WCC to Serve as COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Site

By Anna Young

Efforts to immunize eligible New Yorkers with the COVID-19 vaccine are expanding in Westchester County, with officials setting up a new distribution site at Westchester Community College.

County Executive George Latimer announced Thursday the Grasslands Road campus in Valhalla will serve as the area’s second mass vaccination site. The County Center in White Plains opened as the first state-run location on Jan 13, with the facility immunizing about 1,000 people daily.

Latimer said the extra space is necessary with individuals now due for their second dose of the vaccine, on top of those receiving their first dose.

“We need some additional space in order to help people,” Latimer said. “We are now facing giving out second shots to those people who three or four weeks ago received their first shot and so now we have to have additional space.”

The county has been distributing the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine, which is a two-dose shot that needs to be distributed 28 days apart, to those in phases 1A and 1B.

The 1B group currently consists of police, firefighters, public safety workers, educators, transit personnel and people 65 and up.

Health care workers, who have been eligible since the vaccine rolled out in December, are categorized as Phase 1A.

While there are approximately 7.1 million New Yorkers eligible to be inoculated, Gov. Andrew Cuomo granted local governments on Feb. 2 the power to expand the 1B eligibility group to restaurant workers, taxi drivers and developmentally disabled facilities.

Latimer said officials are working to survey just how many people in each occupational group want to be immunized to organize a system that gets them vaccinated more efficiently when the supply is available. The more doses of the vaccine the county has, the more cohorts of people can receive it, he said.

It was not specified when the vaccination site at Westchester Community College will be up and running. The expectation is the clinic will operate six-days-a-week, with the setup of one of the education buildings.

However, it was stressed that those wanting the vaccine should not show up at the County Center, Department of Health clinic or area pharmacies without first making an appointment.

“Do not under any circumstances just go to a vaccination site, you will be rejected,” Latimer said.

“There are no vaccines to be had at the end of the day that we’re going to throw out that you can sneak in and get one. We make sure that we give a vaccine to every single person that we plan on.”

County IDA Gives Okay of Tax-Exempt Bond Financing

By Rick Pezzullo

The Westchester County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) has approved tax-exempt bond financing and incentives for the acquisition and renovation of Marble Hall, an affordable 134-unit apartment building in the Village of Tuckahoe.

The acquisition and rehabilitation of Marble Hall will be primarily financed by $36 million in short-term tax-exempt bonds to be issued by the IDA; a $48 million HUD 223(a) permanent loan, approximately $16.85 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity, and approximately $1.38 million in interim income.

Project developer Tuckahoe Limited Partnership is also seeking a 35-year PILOT from the Village of Tuckahoe. At its January 28 meeting, the Westchester IDA also approved a sales tax exemption for Marble Hall of $245,000 and a mortgage recording tax exemption of approximately $480,000.

Located at 100 Columbus Avenue, the ten-story building features 39 one-bedroom, 77 two-bedroom, and 18 three-bedroom units. Renovations of the building, which was built in 1974, include new kitchens, baths finishes and lighting. Building exteriors would receive masonry repointing. The renovations are estimated to cost approximately $5.6 million.

“The acquisition and renovation of this nearly 50-year-old apartment building is a welcome development for our county’s affordable housing inventory. As noted in our housing needs assessment study, the preservation of existing affordable units is critically important in meeting the housing needs in our communities,” said Westchester County Executive George Latimer.

“The IDA is very pleased to provide tax-exempt bond financing and financial incentives for the acquisition and renovation of this important and much-needed development. We applaud the project developer for their private investment in affordable housing in our County,” said IDA Chair Joan McDonald.

“The preservation and rehabilitation of Marble Hall Apartments in The Village of Tuckahoe could not have happened without the tremendous amount of support received from the village, town, school district, county, and state authorities in their many forms of assistance,” said Silver Street Development Principal Chris Poulin. “We thank all of these stakeholders in trusting our ownership team’s ability to usher the property into the future and provide safe, revitalized, affordable housing for those who call Marble Hall their home.”

More from the Examiner

ArtsWestchester to Receive $20,000 Grant

ArtsWestchester has been awarded a $20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support a contemporary art exhibition titled The Social Fabric: Common Threads and Uncommon Visions. This art exhibition will feature new work and site-responsive commissions featuring Hudson Valley-area artists who use textiles to explore issues of broad social consequence. ArtsWestchester’s project is among 1,073 projects across America totaling nearly $25 million that were selected during this first round of fiscal year 2021 funding in the Grants for Arts Projects funding category.
United Way Appoints Six Members to Board of Directors

White Plains-based United Way of Westchester and Putnam’s Board of Directors has announced the appointment of six community-minded professionals to its roster.

Joining the 20 sitting board members are Swati Goel-Patel, Associate Vice President, Human Resources, PURE Insurance; Walter Hosp, Chief Executive Officer, ZenRE Holdings LLC; Joshua Kimerling, Esq., Partner and Chair of Litigation, Cuddy & Feder LLP; Kevin Kubicki, Vice President, Human Resources, Finance & Operations, IBM; Leslie Lampert, Executive Chef and Proprietor, Ladle of Love and Love Hospitality; and Bernadette Schopfer, CPA, Partner and Director of Taxation, Maier Markey & Justic LLP. Their terms are for a three-year period.

“We are very fortunate to have a group of highly respected and well-connected individuals, who want to give back to their communities through the United Way of Westchester and Putnam,” said Board Chairman Bud Hammer, who is also the President of Atlantic Westchester, Inc. “Swati, Walter, Josh, Kevin, Leslie, and Bernadette bring valued skillsets to the organization and we look forward to working with them as new additions to the Board of Directors.”

Goel-Patel, associate vice president of human resources for PURE Insurance, has more than 15 years of experience in human resources for IBM. In that capacity she is responsible for IBMers worldwide, influencing and proactively addressing business opportunities and issues related to talent, leadership, skills, labor cost, diversity and inclusion, and organizational development to support business growth. Kubicki has held a variety of positions across both Finance and Human Resources during his 19 years with IBM. Prior to joining IBM, he previously worked for the Walt Disney Company and Lockheed Martin. Kubicki earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Colorado, and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Florida.

Kimerling of Dobbs Ferry is partner and chair of the Litigation Group at Cuddy & Feder LLP. His commercial litigation practice is diverse, with varied experience in areas of real estate litigation, title and easement matters, contract and corporate disputes, commercial landlord-tenant proceedings, employment-related issues, and appellate advocacy. He has appeared before local, state, and federal courts, at both the trial and appellate levels. Kimerling is a longstanding active member of the community, previously serving on the boards of Bostwick Laboratories, Inc., Hexcel Corporation and the United Way of Westchester and Putnam’s Women’s Leadership Council. She lives in Scarsdale with her husband and three children.

Hosp, CEO of ZenRE Holdings LLC, is a Scarsdale resident who during his seasoned career, has led all aspects of financial and administrative management. His broad-based expertise includes control, treasury, planning and analysis, corporate development, investor relations, information technology, legal, risk management, compliance, and human resource functions. Hosp has served as a director and chair of the audit committee for the Trustwave Holdings, Inc. and was formerly on the boards of Bostwick Laboratories, Inc., Hexcel Corporation and the United Way of Westchester and Putnam counties where he served as Chairman of the Board from 2000 to 2002 and as its treasurer.

Kimerling of Dobbs Ferry is partner and chair of the Litigation Group at Cuddy & Feder LLP. His commercial litigation practice is diverse, with varied experience in areas of real estate litigation, title and easement matters, contract and corporate disputes, commercial landlord-tenant proceedings, employment-related issues, and appellate advocacy. He has appeared before local, state, and federal courts, at both the trial and appellate levels. Kimerling is a longstanding active member of the community, previously serving on the boards of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley and The Hudson Valley Justice Center.

Kubicki of Chappaqua is Westchester New York’s Senior Location Executive for IBM. In that capacity he is responsible for leading the strategy and execution for people and culture for 35,000 IBMers worldwide, influencing and proactively addressing business opportunities and issues related to talent, leadership, skills, labor cost, diversity and inclusion, and organizational development to support business growth. Kubicki has held a variety of positions across both Finance and Human Resources during his 19 years with IBM. Prior to joining IBM, he previously worked for the Walt Disney Company and Lockheed Martin. Kubicki earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Colorado, and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Florida.

She continues to pursue courses in Positive Psychology, Brain Based Coaching, and Conscious Leadership. Additionally, Goel-Patel is an active member of United Way of Westchester and Putnam’s Women’s Leadership Council. She lives in Airdsley with her husband and three children.

Six corporate and community leaders were appointed to three-year terms.

Goel-Patel graduated Magna Cum Laude from Manhattan College with her bachelor’s degree in Psychology and Minor in Business and an master’s degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Baruch College where she was the Salutatorian of her class.

She was the Salutatorian of her class. She received a Bachelor of Arts from Skidmore College and a Master of Science in Taxation at Maier, Markey & Justic, LLP, a Certified Public Accountant who specializes in understanding the increasing complexity of the tax laws, and translating them into ordinary, everyday language for her clients. Schopfer earned her BA in Accounting from Siena College, and her Master’s of Science in Taxation from Pace University. She is a Founding Member of United Way’s Women’s Leadership Council and a member of its original Steering Committee.

With the United Way of Westchester being an independent nonprofit, which is part of the United Way network, its board is responsible for developing the vision and policies of the organization as well as maintaining its fiscal oversight.

About United Way of Westchester and Putnam

United Way of Westchester and Putnam supports education, financial stability, and health initiatives to help residents become self-sufficient and thrive. These include the 211 Helpline, essential goods for basic needs distributions, early literacy programming for preschoolers, support services for students, job skills training and financial empowerment for adults, and access to health services for all.
COVID-19 Vaccinations to Include Residents With Co-Morbidities

By Anna Young

New York residents living with underlying health conditions ranging from cancer to diabetes will become eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine starting Monday, Feb. 15.

Cuomo expanded the list of individuals allowed to be immunized, despite warning for weeks how more than seven million currently eligible New Yorkers heavily outstrip the vaccine supply the state receives from the federal government.

“We’re committed to vaccinating vulnerable populations that have suffered the most as we distribute a strictly limited supply of vaccines, and people with co-morbidities are 94 percent of the state’s COVID deaths,” Cuomo said.

“That’s why we’ll open eligibility to people with co-morbidities starting Feb. 15 and give hospitals the ability to use extra doses they have to address that population.”

Underlying health conditions include cancer (current or in remission, including 9/11-related cancers); chronic kidney disease; pulmonary disease, including but not limited to COPD, asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, cystic fibrosis and 9/11-related illness; intellectual and developmental disabilities, including Down syndrome; heart conditions; liver disease; Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes mellitus; and pregnancy.

Also included are the immunocompromised.

That list includes those with solid organ, blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV use of corticosteroids, use of other immune weakening medicines or other causes; severe obesity; sickle cell disease or thalassemia; cerebrovascular disease; and neurological conditions such as Alzheimer’s or dementia.

Residents with underlying conditions can register for appointments starting Sunday, Cuomo said. They must show proof of their condition through a doctor’s note, signed certification or providing other evidence of a co-morbidity.

With the announcement, Cuomo warned local governments to prepare serving the new wave of eligible recipients, which makes up a reported four million people.

But Westchester County is already scrambling to ensure those already eligible are inoculated, with appointments booked for weeks and months at county facilities.

After announcing the state would see a 20 percent bump in its supply allocation in the coming weeks, Cuomo also granted local governments the power to authorize restaurant workers, taxi drivers and facilities that serve the developmentally disabled to receive the vaccine.

Currently police, firefighters, public safety workers, educators, transit personnel and people 65 and up are eligible for the vaccination. Health care workers have been eligible since the vaccine rolled out in December.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said that officials are working to survey how many people in each eligible occupational group want to be immunized to organize a system that gets them vaccinated more efficiently when the supply is available.

COVID-19 Case Update

As active coronavirus cases continue to decline in Westchester, Latimer issued concern that a mini spike could arise depending on how residents handled their Super Bowl celebrations.

Coronavirus cases in Westchester increased by 537 on Monday. There are now 8,416 active cases, a decrease of 1,862 since last week.

