



March 23 - March 29, 2021

The **WHITE PLAINS** Examiner

Covering White Plains, Greenburgh, Harrison

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COVID-19 Breakdown:
White Plains
6,679 (271)
Greenburgh
4,267 (191)
Harrison
2,466 (188)
Scarsdale
1,057 (41)
Elmsford
682 (26)

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 11, Issue 501

Hunger Strike Launched to Support Excluded Workers

By Martin Wilbur

A group of immigrant workers and their advocates launched a two-week hunger strike last week to demand that New York State provide \$3.5 billion of assistance to those who have been excluded from federal stimulus checks and unemployment.

About 100 supporters gathered in a cold rain outside the White Plains Presbyterian Church last Thursday morning calling on the state legislature to approve a pending bill that would allocate \$3,300 a month in direct payments from April through December for workers and their families.

It would compensate those who have lost wages during the COVID-19 pandemic because of unemployment or reduced work or households that have lost income because the primary earner has become disabled or died.

Proposed in state Senate bill S4543 and Assembly bill A5421, money from the Excluded Worker Fund would go to households that have not received federal assistance or unemployment insurance. Most excluded workers are undocumented, but others are living and working legally in their communities and have fallen through the cracks.

Peekskill Councilwoman Vanessa Agudelo, Hudson Valley manager of member engagement at the New York Immigration



PHOTO BY MARTIN WILBUR

A crowd of immigrants and their supporters turned out last week to call on the state Legislature to provide money for those workers who have been excluded from federal relief efforts and unemployment during the pandemic.

Coalition and one of the roughly dozen people in Westchester participating in the Fast of the Forgotten, said all workers who have been negatively impacted by the pandemic deserve the same treatment, with many of the excluded workers having helped to keep the economy and food supply going.

Many in the immigrant communities across the state have experienced a disproportionate negative impact because a greater percentage of those workers have held jobs in service-oriented businesses.

"Our communities are forced

to stand in line every day, sometimes for hours during a pandemic just to guarantee that they'll have food to put on the table for them and their children that evening," Agudelo said.

"We know that our immigrant communities are the backbone of this state. We know that our immigrant communities are the reason our economy is so successful, and we know that we'll need these workers if we look to recover from this pandemic," she added.

Another striker, Noelle Damico, director of social justice for the

Manhattan-based Workers Circle, was one of several participants who pointed out that a person cannot be deemed essential but excluded from benefits.

"Thousands of our workers across the state are ready to go the distance with you to make sure that you, who have made sure that we are healthy and are recovering and helped us construct this community and made sure that there's food on our table, all of the work that you have done, and most importantly, who you are as our sisters and brothers, is respected by

Albany," Damico said.

The hunger strike will last until Apr. 1, the scheduled deadline for the state budget.

A few members of the Westchester contingent of the state legislature, including state senators Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) and Peter Harchkham (D-Lewisboro), sent representatives to express support for the action.

"I am proud to support the state Senate's Excluded Workers Fund in its budget, which will provide a record amount of disaster relief for residents who truly deserve this help," said Tito Davila, from Harchkham's office. "This is money that will help landlords, small businesses and local communities get back on track. In the meantime, I will continue to fight to ensure that excluded workers and their families have the resources they need."

However, last Monday, the Senate passed the One-House budget resolution that includes only \$2.1 billion in the Excluded Workers Fund, a sum that those who gathered last week in White Plains argued is insufficient to help all those in need.

"Our workers deserve to have equal relief to that of every other worker in New York State," Agudelo said. "Our workers and our families deserve to be able to rely on the benefits and the programs that every New Yorker has access to."

Greenburgh Task Force Makes Suggestions on Police Operations

By Anna Young

The Greenburgh Against Systemic Racism Task Force revealed its report that includes over three dozen recommendations for consideration as the town looks to improve how the Greenburgh Police Department operates and interacts with the public.

While the wide-ranging suggestions do reiterate some existing policies within the department, the report addresses recruitment, hiring practices, training, accountability, oversight, community engagement, transparency, use of force, and the need for greater diversity within the department.

The report does not recommend cuts to staffing and funding.

