "So, I'm cautious, but I think it's important for the citizens of White Plains to be heard."

Marie Silverman Marich of the Gedney Association questioned the Bowers' motive for their support of having dispensaries and on-site consumption lounges within city limits.

"These people are here as business owners to make money," Silverman Marich said. "But some of us have a vested interest in this actual community, some of us actually grew up here, some of us are generational."

Silverman Marich also expressed concerns that marijuana that is being made now is much stronger than it was in the 1970s and may be laced with other materials.

"The strength and the toxicity that you're afraid of are not unfounded," Carla Bowers

said. "However, the illicit black market, that's what you should be afraid of."

Bowers said having legal dispensaries in the community will allow residents to purchase products that will be highly regulated and grown within the state instead of those sold on the street illegally.

"We're taking the people that have been incarcerated out of jail for these offenses, and that's all part of the social equity and the social outreach that you have to keep in mind," Bowers said. "It's not all about making money, and I take offense to that."

When asked whether the Common Council has discussed this issue, Brasch said he has had consultations with council members and the mayor. But at this time, he does not know whether a public forum will be held.

Grafman said White Plains residents are struggling to figure out how they're going to be heard.

"I am for moving upstream on these types of issues, and when you move upstream, you get input and you don't deal with the symptom, you deal with the issue," Grafman said. "And the issue is what do the residents of White Plains want? At this stage, no one can speak to that issue."

Carry Kyzival of the North Broadway Citizens' Association encouraged the Council to hold a public hearing and be transparent with the community.

"It is the role of the elected officials of our administration is to inform the public what is going on so that the public can express their opinion," Kyzival said. "At this point, nobody knows anything, and that's not democracy."

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# School COVID Testing Program Yields Few Cases in Westchester

By Martin Wilbur

The first month of weekly COVID-19 testing of students, teachers and staff in Westchester's schools designed to avoid shutdowns have yielded a miniscule fraction of positive cases.

County Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler and First Deputy Commissioner Renee Recchia reported that there were 22 positive cases from the first 22,000 tests administered. The program started the week of Sept. 20.

"So by doing surveillance screenings, we may be able to identify people who are asymptomatic positive individuals who would be able to spread this disease, find them, isolate them, get them out of the classroom, and by doing that, prevent spread so we don't have large, disruptive quarantines that occur in schools," Amler said.

Last school year, some districts were forced to shutter their buildings once the fall and winter COVID spike struck, leading some angry parents arguing that their children were falling behind because online learning was inferior.

Under the testing program, participating schools initially tested their entire student body and staff during the first week, then may test up to 20 percent of their population each ensuing week. Teachers who are unvaccinated are mandated to be tested weekly, but not students who are old enough to receive vaccines.

Only two or three districts opted out of the program, but they are getting their testing completed through other means, Recchia said.

What has been helpful is that two of the three outfits that are conducting the tests use the PCR saliva test where an individual spits into a vial. The third testing company swabs the inside of a person's cheek, Amler explained. Participation might have been lower had the test required the nasal swab.

"(Parents) have concerns about putting their children through that, and so the good news is that's not done," Amler said.

County Executive George Latimer said the testing program is key to keeping schools open this year to the greatest extent possible.

"We know that children don't perform as well with remote learning or hybrid learning," Latimer said. "In-class learning is the best possible way to do this, so we're committed to do that but we're committed to do it in a way that's intelligent and pragmatic."

The testing program is being paid for by \$15 million in federal funding, Recchia said. It was estimated that if there was maximum weekly participation, the funding for the tests would be used up by the end of the calendar year, she said. However, it appears the districts will be able to get through nearly the entire school year.

## COVID Case Decline Continues

The trend in the steady reduction in Westchester COVID-19 cases have continued over the past couple of weeks as the county has reached a 90 percent vaccination level during the past week, Latimer said.

As of Sunday, there were about 1,350 active cases, now just under half the number

of the late August peak and more than 300 less than two weeks earlier.

Another highly encouraging sign is that there have been no COVID-19-related deaths in Westchester for 12 consecutive days as of Sunday.

"If we can continue to go without a COVID death in Westchester County, then I would consider that the best of all possible outcomes, whatever the statistics are," Latimer said.

The county has seen 2,338 fatalities related to the virus since the start of the pandemic.

There have been nearly 750,000 adults 18 years old and up who have received at least one vaccine does and almost 670,000

people are fully vaccinated.

Westchester joins Manhattan and Nassau County as the only counties in the state to reach 90 percent, Latimer said. The three counties had been the first to reach 80 percent vaccination status in the state several months ago.

Declines in COVID-19 cases are evident in most areas of the state. New York City had a 1.1 percent positivity rate while the seven-county Mid Hudson region stood at 2.4 percent on Sunday, according to the state's COVID tracker. Long Island had the second lowest rate on Sunday at 2.2

percent.

The positivity rate statewide was 2 percent on Saturday but ticked back up to 2.6 percent on Sunday.

By individual counties, Westchester declined to 0.9 percent on Sunday. Only Manhattan had a lower rate on Sunday at 0.7 percent, although the sparsely populated Hamilton County had no positive cases from 15 test results. The Bronx also stood at 0.9 percent.

All other counties in the Mid Hudson region had at least a 2.7 percent positivity rate on Sunday, with Putnam at 3.5 percent.



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# Affordable Housing, Recreation Among Priorities in 2022 Capital Plan

By Martin Wilbur

Westchester County Executive George Latimer proposed a \$476.4 million capital projects budget for 2022 last Thursday, with commitments to develop more affordable housing, tackle climate change locally and invest in the parks system.

Latimer, joined by various department heads, has also planned a \$28 million commitment to improve potable and fire water suppression systems at Westchester County Airport.

"The capital budget is really a statement of strategic investments," Latimer said. "This is as much about our future as our present."

Of the more than \$476 million in projects, nearly \$292 million will be for general county purposes, \$152.4 million for sewer and water projects and \$4.1 million toward refuse in addition to the planned expense at the airport.

The county will make the largest investment in affordable housing in its history, Latimer said, with a \$50 million commitment for land acquisition and infrastructure improvements in 2022. The effort will help attract and keep a diversified workforce in Westchester.

Planning Commissioner Norma Drummond said Westchester recognizes its need to provide incentives for the construction of housing for people of all income levels. The \$50 million far exceeds anything the county has proposed in the past. During the last two years, the county

made investments of \$10 million toward land acquisition and infrastructure.

"We've got developers lined up, we've got developers ready to use the funds, so we're really looking forward to having the ability to provide these funds in the future," Drummond said.

Several years ago, there had been a report that the county needed about 11,000 additional units of affordable housing to meet the current demand. Latimer estimated that between what has opened this year and other plans in the works accounts for roughly 2,500 units.

Environmental conservation is also high on the list of priorities for the county next year. Proposed is a \$31.9 million appropriation for the purchase of electric hybrid buses for the Bee-Line bus fleet, \$4.3 million to electrify Westchester's two bus garages and \$1 million for the installation of electric charging stations at county facilities.

In addition, another \$1.1 million has been proposed for improvements at Hilltop Hanover Environmental Center in Yorktown.

Nearly \$50 million would be appropriated for parks improvements, most of it for structural upgrades to Playland Ice Casino and the neighboring amusement park. The investment is being made as Standard Amusements is set to take over operation of Playland before the end of the year.

There will also be \$4 million for significant upgrades for the County Center in White Plains, the first time in nearly 40 years major improvements is planned for that facility.

Parks Commissioner Kathy O'Connor said she and her staff are excited at the county's pledge to maintain its recreational facilities.

"For many, many years, they've been neglected, so we're playing catch up, but this capital budget for 2022 will really get us off the ground," she said.

Another \$60 million is being invested into the wastewater recovery facilities in Mamaroneck and Yonkers, Latimer said.

Over the past four years, the administration has reduced the backlog of capital project by about \$400 million, from just over \$1.7 billion to a little more than \$1.3 billion, said Larry Soule, the county's budget director. Westchester has been able to achieve that while upgrading its standing with the ratings agencies.

Soule said Fitch recently removed its negative outlook for Westchester with a current AA+ rating with a stable outlook. That's the same rating that S&P has given the county while Moody's reported a AA1 rating, a notch below the coveted AAA. Improved credit ratings lower the county's borrowing cost for capital projects, he said.

Last week's unveiling of the capital budget comes about a month before Latimer will release the main portion of Westchester's spending plan. Latimer said he expects a modest property tax reduction for the third consecutive year when it will be introduced on or about Nov. 10.

During the press conference, Latimer handed the capital projects plan to Board of Legislators Chairman Ben Boykin (D-White



County Executive George Latimer addresses his priorities for next year's Westchester capital projects budget.

Plains). Boykin said the investments in critical infrastructure and other assets attracts families to the county.

The Board of Legislators must approve the capital budget and the operating budget by late December.



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# Excluded Workers Call on Hochul to Expand Funds as \$2.1B Runs Dry

By Bailey Hosfelt

Westchester elected officials, community members and undocumented workers held a rally in front of the Martin Luther King Jr. statue in White Plains on Oct. 12 to call on Gov. Kathy Hochul and state lawmakers to expand the Excluded Workers Fund (EWF)'s cash flow.

The \$2.1 billion fund, which was approved by the state in the spring, provides undocumented New York residents who were not eligible for and did not receive COVID-19 economic relief from the state or federal government the ability to recoup lost income.

On Oct. 8, Hochul announced that the funds were nearly exhausted. That same day, the Department of Labor closed the fund to new applicants.

According to the Department of Labor website, applications already submitted will be processed in the order they were received. However, for claims submitted after Sept. 24, there is no guarantee funds will be available.

"Given the demand, given the success of this program, it is clear that \$2.1 billion will not be enough," said Janet Fry, deputy executive director of the Mamaroneck-based Community Resource Center. "We knew about this before the state budget passed, and we are sure of it right now."

"Gov. Hochul, please hear the voices of this community full of workers who need those funds now for their survival," Fry

added.

Roberto Zumba, the worker center coordinator at Neighbors Link in Mount Kisco, said all people should have an opportunity for financial recovery.