Latimer said sometime in the next week, the county will surpass 100,000 people who have tested positive since last year. That would represent about 10 percent of Westchester’s population have tested positive for COVID-19 at some point.

The county’s daily positivity rate is 5.56 percent, with 9,660 tests administered Wednesday. Overall, more than 1.86 million COVID-19 tests have been dispensed in Westchester since March.

The county reported five more deaths on Monday, bringing the COVID-19-related death toll to 1,976. Over the last week there have been 59 virus deaths, with 301 fatalities since Jan. 1.

As of Saturday, there are 491 virus patients in Westchester hospitals, a 10 percent decrease from two weeks ago, Latimer said.

“We’re hopeful that this slight downward trend will continue. We will see what the aftermath of Super Bowl Sunday is,” Latimer said. “We hope that people used common sense in their gatherings, but we’ll see if there is a spike that follows and if it reverses this downward trend.”

The county government has directly administered 34,908 vaccines to eligible residents, with 31,453 individuals inoculated since the County Center became a distribution site on Jan. 13. The county health department has immunized 6,344 people and 560 people have been inoculated at Westchester Community College.

Putnam County’s total caseload reached 7,625, with 33 additional positive cases recorded on Monday. The county’s daily positivity rate is 4.10 percent, with 805 tests administered on Saturday.

Putnam currently has 621 active cases, a decrease of 316 over last week.

There have been 82 coronavirus-related deaths in Putnam County since March, state data shows. One person died from the virus last week, with 15 fatalities in 2021.

Statewide there were 8,448 new positive cases on Monday, with the daily positivity rate clocking in at 4.28 percent.

There were 14 additional COVID-19-related fatalities, bringing the death toll to 36,339.

Statewide hospitalizations stood at 7,716, a decrease of 67 over the previous day. Across New York there have been 1,479,220 positive coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic.
Harckham Small Business Grant Program Looks to Help Small Owners

By Martin Wilbur

State Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro) introduced legislation Monday to create an emergency small business grant program that would set aside up to $100 million in federal disaster relief funds to help business owners imperiled by the pandemic.

The new bill would use a fraction of the next coronavirus pandemic disaster relief funds that Congress and the Biden administration are expected to disburse to the states. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has requested New York receive $15 billion.

Once New York receives the federal funds, Harckham’s proposal would authorize the state to establish the parameters for the grant program. The legislation would focus on businesses that had been asked by the state to remain closed during the pandemic, according to the proposed measure.

“The financial situation for small businesses across the state right now is dire, and we cannot wait any longer to give them the help they need to survive,” Harckham said. “Giving businesses access to emergency grants so they can pay bills and remain open is a must.”

Harckham said that not only would the legislation, which was introduced in the Assembly by Assemblyman Steven Otis (D-Rye), save thousands of businesses but it would protect the jobs for thousands more New Yorkers.

It is unknown at this time the maximum size a business can be to be eligible for participation in the program or what would happen if New York State receives less than the requested $15 billion.

The legislation is part of a package that includes two previously introduced bills that will offer small businesses and nonprofit organizations additional financial resources to help keep them going while grappling with the financial devastation caused by the pandemic. The first bill would establish a state of emergency loan program and will also guarantee loan repayment to the financial institutions that eligible small businesses statewide have been using for help.

A second bill would allow small businesses and small landlords to defer certain taxes during the COVID-19 state of emergency and repay those expenses through an installment plan later on.

For small businesses that have been decimated by the mandated shutdown through policies designed to protect public health, the need for help is dire. John Crecco, who co-owns Villa Barone Hilltop Manor, a Mahopac catering hall, with his brother Nick, said that without help from the state and federal government very soon there may not be a way for them to survive much longer.

Crecco said there has been no chance for him to operate for nearly an entire year because New York State prohibits gatherings of more than 50 people. Virtually all of Village Barone’s business, much like any caterer, is derived from parties of more than 50 guests.

During the past year, he has taken out loans totaling about $750,000 to try and stay afloat, but until now few have seemed to care, Crecco said. He’s hoping that with the proposal from the state and last week’s introduction of the federal RESTAURANTS Act in Congress, that perhaps they can survive.

Property taxes, mortgage and electric costs about $50,000 a month. Villa Barone laid off all of its 75 employees at the outset of the pandemic.

“I’m doing everything in my power, from selling my house to selling everything I own because I believe my business is a much-needed business in Mahopac,” Crecco said. “I’ve been there 20 years growing and growing, so I’m betting everything I own and there’s not much left on staying in business, but at this point there’s no hope.”
Republican Lawmakers Pressure Cuomo on Nursing Home Death Data

By Martin Wilbur

Republican state lawmakers are demanding that Gov. Andrew Cuomo release all data involving COVID-19-related nursing home deaths following the recent attorney general inquiry that revealed fatalities may have been grossly underreported.

A group of GOP legislators, including state Sen. Sue Serino (R-Hyde Park) and Assemblyman Kevin Byrne (R-Mahopac), last week called on Democrats who control the legislature and its appropriate committees to agree to an independent commission with subpoena powers if the governor’s office or Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker fail to provide the information being sought.

On Jan. 28, New York Attorney General Letitia James released a report stating that the state Department of Health may have undercounted nursing home COVID-19 deaths by as much as 50 percent. In many instances, staffing ratings from the U.S. Medicaid and Medicare Services experiencing higher COVID-19 infection rates; and inadequate personal protection equipment and a lack of testing in the pandemic’s early stages, thereby putting residents in greater danger.

The attorney general’s report used a sample of data from 62 nursing homes, about 10 percent of the state’s total. Byrne said the report highlighted many of the concerns voiced not only by his colleagues but by thousands of families across the state who lost relatives in nursing homes during the pandemic or went months without seeing their loved ones.

Last summer the legislature held hearings into the nursing home death toll but about six months later no questions have been answered, Byrne said. He added that legislators demanding answers have been portrayed as “ugly” and “political” by Cuomo and his surrogates but they will not rest until the information that has been sought has been delivered.

“One of the most significant things that it did was it validated our concerns that we’ve been voicing for many, many months.”

Last Wednesday’s press conference also featured Cindy Lizzi and her brothers Phil and Ted Minnissale, who lost their 93-year-old mother, Agnes, last April, a resident of Teresian House Center for the Elderly in Albany.

“We felt totally out of control and we felt no one was listening to us, including the nursing home,” Lizzi said.

Two local Democratic legislators said they are also deeply troubled by the governor’s response to the nursing home deaths but are willing to wait for the scheduled Feb. 25 appearance by Zucker before the legislature before taking additional action.

State Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) and Assemblyman Tom Abinanti (D-Pleasantville) said they expect the information to be delivered by that date.

“With respect to nursing home deaths, get the data, lets analyze and decide how to move forward,” Mayer said. “That to me is the responsible way. I’m not in a partisan fight, I’m in a fight for my constituents to get the information they need.”

The investigation by the attorney general’s office into the issue is continuing.

All Smiles

This February, Touro Dental Health in Hawthorne will celebrate its annual Give Kids a Smile with a variety of fun virtual programs to educate children and teens on the importance of good oral hygiene. From Feb. 16-26, youngsters 16 and under can also receive free dental screenings, cleanings, x-rays, fluoride, sealants and some preventative restorations, including fillings, at Touro Dental Health. Space is limited and exclusions may apply. Multiple appointments may be required to complete treatment. To schedule an appointment for free dental care, call 914-594-2700 or visit www.dental.touro.edu/GKAS.

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North Castle Police Department

Jan. 29: A Rock Hill Road resident reported at 11:24 a.m. being notified via mail that an unknown person has filed for unemployment in his name in the states of Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Jan. 31: At 11:40 a.m., there was a report of a 61-year-old man who swallowed a vitamin earlier this morning, which appears to still be lodged in his throat causing him difficulty breathing. The caller advised that her husband is conscious and alert at this time. The call was transferred to County Fire Control. The responding officer stated that the subject was transported by Armonk Fire Department to Northern Westchester Hospital.

Jan. 31: A passerby arrived at headquarters at 12:51 p.m. to inform officers of three to five kids observed skating on the ice at Wampus Pond. County police were dispatched to respond. The skaters were directed off the ice.

State Police/Somers

Jan. 31: Benjamin J. Deurso, 26, of Somers, was arrested and charged with two counts of second-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a Class A-II felony, first-degree possession of marijuana, a Class C felony, three counts of seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and second-degree criminal use of drug paraphernalia, both Class A misdemeanors. At about 11:45 p.m., troopers stopped a 2020 Chevrolet Equinox on I-684 in Bedford for a vehicle and traffic violation. Deurso, the driver, was found to be in possession of about 2.4 grams of Lysergic acid diethylamide, 4.1 pounds of psilocybin mushrooms, 15.9 pounds of marijuana, boxes of THC edibles and oil and $4,000 in cash. He was issued an appearance ticket returnable to Town of Bedford Court on Feb. 17.

Putnam Sheriff’s Department

Jan. 20: At 8:40 a.m., in the vicinity of Route 6 and Simpson Road in Carmel, Deputy Shane Rossiter pulled over a 2008 Dodge Charger for an expired inspection. Upon further investigation, it was determined that the driver, Todd Carmody, 39, possessed cocaine, Suboxone and marijuana. Carmody was charged with two misdemeanor counts of seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and unlawful possession of marijuana. He was also issued a summons for an un inspected vehicle. Carmody was issued an appearance ticket for the Town of Southeast Court on Feb. 26.

Jan. 23: Deputy Matthew Shelters discovered a vehicle stopped in the middle of Route 6 in the Town of Southeast, blocking the south bound lane of traffic, at about 10:35 p.m. Upon further investigation, the deputy determined that the driver, Perfecto Lopez-Garcia, 39, was the sole occupant of the vehicle. Shelters approached Lopez-Garcia and based on his observations suspected that he was intoxicated. Further investigation revealed that Lopez-Garcia had a blood-alcohol content of .11. He was arrested and charged with two Driving While Intoxicated misdemeanor counts and two traffic violations.

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By Martin Wilbur

The North Castle Town Board will hold a public hearing Wednesday evening on a proposed local law that would reduce the percentage of affordable housing units for a revised condominium project at the old lumberyard site in Armonk.

Town officials are weighing whether to allow developer Michael Fareri to provide 10 percent affordable housing units instead of 20 percent for his reconstituted proposal at 162 Bedford Rd. In exchange for lowering the density from 36 to 22 units, he would be required to provide two units of affordable housing rather than six.

However, Fareri has until June 30, 2022, to complete construction to be able to obtain the zoning text amendment unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The town approved the 36-unit plan more than five years ago, but Fareri then balked at complying with the 20 percent affordable housing units. The developer’s pledges to build the project in this town and probably an additional 100 have never once did I not complete a job.”

Berra reiterated previous comments he made, calling the text change “misguided.” He said while the main motivation for Fareri has been economic, the realities of the housing market in the area have changed over the past year.

“We know that pricing has gone up for housing in this area since COVID,” Berra said. “So leave it at that, Mike, no offense intended. I don’t want to rehash old histories (but) that’s my view and I’m trying to look out for my town just like everybody else is on the board.”

Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said that the board should clarify what would constitute close enough to being finished with construction for Fareri to avoid losing the proposed affordable housing unit reduction. She said it would make sense for Fareri to start construction and dawdle.

Schiliro said the town will consult with Building Inspector Robert Melillo to make sure everyone’s in agreement.

“We want this project built and completed and we know there’s a certain amount of time that’s needed to do it,” Schiliro said. “We are focused on you getting it done as quickly as you can, but we’ll make sure we’re covering all our bases before the hearing.”

The public hearing is part of Wednesday’s North Castle Town Board meeting that begins at 7:30 p.m.

No. Castle Hearing to Open on Fewer Affordable Units at Old Lumberyard
Reservoir in accordance with the Interim Ashokan Release Protocol (IRP); and

2. Delay of dredging accumulated material (alum floc) from Kensico Reservoir until the completion of certain infrastructure projects.

Implementation of the turbidity control measures analyzed in the Draft EIS would allow NYCDEP to continue to provide reliable, clean, and safe drinking water while reducing reliance on chemical treatment of the water supply, specifically the use of alum, during episodic turbidity events.