"None of our recommendations recom-

mend cuts to the police department, staff and funding," Howard Tribble, co-chair of the Law Enforcement Committee, said at the Town Board's March 10 meeting. "We believe that implementation of these recommendations will result in improving our already high-quality police department."

Tribble explained that the report seeks to hire the best applicants, train police officers to more effectively manage the types of encounters that arise within the town and improve and strengthen the relationship with the community by enhancing the ability for officers to provide better community policing.

Furthermore, officials hope to identify and remove any officers that could damage the reputation of the police department and

willfully harm the same public they swear to protect and serve.

"Following four months of research, community input and discussion, it was determined that fear of interaction with our police officers exists within among members in our community," Tribble said. "You must remember that armed uniformed police officers can be intimidating."

Tribble said there is a strong desire from the public to interact and get to know officers in a non-confrontational setting. It was also found that there have been many instances of over policing.

To help integrate the department and public, the report suggests the department launch a forum where the public can offer feedback on their experience with officers

and partner with the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives for probationary ride along periods for all new hires to improve cultural sensitivity.

It is also recommended the department revise its arrest policy and use of force, with a request to stop officers from kneeling on the neck or back to subdue a criminal suspect. Pertaining to arrests, the report states the department should eliminate low-level offense pursuits and arresting children without parental presence.

"It also seeks to increase procedure justice so that individuals no longer suffer arrest, imprisonment or excessive penalties for minority, non-criminal offenses," Tribble said.

continued on page 2

Greenburgh Task Force Makes Suggestions on Police Operations

continued from page 1

Additionally, the department would limit the number of officers responding to emergency calls, utilize de-escalation tactics, implement a mental health crisis response team, and offer more community events.

To increase diversity on the force, Tribble said the department should create a recruitment team comprised of community members, educators, and police officers to devise and implement a strategy on how to generate a

wider selection of recruits. It is suggested more financial support be provided for formal recruitment activities.

Furthermore, the department should invest in youth outreach to create a pipeline to enhance the existing efforts of the Greenburgh Cadet program, the report states.

Other initiatives include offering newly hired officers financial incentives to live in Greenburgh; lobby the state and county government to revise the civil service guidelines to consider attributes other than test scores; increase

test frequency to once every two years instead of four; raise the minimum hiring age to 24 years old; require a minimum of two years of college credits; and require all police departments to permanently maintain records of all civilian complaints in an officer's personnel file.

The department is also encouraged to offer training in cultural sensitivity, de-escalation of force and aggression, systemic racism, intercultural competency, procedural justice, mental health, peer support and officer-civilian interactions. Of-

ficers should undergo a mandatory refresher training after an event requiring discipline, the report states.

The report recommends resources be allocated to establish a civilian review board for police misconduct. It is also suggested the department develop and engage in a routine of regular self-monitoring and self-review which integrates data driven information that is routinely shared with the community.

Once the report is finalized, it will be forwarded to the Town Board for its approval. The deadline

for an approved plan to be submitted to the state is Apr. 1 following last June's executive order signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo for all communities with police departments to review policies and procedures.

"This work does not end here," Councilwoman Gina Jackson said. "It's ongoing, it's continual, so we want to make sure that the recommendations we hear we take those back, we look at those, see what modifications need to be made to the report and make the necessary modifications."

DA's Office Partners with Moms Demand Action on Gun Violence

The Westchester District Attorney's Office is partnering with Moms Demand Action, a grassroots movement of Americans fighting for public safety measures to protect people from gun violence, to address the issue of gun violence in Westchester County.

"Unsecured guns in the home present a major risk to everyone in the household," said District Attorney Miriam Rocah said. "Even if you do not own a gun, your children may encounter one at the home of a friend or relative. You have an important responsibility to protect your children from guns, wherever they may be encountered."

The DA's Office will partner with all local schools to provide free resources for families to learn more about secure storage of firearms. Additionally, Moms Demand Action will provide free virtual training about their

secure firearm storage program, Be SMART.

Studies of all types of school-based gun violence show that keeping students away from guns in the home is a critical way to reduce violence. In a recent study of school violence incidents across the country, 76 percent of the firearms were obtained from the home of a parent or close relative.

Unsecured guns in the home pose a risk to students beyond gun violence in schools. Every year in the United States, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else.