"Thousands of people were excluded despite paying into the social safety net," Zumba said. "The social safety net needs to include me and all my neighbors."

Many excluded workers who participated in a 23-day hunger strike last spring to advocate for the funds spoke about how crucial it was for their survival, calling on Hochul to expand funding so more workers' lives could be helped.

Fry said funds were used by many to pay debt accrued during the pandemic, purchase laptops for children to attend virtual classes, help workers remove themselves from unsafe working conditions and allow survivors of domestic violence to move away from their abuser and rebuild.

"It wasn't easy to get the first \$2.1 billion, but we heard today that it saved people's lives," state Sen. Shelly Mayer (D-Yonkers) said. "And we have more people's lives to save."

In Westchester, Mayer said 2,738 people who applied have already received their funds. However, 13,357 eligible Westchester residents applied before the applications were shut off, and many are now waiting in limbo to see if the Department of Labor will process their claims.

State Sen. Jessica Ramos (D-Queens), chair of the Committee on Labor, sent a



BAILEY HOSFELT PHOTO

Undocumented workers rally in White Plains with the support of advocates and some elected officials to try to add more state money to the Excluded Workers Fund. Thousands were shut out of the funding.

letter to Hochul encouraging her to increase the amount of money in the fund, which Mayer and 13 other state lawmakers signed onto.

"New York led the nation this past spring when we established the most robust excluded workers fund in the country," said Amy Rivera, bilingual community liaison for

Assemblyman Chris Burdick (D-Bedford). "We can be proud of that, but it's not enough."

"While 80 percent of the beneficiaries (of the EWF) are New York City residents, the unmet need is great in the entire state, including here in Westchester County,"

*continued on page 6*

## "HER TREATMENTS ARE LIFE CHANGING"

Finally! A local acupuncturist is helping cancer survivors live lives free from the constant pain and suffering associated with **Peripheral Neuropathy!**

Albert S. of Westchester, NY survived testicular cancer only to be living life in constant pain. He felt as though he were walking on pins and needles, becoming weaker and weaker every day. "I was beginning to be worried that one day I would be wheelchair-bound."

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# Board of Legislators Approve Declaration of Climate Emergency

The Westchester County Board of Legislators unanimously passed a declaration of climate emergency on Monday, urging state and local governments to follow suit.

The resolution cites the catastrophic global and local impacts of climate change, including devastating flooding from extreme weather, as well as many of the recent steps that county government has taken to reduce the county's carbon footprint. Those steps include replacing fossil fuel buses and fleet vehicles with hybrid

and electric vehicles, supporting food scrap recycling and installation of electric vehicle charging stations, among other initiatives.

It pledges to issue a revised Westchester Climate Action Plan with new recommended action steps and an effort to support local, state and national governments address the emergency.

"I would like to thank all legislators who have long been a staunch advocate for county action on climate change," said Board

Chairman Ben Boykin (D-White Plains). "I'd also like to thank County Executive George Latimer for sponsoring this resolution and for his leadership in pushing for a cleaner and greener Westchester County. We have much work to do, but with this resolution we're saying to the world that Westchester County is serious about climate action."

Last week, in his \$476 million proposed capital budget for 2022, Latimer included \$31.9 million for the purchase of electric hybrid buses for the Bee-Line bus fleet, \$4.3 million to electrify Westchester's two bus garages and \$1 million for the installation of electric charging stations at county facilities.

Majority Leader MaryJane Shimsky (D-Dobbs Ferry) said the debate should not be about economic growth versus climate change.

"With this resolution, we are putting to rest any debate in Westchester over those false choices, she said. The extreme impacts of storms and flooding and the health effects of air and water pollution that we are living with today illustrate clearly that future economic growth and the future health and well-being of Westchester require our action on the climate crisis now."

To read the full text of the resolution, visit <https://bit.ly/3vq41Cn>

## Excluded Workers Call on Hochul to Expand Funds as \$2.1B Runs Dry

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Rivera added. "We cannot turn our backs on that need."

Board of Legislators Majority Leader MaryJane Shimsky (D-Dobbs Ferry), said that so many essential workers put their own and their family's lives on the line when COVID-19 hit.

"This helps everyone, and I hope that the state legislature and the governor will find a way to put more funds into this vital and badly needed program," Shimsky said.

County Legislator Nancy Barr (D-Rye Brook) commended how far the EWF initially went but echoed other speakers' sentiments that the \$2.1 billion was insufficient.

"There's a lot of other people who earned this money, and they deserve to have it," Barr said.

Manuel Ospina, a construction laborer and member of Don Bosco Workers in Port

Chester, said that during the beginning of the pandemic, he was unable to find any work.

"During those times, it became really hard to make even \$200," Ospina said. "And of course, I got late with the rent and everything."

The fund, Ospina said, will help him get back on his feet, especially after Hurricane Ida. The basement where Ospina lived took on eight feet of water.

"I'm basically homeless," Ospina said, sharing that currently he's staying in his friend's living room.

Expanding the EWF is essential to help workers like him make a long-term recovery, he said.

"We live from our paycheck," Ospina said. "What are people going to do without any kind of assistance? Just because they're undocumented doesn't mean they cannot be helped."

## Learning Center, Sweet Shop to Move Into Downtown Chappaqua

Two new businesses have reached an agreement to operate out of space on Chappaqua's South Greeley Avenue in the near future.

Admiral Real Estate Services Corp. announced Monday that Mathnasium, a math learning center, will be joined by Frannie's Goodie Shop and Longford's Ice Cream, which will partner to rent out another space at 75 S. Greeley Ave. in the hamlet.

When they move in, that will leave three remaining vacant spaces at the same address that had also been the site of the former ICD Contemporary Jewelry.

Mathnasium, which was established nearly 20 years ago, helps students by addressing the disconnect between their

learning skills and the curriculum they are taught in school.

The new Frannie's Goodie Shop/Longford's Ice Cream store brings a much-anticipated ice cream and sweet shop to the downtown. Frannie's also has a location in Mount Kisco.

Both businesses will have street parking in the front and a municipal parking lot in the rear of the property.

No target dates were given for when the two spaces will be filled.

Joan Simon of Admiral Real Estate Services Corp. represented the landlord, Developers Consolidated Realty, LLC. Mathnasium was represented by Garrett Aries of ESR Commercial.



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# New York Medical College Receives \$250G for Disaster Preparedness

Assemblyman Tom Abinanti (D-Pleasantville) joined with New York Medical College leadership in Valhalla last week to announce a \$250,000 grant for the Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters within the Center for Disaster Medicine.

The funding will support the center's training of local health care professionals, emergency responders and law enforcement in emergency preparedness for disasters, terrorism and public health emergencies.

"Today we are here to acknowledge and give thanks to the state legislature for an additional appropriation to make the first step in becoming a national center for disaster medicine," said Dr. Salomon Amar, vice president for research at New York Medical College and senior vice president for research affairs for the Touro College and University System.

Dr. Robert W. Amler, vice president for government affairs and dean of the School of Health Sciences and Practice, thanked Abinanti, for his longstanding supporting of New York Medical College and the center.

"Tom has been our friend from his days as a county legislator, and now in his role as our Assembly member, supporting us in the area of disaster medicine," Amler said.

Abinanti said the progress at New York Medical College and the Center for

Disaster Medicine reinforced how vital the research and training conducted by the center has been.

"For the past 15 years, this center has really been unique in serving the role of conducting interdisciplinary research, training, technical assistance and educational activities all related to emergency preparedness," he said. "To see how far NYMC has come is just amazing."

Dr. David S. Markenson, the center's medical director, highlighted the impact the Center has had on regional emergency preparedness and how new facilities are needed to facilitate the increased demands for the center's services.

"The Center has really had a platform to prepare for all hazards. To be creative, to be forward-thinking, whether it's training hospitals for mass casualties, but not training them in the standard approach, but breaking down the standard approach and saying, nice, orderly arrival isn't what happens. We have chaos at the scene," Markenson said.

"Another [training] the center does in economic development is not only to prepare [businesses] but talk about continuing operations and how they can continue to operate through these events."

Richard G. Wishnie, Westchester County Department of Emergency Services' commissioner, said gave the Center for Disaster Medicine is not only a



Assemblyman Tom Abinanti, left, visits with the leadership of New York Medical College last Wednesday to present a \$250,000 state grant to the college that will help it train health care professionals, law enforcement and other emergency responders to prepare for dealing with disasters, terrorism and public health emergencies.

prominent center for research in New York but throughout the country.

"We believe that an expanded mission for the center will make it a national

attraction that requires a modern facility, that will then attract students from around the nation," Wishnie said.

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Letters to the Editor

New Castle’s Form Based Code Financial Analysis Seriously Lacking

I am a longtime apolitical Chappaqua resident, having moved here in 1995, and I am increasingly concerned about the politics apparently driving the discussion of the adoption of the Form Based Code.

Last week’s article, “New Castle, Chappaqua Schools at Odds Over Funding Projections,” outlines a key problem. It is not clear to me what the motivation of several of the Town Board members may be, but I have concluded that the Board of Education clearly knows best about the potential financial impact on our school system.

As a finance professional, I would have thought that, after so many legitimate questions were raised by the Board of Education, Planning Commission and concerned citizens, the latest consultants’ reports would have come up with far better answers and more solid financial analysis to support the Town Board’s proposal. Instead, we hear that they continue to use disputed assumptions flatly rejected by the Board of Education to support the Form Based Code proposal, and still don’t answer key questions.

It is quite extraordinary to be having the

Town Board hurriedly move forward with such a flawed plan over the objections and concerns of both the Board of Education and the Planning Board, as well as many local taxpayers. More outrageous, as pointed out in the Sept. 29 letter from counsel for the Board of Education to the Town Board, the analysis of the financial impact on the school system has not even been properly done! Note that school taxes make up about 65 to 75 percent of the total taxes we pay in this town, and any mistakes made will be paid for in the future by the legacy single-family homeowners of the town.

The Form Based Code basically does away with zoning and Planning Board oversight and instead gives commercial developers virtual free rein to maximize their potential short-term profits irrespective of the long-term impact on

the community, its school system and current taxpayers.