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT (SEQRA):
The project is a Type I Action as designated by 6 NYCRR §617.4(b)(6)(i). The Consent Order required the preparation of a Draft EIS. A Draft EIS has been prepared, and the NYSDEC, as lead agency, has determined that the Draft EIS is adequate for public review and comment. As noted below, written public comments will be accepted on the Draft EIS until March 16, 2021. In addition, pursuant to 6 NYCRR §617.9(a)(4), NYSDEC has made the determination to hold a public comment hearing, the details of which are provided below in the legislative public comment hearing section of this notice.

NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION:
The NYSDEC has determined that the permit application filed for the proposed SPDES permit modification is complete for purposes of further NYSDEC review and public comment pursuant to the Uniform Procedures Act (UPA) §621.7. NYSDEC permit jurisdiction includes the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit (ECL Article 17). As noted below, written public comments will also be accepted on the application and Draft SPDES Permit, including the Proposed Revised Operating Protocol and Revised Monitoring Plan, until March 16, 2021.

ADDITIONAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS:
State Historic Preservation Act ("SHPA") Determination:
The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYSPRHP) was consulted and their determination indicated that the Proposed Action would have no impact on archaeological or historic resources within the study area.

Coastal Zone Management: This project is not located in a Coastal Management Area and, therefore, is not subject to the Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY:
The Draft EIS, which includes permit application materials are available for public review on the internet at the following websites: NYCDEP Website: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dep/about/catskill-influent-chamber.page NYSDEC Website: https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/79771.html. Hard Copies of these documents can also be requested from NYCDEP by emailing catalumeis@dep.ny.gov or calling 718-595-4614.

LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING:
A legislative public comment hearing on the permit application and the Draft EIS will be held before Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Michele M. Stefanucci to receive unwritten statements from the public at 4:00 P.M. on Wednesday, March 3, 2021, through the Webex Events electronic webinar platform. All persons, organizations, corporations or government agencies that may be affected by the proposed project are invited to attend the legislative public comment hearing and to submit oral comments on the Draft EIS, applications and draft permits. Instructions on how to “join” the hearing webinar and provide an oral statement may be accessed at the NYCDEP webpage for the Ashokan Reservoir at https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/79771.html. Persons who wish to receive the instructions by mail or telephone may call the NYCDEP Catalum SPDES Permit public comment hearing. The ALJ may restrict the time available for each person, to ensure that all persons will have an opportunity to be heard. It is recommended that lengthy comments be summarized at the hearing and submitted in writing as indicated below. Equal weight will be given to both oral and written comments.

Interpreter services shall be made available to deaf persons, and English language translator service shall be made available to persons with limited English-language proficiency, at no charge upon written request to the ALJ identified above, at least ten (10) business days prior to the hearing. The written request must be addressed to ALJ Stefancuci, NYCDEP Office of Hearings and Mediation Services, 625 Broadway, 1st Floor, Albany, NY 12233-1550 or emailed to ALJ Stefancucci at ohms@dec.ny.gov.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS:
All interested parties may submit written comment concerning the Draft EIS and permit applications to the DEC Contact Person listed below by March 16, 2021. Comments sent by regular mail must be postmarked no later than March 16, 2021. E-mail comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. March 16, 2021.

DEC CONTACT PERSON:
Kristen Cady-Poulin, Environmental Analyst, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233, Phone: 518-402-9167, E-mail DEPPermi-
ing@dec.ny.gov.
White Plains Music Therapist Helps Others By Writing Anthem for Change

By Sophia Spiegel

It took just one conversation in a New York City subway station for White Plains resident Donald Stevens to develop an even greater appreciation for music and the positive impact it can have on others. Stevens recently created a new anthem for change while participating in the online show “Date While You Wait.”

Set in New York City subway stations, this social experiment was created by Thomas Knox, who invites commuters to play board games while they wait on the platform for their train. He connects with busy New Yorkers on a more intimate level to help empower personal connections.

In October, Stevens, a White Plains resident who works at the Music Conservatory of Westchester, appeared on the show and talked with Knox about his experiences working with children and adults with disabilities.

In the midst of their conversation, Stevens began creating what would be an original song, “You Can Change the World.” Within moments, Knox began singing along with Stevens, as the two connected over the joyous tune that was inspired by their conversation.

After the episode was filmed, “Date While You Wait” Executive Producer David Harris Katz encouraged Stevens to finish the song and shoot a music video to celebrate the premise of the show and the positive impact one conversation between strangers can have on the world.

“In our world of distance and isolation, the message of personal connection and the reminder that we all have the power to make positive change rings out,” said Lisa Sandagata, director of outreach services of the Music Therapy Institute at the Music Conservatory of Westchester.

Stevens said even if the change isn’t monumental, it can potentially alter a person’s life for the better, which in turn, can change another life.

Growing up in White Plains, Stevens was always surrounded by music. His father is a musician and singer, his three sisters are all singers and he even has family members in England who are pop stars.

“Music runs real deep in our family, so I have been around music and playing in church my whole life,” said Stevens, one of the few Black American men to earn a master’s degree in music therapy from New York University.

Stevens was inspired to become a music therapist after serving as a mental health worker at New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

As a music therapist, Stevens works to create an environment that is comfortable for his students, clients and patients so that they can freely express themselves. Over the past 10 years, he has worked in numerous local school districts, engaging weekly with more than 120 students from elementary school to high school. Stevens works closely with teachers, speech pathologists and other medical professionals to help patients cope through music.

He also works with military veterans in the tristate area through the Healing Our Heroes program. Many of the veterans he serves suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and use music therapy to help with their cognitive, psychological and physical recovery.

“It’s not just the music that we talk about, we talk about life and how we can apply it,” Stevens explained. “I understand the differences between people, have conversations with them, and then turn it into a song, which is one of my philosophies that every conversation is a song.”

The transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has posed extensive challenges for Stevens’ work, which he acknowledges is more effective in person. Stevens said he hopes he can provide his students and clients with a positive way to cope with the pandemic’s stress. The world needs more hope than ever right now, which is his motivation to create an album this year that will be focused on hope and confidence, he said.

Stevens’ one conversation with Knox changed his life. On May 3, Stevens will be performing virtually with The New York Songwriters Circle, a community of songwriters who collaborate by sharing their ideas and performing their music. He will be singing “You Can Change the World” and two other songs he has written.

“Whatever you have in mind to do, whatever your passion is, whatever your talent is, use it because whatever you have is going to change the world,” Stevens said.
Obituaries

Eleanor Kwap

Eleanor Kwap, 94, of Brewster died Feb. 1.
Kwap was born and raised in Yonkers to
Stephen and Rose Kranko on Apr. 27, 1926.
After graduation from Yonkers High
School of Commerce, she worked as a
secretary. Theodore and Eleanor married in
1950. They moved to Brewster with their
Eleanor’s avocation was gardening and
neighbors could often find her outside
in her garden. She had a smile and kind
word for all she knew. For 30 years
she volunteered at Putnam Hospital’s
Brewster Eagle Eye Thrift Store. Eleanor
worked at Grolier Educational Corp. in
Danbury.
Candlewood Lake, Conn. was a big part
of their family’s life. For over 35 years,
they were members of the Candlewood
Power Squadron and Danbury Yacht Club.
Eleanor and Theodore enjoyed travel with
the Southeast Seniors and IBM where
Theodore worked. She was a member of
the Brewster Senior Center. They enjoyed
wintering in Florida after Theodore retired.
The family wishes to thank all her aides
and neighbors for her care at home. Eleanor
is predeceased by husband, Theodore; son
Richard, her sister, Florence O’Connell;
brother-in-law Joseph O’Connell; and
recently nephew Warren O’Connell.
She is survived by her daughter Patricia
(Bruce) Kemble; granddaughter Cheryl
(Eric) Kozlowski of New Fairfield, Conn.;
grandson David Kemble of North Carolina;
great-grandchildren Shawn Kemble and
Emma, Abigail and Leah Kozlowski;
dughter-in-law Kathy Feeney Kwap; and
cousins in Connecticut.
In lieu of flowers, donations may be made
to Putnam Hospital, Volunteer Office, 670
Stoneleigh Ave., Carmel, N.Y. 10512.
Visitation is Wednesday, Feb. 10 at
Beecher Funeral Home in Brewster from 4
to 8 p.m. A funeral service will be held on
Thursday, Feb. 11 at St. Lawrence O’Toole
Church in Brewster at 10 a.m.

Angela Ericson

Angela F Ericson (nee Cammarasana), 84,
of Dingmans Ferry, Pa. passed away on Feb.
2 at St. Clare’s Dover Hospital in Dover, N.J.
Angela graduated from Boys and Girls
High School in Brooklyn and attended
Queens College, majoring in accounting.
She began her career at Blue Cross Blue Shield
in New York City, where she was a head
administrator for claims. She became a stay-
at-home mom in 1970 and took some part-
time positions outside of the home. In Ozone
Park, Queens, she worked at Markette, a
variety store, for a number of years before
moving to Dingmans Ferry, where she
worked as a cashier at Weis Supermarket
for a short time. She loved interacting with
customers and thoroughly enjoyed every
minute of it.
The daughter of the late Dorothea (Agate)
and Matteo Cammarasana, Ericson was born
on May 29, 1936. She met her husband,
Eugene, on a blind date on June 26, 1965,
and they were married on Nov. 6, 1965. Her
husband predeceased her on Nov. 18, 2020,
at the age of 89.
She was the loving mother to Loretta (her
spouse, Chris) Marengo of Pleasantville
and Steven (his spouse, Jackie) Ericson and
Robert Ericson, both of Dingmans Ferry.
She is also survived by her grandchildren
Shannon, Megan, Jessica, Isabella and
Makaya and grand-dog, Snickers.
The family received friends on Feb.
8 at Beecher Flooks Funeral Home in
Pleasantville. A Mass of Christian Burial
was celebrated at Holy Innocents R.C.
Church on Feb. 9 at 10 a.m. Burial followed
at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Coram, N.Y.
Donations to her memory may be made
to the American Diabetes Association at

State Police Nab Cortlandt Man in Montrose Burglary

A Cortlandt man was arrested last
week after breaking into a Montrose
home while the residents were sleeping.
Darius McCallop, 32, was charged by
state police on Jan. 27 with second-
degree burglary and fourth-degree
criminal possession of stolen property,
both felonies.
Troopers were dispatched to a home
on James Street at 3:07 a.m. on that date
after the occupants were awakened by
the sounds of a break-in and dialed 911.
McCallop fled the residence and was
tracked by the responding troopers in
the freshly fallen snow.
He was located on Catherine Street and
was found to be in possession of a stolen
wallet containing about $782.
McCallop was arraigned in Town of
Cortlandt Court and remanded to
Westchester County Jail without bail.
--Rick Pozzuillo

Thomas Pomposello Sr.

It is with love and great sadness that
the family of Thomas J. Pomposello Sr.
announces his passing on Feb. 5 at the age
of 73.
Tom was a longtime Westchester resident
and a retired ironworker from Local 580 with
more than 30 years on the job.
The youngest son of Concetta Pomposello
(née Bellafatto) and Arthur Pomposello Sr.,
Tom was born on Sept. 3, 1947, in New York
City. Growing up in the Bronx, he spent
his childhood cheering on Mickey Mantle’s
Yankees, often occupying the bleachers as
the team won eight World Series titles in
the 1950s and ’60s. Before settling down and
starting his career and family, Tom served
his country in the U.S. Army.
In addition to baseball, Tom also had a
passion for hockey, which included a stint
moonlighting on the New York Rangers’
equipment staff in the 1970s. Year in and
year out, he watched hundreds of NHL
games per season, not supporting any one
family members who knew Tom in life to
be gregarious at holidays and get-togethers
with those he loved, and rarely at a loss for
words. He is also survived by his lifelong best
friend, Craig Williams, as well as his loving
companion, Sylvia Adorno, affectionately
referred to as “Cha Cha,” and his little four-
legged buddy JayB (“Fuzzy”).
It’s Elementary: Bedford School Mentor Program Persists in Pandemic

By Lindsay Emery

Tommy Rozgonyi is following in his brother’s footsteps by leading student mentorship program It’s Elementary – Giving Back to Where It All Started.