In New York, guns are the fourth-leading cause of death among children and teens and 63 children and teens die by guns every year.

New York State law requires gun owners to secure their firearms if children 16 years old or younger live in or visit the home. All

firearms need to be in a gun safe or locked with a trigger guard or similar gun locking device, and individuals who fail to do so can be charged with a misdemeanor.

"Keeping our communities safe from gun violence is one of our top priorities at the Westchester District Attorney's Office and we are partnering with Moms Demand Action to educate all Westchester families about secure firearm storage," Rocah added.

"It's always an adult's responsibility to keep children safe, and keeping guns locked, unloaded, and separate from ammunition will do just that," said Jessica Buck, a volunteer with the New York chapter of Moms Demand Action. "We're thrilled to be partnering with the District Attorney's Office on this proactive initiative. Securing guns and keeping them out of the hands of kids and teens will save lives."

Children often know where their parents' guns are kept and they can't always tell the difference between real and toy guns. One nationwide study found that 87 percent of children know where their parents' guns are stored and 60 percent have handled them.

Rocah said parents should familiarize themselves with New York's safe storage law, which includes requirements that:

- Child safety locks or other commercially available locking mechanisms must be used on all firearms.
- Firearms must be locked in a secure location accessible to adults only.
- Ammunition must be locked in a secure location away from the firearms.

Rocah also urged school districts throughout Westchester to join in the secure storage initiative.

Local School Districts Cash in on Federal Rescue Plan Funds

By Rick Pezzullo

Local school districts will be receiving a chunk of the more than \$2.5 billion set aside for New York State schools in the federal American Rescue Plan recently signed by President Joe Biden.

"Everyone wants schools to reopen completely and for our children to be able to return to the classroom, but it needs to be done in a way that is safe for students, families, educators, and learning institutions," said Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY).

"COVID brought unprecedented challenges that have cost a year of learning and development for students—challenges disproportionately felt by students of color, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, and more. As Majority Leader, I was proud to make funding for our schools a priority, and the American Rescue Plan will deliver this much needed aid to get upstate students back in school. Help is on the way for upstate New York's schools put behind the curve by the pandemic."

"The name American Rescue Plan says it all: This is a real rescue package for K-12 schools across New York as they continue to grapple with needs only exacerbated by this pandemic," said New York State United Teachers President Andy Pallotta. "From helping districts preserve existing academic services to getting kids the social-emotional supports they need to providing the funding needed to reopen more classrooms with the right safety measures in place, Sen. Schumer, Congress and the president have

delivered for New York students yet again."

The White Plains School District is the largest area recipient, on tap to receive \$9,167,000.

Also on the seven-figure list, Harrison is slated to get \$2,839,000, Greenburgh will receive \$1,897,000, and Elmsford will garner \$1,117,000. Valhalla is set to receive \$431,000.

Under the \$1.9 trillion relief package, the funds designated for schools are intended to help fill budget gaps, address learning loss, meet the needs of students

with disabilities, assist students experiencing homelessness and provide summer enrichment and afterschool programs.

"The pandemic exacerbated disparities in our schools, and we must ensure that resources and staff are available to help students recover academically and work through mental and emotional health challenges," said New York State Senator Shelley Mayer (D), Chair of the Senate Education Committee, who represents several municipalities in Westchester.

Greenburgh Police Nab Duo for Drag Racing on Central Ave.

By Anna Young

As the Town of Greenburgh looks to crackdown on illegal speed contests, police arrested two New York City men last week who were caught drag racing on Central Park Avenue.

Greenburgh officers arrested Obed Pozuelos, 24, and York Roman, 24 and charged both with misdemeanor illegal speed contest and multiple traffic infractions, according to Lt. Kobie Powell. They

were issued appearance tickets and will return to Greenburgh Town Court on March 30.

On March 15, police observed two vehicles drag racing southbound on North Central Park Avenue, Powell said, but after an unsuccessful attempt to safely catch up with the cars, the initial pursuit was terminated. Shortly thereafter, both drivers were located after their vehicles became inoperable after a car accident near South Central Park Avenue and Underhill Road.

Both vehicles were then impounded, Powell said.