I moved to this town and remain here despite having completed putting three great kids through its school system because I like the town generally the way it is. If I wanted a bigger downtown and lots of apartment buildings, I could move to White Plains. I am hopeful that those on the Town Board who have been so dogmatic in their support of the Form Based Code will begin to understand the risks they may inadvertently be courting and develop a more strategic approach to solve the problems they perceive. I can only conclude they don’t understand the real numbers.

**Rob Rauch**  
Chappaqua

Call for Volunteers Needed to Advocate for Long-Term Care Residents

October is National Long-Term Care Residents’ Rights Month, a time to acknowledge the contributions and sacrifices many long-term care residents have made to better our community and to call attention to the rights of residents in nursing homes, assisted living, adult care facilities and family-type homes.

The theme for Residents’ Rights Month 2021 is “Reclaiming My Rights, My Home, My Life” to acknowledge the impact of COVID-19 this past year on residents and highlight the need for residents’ rights to be recognized and reasserted. It emphasizes the recognition of the long-term care facility as the residents’ home and underscores residents’ rights to dignity, choice and self-determination.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a dedicated advocacy program available to anyone residing in a nursing home or other long-term care facility. The program advocates for residents to address their quality-of-life and quality-of-care

issues, along with their rights. Locally, the Tri-County LTC Ombudsman Program serves Westchester, Rockland and Putnam counties, and is sponsored by the Long Term Care Community Coalition (LTCCC). If you or a loved one need an advocate in long-term care, please call 914-500-3406 or e-mail [judy@ltccc.org](mailto:judy@ltccc.org).

We need now, more than ever, dedicated volunteers to advocate for nursing home and other long-term care residents. Please consider volunteering in your area to advocate for this vulnerable population. As a volunteer certified ombudsman, you can help ensure that the voices of long-term care residents do not go unheard.

To learn more about making a difference as a volunteer with the Ombudsman Program, visit <https://nursinghome411/ltcop/volunteer>.

**Judy A. Farrell**  
Program Director, Tri-County LTC Ombudsman Program

Dedicating Park to Jean Craighead George Was a Special Moment

On Oct. 10, we welcomed Jean Craighead George Park into the Town of New Castle Park family. We were joined by her children Craig, Luke and Twig George and many of her neighbors, friends and colleagues.

Parks have a unique way of connecting people to both one another and to nature. Jean lived up the hill from the park, her backyard touches mine, and I am proud of the work I did to kick off this project.

Today, it is still rare to see parks dedicated to women. Central Park did not get its first statue of a woman until 2019. New Castle took a great step to honor our neighbor, an award-winning author and conservationist, who taught us to appreciate and protect the natural world.

A group of dedicated volunteers have begun the work of removing invasive vines. The New Castle Department of Recreation & Parks has joined the effort and have brought out the big trucks that have accelerated the work.

However, there is still lots of work to be done. If you would like to get involved or follow the project, please join our Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/JeanCraigheadGeorgePark>.

**Jen Bounds**  
Chappaqua  
*Jen Bounds is a Democratic candidate for New Castle Town Board.*

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# Guest Column

## Not Ready for a Cannabis Store for Billions of Years

By Michael Gold

Pleasantville isn't ready for a cannabis café. It won't be ready for about five billion years, when the sun will burn out and life on Earth will cease to exist.

It doesn't matter where the cannabis café would be located, what security measures are put in place to prevent minors from entering or how much tax revenue it might generate.

Adults seeking cannabis can get into a car and drive to a cannabis shop in another town. Any store or warehouse a kid can walk to in town is a place a kid can hang around in front of. While that's OK for a comic book store, it's not for this.

Pleasantville has certain Norman Rockwell-like qualities that could easily be degraded with the arrival of a cannabis shop. It's the type of town where parents pull their little children in red wagons to the Saturday market. Kids peacefully walk to school. We say hello to other people walking on the streets and talk with our neighbors on the weekends. The tree-lined streets exude a sense of quiet and peacefulness. It feels like a little slice of heaven.

I had a friend growing up who started smoking pot when he was about 13 years old. We met at summer camp in upstate New York when we were 11. His nickname was Bones, like the doctor on Star Trek.

Bones smoked a lot of pot. I never asked to join him. When I was in the sixth grade, my father had put the fear of God in me about doing drugs and I actually listened to him. My friendship with Bones never got crossed up because he did drugs and I didn't.

His parents were divorced, but I don't know how much that troubled him. We didn't talk about it. He loved music, and he taught me about Eric Clapton, Cream and Lou Reed, artists I hadn't heard of before.

He lived in Forest Hills, Queens. I used to take the train from my town on Long Island to see him.

He and I went to concerts and wandered around Manhattan sometimes. We saw Jethro Tull at Madison Square Garden and The Grateful Dead at Nassau Coliseum. We went to the movies and ate fast food.

At the Grateful Dead concert, Bones smoked pot and hashish and swallowed some amphetamines and LSD. The concert was festival seating, so we could sit anywhere.

Soon after the band came on stage, I lost him. Later, at the end of the concert, he found me, telling me he was so high he had run around the arena the entire time. Drugs made him happy.

The next year his mother and stepfather placed him in a drug rehabilitation facility. I went to visit him in Queens one weekend when he was released from the facility. We played basketball with the other kids in the rehab center.

When we were older, we got jobs at our old summer camp, as dishwashers. The next summer we worked as maintenance men at the place.

After that, we lost touch. I went to college. I heard through Bones' stepbrother that he moved to San Francisco and was working in a music store, selling stereo systems.

A few years ago, I had lunch with his stepbrother on Long Island. I asked how Bones was doing. He told me that Bones had died of a drug overdose in San Francisco about 20 years before. I didn't ask what kind of drug. He may not even have known.

The family brought his body back East and buried him in New Jersey. There's nothing left of him now.

If there's even the slightest chance that just one kid could figure out an illicit strategy to get into a cannabis café in this town or finagle a way to get an adult to buy them pot, that's one too many.

Every parent knows that they need to communicate the message to their kids that drugs are not OK. They provide an escape, yes, but you know what? When you come down from that high, you still face the same problems and issues. The solution is not to escape, but to work at the challenges in your life. If you need a temporary break from school or your house, take a walk around town. Play ball with your friends. Read a book.

And whatever drug you take may get you addicted, until all you think about is getting high again and all you do is get another hit. It will ruin your life.

Allowing a cannabis shop in this serene village is the wrong message to send to our children.

A comic book store would be OK, though. *Pleasantville resident Michael Gold has written op-ed articles for the New York Daily News, Albany Times-Union, The Virginian-Pilot and other newspapers.*

# Letters to the Editor

## Pierce is Best Candidate to Continue to Help Westchester From District 2

Erika Pierce should be our next county legislator for District 2. Retiring County Legislator Kitley Covill has served the district for two terms and her careful and smart leadership needs to be continued.

Erika is the candidate to do just that. She served as Kitley's legislative aide from 2018 until earlier this year. She has gained unparalleled insight into the job, from running the office to researching and drafting important local legislation. Erika's curiosity, integrity, intelligence and impartiality make her uniquely qualified to take on this role and be effective immediately upon taking office.

As a longtime District 2 resident, Erika has always been a compassionate community member. She understands the importance and power of giving back and strives to make life better for those around her. Whether that's helping to design and construct the vegetable garden of Katonah Elementary School or founding Action Together Northern Westchester, a local grassroots activist organization focusing on social justice issues.

Being the change you want to see is near to my heart and few people fully encompass that more than Erika. I have known her in a personal and professional

capacity for years and can attest to her tireless commitment to public service. She is a pragmatic problem solver who is ready and able to take on the big challenges our COVID recovery requires.

Erika's nonprofit leadership experience, in depth understanding of our education system and thorough knowledge of Westchester County government, make her the clear and most qualified candidate to be our next county legislator.

**Justin White**  
Mount Kisco

## Yorktown Doesn't Need Do-Nothing Politicians Like Gilbert

Rama Iyengar's letter to the editor ("Gilbert's Record of Accomplishments Merits His Return in Yorktown," Oct. 12-18) touting Ilan Gilbert's "record" is an embarrassing attempt to mislead Yorktown voters. Here's some of the things Yorktown voters should know about the failed tenure of Ilan Gilbert:

- Gilbert takes credit for "obtaining" \$875,000 for Hilltop Hanover from Westchester County but neglects to state that Hilltop Hanover is a county property. Gilbert did not obtain anything for the farm.

- Gilbert takes credit for an additional \$3 million of revenue from Entergy but the town never negotiated or obtained funding from Entergy, the company that ran Indian Point.
- Gilbert takes credit for searching for vendors for the Granite Knolls solar canopy project and brazenly takes credit for the associated revenue, all of which happened when he was voted out of office.

Yes, Ilan Gilbert has served this town but lost his re-election attempt because he does not deliver on anything he says.

He left the courthouse a mess and is so desperate to find something to take credit for as supervisor he is resorting to smoke and mirrors and stealing credit for other people's accomplishments.

We are facing extremely challenging times. Our national economy is imploding, which has a direct impact on us here in Yorktown. We don't need more do-nothing politicians like we have in Washington and Albany. We don't need Ilan Gilbert.

**Marianne Violante**  
Yorktown

## Tattered American Flags on Pleasantville's Bedford Road Must Be Replaced

Have you seen the American flags displayed along Bedford Road in Pleasantville? If not, I invite you to please go and look at them. They are a disgrace!

The American flag is not just a flag. It represents our nation and the millions of American soldiers who fought for this great country of ours – from Lexington and Concord to Afghanistan. These brave soldiers fought and died defending it. We do them a gross disservice in allowing these tattered and torn flags to remain in place.

Please request that they be replaced ASAP. If they cannot be replaced immediately, please respectfully remove them and allow the Marine Corps League to take them to be respectfully taken out of service.

Allowing these flags to remain in place is a black mark on Pleasantville, and a disrespectful tribute to our veterans. I would hate to see these flags remain on the poles when Veterans Day comes on Nov. 11.