But with distanced learning amid COVID-19 restrictions, the program has had to adapt and become a fully virtual experience.

The Bedford School District program, now in its sixth year, provides guidance and friendship to children who need extra support as they navigate their way through the primary grades. The program pairs Fox Lane High School mentors with children in grades 2-5 at Mount Kisco Elementary School, and within the past two years, Bedford Hills Elementary School.

Despite the absence of in-person meetings, Rozgonyi adjusted many of the activities so that they could be completed in the young students’ homes. Games like scavenger hunts were altered so the children could find all the objects in their house instead of at school, he said.

“I think they need it more now than ever with the pandemic being especially hard on students,” Rozgonyi said. “A lot of them are fully remote and don’t go into school so they don’t have a lot of social interaction, so we provide a good deal of that for them.”

Since its inception, It’s Elementary has grown from seven students to more than 40 mentors and mentees. Rozgonyi said he and the other high school mentors plan the 30-minute sessions every month.

Mount Kisco Elementary School Assistant Principal Angélique Johnson ensures that everybody has the link for the Google Meet, since the students can’t gather on school grounds due to coronavirus restrictions.

Johnson, who has seen the program’s development, praised the commitment of the Rozgonyi family and the mission that they set out to accomplish from the outset.

“Because they had a vision for a mentor program, where the kids from high school could give back to Mount Kisco, and that’s still happening,” she said.

Johnson said the program is important because it provides a sense of pride to the students, noting an instance where an elementary school student expressed enthusiasm to reach high school so they could become a mentor one day.

“I can’t say enough about the high school students,” Johnson said. “They love working with our students and they’ve built some great relationships with them and they encourage them and they support them and I do guide them.”

The program’s framework allows for both the mentors and the younger children to determine what is needed at any given time, whether that be a fun activity or just someone to talk to.

Before the pandemic, the program developed connections through one-on-one time and interpersonal team building.

Now, previous physical outlets like playing sports outside are replaced with traditional games with a twist, such as online charades.

However, Rozgonyi is optimistic the mentors will get to meet their mentees in the spring and gather outside with masks while socially distanced. He’s also hopeful of a future where in-person activities can resume without issue.

“Hopefully next year, we’ll be able to do all the fun things, like building gingerbread houses is one of the (activities) they loved,” Rozgonyi said.

Despite the challenges, Rozgonyi said It’s Elementary is filling a void that many students have been missing since last March.

“During the pandemic, I would say at least in my experience, it’s definitely much harder to get the social interaction that we used to have,” Rozgonyi said. “Because a lot of kids aren’t going into school when I go in, I don’t see many friends. So I’m sure the kids are feeling the same way, but it’s really nice to get the kids together to have some friends to talk to consistently after school.”
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Guest Column

Victory Gardens: A Great Food Source That Helps Build Community

By Emil Moussa

Whether you enjoy the winter season or not, spring is around the corner. Because of this, the gardener must always have a plan of action to tackle the necessities of having a successful harvest of his or her goods and bounty from the earth.

With that being said, I recently started to think about gardening as a whole. Although I am a self-admitted novice at this fun and endearing hobby, I feel that the garden is one of the great assets one can have when residing in suburbia.

I also started to think about the interesting history of the Victory Garden, what it means and what it stands for; and if you don’t have one already, why you should create your own version of the Victory Garden.

Victory Gardens are truly what they are – a garden to help declare victory. The concept has been around since World War I and continued into the second World War when foods were rationed. I couldn’t think of a more appropriate time to revive such a great idea.

The world we live in now has seen a stark increase in the cost of food, especially the ones that are better for us while the unhealthier foods remain cheaper to buy and consume. What’s been going on the past year has also played out on our television screens – long lines going on the past year has also played out on our television screens – long lines going on the past year has also played out on our television screens – long lines across America for those that, through no fault of their own, have fallen into despair as the current crisis has been trying the American spirit.

Times were difficult enough with the long economic recovery following the Great Recession; it’s now gotten worse the past year and the cracks of the facade of American prosperity are showing for the world to see. Who would have thought that one of the richest, most powerful, freedom loving people on Earth could succumb to such a tragic fate? Who would have guessed that a continental power, let alone a global power, could see food lines stretch across our great cities? No one, that’s who.

Let’s take care of one another. With all that’s happening in our world right now, a Victory Garden is but a small contribution you can make for the greater good. By no means will it solve all our problems. But it’s something we can do to help us contribute in a sort of national service (national in the scope of your local community at least).

You can start one of your own growing herbs and nutritious fruits and vegetables. Use it as an opportunity to give yourself and your family some nutritious foods in your diet. Take the kids out to work on it so they can actually know where their food comes from and a little extra work outside might actually be good for them. Nothing is a better confidence booster than seeing the fruits of your labor literally come out and knowing that it was because of you.

Use the excess to give or share with your neighbors, some you may not even know. This is how we build a community. We live so close together but remain so far apart. This is but a small gesture in rebuilding our suburban communities.

Perhaps your town has vacant lots and unused land. Why keep them vacant? What good does the empty land do? Why wait for a developer to come along and put another box store where we don’t need, and for that matter, even want one?

Create a group of fellow citizens to approach your local government to turn these once vacant lots into flourishing gardens that the community owns. A small piece of land everyone can work on and produce some extra food for themselves. Give the excess food to a local food pantry, letting your fellow citizens know that they are not forgotten and they shan’t be lost.

Some of us have forgotten how to take care of one another in this country. This is an effort to remind us of who we are. The Victory Garden is a way to bring back a uniquely American idea of growing one’s own food source in a patriotic and community-oriented way while still remaining an individualistic, self-reliant person.

I would encourage you to, at the very least, consider this idea and find a path to creating a Victory Garden that best fits you and your community. No two Victory Gardens will be the same, but they will have the same purpose.

Happy gardening!

Emil Moussa is a public school teacher and is a member of the Town of Cortlandt Conservation Advisory Council.

Letter to the Editor

Have Your Say on Putnam Police Reform on February 17

On June 12, 2020, Gov. Cuomo issued an executive order requiring a Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative for all police jurisdictions in New York state. The stated purpose of the order is to “address racial bias and disproportionate policing in communities of color,” recognizing that there has been a “long and painful history in New York State of discrimination and mistreatment of Black and African-American citizens.”

In response, Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell created a lead panel of legislators, county employees and police officers in early August, and later formed nine subgroups from a pool of applicants. These subgroups only included two groups focused on people of color. The groups were invited to form in November with a January deadline for proposals.

The limited timeframe provided to formulate recommendations did not allow for a complete review. The resulting Draft Police Policy Comprehensive Review released by the county (available at https://www.putnamcountyny.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Putnam-County-Police-Policy-Comprehensive-Review.pdf) contains contradictory recommendations and needs more clarity on implementation.

The Draft Police Policy Comprehensive Review includes a Stakeholder Addendum explaining our views on page 31.

In an acknowledgement of this, the county recently met with the People of Color Subcommittee and offered to allow a permanent, community-appointed Public Accountability Committee composed primarily of people of color to provide ongoing input on policing throughout Putnam County.

This committee should be provided access to materials reviewed by the Protective Services and other relevant committees of the legislature and the Sheriff’s Department and invited into the decision-making process on substantive issues of policing in order to foster the mandated collaboration with the community.

On Feb. 17, Putnam County will hold the first public meeting of the Police Policy Review Panel in which the broader community will be invited to comment. We ask that Putnam residents, and specifically people of color, attend and urge the county to follow through on its plan to work with the Public Accountability Committee. It is important that residents of color have proper representation in this process and that there is a mechanism for ongoing stakeholder participation and revision.

We are encouraged by the county’s commitment to establish this Public Accountability Committee and urge the public to voice their support for it on Feb. 17. Comments may also be submitted via e-mail to PoliceReviewPanel@putnamcountyny.gov.

Scott Rhodes (Brewster), Jenie Fu (Putnam Valley), Ron Reid (Patterson), Joelle DePaola (Brewster), People of Color Subcommittee

Sean Conway (Philipstown), Eileen McDermott (Brewster), LGBTQIA+ Subcommittee

Lou Riolo (Brewster), Education Subcommittee

Baila Lemonik (Mahopac), Mental Health Subcommittee

Have Your Say on Putnam Police Reform on February 17
**Staying Grounded Through Pandemic With Yoga – and for a Good Cause**

By Martin Wilbur

Like so many other aspects of life during the past year, the pandemic has brought havoc to those who love yoga and their instructors. Many studios have been forced to close, whether it be temporarily or permanently and move online. One local yoga instructor has found a way not only to continue providing virtual classes for her students, but has also been collaborating with colleagues to raise money for important causes and organizations.

This Saturday at noon, Alka Kaminer will be the lead teacher in Saturday’s virtual yoga benefit to raise money for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. This is the fourth yoga fundraiser Kaminer has been part of since last June.

Alka Kaminer will be the lead teacher in Saturday's virtual yoga benefit to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. This is the fourth yoga fundraiser Kaminer has been part of since last June.

Floyd. She and her friend held an online class, which doubled as a charity event for Reclaim the Block, an organization that supports communities in Minneapolis.

That initial effort was popular enough that Kaminer concluded that she should bring the follow-up edition of the event two months later. The second event was held in support of Neighbors Link, the Mount Kisco–based organization that helps to acculturate immigrants to their new community and country, followed by another that benefitted the Alzheimer’s Association.

New the thought is to hold a Yoga for Charity event about every other month. Without the restrictions due to the pandemic, we are able to hold our events much more quickly,” said Alka's husband, Brian Kaminer.

“We are excited to see how people responded to our events and we want to continue to offer more opportunities to support important causes,” Brian said.

The local access television station is running a virtual talent contest; entries due by Feb. 28.

**PCTV Holding Virtual Talent Contest; Entries Due By Feb. 28**

By Martin Wilbur

If you have any type of performance talent, Pleasantville Community Television (PCTV) would like to hear from you this month.

The local access television station is running a virtual talent contest, where anyone who can sing, dance, play a musical instrument, do a quick standup routine or any other form of entertainment can forward a two-minute video of themselves via e-mail to PCTV by Feb. 28.

All residents of New York State are eligible to enter, not just Pleasantville residents, said PCTV Board President GG Kopilak.

“On Saturday, the online yoga event will feature five different instructors leading their portion of the class for about 13 minutes each. Kaminer will take a bit longer since she will be introducing the class and others. The event will also feature an appearance by St. Jude representatives who will talk about the work they do and perhaps include a conversation with a family helped by the hospital.”

Last June, Kaminer had spoken to a friend who has relatives in Minnesota affected by the protests following the death of George Floyd. She and her friend held an online class, which doubled as a charity event for Reclaim the Block, an organization that supports communities in Minneapolis.

That initial effort was popular enough that Kaminer concluded that she should bring the follow-up edition of the event two months later. The second event was held in support of Neighbors Link, the Mount Kisco–based organization that helps to acculturate immigrants to their new community and country, followed by another that benefitted the Alzheimer’s Association.

This weekend’s roughly 90-minute virtual experience will raise money for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

“We were trying just to get our word out there and we are doing so there are so many people that are also in need and how could we serve them as well, and we realized that it could be used for a charity event,” said Kaminer, an Armonk resident.

On Saturday, the online yoga event will feature five different instructors leading their portion of the class for about 12 to 13 minutes each. Kaminer will take a bit longer since she will be introducing the class and others. The event will also feature an appearance by St. Jude representatives who will talk about the work they do and perhaps include a conversation with a family helped by the hospital.

Last June, Kaminer had spoken to a friend who has relatives in Minnesota affected by the protests following the death of George Floyd. She and her friend held an online class, which doubled as a charity event for Reclaim the Block, an organization that supports communities in Minneapolis.

That initial effort was popular enough that Kaminer concluded that she should bring the follow-up edition of the event two months later. The second event was held in support of Neighbors Link, the Mount Kisco–based organization that helps to acculturate immigrants to their new community and country, followed by another that benefitted the Alzheimer’s Association.

The thought was to hold a Yoga for Charity event about every other month to help not only those who enjoy yoga make it through the pandemic, but to assist organizations that depend on donations.