Police urged the public to contact and notify the department if any unsafe or illegal vehicle operations are observed within the town. While the arrests were made during a targeted speed enforcement, officials, along with neighboring jurisdictions, are committed to enforcing obedience of vehicle and traffic laws and maintaining safe roadways.

The Greenburgh Town Board in De-

cember passed a law permitting law enforcement officials to seize the vehicle of anyone who is caught and convicted of an illegal speed contest. Drag racing is currently prohibited within the town.

The law is enforced on all streets within the Town of Greenburgh, with violators charged with a misdemeanor. Those who are convicted or plead guilty will forfeit their car to the town.

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State Lowers Eligibility Age for Vaccines to 50 Years Old

By Martin Wilbur

New York State residents who are at least 50 years old will be able to receive a COVID-19 vaccination starting this week after Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Monday the age for eligibility has been lowered.

Cuomo, who was in Mount Vernon to enlist the faith community to help convince citizens to get the vaccines as part of the state's Roll Up Your Sleeve campaign, said vaccines for those as young as 50 were available starting Tuesday at 8 a.m.

"Make your appointment and get your vaccine," implored Cuomo.

For the past few weeks, residents 60 and up have been able to get vaccinated. Before then, the age for eligibility was 65 unless a person had underlying conditions, were health care workers, teachers or first-responders.

In addition to the two state-operated vaccine sites, Westchester Community College and the Yonkers Armory, and the two county Department of Health clinics, those meeting the age threshold will be able to get vaccinated at pharmacies along with those with comorbidities.

The increase in vaccine availability comes as about 15 percent of Westchester's population is fully inoculated and another 289,000 of

the county's residents, or about 29 percent, have received their first dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, County Executive George Latimer said.

Latimer said with all people in their 50s eligible as of Tuesday, there still could be lingering supply issues but those should be rectified in the coming weeks.

"We still have more demand than we have supply but for those folks who have been already seeking appointments, who have been eligible up to now, they've had the opportunity over some period of time, the (age) 65 threshold, which was the prior threshold, and then down to 60, has been around awhile, so we think it's a reasonable expectation now, as many of these people are satisfied – not all of them – you open it up to the next cohort," Latimer said.

A bigger challenge for the state was convincing residents in communities of color to seek their vaccinations as soon as they are eligible, Cuomo said. In the Hudson Valley region, for example, 79 percent of the population is white, but they make up 86 percent of people who are vaccinated. By contrast, 14 percent of the region is Black, but just 8 percent are vaccinated while 19 percent is



County Executive George Latimer and Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins provide Monday's weekly update on news regarding COVID-19 in White Plains.

Hispanic but they account for just 13 percent of vaccinations, Cuomo said.

He said the discrepancy must be rectified for the state and the nation to defeat COVID-19.

"We will have enough vaccines to vaccinate people," Cuomo said, who mentioned that AstraZeneca is now going to the Food & Drug Administration for approval for its vaccine. "We have to make sure we have the capacity and the willingness to take the vaccine."

As part of the Roll Up Your Sleeve campaign, Cuomo is calling on houses of worship and religious organizations to not only encourage

their congregants to get the vaccine but to become local vaccination centers.

Since opening in mid-January, the Westchester Community College site has now surpassed 125,000 doses administered. Another 16,000 does have been distributed at the Yonkers armory and 25,000 at the county Health Department's two clinics.

Slow Drop Continues

The number of active cases, hospitalizations and fatalities across Westchester continues to edge downward, although at an agonizingly slow rate.

On Monday, Latimer reported active cases were reduced to 5,233 as of Sunday, down 134 from the previous week. Two weeks ago, that figure stood at 5,930 and at 5,976 three weeks ago. The active caseload is the lowest in Westchester since late November, just as the fall spike was beginning.

On Saturday, there were 256 COVID-19-related hospitalizations in the county, virtually unchanged from the 253 a week earlier. Two weeks ago, that number stood at 270, but down noticeably from 340 three weeks ago.

Over the past week, there were 22 COVID-19 fatalities, also a slow diminution but less than half the number during the early winter spike.

Latimer said with a growing number of vaccines and a larger percentage of people becoming eligible for the shots, it is expected the cases, hospitalizations and deaths will eventually fall.