It would cost less than \$2,000 to replace the flags and poles with new ones. Surely that is not asking too much.

Please don't dishonor your veterans by keeping the flags up for Veterans Day.

God bless America.

**Drew McFadden**  
Pleasantville

**SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS**



## Guest Column

### Cortlandt is Looking to Shirk Responsibility for Wallace Pond

By George Pappas and Marlene Sauer

Wallace Pond, located in the northern and often forgotten section of Cortlandt Manor, is plagued with troubles that the Town of Cortlandt can resolve by taking ownership of the situation and of the Wallace Pond dam.

For decades, the issues have remained unresolved and top of mind for residents as they relate to the town's unscrupulous actions involving (1) transfer of ownership of the Wallace Pond dam in the early 1980s (and after the state Department of Environmental Conservation notified the town that they would need to remediate the dam's serious and significant deficiencies) to an unsuspecting property owners association; (2) lack of maintaining the water quality of Wallace Pond which they still own; and (3) the condition and rating of the dam.

Last December, the DEC reclassified and downgraded the Wallace Pond dam to a Class C

rating. This new high-hazard rating (potential downstream damage in the event of a breach) means that repairs are now mandatory or the dam could potentially be removed and Wallace Pond would be drained. The Town Board has been dangling this potential threat as an incentive for neighborhood residents to vote in their "we-want-to-help-you" proposal, which calls for the residents to assume the cost burden of repairing the dam instead of the town reclaiming ownership and paying for the dam's repair.

Cortlandt Town Board members publicly stated "over their dead bodies" will the Wallace Pond dam be taken down. However, their proposed solution would unfairly redistrict, create division and burden a smaller number of residents in our neighborhood if a special parks district was voted in. A parks district would allow the town to inflict an annual tax assessment of thousands of dollars per household for 30 years and assign perpetual

responsibility for the maintenance of the dam that is owned by a defunct property owners association that individual neighborhood residents are not responsible for.

The town's stance is only the residents in the immediate area of Wallace Pond benefit from it and, therefore, are responsible for the cost. This logic is flawed since Wallace Pond is located in a critical watershed area and all town residents have the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from its environmental significance. Wallace Pond also has historical significance as it was used for ice harvesting prior to refrigeration. The town claims that they have no interest in Wallace Pond as a community resource. How can that be, especially when they own the pond?

Neighborhood residents are unified in rejecting the Town Board's unfair proposal and want the town to reclaim ownership of the dam and pay for the repairs to remedy this situation. The town should work

cooperatively with Westchester County, the state and FEMA to obtain infrastructure and environmental grant funding. The Lake Isle dam in Eastchester and Lake Suzanne in Rockland County prove that this is possible.

The Town of Cortlandt is already receiving significant amounts of grant money and, as highlighted by the town on public television, is benefitting from several million dollars in realized savings due to program restrictions during COVID-19.

With their smiling faces and crossed arms, the Town Board's campaign slogan is Cortlandt Forward. Forward okay, but the Town Board has a responsibility to correct haunting situations from the past and preserve Wallace Pond as a town resource for wildlife and constituents alike.

*George Pappas and Marlene Sauer are residents of Cortlandt's Wallace Pond neighborhood.*

## Letters to the Editor

### Transparency Needed to Ensure Chappaqua Rezoning Plan is in Public Interest

New Castle Acting Supervisor Jeremy Saland has made multiple public requests that explain who is privately lobbying the town for favorable development regulations. He claimed that no one has lobbied him or other town leaders. I am writing to respond, and to publicly call for much-needed transparency.

Freedom of Information requests reveal written correspondence between the town and numerous developers and their representatives that have not, until now, been publicly disclosed. The communications contain insults against the Chappaqua Board of Education for "fighting back" against the

1997-apartment development plan for Chappaqua, and claims that the impacts of the development will be much smaller than the town has publicly acknowledged. Town officials deride community residents standing in principled opposition to the town's development plan as "NIMBYs."

Town records reveal that Mr. Saland, former supervisor Ivy Pool, Councilwoman Lauren Levin and the-Councilwoman-elect Lori Morton met privately, away from Town Hall, with high-level associates of Joseph Tivolacci, the developer of a newly constructed three-story building in Chappaqua. His representative, William Spade,

who made the arrangements, had told them in advance to expect that they would be lobbied to increase the height limit for buildings in Chappaqua to four stories, which is contrary to the town's Comprehensive Plan.

The public was never noticed either before or after, and no meeting minutes were published. New York State's Open Meetings Law prohibits three or more Town Board members from meeting to conduct town business in private, let alone together with private interests to be lobbied about pending legislation.

Mr. Spade also privately lobbied the town in pursuit of other lucrative legislative changes

relating to properties owned by his clients including eliminating retail requirements and reducing setback requirements, which was then quietly introduced by the town, without public discussion of the merits).

Mr. Saland should know how lobbying works. His father, a retired state senator, is a registered lobbyist paid to represent development and construction interests. Mr. Saland should have publicly disclosed his family ties to developer interests, because this knowledge would help the public interpret his support for this pending developer-friendly legislation.

Mr. Saland is currently refusing to release numerous communications between the town and developers. New York State law permits him to disclose this correspondence. In the interest of transparency, I call on Mr. Saland to now publicly release all correspondence with private development interests relating to the pending zoning legislation. Keeping these influences on governmental decisions private is contrary to the public interest – which demands sunshine, nature's best disinfectant.

**Scott Le Vine**  
Chappaqua

### Esposito's Business Acumen Would Help the Town Thrive in Years Ahead

Before COVID-19 I had no idea who Sergio Esposito was.

During the pandemic lockdown, I watched Supervisor Matt Slater's town COVID-19 updates, which were great and very informative). This is where I found out about Mr. Esposito.

I have watched him explain what businesses needed to do to survive. I've watched him talk about the PPP loan process and how it would help the local business owners. I've watched him talk about establishing a list of restaurants that provided takeout and a pledge from the residents to take part in helping. He also provided us with information on the

stimulus packages and what was going on in Washington to help every one of us. He worked with the town to help restaurants get outdoor dining established so they could survive.

Sergio Esposito really cares about the town, people and all the businesses that make this town a great place to live.

Being a small business owner himself, I feel that Sergio Esposito would be a valuable member of the Town Board. He will help keep this town thriving with business because of his concerns to help everyone succeed.

**Patricia Costello**  
Yorktown

### Esposito Has Clear Understanding of What Yorktown Businesses Need

I want to personally thank Sergio Esposito for advocating for our town, our citizens and our small businesses, especially mine. Sergio was instrumental in formulating the "outside dining" legislation, which allowed my business to survive. I remember talking about it with him by phone and he even came to my business to ask my opinion and get my input on what I would like to have seen in the new legislation.

Sergio Esposito listened to my concerns and my recommendations, and shortly thereafter, he appeared at Town Board meetings advocating for the outside dining legislation that he helped formulate. As a

side note, many of my suggestions were in the proposed legislation. Thankfully the new legislation was enacted! Sergio even showed up one day with Supervisor Slater and brought along News12 for an interview regarding the proposed redevelopment for the Yorktown Green shopping plaza. The man is unstoppable and truly dedicated.

Sergio Esposito is the only candidate that understands what our business sector needs and can get the job done.

**Bob Crossett**  
Owner  
Yorktown Grille

# White Plains Historical Society to Recognize 1776 Battle, Purdy House

By Martin Wilbur

Residents of White Plains and local history lovers are invited this Sunday to attend a pair of simultaneous celebrations that have been as much as three centuries in the making.

Not only is the White Plains Historical Society holding its annual commemoration of the Battle of White Plains, which has its anniversary several days later on Oct. 28, but it will also observe the 300th anniversary of the Jacob Purdy House, where George Washington is known to have stayed in 1776 and in 1778.

John Vorperian, president of the White Plains Historical Society, said with the Purdy House’s milestone anniversary this year, it made sense to combine the two events, where 1721 meets up with 1776.

“The point is that we’d like to do something where the public is aware,” Vorperian said. “The Battle of White Plains we do every year to commemorate (and) the board had felt this was the appropriate way to go, so that’s what we’re going to do on Sunday.”

The celebrations last from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Jacob Purdy House, located at 60 Park Ave. in White Plains, with a flag-raising at noon. There will be groups of re-enactors, not only representing the patriots but also British redcoats, along with two blacksmiths and women re-enactors who portray the importance that they played during the American Revolution, Vorperian said.

One re-enactor who usually dresses as Martha Washington will come as a



The Jacob Purdy House in White Plains, which turns 300 years old this year. It was the site of the October 1776 Battle of White Plains and housed George Washington that year and in 1778.

washerwoman, someone who would be found at a Revolutionary War camp, he said. Women often came and gave support to the rebels.

“This is something that I’ve been hammering away at as president, to look at history in a more global perspective,” Vorperian said. “Yes, Washington is one of the fathers of our country, but we get to look at who else participated in the Revolution and the role of women.”

There will be a fife and drum corps and the White Plains High School marching band will also perform at the event. Tours will be given of the Jacob Purdy House, where visitors can

walk the same spaces that Washington did on his visits, although groups will be limited to six to eight people at a time.

While some may think of history occurring in far-off places, Vorperian said White Plains and its surroundings were a hotbed of activity during the Revolution. In addition to being home to the battle, where Washington’s troops were able to repel the British, the city was the first place in New York State that held a public reading of the Declaration of Independence at the armory on North Broadway, he said. That site now has senior apartments.

White Plains was also split in its loyalties,

with roughly a third of its inhabitants loyal to the crown and another third supporting the patriots. The rest of the citizenry just tried to stay out of the way. There were even taverns that were known to be pro-crown or pro-patriot. Hatfield’s Tavern, a pro-King George spot, was burned down by rebels.

“Here in Westchester, and White Plains in particular, there was no safe side to be on,” Vorperian said. “People just tried to get through it all.”