“Our intention is to work with large organizations as well as local organizations and we’re giving back, not only nationally and globally, but also to our community as well,” said Kaminer, who for several years has led yoga and meditation classes at the North Castle Public Library in Armonk two days a week. She has continued those classes online since last year as well.

“We’re like so many other people, we’ve just been involved, our consciousness has been increased through the events of 2020 and seeing which ways you could further and be of service to the greater community,” added Kaminer’s husband, Brian.

He said that through the first three fundraisers they were able to donate a combined $3,000 to the designated charities.

As word begins to filter out and the events are better publicized, the totals have slowly increased. As of last week, Brian Kaminer estimated that they had already come close to matching their previous combined total with Saturday’s class.

For the upcoming event, instructors will lead participants through several different yoga styles. Alka Kaminer said, anyone can register for the class, even those who are novices. If someone wants to join but decides to observe for part of the program, that is fine as well, she said.

Alka and Brian agreed that yoga sessions, even when virtual, provide people with a way to manage through difficult times.

“Every day, it gives them a way to stay connected with friends, with their community,” she said. “It’s bringing them back into their bodies and achieved a sense of being present as opposed to letting their minds take them away into anxiety or fear or worry.”

“I think the higher levels of anxiety in society attracted people to it, and my understanding with my own practice – I’m not an instructor but personal experience – it really helps reset your anxiety levels,” Brian Kaminer said.

Registration for Saturday Charity for Yoga is $10 a person. Participants are free to donate more if they choose. For more information about the event and to register, visit www.presentwisdom.com.
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The Mudroom and the Foyer: Those Important ‘In-Between’ Spaces

What the decompression chamber is to astronauts and what the hyperbaric chamber is to deep sea divers, so the foyer, traditionally at the front of a house, and the mudroom, typically around back, are to homeowners.

It’s those in-between areas that allow one to transition with impunity from one environment that may be dusty, dirty, muddy or wet into a cleaner space.

Just by their names, one may assume that the mudroom is a dirtier, more utilitarian kind of space, while the foyer may be grand in appearance, putting a home’s best foot forward, so to speak, to the visitor.

The mudroom, mostly as a lean-to shed or an enclosed porch attached to the back of the house, was popular from the 18th century to the 1920s. But as our society shifted from farming to less physical endeavors, mudrooms were banished to the back to give way to the foyer in front.

But in the 1950s, perhaps because Americans started to collect more “stuff” in a more prosperous time following World War II, the mudroom regained popularity, adding storage space to the function of housing coats and shoes. In the 1970s, it morphed into a combo storage/laundry room when homeowners demanded that washers and dryers make their way up from the basement. Eventually designers questioned the wisdom of combining a place for shedding dirt with laundering, and washers and dryers made their way up to the more convenient second-story bedroom level.

Today the mudroom serves many individualized needs of the homeowner. Most times it’s now incorporated into the footprint of the house, taking space from the kitchen and most often situated as an entry from an attached garage.

As a realtor, I’ve listed homes where the mudroom has featured a pantry as an extension to the kitchen, an office, a hobby center, a sports equipment storage facility, a potting room for the garden and a changing room for the pool, the latter of which was the case with my mudroom when I owned an 18th century farmhouse.

When I found that home, it featured a motley mudroom that had been tacked on to the back of the house sometime after 1860. All but abandoned in terms of maintenance, it was just a loosely framed lean-to with a cracked cement floor, and the ceiling was just the raw rafters of the roof, overlaid with wood shingles. There was no insulation and only wood shelves on one wall suggesting that the structure may have doubled as a potting shed.

Because it was the direct access from our driveway to the kitchen, it was hardly an attractive entrance to the house.

In my boldest construction project before or since, I chopped away the broken cement and hand-poured a new concrete foundation from a number of mixings in my wheelbarrow. I insulated the walls and created a nice closet and space for a half-bath. Other than the installation of the bathroom fixtures and a new windowed door that replaced one with decaying solid wood, I did all the work myself.

My work in that house from long ago gave me a great sense of satisfaction every time I entered or left the house.

When designing a mudroom and selecting its finishes, it’s well to remember that there’s a reason that the word “mud” lingers in its name. Materials for flooring should therefore be durable, easy to clean and water resistant. This is not the space for wall-to-wall carpeting, but tile, vinyl, natural slate or porcelain tile are excellent flooring choices.

Wall treatments also should not be delicate. They might be a solid vinyl covering, which can be scrubbed without damage, or paneling that will be more forgiving when visitors lean against the wall to remove their soiled shoes or boots.

One design trick is to use the same cabinetry in the mudroom that’s used in the kitchen, which gives the impression that both rooms are bigger than they actually are.

Many times, mudrooms don’t have windows, although it’s ideal if they do. If not, overhead lighting is preferred, rather than wall fixtures that protrude into cramped space or standing lamps that could interfere with cleaning the floor.

A modern mudroom might best include closed storage areas and a large closet organized in a way to separate clothing and dryers made their way up to the more convenient second-story bedroom level.

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A modern mudroom might best include closed storage areas and a large closet organized in a way to separate clothing and equipment for the outside. Lacking a closet, the mudroom can accommodate an armoire for storage purposes.

Now that I live in a spanking new condo, my mudroom has been replaced with an entrance foyer which is far less utilitarian. It features only a thigh-high decorative column that serves as a catch-all for newspapers and mail, and a large mirror with which to check our personal appearance on the way out. And, of course, that’s important too.

Bill Primavera, while a writer and public relations practitioner, is also a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate. To engage the talents and services of The Home Guru to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.
Benefit Shop Foundation to Hold Auction on Feb. 24

Some collectors collect one type of item they are passionate about while others have room in their hearts— and homes—for more numerous types of pieces.

For decades, a Brooklyn couple collected vintage radios and phonographs, Roseville pottery, Asian porcelain, blue and white china, “Gone with the Wind” lamps and much more.

The kitchen was a veritable sea of whimsical and kitschy red items from cherry red bowls to pots and even the toaster oven. Their home was chock-full of the antiques they loved, and the living room, for example, looked like a Victorian parlor on steroids with red velvet chairs and a large cathedral radio. The home was tidy and neatly organized, however, with everything in place.

After their passing, their collection is now going to new homes with the first group of highlights from their collections crossing the block at The Benefit Shop Foundation, Inc. at a Red Carpet auction on Wednesday, Feb. 24 at 10 a.m. The couple had so many items they are still being cataloged and their estate will spill over into a March auction as well.

“They collected everything under the sun and never threw anything out,” said Pam Stone, owner and founder of The Benefit Shop Foundation, Inc. “You could describe this as a curated kitsch collection, featuring vintage radios from the 1920s through the 1980s.”

Radios are an iconic piece of Americana, and before the age of television, families would gather around the radio to hear music and stories, the news of the day or follow their favorite sports team. Indeed, the vintage radios come in all forms with tubes or transistors and made of different materials, from Bakelite and Catalin to wood.

Spanning decades and styles, the featured radios ranged from small tabletop models to larger cathedral-style models and even one that looks like a fireplace mantel. Many are from companies that once were industry leaders but are now history footnotes, such as Zephyr, Crosley, Majestic, Emerson and Sentinel.

Highlights include an RCA Victor fireplace radio with intricate wooden detail and measuring 50-by-60 inches by 25 inches. It comes with accessories and fireplace tools ($500 to $1,500) and a vintage Zenith stereophonic record player and radio console table ($200 to $2,000) built into a cabinet, offered with several vintage records.

Catalin cabinet radios are highly desirable and perhaps none are more iconic than a FADA Model 1000, which debuted in 1941, epitomizing the Art Deco streamlined design of its era. There will also be two FADA Model 1000 Bullet radios in butterscotch and red that are among the top design icons of the 20th century and highly prized by radio collectors.

While the Benefit Shop Foundation offers across-the-board auctions, artwork is a specialty and a staple of most sales. This auction boasts fine etchings, bronzes and contemporary art. Offered are two signed lithographs by Keith Haring, one depicting a figure riding a fish ($200 to $800) and a limited edition lithograph of two dancing figures holding up a heart ($200 to $600).

The couple’s Roseville pottery for auction includes a 15-inch Freesia floor vase ($100 to $250), a Popppy basket vase/planter ($100 to $200), 8.5 inches wide, and a Magnolia centerpiece vase ($200 to $500), which is 16.5 inches tall.

A last-minute addition to the auction and still being unpacked is a collection of Lord & Taylor perfume bottles, all salesman samples and animatronic puppets from the store’s window displays. These will be sprinkled into several auctions, from February through April.

Rounding out the auction will be a 2000s La D de Dior diamond watch featuring mother of pearl ($2,500 to $10,000), a pair of Hazorflin Bugatti sterling candlesticks ($1,00 to $2,000), 16 inches tall, and a pair of antique French-mirrored wall sconces by Carlos de la Puenta ($1,000 to $3,000) with two S-curved brass arms, each 18.5 inches tall.

The Benefit Shop Foundation is a nonprofit organization with auction proceeds supporting community organizations. Consignors get a tax deduction; the buyer gets a great deal and local nonprofits receive much-needed funds.

The auction gallery is at 185 Kisco Ave, Suite 201, in Mount Kisco. For more information, call 914-864-0707 or visit www.thebenefitshop.org.
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Wine Thoughts in the Middle of Our Pandemic Winter

So, here we are in the middle of COVID winter. We've been trying to cope with the effects and reactions (both real and contrived) of this persistent, ever-present pandemic. My prayers go out to those afflicted with the virus. For those of us more fortunate, we've been coping as best we can.

Some are able to diligently pursue their careers, others have engaged in de-cluttering projects, binge watching or binge reading and any number of other means to fill our days. Through it all a number of us have been riding a roller coaster of alcohol consumption in an attempt to cope with – or escape – the trials and tribulations of this pandemic. For me, my consumption steadily increased before I tempered my indulgence. Steadily increased before I vowed to stop and smell the roses (in this case the subtle facets of wine – and life). Under wine’s influence, we fall into an ethereal state of peace – with ourselves and with those around us.

Having stated my coda for a balanced lifestyle, I offer two maxims that I live by when drinking wine to keep my perspective on a practical plane and which function as an operations manual. Let them be your guide as you navigate the media-laden world of wine.

First, always view wine as an enjoyable, positive experience. Never reduce wine to a status symbol or elevate it to the status of the Holy Grail. Don’t become a wine snob (or a wine geek for that matter); wine is an agricultural product, not a rare gem. It is meant to be consumed with food and preferably with like-minded friends in an atmosphere of geniality. It enhances our dining and social experiences. It shouldn’t be the focal point of those encounters.

Second, the appreciation of a particular wine is an individual experience. A great wine is a wine that you enjoy. Each of us has unique palates, unique olfactory senses and time-tested individual experiences in discerning good from bad. Don’t rely on others for anything more than general guidance. Continue experimenting and finding new favorite wines.

I’m frequently asked to recommend wines for meals, for special occasions, for hanging out in the kitchen or sitting in front of the fireplace. My response is always the same. Think of a recent wine that you especially enjoyed, one that stood out from others. Recreate that experience in the moment.

It is likely that as much as you enjoyed the particular producer, your palate was simpatico with the grape varietal or the wine region. Experiment with:

1. Other wines from that producer (each producer has an individualistic style for creating wines);
   or
2. Other wines produced from the same grape or blend of grapes (chances are your palate is sensitive to a flavor profile that can be matched to other producers’ offerings);
   or
3. Other wines from the same wine region. In the vast sea of California Sauvignons, if you find a special bottle from Chile and prefer it over those you’ve sampled from California or South Africa, explore the multiple Chilean offerings currently available.

In short order you’ll expand your wine horizons and find new “favorite wines” that will become sure-fire crowd-pleasers – in every sense of 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 or on Twitter @sharingwine.

The Claddagh Ring: A Classic Design, and a Worthy Badge

In another month we’ll be in the throes of St. Patrick’s Day, typically the “Holy Season” of grand parades, festivities, spiritual worship, quiet reflection and general celebration of all things Irish – or not – depending upon the state of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When will we see our return to days of glory? I am thinking this year might not be it. No green hair, no shamrock tattoos, no buttons spouting phrases like “Kiss me, I’m Irish.”