"At some point, the rise in the vaccination numbers should start to see a significant downturn in the number of positive cases," he said.

For information on eligibility and vaccination sites, the public may call 1-833-697-4829 or visit <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>

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Westchester Launches Campaign to Prevent Hate and Bias Incidents

By Martin Wilbur and Anna Young

With hate crimes and bias incidents soaring across the region and in communities nationwide, Westchester County officials have launched a new campaign to ensure immediate assistance is provided if a crime occurs.

The campaign, coined #SpeakUpWestchester, is designed to encourage residents to report incidents if they become a victim or witness a hate crime, bias or hate incident. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, attacks on Asian Americans have spiraled across the United States.

County Executive George Latimer said the targeting of Asian Americans or any group is condemned strongly in Westchester. While there hasn't been an uptick in incidents across the county, officials want to send a clear message that the threat is taken seriously.

"We obviously condemn any act that targets a person or group because of their actual or perceived races, color, national origin or ethnicity, ancestry, gender, identity, sexual orientation, age, disability," Latimer said. "Not every hate incident violates the law but they should still be reported and you have the 911 tool to report crimes of a certain nature."

Part of the campaign includes social media graphics available in English, Korean, Mandarin, Japanese and Spanish, with instructions on what to do and who to contact if a crime has been committed. Communities are encouraged to share them on all platforms

using the hashtag #SpeakUpWestchester.

To encourage more reporting, the county's Human Rights Commission has launched a new webpage to report incidents of bias, hate or discrimination anonymously or with your contact information at www.westchestergov.com/biasreporting.

John Hodges, chief of investigative services for the county Department of Public Safety, said all of the local police departments along with his department, the district attorney's office and the Human Rights Commission have devised a reporting process that includes hate and bias crimes and incidents that can be accessed by all of the agencies.

Hodges urged all residents who witness or are victimized by what they believe is a hate or bias crime or incident to report it to police or the commission.

"We now have every single police department in the county – cities, towns, villages – everyone single one participates and has a person who's assigned either on a full-time or part-time basis to the Real Time Crime Center, and that's important because the allocation of information on a timely manner is very important," Hodges said.

Additionally, District Attorney Mimi Rocah has created a new multilingual hotline for the public to report hate crimes, bias incidents, victimization of immigrants, elder abuse, wage theft and other labor-related violations, law enforcement misconduct, public corruption and other potential criminal matters.

The public can call the hotline at 914-955-8477 or report a crime through the website www.WestchesterDA.net.



Westchester District Attorney Mimi Rocah is working with the Department of Public Safety on a campaign to prevent hate and bias crimes after the pandemic has spawned a rash of incidents against Asian Americans, including last week's mass murder near Atlanta.

The hotline is available around the clock every day of the year in English, Spanish and Mandarin and will automatically notify the district attorney's office whenever a call arrives. Additional languages will be added in the coming weeks, Rocah said. The caller will then be directed to voicemail boxes to leave information.

Rocah added that experienced coordinators have been designated for each hotline category, with a member of the investigative team assigned to follow up on all complaints

received. The office has also launched the first in a series of promotional videos to promote the hotlines on social media and online.

P'ville Village, Schools Condemn Attack

Last Thursday, the Village of Pleasantville and the Pleasantville School District issued a joint statement condemning the rash of racist attacks against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders that have escalated around the nation.

"Here in Pleasantville, we do not and will not stand for hate," the statement read. "We remain committed to educating ourselves about discrimination of all kinds and taking concrete steps to make those in our schools and community feel safe and accepted."

Mayor Peter Scherer said the effort is to signal to the Asian American families who live locally and to the village at large that racism will not be tolerated.

"It's simply driven by an effort to stand in solidarity with those who are in pain over what happened (in Atlanta) which, obviously, ought to be all of us, but also to make clear there's bias in lots of places and we need to look for it," Scherer said.

Superintendent of Schools Mary Fox-Alter said it was critical that the school district, which has included inclusivity and education programs for students on an ongoing basis, put that into practice.

"We certainly felt it was super important that we tell our school families and our greater community in Pleasantville that we stand with them, we're here to support them and we as a school district and as a village condemn racism," she said.