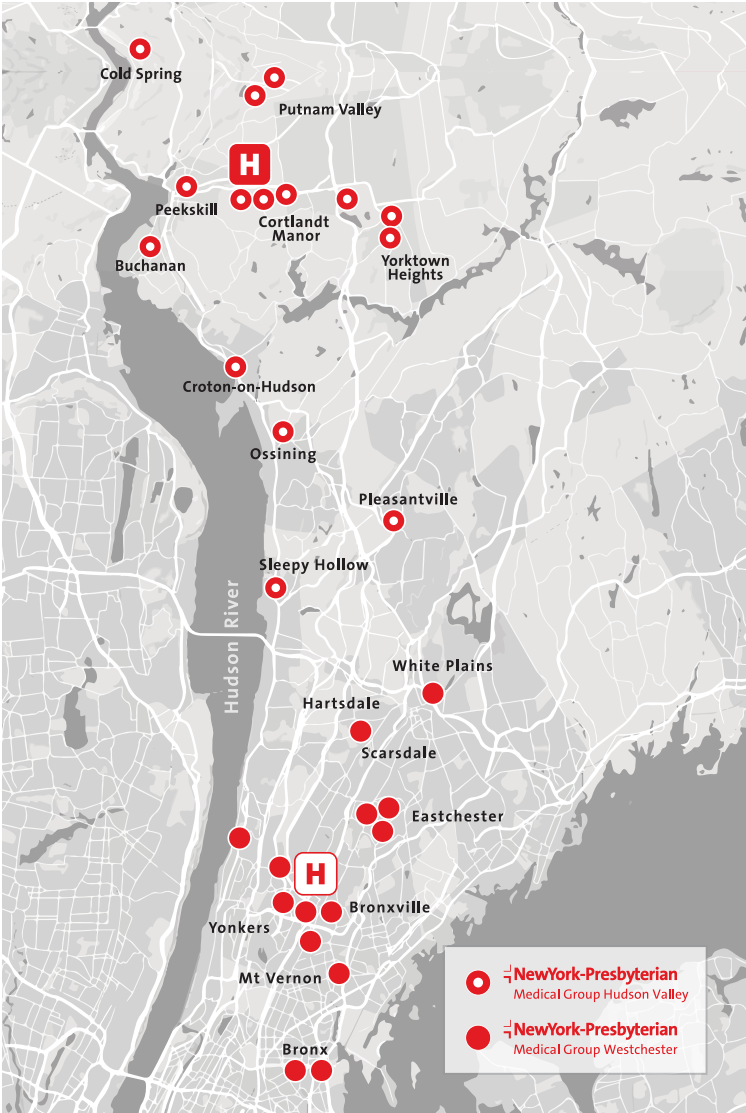
The split also fractured the Purdy family, which bought the house and about 132 surrounding acres from its original owner and builder Samuel Horton. Jacob Purdy was living in the house at the time of the Revolution, Vorperian said. The Purdys who were loyalists fled to Canada, and the White Plains Historical Society has formed a friendship with the Annapolis Royal Historical Society in Nova Scotia, where they settled.

The house stayed in the hands of the Purdys until shortly after Jacob’s death in 1823. Then 10 years later, it was reacquired by Jacob Purdy II until it was bought by James Ferris in 1866.

Vorperian is hopeful that if families bring their children there will be at least a couple of youngsters who will fall in love with history.

“My hope is if it means one, two, maybe three youngsters turn and say, ‘Hey I want to go to college and I want to major in history, I’ll be all the more enthused and happy about this,’” he said.

The event is free for anyone who attends.



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# Obituaries

## Sonia Gitner

Sonia (Auerbach) Gitner, a longtime Yorktown Heights resident, died Oct. 14 at NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital following a recent stroke. She was 89.

Gitner was born in New York City on Feb. 18, 1932, the daughter of the late David Auerbach and Tillie (Rubin) Auerbach. She was a graduate of Walton High School in the Bronx, attended City College School of Business, and after raising her family, graduated from Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, class of 1979, with a degree in business administration.

Sonia married the late Stanley Gitner of Brooklyn on Jan. 27, 1951. She is survived by three sons, Fred of New York City, Barry of Morgan Hill, Calif. and Henry (Debra) of Goshen, N.Y.; grandchildren Jessica of St. Louis, Andrew (Elizabeth Hauserman) of Denver and Christopher of New York; niece Suzanne Becker Bronx; nephews Lewis Auerbach and Stephen Auerbach; and many cousins. She was predeceased by her sister, Grace Becker, brother Jack Auerbach and niece Rosalie Becker.

Sonia was especially active as a volunteer serving on the Board of Directors of the Yorktown Teen Center for many years and remaining a board member emerita; organizing luncheons and excursions for the Norchester Chapter of Hadassah; and volunteering every week for 25 years at NewYork-Presbyterian/Hudson Valley. She was honored by each organization for her

work. In addition, she served for more than 30 years as a poll worker and supervisor in Yorktown for both primary and general elections.

Sonia loved travel, reading, classic movies, Jeopardy! and being of service to others. One of her special talents was being an expert proofreader.

She was a longtime active member of Yorktown Jewish Center.

Sonia will be missed by her extended family and friends, both near and far, with whom she kept in contact by telephone across the U.S. and Canada, sharing in their joys and sorrows, and her friends and all of the people she touched during her 63 years in Yorktown.

A gathering for family and friends was held Sunday, Oct. 17 at 10 a.m. at Yorktown Funeral Home, 945 E. Main St. (at Route 132), Shrub Oak, NY 10588, followed by a graveside service and burial at 11:30 a.m. at King David Cemetery, 101 Mill St., Putnam Valley, NY 10579.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that contributions in memory of Sonia be made to one of the following: Yorktown Teen Center, P.O. Box 192, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598; Yorktown Senior Center, 1974 Commerce St., Yorktown Heights, NY 10598; Yorktown Volunteer Ambulance Corps, P.O. Box 104, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598; and NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital, 1980 Crompond Rd., Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567.

## Melvin Berger

Known around his hometown of Mount Kisco as a tireless community servant who helped countless citizens battling alcoholism, drug addiction and homelessness, Melvin "Mel" Berger will be truly missed. He peacefully passed away on Oct. 6.

Born on June 28, 1938, Mel grew up in the middle-class Bronx enclave of Pelham Parkway, as the eldest of four sons to George and Elaine Berger. He and his brother Stuart studied pharmacy at Columbia University and soon opened a series of small pharmacies around Westchester County.

Mel settled in Hartsdale where he helped raise his three sons, Michael, Craig and Jonathan. He first came to Mount Kisco as a co-owner of Mount Kisco Pharmacy, a business he would ultimately run and own by himself for over two decades. After a divorce, he moved to Mount Kisco where he met and partnered with Cheri Nowell, and helped raise her two young children, Megan and Bob, as his own.

He would remain a proud Mount Kisco

resident for the rest of his life. As a local pharmacist, he saw first-hand the negative effects of drug and alcohol abuse in his community and founded Mount Kisco's Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Council. Consequently, he helped pioneer the successful drug court to divert young drug and alcohol offenders away from prison and into recovery programs. Later, he would collaborate with local places of worship to create the Emergency Shelter Partnership to provide winter shelter to the area's growing homeless population, many of whom were laborers from Central America who couldn't find work in the colder months.

Mel was so loved and respected in the community that his children often joked that he was the unofficial mayor of Mount Kisco. In addition to his passion for community service, he was an avid fan of classic country music and his beloved New York Mets.

He is survived by his five children and eight grandchildren.

## Gertrude Farrington

Gertrude (Guggie) Farrington, 107 years old, formerly of Ridgefield, Conn., passed away peacefully in Valhalla.

Born in 1914, Gertrude lived a long life that allowed her to excel at her professional career at Texaco and pursue her passion for gardening.

She graduated from the College of New Rochelle in 1935, a significant achievement since only 8 percent of females in the U.S. graduated from college at that time.

Gertrude had a long and remarkable career with Texaco. She started in 1944 as a stenographer in the Personnel Department. In 1963, she became the first female officer of Texaco when she was appointed assistant secretary of the company. She retired from Texaco in 1973.

Gertrude and her husband, Wesley, shared a lifelong passion for gardening. Gertrude was a member of the Ridgefield Garden Club where she was instrumental in

the restoration and maintenance of Ballard Park's parterre gardens. Gertrude kept a diary from 1978 to 1992 that detailed her daily life, gardening activity, bird sightings, world events and Notre Dame football games. Her diary was accepted into The Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Gardens, and turned into a learning lab titled "Explore One Woman's Experience in Civic Life, 1978-1992."

Gertrude is survived by her sister, Kelly Davis; 10 nieces and nephews; 12 great-nieces and great-nephews; 22 great-great nieces and great-great nephews; and two great-great-great nephews.

Visitation will be on Monday Oct. 25 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Beecher Flocks Funeral Home in Pleasantville, where funeral services will be held. A burial will follow at Mount Calvary Cemetery in White Plains.

## Local Author to Speak on Churchill's 1932 Visit to Westchester

When Winston Churchill spoke in Westchester County will be the topic of a talk this Saturday, Oct. 23 at 2 p.m. at Cortlandt Town Hall.

Jointly sponsored by the Van Cortlandtville Historical Society, the Yorktown Historical Society and Croton Friends of History and hosted by the Town of Cortlandt, the program is open free to the public.

Author and historian Anthony Czarnecki of Cortlandt Manor will present in a PowerPoint program what the iconic British prime minister said in an historic lecture on "The World Crisis" at the then newly-opened Westchester County Center in White Plains in 1932. It was at the end of a memorable

two-month lecture tour of the United States by Churchill and it was eight years before he emerged on the world stage.

"This year marks the 75th anniversary of Winston Churchill's famous 'Iron Curtain Speech' in 1946, which followed the multinational military victory that defeated Nazi Germany during World War II," Czarnecki said.

Based on his article published in Westchester Historian Magazine in 2014, Czarnecki will elaborate on the meaning of Churchill's lecture in White Plains, including an almost tragic incident that happened to him upon his arrival in Manhattan that involved a Yonkers resident.



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# Mt. Kisco Lions Walk to Raise Funds for Nursing Scholarships

By Martin Wilbur

The pandemic has changed so many lives, including how and where we work. Until the last year-and-a-half, nursing was a profession that seemed to always attract enough young adults to the profession.