But the day will still dawn, and the good St. Patrick will still be with us. And, with the hope that vaccination and subsequent herd immunity offers, a trip to Ireland with good friends, derailed last year by COVID-19, once again graces my drawing board.

One destination I would like to see is a small fishing village in County Galway. Now, there are many small fishing villages throughout Ireland, and this precise one I might search for has no familial connection to me. This particular village I am reminded of every day when I glance down at the ring finger of my left hand – Claddagh.

One of the four, Richard Joyce, is usually credited with creating the Claddagh’s distinctive design, combining the clasped hands around a heart with a crown atop it.

Joyce’s story is also fascinating. A native of Claddagh, he set off for the West Indies in the late 1600s to seek his fortune. While en route, he was captured by Algerian pirates and sold into slavery. In Algeria, he became the possession of a goldsmith who taught him his craft.

While so engaged, Joyce fashioned a ring that he hoped he would one day be able to give to the proverbial “girl he left behind.” Fortune smiled upon him, and after 14 years, Joyce was freed, returned to Ireland, married the waiting lass and set out his shingle as a ringsmith of particular talent.

A visitor trying to find Claddagh today would be hard-pressed. The small village suffered a tuberculosis outbreak in the 1920s, and all the structures were razed and the villagers relocated, a fate shared in those days by many more remote locales.

But Joyce’s design had become extremely popular well before then as a symbol of Irish heritage and pride, with its three symbols of the heart, the hands and the crown.

But what do they signify? Quite simply, the hands represent friendship, the heart represents a loved one and the crown represents loyalty to that loved one.

While there are a variety of traditions on the significance of how the wearer chooses to display the ring, most of these seem to be of more recent concoction, and are by no means rooted in legend or lore. But they are worth a mention, so here they are: if worn on the right hand and the heart points to the tip of the finger, the wearer is single and unattached; right hand again, heart pointed toward the arm, the wearer is in a relationship with someone, serious or otherwise; on the left hand, heart pointed to the tip, the wearer is engaged; left hand, heart toward the arm, the wearer is married.

Believe whatever you may, it’s a beautiful design, with a beautiful tale behind it, and far better than a button worn once a year.

Pleasantville resident Brian McGowan was born and raised in the Bronx and is a second-, third- and fifth-generation Irish-American/Canadian, as his immigrant ancestors followed several paths to the New World. Reach him at brian.m.mcgowan1952@gmail.com or on Twitter @Bmgowan52M. 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.
White Plains Playwright Tries Hand at Putting His Work on Film

By Martin Wilbur

For Richard Cirulli, it was time to try something different.

The playwright, author and retired professor had written and produced four plays for the troupe he established in 2016, the nonprofit organization The Demitasse Players, all performed at the White Plains Performing Arts Center or at Whippoorwill Hall in Armonk.

But on a weekend getaway last summer to the Catskills, Cirulli had the inspiration for his next work, not a play or a novel, but a short movie. The film, “An Existential Date” was shot mostly at the Wolf and Warrior Brewing Co. on East Post Road in White Plains on Jan. 30 and 31.

It’s the story of two aging philosophy professors meeting at a local café for their first date. Cirulli had the inspiration for his next work, not a play or a novel, but a short movie. The film, “An Existential Date” was shot mostly at the Wolf and Warrior Brewing Co. on East Post Road in White Plains on Jan. 30 and 31.

“It just really wanted to challenge myself,” Cirulli explained about turning his latest project into a film rather than for the stage. “When I wrote it, I kept looking at the script and I kept saying to myself I think it would work better as a movie then a play. The interaction would get lost in a play.”

With the world still in the throes of COVID-19, there’s also no telling when local venues will reopen to audiences – or when audiences might feel comfortable to return. But with social distancing achievable during filming with only a three-member cast for what is expected to be a 40- to 45-minute film, Cirulli expects to have final editing done this spring and ready for public consumption by summer.

“An Existential Date” also represents a departure for Cirulli in that he created a comedy with gallows humor. His four productions with the Demitasse Players were productions addressing heavy topics that had some connection to mental health, an issue that Cirulli cares deeply about.

Cirulli said with troupe members prodding him to feature his sense of humor, he tried a comedy to provide some welcome relief in a difficult time.

“Let’s take some very philosophical language and turn it into hilarious conversation, and also to prove that the youth don’t have a monopoly on romance,” Cirulli said of the story.

While not autobiographical, Cirulli drew upon his years as a philosophy professor to make the film as realistic as possible. It features Robert Ansbro as Camu, Dona L. White as Neisky and Michelle Osojnak as the waitress.

“The two actors are very good once they get into it and I think they get into the romance part,” Cirulli said. “I’m having fun with it. I thought that two professors, existential performers on a date and you have to strategize how is this going to go.”

Director of cinematography Chris Casaburi has been aware what Cirulli’s been trying to do with The Demitasse Players, raising awareness for mental health. Proceeds from a planned premiere later this year will serve as a fundraiser for organizations related to mental health.

Casaburi said he met Cirulli while filming another short movie through a mutual acquaintance.

“I love the story, I love what he’s doing for the community, so I kind of hopped on board with it,” Casaburi said.

There’s also a musical score that was written and performed by Drew Caico.

Cirulli is hopeful that later this year he can have the premiere when it is safe to do so, whether it be in White Plains or somewhere else in the county.

To learn more about The Demitasse Players, visit www.demitasseplayers.com.

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Appreciating the Birds of Winter in Difficult Times

By Brian Kluepfel

On Feb. 7, 2020, we were on a plane to South America. A visit with in-laws, wonderful food and weather, a meeting with dear old friends in torrid Cartagena, and an obligatory appearance at the Colombia Bird Fair in Cali. We saw an incredible array of birds on our trip, from Colombia’s nearly-countless colibris (hummingbird) collection to the awe-inspiring Andean condor. Blue-headed parrots. Multicolored tanagers. Green honeycreepers. A yellow-headed caracara from my mother-in-law’s porch, even.

Of course, three weeks later we were on a plane back to Westchester descending into a changed America, and world. The weekend after we returned, U.S. airports devolved into chaos and COVID-19 became a household term. On Feb. 28, a Friday, we took Metro-North into Manhattan for a concert. It would be if you saw a snowy, I’m sure.

(Owls have been on the urban birding brain lately, from the accidental Saw-whet owl, “Rockefeller,” who tumbled out of his namesake’s Christmas tree, to Barry the Barred Owl, another recent Central Park discovery.) Local walks in Ossining have gifted us with the usual wintry mix of cardinals, chickadees, wrens, hawks, crows, jays and even eagles. On a very blustery day, even by Winnie-the-Pooh’s standards, I went watching them peck through the seed mix – the sunflowers are too big for them, so they only eat the small seeds, leaving me to sweep up the rest – is a welcome diversion to my work-at-home day.

(Shameless plug here: you can stock your winter feeders with a variety of seed-stuff from Saw Mill River Audubon. Info is in the ad below.)

I watched a nice YouTube video by LesleytheBirdNerd on the survival mechanisms of northern winter birds. They shiver, they puff up their bodies to twice their size, they cache food in trees and even in their own gullets, they vary their diet, they lower their body temperatures at night and huddle for warmth. In short, they survive. Which is sometimes the best we can do during difficult times like these.

So, on Superb Owl Sunday and beyond, I wish you, and all the birds, survival.

Brian Kluepfel is the editor of Saw Mill River Audubon’s newsletter and an author for Birdwatching Magazine and the Lonely Planet and Fodor’s series of travel guidebooks. Find him at birdmanwalking.com.

For The Birds

Across
1. Trophy
4. That ship
7. Rip off
10. Fire remnant
11. Raw metal in the ground
13. For each one
14. Glove compartment item
15. Take effect
16. Cab charge
18. Lots of land
20. Wear and tear
21. Furnace fuel
22. Bound
24. Marathon, for example
25. Tennis settings
27. Period
28. Word in many business names
29. Dance craze of the 60’s
30. Munificence – except the occasional
31. Get the creases out of a shirt
32. Caught sight of
33. Rowboat equipment
34. Dined
36. Deliver from
38. A while back
39. Last O of O-O-O
40. Give it a whirl
41. Easy chair room
42. Have
43. Date

Down
1. Baseball headgear
2. Beneficial
3. “Wheel of Fortune” category
4. “Where the heart is”
5. Memorable time
6. Fix
7. Surf’s sound
8. Fairy tale start word
9. “All ___ are off!”
10. Rip off
11. Fire remnant
12. Fire remnant
22. Bound
24. Marathon, for example
25. Tennis settings
26. Complete
28. Word in many business names
29. Dance craze of the 60’s
33. Rowboat equipment
34. Dined
36. Deliver from
38. A while back
39. Last O of O-O-O
40. Give it a whirl
41. Easy chair room
42. Have
43. Date

Answers on page 22

Crossword


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Children Learn ‘Literacy of the 21st Century’ at Mt. Kisco Code Ninjas

By Lisa Mocket

When eight-year-old Jack Fisher of Ossining showed an interest in animation and began creating his own basic video games, his mom, Tina, took to Google, searching for classes to help take her son’s budding passion to the next level.

She was thrilled to find Code Ninjas had recently opened.

Code Ninjas, the world’s largest and fastest growing children’s coding franchise, was founded in 2016 by professional software developer David Graham. It offers classes in computer coding and problem-solving skills by creating video games using Scratch, Roblox, Minecraft and other platforms.

Utilizing a nine-belt curriculum inspired by the martial arts to teach children ages 7 to 14, Code Ninjas offers flexible online and in-person coding and STEM programs taught by instructors known as “code senseis.”

By the time a child finishes the program, they will publish an app in an app store. The new Mount Kisco Code Ninjas dojo is located at 41 S. Moger Ave.

The independently-owned franchise, which launched virtually in September, currently takes in-person classes for two hours once a week. His dad, Ron, is currently taking in-person classes for four hours twice a week.

Ron Fisher said, adding that about one million U.S. coding jobs go unfilled each year because of a lack of qualified people. "If (kids) don’t understand coding at all, the logic behind it and how to interact with those interfaces, it’s going to be a problem. Everybody should be doing it.”

Fisher, a major Minecraft fan, is currently taking in-person classes for two hours once a week. His dad, Ron, is pleased with the program.

"He could easily stay there for hours and would be overjoyed if he could go more than once a week," Ron Fisher said. "Remote learning has taken over our lives and to say it’s challenging to keep our children engaged is an understatement. At Code Ninjas, we feel that Jack is getting a head start in the world of coding and computer design. Since my wife and I know nothing about it, these specialized classes allow us to nurture his interest and provide him with a knowledge base from which he can excel."

"In order to execute an idea, (the students) have to figure it out, they have to draw it, create it. There’s a lot of creative problem-solving involved," Wong said of the skills acquired through Code Ninjas classes. "These are skills they’re not teaching in a lot of schools. Some schools have after-school programs in coding but it’s not required that we’ve seen so far."

Another local parent, Suzanne Yeager, said Code Ninjas allows her 10-year-old son Graeme to socialize with his friends online, outside of school. He is currently taking the Introduction to Scratch course via Zoom twice a week.

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"In order to execute an idea, (the students) have to figure it out, they have to draw it, create it. There’s a lot of creative problem-solving involved," Wong said of the skills acquired through Code Ninjas classes. "These are skills they’re not teaching in a lot of schools. Some schools have after-school programs in coding but it’s not required that we’ve seen so far."

Another local parent, Suzanne Yeager, said Code Ninjas allows her 10-year-old son Graeme to socialize with his friends online, outside of school. He is currently taking the Introduction to Scratch course via Zoom twice a week.

"We love the convenience," Yeager said. "The instructors make each lesson different and engaging. Sometimes the students learn to design video games and at the holidays they each designed a party complete with décor and music. The students love sharing these builds with each other and the instructors are so knowledgeable and a lot of fun."

The 1,200-square-foot dojo is bright, well-lit and desks are six feet apart. It is regularly de-sanitized. Social distancing and masks are required. While there, students can also participate in other STEM activities including circuit building and robotics.