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APPETIZER

6 pieces of Gefilte Fish & 1.5 pts. Chopped Liver

SOUP

2 qts. Chicken Soup & 7 Matzo Balls

ENTREE (Choose One)

3 Roast Chickens with Tray of Stuffing

2.5 lbs. Fresh Turkey Breast

2.5 lbs. Sliced Fresh Brisket

ACCOMPANIMENTS (All Included)

1 pt. Cranberry-Pineapple Compote

1.5 pts. Fresh-Cut Cole Slaw

1 pt. Carrot Tsimmes • 1 pt. Ben's Homemade Gravy

Small Relish Tray

SIDES (Choose Two)

Broccoli Almondine

Matzo Farfel & Mushrooms

Parsley Red Potatoes

Sweet Potato Pudding • Potato Pudding



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Croton-on-Hudson Delays Leaf Blower Ban, Will Revise Proposal

By Anna Young

A proposal that would have outlawed gas-powered leaf blowers year-round by 2023 in Croton-on-Hudson will be pushed back and undergo a complete revision as officials look to narrow the scope of the law.

While the original proposal – drafted by the village's Conservation Advisory Council – sought a three-year phased-in approach to reaching a complete ban and a shift to electric leaf blowers, the Board of Trustees is now looking to take a more measured approach by tackling noise pollution rather than instituting an outright ban.

The proposal, which had yet to be passed, was scheduled to go into effect in May, with a seasonal ban on gas-powered leaf blowers lasting through October, and legislation prohibiting its use from January to October in 2022. In 2023, the village would have instituted a year-round ban, with ongoing year-round education.

However, during the Mar. 8 Village Board work session, officials concluded that the proposal required more work and elected not to rush the process. They agreed to spend the remainder of this year tweaking the proposal to implement in 2022.

"We can't avoid the fact that we're still living under a pandemic and we have to take that very seriously, and the outpouring of concern that we've had, whether it's individuals, seniors or minority-owned businesses, I think reflects the fact that we're in a very difficult time and that raises the question of whether a significant environmental regulation is appropriate right now," Trustee Len Simon said. "I think we need some more work to do on this."

Mayor Brian Pugh added he was leery of passing a law assuming that the progress of technology, including electric and battery-powered lawn equipment, would be easily accessible to residents and the village by 2023.

Pugh suggested the village refer to neighboring municipalities that have passed similar laws, with a seasonal restriction on gas-powered leaf blowers between June 1 and Sept. 1. He also recommended altering how



the village would enforce the law, explaining he wants to minimize conflict between residents and the police department.

The current proposal would see violators subject to a \$250 fine for the first offense, \$500 for the second infraction and \$1,000 for the third and any subsequent offenses. Convictions would be deemed a violation. Fines would be levied against the person operating the leaf blower, the party who employed the person in violation and the property owner.

Pugh said the village should consider having a police officer or code enforcement officer identify property owners who violate the law, with a summons then mailed out.

"What I don't want is a direct confrontation between a police officer or an agent of the

village and a citizen," Pugh said. "I think the way to do that is to have liability on the property owner. It's the responsibility of the property owner."

Pugh added the current exceptions included in the proposal should also be revised, asserting it would be hypocritical to exempt the village or a private entity from the law.

According to the proposal, the village could still permit the use of gas- or electric-powered blowers after a storm at any time of the year should it be needed. The Hudson National Golf Club would be exempt from the proposed law.

Additionally, officials said they would be open to altering the hours leaf blowers can be used within the village. Pugh said the

continue on page 8

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Board of Legislators Adopts Reform Plan for County Police

The Westchester Board of Legislators unanimously adopted the report of the County's Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force Monday night, after weeks of review by the board's Public Safety Committee.

Its adoption establishes a blueprint for police reform intended to promote more equitable policing in Westchester.

The 177-page report contained 51 recommendations for the county's police, correction and other public safety operations.

Key points include implicit bias and intercultural competency training for law enforcement personnel; a formal review of the county Department of Public Safety's use of social media for branding and community outreach; creation of community liaisons; increased multilingual communications; training in implicit bias and restorative justice for school resource officers; joint de-escalation training with the Department of Corrections; increased police academy training in procedural justice, cultural diversity and bias-related crimes; and creation of a county Office of Police Accountability.