But COVID-19 has seemingly changed all of that, with many hospitals and other health care facilities reporting shortages.

This Sunday morning, the Mount Kisco Lions Club will be holding a three-mile walk within the village to raise money for a scholarship for a local high school student who plans to pursue a nursing program in college and for a current health care worker who would like to go back to school and become a nurse.

Gail Smilkstein, president of the Mount Kisco Lions and a retired registered nurse, is reconstituting the walk to raise money for the scholarships after the effort lapsed for the past 12 years. She said the prospective nursing candidates need all the encouragement that can be mustered to entice students into the field.

“People are leaving the nursing field, people aren’t going into the nursing field because of COVID and we really need nurses,” said Smilkstein, who worked as a school nurse for the bulk of her career at Sleepy Hollow High School, along with several other schools around the county.

Candidates for the high school scholarship will be selected from Fox Lane, John Jay or Kennedy Catholic high schools, she said. The two recipients will

receive \$1,500 each.

The walk, which kicks off at 9 a.m. from the front entrance of Northern Westchester Hospital, will follow a three-mile loop around the village. After leaving the hospital grounds, it will head down Moore Avenue, before turning onto Lexington and then South Moger Avenue, and finally onto Main Street to head back to the hospital.

The route will remain on the sidewalks so there will be no road closures or impact on traffic. Smilkstein expects a fair number of nurses from the area to take part.

Participants are asked to secure donors to sponsor their walk for a flat rate and to pay before the walk. Smilkstein said a station will be set up at the gazebo on South Moger Avenue to answer questions from passersby and solicit additional donations from the public. A second table may also be set up near Jacobson’s Pharmacy on East Main Street.

Participants may park behind the pharmacy or at the Boys & Girls Club.

Smilkstein said since 2009 the Mount Kisco Lions have focused their energies on other charities, organizations and causes. But with the pandemic straining the nursing field in many areas, it seemed the proper time to restart the walk, she said.

“We would like to raise as much money as we can because it will carry over to next year if we make extra money, and we we’ll give (out) funds the next year,” Smilkstein said. “If it’s really a very well supported

thing then we will.”

The walk will be held from 9 a.m. to noon rain or shine. For more information or if anyone has questions, they may call Gail Smilkstein at 914-483-7106.

## Fight to End Alzheimer’s



Mount Kisco resident James Silverman a Walk to End Alzheimer’s on Sunday, Oct. 17 at Gipsy Trail Road in Carmel. A total of 47 teams and 215 walkers participated in the event, which takes place annually in 600 communities nationwide.

MICHELLE SILVERMAN PHOTOO



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## Halloween Celebrations Close By in the Hudson Valley

Boasting crisp seasonal air and vibrant scenery, New York is one of the best destinations to experience Halloween.

From quirky small-town festivities and a hotel offering otherworldly experiences to a theme park's inaugural family-friendly Halloween experience, the state offers something for everyone to celebrate the spookiest time of the year.

Below are some of the best locations to celebrate Halloween in the Hudson Valley.

**Roxbury:** Nestled in the heart of the Catskills Mountains, Roxbury offers small-town charm and one of the nation's most immersive and fantastical hotels that offers over-the-top Halloween thematic accommodations.

From the spooky Dracula's Fangs Tower Cottage featuring old-world Transylvania gothic décor, a grand winding staircase, a vampiric throne chamber and red velvet curtains to the beautifully ornate Victorian-inspired 1848 mansion room where a friendly young ghost is said to preside over the room, The Roxbury at Stratton Falls is just the ticket for a unique Halloween experience.

**Goshen:** Off the heels of its grand

opening in August, LEGOLAND New York offers its not-so-spooky Halloween extravaganza, Brick-or-Treat. Available every Saturday and Sunday in October from 3 to 6 p.m. the park is "tricked" out in Halloween decor, featuring special events including costume contests and parades, spooky fun exhibits, dance parties, special Halloween shows, meet-and-greets with LEGOLAND Halloween characters, goodie bag giveaways and of course, trick-or-treat stations.

After a "bricktastic" fall day at the park, families can conveniently retreat to the new LEGOLAND New York Hotel, the first and only LEGO-themed hotel in the Northeast, located just steps away from the theme park's iconic entrance arch.

**Croton-on-Hudson:** Along the Hudson River is Croton-on-Hudson. Starting in late September and running through Nov. 21, Historic Hudson Valley puts on The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze that's known for being one of the most eye-catching events in the entire state. Made up of thousands of lit up magical pumpkins, you won't believe the spectacular displays that are put together at Van Cortlandt Manor every year.



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## The Recent and Sad Demise of Interest in Antiques

When my wife and I first got married, way back in the dark ages of 1965, we were anxious to fill our first apartment with interesting furnishings.

Because I had gone to college at William & Mary in the historic town of Williamsburg, Va., I was really into antiques. My wife Margaret was totally a modern kind of gal and the furniture she brought to our first apartment was her bedroom set from her parents' home, which was strictly modern.

What I brought to our first home was a collection of antiques I had been gathering since I first arrived in New York City three years before. During that time, there were many antiques shops in New York City, especially along lower 3rd Avenue, and I spent almost every lunchtime visiting them and adding both furniture and accessories to my first bachelor apartment, which was located in the historic landmark neighborhood, Brooklyn Heights.

My future wife was impressed when she visited my place for the first time. I further indoctrinated her to furnishings of the past by suggesting for our honeymoon that we visit Colonial Williamsburg, then Charlottesville, Va. (specifically the home of Thomas Jefferson).

Isn't it interesting how one can align with another's interests once exposed to them? Not only did Margaret jump on the



By Bill Primavera

bandwagon of antiques discovery and purchase, but she soon far surpassed my interest.

For many years we acquired pieces both big and small, filling an 18th century home we eventually bought in Yorktown Heights, a large six-bedroom house where there was plenty of room to house our collection.

However, when it came time for us to downsize a half-dozen years ago from that 3,900-square-foot home to an 1,800-square-foot condo in Trump Park, we endeavored to unload the bulk of our collection, first through an open house sale, then by inviting local antiques dealers to buy from us wholesale. The sale directly to the public didn't produce much and the antiques dealers didn't even bother to show up.

As a result, the buyers of our home lucked out with a lot of furniture and accessories left behind, which they, moving from a smaller apartment, were grateful to inherit.

Very honestly, I couldn't understand how the interest in antiques could slack off so dramatically in recent years. I had to look up the reasons on the interest and was not all that surprised to find that, by some estimates, antique furnishings have decreased in value by 45 percent over the past 15 years. Once-hot commodities struggle to find buyers and, when they do manage to sell, can see up to a 70 percent drop in price.



The reasons given for the current lack of interest include the fact that baby boomers are downsizing their homes and flooding the market with antiques and other furniture. Add to that the fact that many more people are buying open concept homes, which don't require as much furniture.

So, while there are far fewer people who are interested in relics from the past to incorporate into their homes, I will continue to take pleasure in indulging my own love for antiques. Further, if and when I find a

little treasure I want to adopt from former owners, I can have it at a cheaper price.

Bill Primavera is a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate and founder of Primavera Public Relations, Inc., the longest running public relations agency in Westchester ([www.PrimaveraPR.com](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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# Foursome of W'chester Women Honored During Hispanic Heritage Month

By Martin Wilbur

Four Latina women in Westchester were honored last Thursday by state Sen. Peter Harkham (D-Lewisboro) for outstanding contributions to their communities in commemoration of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Ruth Ayala-Quezada, Dinora Pacheco, Karine Patiño and Diana Loja were featured at a special ceremony at Sleepy Hollow Village Hall. Hispanic Heritage Month recognizes the accomplishments of the many Hispanic communities throughout the United States.

Ayala-Quezada is the owner of Carmel Taxi in Sleepy Hollow. A native of Peru, she arrived in the United States in 1986 with her parents, who a few years later bought the old Ernie's Taxi in Mount Kisco.

Having worked for her parents learning how to dispatch taxis while going to school served her well when it came time to open her own business. She has worked with her sisters, and they take turns working and watching each other's children, Harkham said.

"I'm very proud of my heritage and I'm proud to represent my community, and with hard work, dedication and being humble, you can succeed," Ayala-Quezada said.

Pacheco was born in the Dominican Republic and her desire to help people led her to become a nurse, including serving on the health care staff of the Dominican president. After immigrating to the United States, she met her husband Freddy and moved to Peekskill.

She co-founded the Peekskill Hispanic Community Corporation, which helps feed

families that face food insecurity, conducts certification classes and raises funds for international crises. Pacheco currently serves as its president.

"During the pandemic the organization has fed dozens of families through its dozens of food distributions and it's volunteered to deliver food door to door to people who were quarantining," Harkham said.

Pacheco's dedication was evident when in one of her first roles with the Hispanic Community Corporation she helped find homes for 24 families displaced by fire.

Patiño, an attorney specializing in immigration and criminal law, was born to Ecuadorian immigrants in Sleepy Hollow and has lived her entire life in Mount Kisco. She volunteered for Neighbors Link and worked with the old Mount Kisco Police Department in the Police and Community Together partnership that trained about 200 officers in cultural competency.

Patiño also joined Putnam County Legal Aid Society in 2017 and served on Westchester County's Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force. She is running uncontested in two weeks for Mount Kisco village trustee and will become the municipality's first Latina board member.

Hispanics comprise nearly 40 percent of Westchester's population but are severely under-represented in many careers, including law and government, Patiño said. Hispanic women make up only 2 percent of the nation's attorneys, she said.

"I hope to be not only a source of inspiration for younger generations, but as a source of



State Sen. Peter Harkham honors four women for Hispanic Heritage Month who have made notable contributions to their communities. Pictured, from left, are Diana Loja, Ruth Ayala-Quezada, Karine Patiño and Dinora Pacheco.

support for my community and for the younger generation," Patiño said.

Loja immigrated at 12 years old from Ecuador with her parents. Today she serves as a liaison between municipalities, communities and businesses to connect the public to cultural and educational workshops, social events, government assistance programs and nonprofit outreach.