This month, Code Ninjas will be launching a new in-person, completely visual curriculum, Code Ninjas Jr., for budding readers ages 5-9. It combines storytelling and game-building with hands-on projects.

The Mount Kisco Code Ninjas plans to offer summer and year-round camps, Parents Night Out evenings and birthday parties. It also provides a free first game-building session. There are convenient drop-in hours on weekdays and weekends.

A grand opening was scheduled for Jan. 23, but Wong decided to postpone the event because of COVID-19 concerns. Meanwhile, Code Ninjas will host hackathons and other prize-winning contests and free Hour of Code days, which would have been part of the grand opening activities.

For more information, call 914-920-9898 or visit www.codeninjas.com/ny-mount-kisco.
It’ll be quick, it could be less than pretty early on as teams work into “game shape”, find their rhythm and get familiar with their coach’s schema, but Section 1 boys’ basketball season is finally scheduled to start on Feb.8 after a three-month layoff due to COVID-19 concerns.

The 2020 campaign was a slightly down year by the standards previously set by the Northern Westchester/Putnam based Examiner-area programs, but the Central portion of the region shined with Class AA Horace Greeley pulling an improbable upset when the Quakers rocked then three-time defending champion Mount Vernon, winners of 11 NYS and five Federation titles. Coach Matt Simone’s Quakers took an arduous road to the title, taking out a pair of Section 1 heavyweights (New Rochelle, also) along the way. Then, they added a win over Section 9 champion Newburgh before the rest of the postseason was cancelled. The Examiner-area teams were skunked in Class A, going without a Final 4 contender, but Class B saw Westlake reach the County Center for the first time since 1978 while Valhalla lost in the finals.

The 2021 campaign will be unlike anything we’ve ever seen as the season will come and go in under six weeks with regionlized playoffs and no Final 4 games at the fabled Westchester County Center, which is currently an unrecognizable COVID-19 vaccination center.

Despite losing out on the Section 1 tournaments in Classes AA, A, B, C and D, there will be regionalized culminating events, similar to what the section did in the fall with six tournaments, including Southern Westchester Large and Small Schools, Putnam-Northern Westchester Large and Small Schools, Dutchess and Rockland. The team-by-team breakdowns were expected to come out later this week.

We reached out to every boys’ hoops coach in the Examiner region from White Plains to the Dutchess County border for team-based information, and discovered that while most programs are excited to begin the 2021 season, there is so much work to do before we see something resembling what we’re used to. It could be a few weeks before we see teams in “game shape”, playing with tempo and continuity, and before we know it the season will be over if it ever starts. Strap up, buckle in and accept that it is what it is.

There’s a bevy of beastly bigs (Briarcliff has three players 6’6” or bigger, Panas has a 6’9” center and three others 6’3” and Yorktown has a 6’6”), a gaggle of gritty guards and an army of versatile swingmen taking the hardwood near you this week, but you’re going to have to rely on live streams like LocalLive (@locallivenet), Twitter and local media for results and recaps as the games will be played in fanless gymnasiums across Section 1.

CONFERENCE I-II LEAGUE C
Ossining, Hen Hud, Peekskill, Lakeland, Panas

Based on last year and what these teams return this year, one could toss a coin to determine a favorite, though Lakeland did have the best regular season, trailed closely by Walter Panas, who has reloaded and is locked in on a league title as the pre-season favorites in the eyes of most. The Panthers are huge up front with four players going 6’3” or better, topping off at 6’9”. Should Section 1 implement a regional post-season tournament similar to what we saw in the fall, the Panthers could ultimately challenge, provided skillful sophomore G Alex Tavarez is ready to take his game to the next level after bursting onto the scene as a freshman in 2020. Ossining is our dark horse, a unit coming off a first-round elimination at the hands of the Class AA champions, Horace Greeley. The Pride are not to be slept on with a slew of key returnees, including Jaeden Carr, and bolstered by a solid core of rookies, including highly touted eighth-grader Kristian Banwreesingh, an explosive 6’3” wing.

Hen Hud is coming off a subpar 2020 campaign after reaching the semis in 2019, but the unit that returns has some legit athleticism. Lakeland is coming off a strong season and has lost the majority of its scoring and four starters to graduation, but the gritty Hornets return a strong senior class that...
Boys’ Hoops Preview

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Lakeland senior F Rob Nardelli and Panas senior F Caleb Evans are expected to lead their respective outfits in 2021. saw plenty of action as juniors. With Brennan Heaven on the wing, Peeskill is a legit challenger this season despite losing a hotshot scorer. The five-time NYS champion Red Devils, who used to burp out league titles prior to 2010, return seven hungry seniors who will take whatever titles they can gather in an effort to restore the once-prideful rep along the river city.

OSSINING
2019-20 Record & playoff result: 8-14, won outbracket as No.15 seed, lost to No.2 Byram Hills 58-51 in first round of sectionals)
Coach & Record: Mike Casey, 6th Season (league champs 2015-2016)
Key Returning Players: Jaeden Carr, PG, Fr. Jr. 7’0 All Conference; Khy’eil Hawkins, FG/SF, Sr. 5’9 All League; Griffin Dahle, F/Sr. 6’7; Chris Acosta, G, Sr. 6’0; Hunter Caparelli, G, Sr. 5’11; Vincent Bernardo, F, Jr. 5’10
Key Newcomers: Kristian Banwareesingh, G, 8th, 6’3; Justin Santos, F, Soph, 6’3; Isaiah Ahlers, G, Fr. 6’1; Dominique Bautista, F, So. 6’3; Af Caparelli, G, Soph, 5’11; Dorian Green, G, Sr. 5’8; Melik Tobee, G, Jr. 5’8
League Favorite: Ossining is returning to a league the Pride were in five years ago. Casey believes the league is up for grabs, but Ossining hopes to be there in the end.
By the Numbers: Carr (22 PPG), Hawkins (17 PPG), Dahle (8 RPG)
Team Goals: To take advantage of every opportunity when we step on the court because we know it could be our last. We will need to defend to get out in transition.
Coach’s Comments: Our program is very grateful to everyone involved in giving our student-athletes the opportunity to get on the court. We are all excited to play! The Pride return Jaeden Carr and Khy’eil Hawkins who make for a tough matchup for any backcourt. Griffin Dahle will look to build upon his solid junior year. The addition of Banwareesingh will provide a scoring boost for the Pride. There are several other players who can fill key roles if the team is going to make a deep run.

WALTER PANAS
2019-20 record & playoff result: 13-8; lost in 1st round at Harrison (70-67, 2OT)
Coach: Mike Auerbach, 4th Season at Panas)
102-84
Key Departures: Robert Ennis, Tom Palma, Lorenzo Santucci
Key Returning Players: Alex Tavarez 6’0” So., G; Caleb Evans 6’3” Sr. F; Rob Simmons 6’1” Sr. G; Christian Zapata 6’1” Sr. F; Andrew Keeve 6’3” Sr. F
Key Newcomers: Oliver Smith 6’3” Jr. F; Cameron Nicholas 6’1” Jr. G; Dillon Cheyenne 6’9” So. C
League Favorite: Ossining, maybe, Peeskill.
By the Numbers: Tavarez (10 PPG, 3 APG, 3 RPG); Evans (9 PPG, 9 RPG)
Team Goals: Be excited we might get to play basketball!
Coach’s Comments: This is definitely the tallest we’ve had since I started coaching at Panas. We have a lot of depth up front and like our length and athleticism across the board. We’ve lost a handful of guards from the program due to various reasons the last couple of years but have a couple of returning starters in the back court, along with a handful of players moving up from the JV who can give us minutes. We’ll need to be strong defensively and on the boards to win in a shortened season with limited practice time.

HEN HUD
2019-2020 Record: 5-15 (did not make playoffs)
Coach: Jordan Hirsch (8th Season); Assistant Coaches: Jason Bertoline, Stephen Purcigliotti
Key Returning Players: Nick Hiltzey, Sr.; Josh Gillison, Sr.; Jack Kapfer, Sr.; Jeremy Rench, Sr.; Chris Connolly, Sr.; Dean Hiltsey, So.
Newcomers: TBD
Coach’s Comments: It has been far too long since we have been able to physically be in the same space and I think that is what we are looking forward to most. Our Athletic Department has been incredibly proactive, supportive, and informative through all of the uncertainty of high-risk sports beginning which our coaches and players alike are so thankful for. I’m really proud of our student-athletes for their resilience throughout this seemingly endless off-season and I’m very confident that this year’s Sailor team will cherish the opportunity to be able to get this season started, to compete and to play basketball in Donovan Gymnasium.

LEAGUE B
Mahopac, Carmel, Somers, Yorktown, Brewster
Despite two Class AA programs -- Carmel and Mahopac -- entering the league this season, there is a ton of familiarity among the foes. The league title is truly up for grabs. The Indians came on strong in the second half of 2020 and they return a seasoned, athletic unit that should seriously challenge for supremacy within. Somers comes off a down year by its standards and should be motivated by the fact that the Tuskers have not won a league title since 1989. They have placed second five times under Coach Chris DiCintio in his nine seasons at Somers. Yorktown has suffered significant losses and leadership but remains a tough out. Carmel has its third different coach in two years, so there’s that to contend with. Brewster hasn’t had the horses in recent years but the Bears grind defensively.

Mahopac senior G Vin Bastone is poised to lead Indians toward league and regional title contention in 2021.

Brewster senior Koby Hart hopes to get Bears back on track in 2021.
**Sports**

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By the Numbers: Bastone (9.4 PPG, 6.4 RPG), Cosentino (8 PPG)

**Team Goals:** To build on last season, win the league and compete for a championship.

**Coach's Comments:** This is going to be a unique year and I am hopeful that returning seven of our top eight players from a year ago will help us get going quickly, especially with such little practice time. Vin and John are poised to take over the leadership of this team and for excellent seasons. We also have a transfer, Miles Buckley (Kennedy), who should make an impact. We were young last year with four sophomores getting major minutes. We need them to continue to grow and be major contributors this season. If that happens, I think we can achieve our goals.

**SOMERS**

2019-20 Record & playoff result: 7-14, No.20 seed lost out bracket to Beacon.

**Coach:** Chris DiCintio, 227-178 (20th

**Key Departures:** Dylan Berliner, Drew Lasher

**Key Returning Players:** Bennett Leitner, Jr., PG, 5'10" (extremely athletic and strong with an exceptional handle); Robert Repp, sr., G, 6'2" (tough, athletic, smart); Matt Fitzsimons, soph., 6'4" wing (high IQ with outstanding basketball skill and deep range); Ben Germaine, sr., F, 6'2" (strong post player with good moves around the rim); Henry Gilroy, 3-year sr. C, 6'4" (great post defender and tough rebounder that runs the floor well)

**Key Newcomers:** Jake Riina, Jr., F, 6'2" (very athletic, tough, finishes well); TJ Oliifers, jr., G, 5'10" (great athlete, strong, can shoot the rock); Mike DiFilippo, jr., G, 5'9" (spark plug, great defender that does all the little things on the court)

Carmel junior G Andrew Fiore is expected to lead the charge for Foxes in 2021.

Byram Hills G Matteo Sinon will look to continue the Bobcats’ good fortune in 2021.

**League Favorite:** Too difficult to tell in this extraordinary time. The title is wide open for the taking.

**By the numbers:** Leitner (top assists), Gilroy (top rebounder); Fitzsimons (top scorer)

**Team Goals:** Capture our first league title since 1989.

**Coach's Comments:** This team has a nice balance of veterans and newcomers. They are an athletic group with good size. They will look to run all game while playing tough, physical defense as always.

**YORKTOWN**

2019-20 Record & playoff result: 11-11, No.16 seed in Class A lost to No.1 TZ in first round

**Coach & Record:** Mark Pavella, 3rd season

**Key Departures:** Roni Bruciac

**Key Returning Players:** Eddie Bruciac, C, jr., 6’6” All-League; Tony Granitto, F, sr. captain, 6’3”; Jack Pyrzybski, G, jr., 6’2”; Sam Pincus, G, sr., 5’11”; Antoine Coles, PG, soph., 5’9”; Jared Fawre, G, sr., captain, 5’10”; Dan Trushani, G, sr., 5’10”; David DiPpolito F sr., 6’

**Key Newcomers:** TBD

**League Favorite:** With the new league this year I think all the teams are going to be very competitive.

**By the Numbers:** Bruciac 12 PPG, 8 RPG

**Team Goals:** As a team we always look to be competitive in our league, by playing good defense, rebounding the ball, and playing together as a team. We want to be able to get through the season safely, without any interruptions, and we will continue to follow all the protocols and guidelines that have been put in place to do so. We look forward to this opportunity in front of us.

**Coach's Comments:** The season is going to move really fast, with a lot of games in a short amount of time. I’m excited for all high school athletes to get this chance to play. What we do, and are able to accomplish will only help Fall 2 and the spring season, and we are not going to take that responsibility lightly.

**CARMEL**

No.18 seed lost to No.15 Ossining in outbracket

**Boys’ Hoops Preview**

**BREWSER**

Did not qualify for playoffs

**LEAGUE A**

Byram Hills, Fox Lane, Greeley John Jay CR

Every one of these teams -- especially Byram Hills and Greeley -- lost a ton of players to graduation, so picking a favorite is a dart throw to see what sticks. That said, the battles should be feisty, low-scoring affairs between these traditional bordering rivals.

**GREELEY**

2019-20 record & playoff result: 22-3, Section 1 Class AA champion as No.2 seed

**Coach:** Matt Simone

**Key Departures:** Nick Townsend (transfer), Chris Melis, Christoph Sauerborn, Sean Dunleavy

**Key Returning Players:** Connor Melis, jr., G

Byram Hills, Fox Lane, Greeley John Jay CR

Every one of these teams -- especially Byram Hills and Greeley -- lost a ton of players to graduation, so picking a favorite is a dart throw to see what sticks. That said, the battles should be feisty, low-scoring affairs between these traditional bordering rivals.

**BYRAM HILLS**

2019-20 record: 18-4, lost to No.7 Pearl River as No.2 seed in Class A quarterfinals

**Coach:** Ted Repa

**Key Departures:** Mike Parrotta, Jon Trongone, Benji Hammond, Nic Picca, Sam Goldman

**Key Returning Players:** Matteo Sinon (All-League, Sr. pg), Justin Gordon (Sr. G), Brady Karp (Sr. G), Daniel Ahern (Sr. F)

**League Favorite:** unsure

**By the numbers:** Sinon averaged 7.5 PPG, 3.5 APG, 2 SPG

**Team Goals:** Winning Record

**Coach’s Comments:** We are all so excited just to give this season a shot. It’s been a long year, and a lot of unknowns exist. We graduated five big-time players that earned the #2 seed in Class A. Our top returning player is All-League senior point guard Matteo Sinon (Clarkson University). He has worked relentlessly in the off-season to improve all facets of his game. The strength of the team should be in the back court, as Sinon will be joined by senior’s Justin Gordon and Brady Karp. However the question marks will be interior size. The Bobcats will have to win all the “little” parts of the game in order to be competitive.

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Sports

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FOX LANE

2019-20 Record & playoff result: 8-13 (First Round Playoff Loss)

Coach & Record: Mike Tomassi (84-45, 1 Sectional Championship and 5 League Championships)

Key Departures: Michael Lombardi, Will Creerend, Trey DiCarlo, Chris Bodine

Key Returning Players: Oliver Shevick, sr., G (All-League); Aidan Hicks, sr., G; Aidan Giannelli, jr., G; Charlie Shevick, soph., G; James Dibiasi, sr., C

Key Newcomers: TBD

League Favorite: Greeley and Byram Hills

Team Goals: League and Regional Championship

Coach’s Comments: Foxes are excited to get going. Last year we had a very young team that improved each and every day. We will have great balance on the roster this year and are excited to see how it plays out. Oliver, Aidan and James are seniors who are ready to take the next step. We have underclassmen Aidan G and Charlie who are primed for big seasons.

CONFERENCE III

CENTRAL

Rye Neck, Blind Brook, Briarcliff, Pleasantville, Valhalla, Westlake

When you get right down to it, the history between Briarcliff and Pleasantville, is as rich as any two programs in Section 1 history. Only the Saw Mill River Parkway separates two of the most distinguished Class B programs we have; the similarities are enormous when it comes to basketball; tradition-rich, battle-tested and enormous pride. That said, Briarcliff is the team most coaches are touting as league favorites in 2021, but sleep on Westlake at your own peril. The Wildcats have one of the finest players in school history in All-NYS G Carter Falkenberg, the first such Wildcat since 1984. Pleasantville is down some by its standards as the Panthers have zero returning starters.

BRIARCLIFF

2019-20 Record & playoff result: 13-9, second round playoff loss to Valhalla

Coach & Record: Nick Friedman, asst. Ezra Elliott

Key Departures: AJ Panarese, Nick Reish, Chris Park

Key Returning Players: Aidan Murnane (6’1 sr., going to play DI Lacrosse at Colgate); Brett Lachtman (5’10 Sc), Elliot Jones (6’6 Jr), Luke McCann (6’6 Jr.), Jacob Zednik (6’7 Sc); Jayden Larregue (6’2 jr., wing)

Key Newcomers: Ben Siegel (5’11 Jr); Blake Smith (6’1 soph.); Ray Hall (5’11 Jr.

League Favorite: Hastings

Pleasantville

2019-2020 Record & playoff result: 10-12, lost in quarterfinals to Westlake

Key Departures: Aidan Lynch, Christain DeJesus (All-League), Nick Doto


Key Newcomers: Massimo Stinziani, G, 5-10, sr.; Tom d’Erizans, F, 6-0, sr.; Aidan Picart, G, 6-0, fresh.

League Favorite: Briarcliff & Westlake

Coach’s Comments: As a program, we are incredibly grateful for all that went into us getting a shot to play. We intend to make the most of the opportunity and compete at the highest possible level for every day we are allowed in a gym.

Westlake

2019-20 Record & playoff result: 16-7, No.5 seed lost to Section 1 champion Hastings, 57-52, in Class B semifinal

Coach & Record: Chad Charney, 5th season, 46-41

Key Departures: Matt Martin, Mike Mancuso

Team Goals: We would have been good enough to compete for a section title this year. Not sure what that will look like in terms of a regional or how it will come together but our talent level is very high.

Coach’s Comments: As a program, we are incredibly grateful for all that went into us getting a shot to play. We intend to make the most of the opportunity and compete at the highest possible level for every day we are allowed in a gym.

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Boys’ Hoops Preview

Key Returning Players: Carter Falkenberg, G, Sr. 6’0, All-State, All-Tournament Class B - first All State Player for Westlake since 1984; Hamad Azhar, F, Sr. 6’1 (3-year varsity contributor); Justin So, 6’0, G, Jr. 5’11

Key Newcomers: Evan O’Brien, G, sr., 6’1; Tommy Marto, F, sr., 6’2; Vinnie Bravo, F, sr., 6’2; Matt Pierro, G, sr., 5’8

League Favorite: Briarcliff

By the Numbers: Falkenberg (18 PPG, 42% FG, 6 RPG)

Team Goals: Section Title

Coach’s Comments: We hope to compete at a high level as a program and we hope to build on the success of last year’s run to the County Center and the Class B Semi Finals which was the first appearance in the Westchester County Center since 1978.

North Putnam Valley, Haldane, North Salem, Croton, Pawling

The competition should be fierce as nobody jumps off the page as a clear-cut favorite among the grouping, though, outside of last year, Putnam Valley has recent history on its side. The youthful Tigers took some lumps last season but should be much improved in 2021. Haldane will fight them tooth and nail for supremacy despite losing the bulk of its scoring to graduation.

Putnam Valley 2019-20 Record & playoff result: 4-16, lost to Pawling in OT first round of Class B playoffs

Coach & Record: Al Morales (2nd season), Asst’s, JD Apostolico, Ron King

Key Returning Players: Ethan Mounier, 6’4, G, Jr.; Menzy Cardin, 6’2, So.; Matteo Cervone, F, 6’4, Soph. (All League); Darrin Santos, 6’0, Sr.; Soren Holmbo, G, 6’2, Jr.; Vincenzo Scanga, G, 6’2, Sr.; Christian Pezzullo, G, 5’10, Sr.; Jonathon Bradley, G, 6’1, Sr.

Key Newcomers: Ryan Irwin, G, Jr.; Bobby Mounier, 6’1, G, Jr.; Soren Holmbo, G, 6’2, Jr.; Menzy Cardin, 6’2, So.; Matteo Cervone, F, 6’4, Soph. (All League); Christian Pezzullo, G, 5’10, Sr.; Jonathon Bradley, G, 6’1, Sr.

League Favorite: Croton, North Salem, Putnam Valley

Team Goals: To value every minute of every practice and game, continue to give 100% effort and make memories that will last a lifetime.

Coach’s Comments: We’re excited to be back in action. Our gym is full of energy, smiles and excitement. The kids need this more than we will ever know. Let the fun begin!

Conference I

SOUTHEAST

White Plains, Mamaroneck, Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, Scarsdale

The toughest league in the state rolls on, and as often the case (almost always), Section I Class AA runnerup Mt. Vernon is the team to beat.

WHITE PLAINS

2019-20 Record & playoff result: 16-6, co-league champs, No.5 seed lost to No.4 Mount Vernon in Class AA quarterfinals

Coach: Spencer Mayfield, 28th Season

Key Departures: Quinn Burns, Jayon Norwood, Jonathan Fortes, John Pasqua, Mike Mayeri, Paul Sevcik

Key Returning Players: Joe Carrier 6-3 Sr.; F; Tymir Greene 5-11 Sr. G (All-Conference); Mehki Woodbury 5-10 Sr. PG; Jason Giraldo 5-10 Sr. PG; Thomas Sutter 6-3 Fr. J

Key Newcomers: Menzy Cardin 6-2 So.; F; James Amadio 6-3 Jr. G; Chez Williams 6-1 Jr. G; Danny Povemma 5-11 Jr. G; Kenny Bardhaj 6-0 Sr. G

League Favorite: Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle

By the Numbers: Greene (11.6 PPG, 3 A PG), Carrier (8.9 PPG, 8 RPG), Mehki Woodbury (6 PPG, 4 A PG), Sutter (46% 3pt shooter)

Team Goal/Comments: Hard working team that takes pride in getting better through competing everyday. Will have to find success through playing tough defense and unselfish offense at a fast pace. With leadership of the senior class led by Joe Carrier, Tymir Greene and Mehki Woodbury the Tigers can be a fun team to watch. Supported by talented underclassmen who are ready to make their contributions, White Plains can have a successful season.

CHSAA KENNEDY

The Catholic leagues are in shambles since NYC has not passed COVID-19 guidelines to allow city schools to play, which means Kennedy Catholic will be negatively affected in that the Gaels will have only a handful of opponents to challenge. They will see a lot of Salesian and Sacred Heart this year.

2019-20 Record & playoff result: 5-20

Coach: Mike McDonnell (2nd season at Kennedy), 288 career wins, 6 seasons at Put Valley (103-33, 5 league titles in 6 years)

Key Returning Players: senior wings 6-0 Lou Heinikis and 6-1 Jaden Watkins

Key Newcomers: junior transfer point guard 5’11 Arturo Macchia

Coach’s Comments: The boys have worked diligently since last March and so badly want to compete. The team has a very talented perimeter trio. I feel super blessed to have two of my former Putnam Valley standouts from the 21-3 2016 team; Harrison Deegan and Kevin Gallagher. Deegan just completed four years of excellent play at Oneonta College while Gallagher has sharpened his coaching woes while spending the past three years at the University of Kentucky learning under Coach Calipari.

All three -- Heinikis, Watkins and Macchia -- have college level potential. Lou led the team in rebounds last year at 511 and even covered a 67 center from Salesian. 64 senior center Brendan Sullivan truly transformed himself this off season with a dedication to body, conditioning and more. The starting power forward position will be a competition amongst junior 6’2 forward Eddie Galvao and 61 senior Brian Tolan. Eddie is a key contributor on the baseball team and Brian on the CHSAA championship soccer team. 64 senior, Eoin Whalen provides depth in the frontcourt while sophomore rising star, Justin Smith provides backcourt depth.

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