As a liaison for the Village of Sleepy Hollow, Loja is passionate about providing assistance to

residents on such issues as job opportunities, food assistance, shelter and loan applications. Loja launched her own Spanish news media platform to capture some of the pressing issues impacting the Latino population.

"It is for me a privilege to be Hispanic, number one," Loja said. "This county has diversity of culture."

Each woman received a special proclamation from Harkham for their achievements.

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Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

**Oct. 4:** Patrol responded to Half Moon Bay Drive at 5:22 p.m. on a report from a resident who stated that she received a letter in the mail from an unknown source that had very derogatory language about their spouse. There was no report taken at this time.

**Oct. 5:** Croton EMS responded to Veterans Plaza at 10:59 p.m. for a party who locked themselves in the bathroom and was in need of medical attention. Patrol, along with another law enforcement agency, were

able to get the party out of the bathroom. The individual was transported to the hospital.

**Oct. 7:** Patrols responded to Croton Point Avenue at 1:03 p.m. on a report of a party loitering on their property while yelling obscenities. The area was checked and the party was located at the train station. They were interviewed, appeared disoriented and Croton EMS was notified to respond. The subject refused to be seen by medical personnel and left the scene on foot.

**Oct. 10:** Patrol responded to Maple Street on a report of a disorderly group of juveniles at 10:18 p.m. It was discovered there had been an altercation between two

parties. One of those parties had left the scene prior to the officers' arrival. Parents were notified and a report was to be filed.

County Police/Mount Kisco

**Oct. 14:** Officers responded to the Holiday Inn parking lot on Holiday Inn Drive at 2:08 a.m. on a report of a man sleeping in a car. The man, who appeared intoxicated and disoriented, told officers he was depressed and was planning to drive to Denver. Officers took him to Northern Westchester Hospital for a mental health evaluation.

**Oct. 14:** A 56-year-old man was issued a summons for drinking alcohol from an open container in the Blackeby parking lot off South Moger Avenue at 9:40 a.m.

and permitted it to defecate on her lawn without picking it up. A minor argument ensued when the complainant confronted the couple about cleaning up after their dog. She wanted the incident as a matter of record because of a concern the couple will return and harass her.

**Oct. 12:** The Bedford dog control officer reported finding a white and black Shih Tzu in the area of Bedford Banksville Road at 9:12 a.m. He would like to be notified if anyone reports a dog missing fitting that description.

**Oct. 12:** A caller reported at 9:30 a.m. that his car was possibly vandalized on High Street with car parts left on his property. The responding officer gathered information; a report to follow.

United Way to Host Human Trafficking Learning Session Oct. 28

The United Way of Westchester and Putnam is co-hosting an hour-long live learning session with United Way Worldwide's Center titled "Understanding Human Trafficking: The Intersections & Complexities" on Thursday, Oct. 28 at noon.

The event will include a team of survivor leaders who are experts in the anti-human trafficking movement. The session will provide an overview of the issue of human trafficking and information on how we can strategically and collectively combat it in our community.

Human trafficking is a widespread and often invisible crime that occurs worldwide and in our own backyards. It is

the act of compelling someone into work or commercial sex acts through force, fraud or coercion.

Although it is illegal everywhere, human trafficking happens everywhere, including in our community. Whether or not we recognize it, this is an issue we all touch daily through our professional and personal lives.

Fortunately, we are positioned to drive a powerful, unified strategy to combat human trafficking together as a community.

All are welcome, but advance registration is necessary. To register or for more information, visit <https://www.uwvp.org/human-trafficking-session/>

Pleasantville Police Department

**Oct. 9:** Report of criminal mischief on Hopper Street at 11:30 a.m. after a car was keyed. The matter is under investigation.

**Oct. 12:** A Honda Pilot was reported stolen from Mountain Road at 5:56 a.m. The keys were left in the car and it was unlocked.

**Oct. 13:** An unlocked car was ransacked on Broadway at 10:12 p.m. Loose change was reported missing.

**Oct. 14:** A Croton-on-Hudson resident was pulled over on Pleasantville Road after driving erratically. A summons was issued and an appearance in village court was scheduled.

**Oct. 15:** A Yorktown resident reported at 12:48 p.m. that his brother apparently used his identity while receiving a traffic ticket in Mount Kisco. The Yorktown man said he could provide proof that he was at work on the day and time the summons was issued and that his brother provided his personal information to an officer issuing the ticket in Mount Kisco and to Yonkers police in a separate matter. The case was turned over to detectives for additional investigation.

North Castle Police Department

**Oct. 10:** A Wampus Avenue resident reported at 5:24 p.m. that earlier this date that an older couple was walking their dog

### Crossword

**Across**

- 1. Hamburg's river
- 5. Posthumous Pulitzer Prize winner James
- 9. Hair tangle
- 10. Academic types, abbr.
- 11. Not a fish supplement, but a way to heat your home and save \$\$
- 12. Markers
- 13. They desert causes
- 15. Prickly seed case
- 16. Fall month, abbr.
- 17. Attention grabber
- 20. Cat calls
- 22. Wing
- 23. Sheepish computer memory?
- 25. Vinny Gambini" would eat at this Mahopac restaurant
- 29. Toward shelter, nautically
- 31. Makes one
- 32. Cub Scout units
- 33. Flight section
- 34. Heartthrob Brad
- 35. Going \_\_ crazy

**Down**

- 1. Approval
- 2. Neighbor of Cambodia
- 3. Englishman, abbr.
- 4. "Enchanted" role for Anne Hathaway
- 5. Per person
- 6. Halloween correspondent?
- 7. Part of some e-mail addresses
- 8. Count followers
- 9. Absorb
- 11. Jamie Foxx's vehicle in "Collateral"
- 14. "Magnum, P.I." star Selleck
- 18. Most cunning
- 19. What patients need, for short
- 21. Not so crazy
- 24. Ed.'s in-box filler
- 26. Not theirs
- 27. Condo, e.g.
- 28. Spanish affirmatives
- 29. Payroll processing company
- 30. Waikiki wear

Answers on page 25

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# Samhain: A Fitting Time to Reflect and Reconsider Roots

Before another word is read, a solid goodbye to a giant of Irish traditional music, Paddy Moloney, a founding member of The Chieftain, who left us on Oct. 11, a young 83. We'll give him his full due in a future article.

For now, "Slán abhaile, Padraig!" Safe home!

Given the time of year, it's fitting to reprise an earlier topic, the Celtic festival of Samhain, what we today call Hallowe'en. Aptly described in Frank Delaney's eminently readable study, "The Celts," as "the greatest Celtic festival," Samhain (pronounced SOW-in, with the "ow" as in "how") is a perfect time for us to reflect and reconsider our roots, and the beliefs our forebears held close to their hearts.

With the coming of the Christian era, Samhain, along with other Celtic feasts and festivals, was "redecorated," in this case becoming the Christian Feast Day of All Saints (Nov. 1), also called All Hallows Day. In fact, the term in use today – Hallowe'en – signifies the Eve of All Hallows. Let's look more closely at Samhain and its lingering presence today.

Sundown on Oct. 31 marks the beginning of the feast. It continues into the following day, Nov. 1, and ends with the setting sun that day. The Celts kept time differently than we do. For them, the 24-hour day began and ended at sunset, rather than our midnight.

Samhain is one of the four major Celtic seasonal festivals, the others being *Imbolc* (Feb. 1), *Beltaine* (May 1) and *Lughnasa* (Aug. 1). Samhain marks the



By Brian McGowan

end of the harvest season, the beginning of the Celtic winter, the birth of another year and the beginning of the storytelling season, which would run until spring. At Samhain, we move from the "light" half of the year, to the "dark" half. Samhain continues to exhibit a magnetic hold on the popular imagination, and has morphed into an almost universally celebrated event throughout the Western world: Hallowe'en.

What happens during this almost 24-hour period from dusk to dusk? The boundaries between our world of the living and that of the dead are lifted, and free passage is afforded to the spirits inhabiting the far side, whether good or evil. It is a time for honoring ancestors, inviting them to step through the portal and take a seat at the hearth. We solicit their aid in warding off malevolent spirits who may have slipped through, with the aim of wreaking havoc among the living for the duration of the feast.

One method of protection is to don evil-looking garb, bizarre costumes and ghoulish masks to fool evil spirits into thinking that someone is already well at work spreading mayhem and havoc. Food is prepared as an offering, both for the living and the dead. Portions left uneaten will be shared later with those less fortunate. A scary night, certainly, but one with great purpose and a stronger chance of calling protection upon oneself and



one's family than most others offered.

Enter Christianity, and a convenient transformation occurs. The Feast of All Saints is on Nov. 1, and the day after, the Feast of All Souls. Why Oct. 31 wasn't similarly commandeered is a mystery, but may speak to the depth of Samhain's starting hours in the people's psyche – strong magic not to be toyed with. And on these Christian feast days, we still honor

the dead, saints or sinners, just as the ancient Celts did. On their eve, the custom of wearing disguises to ward off evil spirits endures, a solid favorite of young and old alike.

Irishcentral.com lays out a nice blessing to sum it all up, deftly balancing a blend of beliefs:

*"At all Hallow's Tide, may God keep you safe  
From goblin and pooka and black-hearted stranger,  
From harm of the water and hurt of the fire,  
From thorns of the bramble, from all other danger,  
From Will O' The Wisp haunting the mire;  
From stumbles and tumbles and tricksters to vex you,  
May God in His mercy, this week protect you."*

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

## Halloween Organ 'Spooktacular' Set for October 31

On Sunday, Oct. 31, Halloween night at 7 p.m., Dr. Sandor Szabo, music director and organist will perform a short organ concert featuring a spooky selection of well-known organ music such as "Toccata and Fugue" by Bach, "Dance Macabre" by Saint-Seans, excerpts from "Nutcracker Ballet, Tchaikovsky," excerpts from "Peer

Gynt Suite" and "Suite Gothique" by Boellman.

The free concert will take place at Sacred Heart Church, located at 417 Broadway in Dobbs Ferry. Open to all ages. Come in costume and enjoy this festive music before or after trick-or-treating.

## Organization Holds Essay Contest on Housing's Role Influencing Future

Lifting Up Westchester, a nonprofit agency committed to helping individuals experiencing homelessness and hunger achieve self-sufficiency, announced last week its fifth annual high school student essay contest.

Open to all pupils attending school in Westchester grades 7-12, students are invited to explore the role housing plays in influencing their personal future, the future of their community and how it impacts all of Westchester.

This year's essay challenges students to reflect broadly on the issue of housing in Westchester. Today, there are 1,800 individuals living in shelters every night in the county. There are tens of thousands of Westchester residents living in homes where their tenancy is unstable. Even more individuals and families have to couch surf or live within overcrowded quarters just to have a roof over their head.

There are negative physical, mental health and educational consequences for those experiencing inadequate housing and all forms of homelessness. The pandemic has exacerbated the housing problem for a much broader socioeconomic group who lost jobs and/or had salaries reduced at the same time that rents and mortgages have risen faster than income and earnings.

"We know that stable, adequate housing is a critical foundation on which all other

individual and family success can be built," said Anahaita Kotval, CEO of Lifting Up Westchester. "This year's essay contest challenges our students to reflect deeply on how we can ensure adequate housing for all our neighbors."

The essay contest was established in 2017 in memory of Beth Massey Rubens, a lifelong teacher, tutor and mentor who had a love for language arts.

First-, second- and third-place cash prizes will be awarded in each of the three grade groups: seventh and eighth grades, ninth and 10th grades and 11th and 12th grades. New this year is an ESL category. Any ESL student in grades 7-12 can choose to enter this category.

First prize in each category is \$500, second place is \$250 and third place is \$100.

The contest, which kicked off last Friday, is accepting students' submissions through Jan. 17, 2022, at 5 p.m. Students can enter the contest through the dedicated portal at <http://s.alchemer.com/s3/2022-LUW-Essay-Contest> and upload their essays. Winners will be announced in late February.

Students, teachers and parents can learn more about how the contest works and review the judging process and criteria by visiting <https://www.liftingupwestchester.org/essay-contest>.

## Crossword Answers



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next week's publication

continued from page 24

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**A nonprofit organization in Westchester, NY** is seeking sealed bids for sales and installation of security related enhancements. This is a **New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services** grant funded project. The project includes (i) installation of one or more: technology (such as CCTV, access control, alarms, sensors, X-ray machines, magnetometer), security film, doors, locks, windows, bollards, booth, planters, barriers, lighting, fencing, privacy fencing, gates, (ii) training programs, and (iii) security personnel. Bids will be accepted until 5:00 PM on December 5, 2021. Work is expected to commence by the week of January 31, 2022 and be completed by August 31, 2023. All interested vendors will be required to demonstrate preliminary qualifications and licensing for this work, acknowledge receipt of the proposal documents, and provide company name, business address, telephone, fax and email address, and primary contact name. Selection criteria will be based on knowledge of surveillance and security, adherence to projected work schedule, prior experience, references, and cost. Specifications and bid requirements can be obtained by contacting us at [Westchestergrants@gmail.com](mailto:Westchestergrants@gmail.com)

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# Todd Elementary School Welcomes In-House STEAM Teacher

Todd Elementary students are in luck.

Not only does their school have its very own STEAM teacher this year, but she comes to Briarcliff Manor with background in International Baccalaureate (IB), an inquiry-based learning program.

The new teacher, Amira Lahlouh, hails from Canada, where she spent six years working as an elementary school teacher and regularly used science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics in her classroom.

"I always did different STEAM-related activities that I integrated into the subjects that I taught," she said. "This fits well with the IB program because STEAM is all about inquiry-based learning."

Lahlouh has done various professional development workshops but also learned on her own.

"My degree is in mathematical sciences and I have always loved math and science but STEAM is a passion of mine," she said.

Before Lahlouh arrived at the district, various teachers did STEAM activities. Now, however, with Lahlouh, they have been organized as one subject that encompasses many subjects within the curriculum.

"I am trying to integrate STEAM to the existing curriculum and working with the teachers to do activities that will enhance the work that they are already doing," Lahlouh said. "I have done that when I worked back in Canada, too; I helped other teachers integrate STEAM activities into their curriculum."

"I can always find ways to integrate



Amira Lahlouh, the new dedicated STEAM teacher at Todd Elementary School in Briarcliff Manor.

subjects like coding or makerspace into the program. It makes it more exciting because it adds another dimension of learning."

Recently, Lahlouh visited Ana Correia's second-grade class to work on coding and spelling.

"I taught the students how to code blue bots which is fairly simple and a great way to introduce coding for the younger grades," she said. "We used the blue bots to spell different words – we started with simple words, so the students would code the blue



Todd Elementary School students coding blue bots, one way to help introduce younger students to coding.

bots to spell the word cat, for example."

Once the students learn how to code with the blue bots, they can use coding as one of the options when they have various stations in the classroom.

"If one of the stations is word work, students can choose to use coding as one of the options to practice spelling," Lahlouh said.

Lahlouh works in both the students' classrooms and her own classroom to have the students engage in the various activities.

"Recently, for example, kindergarten students came to my room to do an activity

where they were tasked with creating a structure that will prevent an ice cube from melting," Lahlouh said.

She acknowledged that not all schools have a dedicated STEAM teacher and thinks it is fortunate to have such an opportunity for students.

"There has been a bigger push for it recently in the area because there has been a push in New York State, so more schools are starting to get STEAM teachers. I am fortunate to have been hired to do this work at Todd," Lahlouh said.



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## Lower Taxes

As a Peekskill City Councilman, Joe worked to turn the city's failing fiscal position around that had seen out of control spending and borrowing. This is the same focus that Joe will bring to Westchester County government.

## Public Safety

As a former Town of Cortlandt Court Officer and Peekskill Auxiliary Police Officer, Joe knows the critical importance of public safety. While serving in City government, Joe was the council liaison to the Police and Fire Departments as well as the Office of Emergency Management, an organization he had served as a volunteer for over a decade. His commitment to public safety and law enforcement is critical to the communities of Northern Westchester.

## Small Business

Joe knows small business. He is the owner of Reliable Sewer and Drain for close to 30 years and has championed the cause of small business to create jobs and opportunity throughout the area. As a member of the Peekskill Yacht Club, Joe sponsors annual boat rides for Peekskill's disadvantaged youth. Joe Torres is the right person at the right time to represent the Towns of Cortlandt and Yorktown and the City of Peekskill.

" I am ready to bring my experience and passion for the communities of Northern Westchester as Legislator for District 1 - Cortlandt, Peekskill, Yorktown "



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- Benefit remote workers and students
- Keep seniors safe and connected in their homes

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- Form a Sustainable Infrastructure Task Force

### Digital Surveillance Data Polices

- Address how collected digital surveillance data is accessed, shared, and retained

Paid for by Friends of April Daly

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# Is Your Palate Able to Discern a Biodynamic Wine?



By Nick Antonaccio

Over the past few weeks, I've been focusing on the virtues of organically produced wines, those that are simpatico with the natural order of agriculture, grown and produced in a symbiotic relationship with the multitude of environments that influence the aroma, taste and enjoyment of a glass of wine.

We've also explored the various phrases in today's lexicon to describe the process by which wines are produced. The use of many of these words and phrases are not regulated, or government-defined, leaving many consumers in a quandary when confronted with "natural," "organic," "sustainable" or "biodynamic" on a label or in descriptive material.

Last week we took a deep dive into one of those descriptors, biodynamic, the ultimate expression of being one with nature. It has been espoused that this practice is one that will sustain the land, the winery workforce and protect mankind from the debilitating effects of big industry's practices.

But through all this, we've yet to delve into the ultimate expression of these various organic practices: the finished product.

In my opinion, these naturally produced wines are more representative of the land on which the grapes are grown, are more representative of the surrounding elements that influence the final grapes harvested and bring out the purest expression of the land and the grapevines as nature intended.

How is biodynamic different from organic? It is a farming philosophy, not a farming practice. It incorporates elements of astronomy and benevolent co-existence with pests, all in an effort to sustain a mutually rewarding relationship with Mother Earth. For example, some practitioners will plant vines and harvest grapes by the phases of the moon in order to be in harmony with the earth's natural cycles; others will bury a cow's horn filled with cow manure in the vineyards on the autumnal equinox, believing that this will

enrich the soil over the winter in preparation for spring growth. Still others will burn insects and weeds and spread the ashes in the vineyard to ward off other pests.

This may sound like a harkening back to the Dark Ages, when occult practices prevailed, but think of it as a renaissance or an enlightenment that rejects modern day chemistry and crop management practices focused on the bottom line.

A short history of vineyard management may help here. In Western Europe, grapes have been grown for thousands of years, well

before the modern-day influences of the petrochemical industry. The introduction of chemicals into the vineyard was hailed as a miracle for grape vigor and consistency.

However, over the past century a noticeable change took place in the wines being produced. Multigenerational French family-owned wineries noticed a change in the flavors, aromas and the balance of fruit and acid in their wines. It seemed as if the wines were losing their natural characteristics. Thus, an organic movement began in the late 1970s.

By the mid-1990s, many of these French winemakers decided that organic products still fell short of creating the truest expression of their wines. So they decided to employ the biodynamic practices that had served their forefathers so well.

The result? In 1997, Domaine Leflaive, a famous winery in Burgundy, France, held a tasting. Two wines were blind-tasted and the tasters expressed a clear preference for one of them. Unbeknownst to the tasters, both wines sampled were from the same vineyard and same vintage, but



from different plots in the vineyard; one had been farmed organically and the other biodynamically.

The tasters stated that one wine had much better balance and acidity and lacked the extraneous aromas and flavors of the other wine, a purer expression of the fruit. Which wine was the overwhelming favorite? The biodynamically-produced wine. The next year Domaine

Leflaive became fully biodynamic. Numerous other winemakers have followed.

I encourage you to seek out these wines and to urge your local wine merchant to stock them. You can be the first to enjoy the ultimate green product. Spread the word.

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](mailto:nantonaccio@theexaminernews.com) or on Twitter @sharingwine.

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