Leg. Colin Smith (D-Peekskill), chair of the board's Public Safety Committee and a task Force member, said the work on the plan was "serious, deliberative and thorough."

"But make no mistake, this is not a report we are adopting and then setting aside," Smith said. "We will be moving forward, in cooperation with the county executive's office, to implement meaningful reforms to promote more equitable policing now and for the future."

Board Chair Ben Boykin (D-White Plains)

called the report "a generational document," but its adoption starts the reform process.

"Substantial work is ahead of us to implement the reforms this document contemplates, but the work of the task force gives us a foundation upon which to build a fairer and more open future," Boykin said.

In 11 meetings, including a session for public input, over more than a month, the Public Safety Committee reviewed the report's recommendations and the process by which those recommendations were arrived

at. The committee heard from task force members, including co-chairs Mayo Bartlett and Leroy Fraser as well as the Department of Public Safety and other law enforcement representatives.

The report was the culmination of nearly seven months of work by the 38-member task force from a wide cross section of stakeholders around the county.

In addition to the patrolling the county's parkways and parks, the county police is the primary police provider in the Village of

Mount Kisco and also provides service to the Town of Cortlandt.

Under Executive Order 203 from Gov. Andrew Cuomo last June, all municipalities statewide must adopt a police reform plan and submit it to the state by Apr. 1. County Executive George Latimer had previously announced plans for a county police reform task force, which he then expanded to address the requirements of the governor's order.

Warehouse Proposed to Replace Old La Quinta Inn at Armonk Business Park

The property owner of the parcel that formerly housed La Quinta Inn in Armonk has proposed demolishing the former lodging facility and building a 71,500-square-foot warehouse.

Armonk Fairview, LLC & Aggro and Brasssi, LLC, the applicant that submitted the plan, pitched the project to the North Castle Planning Board earlier this month that would replace the 140-room inn with a new structure along with 150 parking spaces and 16 loading spaces at 94 Business Park Drive.

Project architect John Mannino said the warehouse would likely be home to one to three tenants with at least two office entry points and the possibility for

a third.

"It is designed to be flexible to try and market it to as many potential tenants as we can," Mannino said.

The applicant's attorney, Anthony Veneziano said after La Quinta Inn left the site in the middle of last year, the two families that own the property looked at the market to try and come up with a plan that might work for the site. It's currently unclear how many prospective tenants the warehouse would attract or the types of entities that would move in.

Director of Planning Adam Kaufman called it "a fairly straightforward plan," although the applicant will need a wetlands permit. Public hearings will



The site of the old La Quinta Inn in Armonk. The property owners have proposed demolishing the lodging facility and building a 71,000-square-foot warehouse.

need to be conducted for site plan review as well as the wetlands permit, he said.

—Martin Wilbur

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Byram Hills Looks to Increase Attendance in Grades 7-12 to 60 Percent

By Martin Wilbur

Byram Hills school officials plan to increase in-class attendance for grades 7-12 to 60 percent next month as districts search for ways to safely and effectively return students to class more often.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jen Lamia said last week there is enough room in H.C. Crittenden Middle School and Byram Hills High School to have students in those grades attend 60 percent of the time while maintaining six feet between desks.

The secondary-level grades have been coming in two-and-a-half days each week since the start of the school year while students in grades K-6 have been attending school full-time except for those families who choose to have their children learn remotely.

The change is scheduled to take effect on Monday, Apr. 19, the first day of the final quarter of the school year.

Where there is not enough room in a class to maintain six feet of separation, there will be overflow rooms to accommodate students, although Lamia said it isn't anticipated that the rooms would have to be used for many youngsters. Overflow rooms will be similar to remote learning, she said.

District officials are working off the assumption there will be 100 percent in-person attendance each day by the students whose days it is to report to class.

"Even right now our kids are not attending in full complement, it behooves

us to see if we can bring more kids in because we know we can handle the extra 10 percent even if everyone is fully in on those days," Lamia said.

From Mar. 1 to Mar. 11, there were eight to 17 seventh-graders who participated in remote learning depending on the day, and two to 15 students in eighth grade, she said. Some of those students have chosen to do full remote learning for the year while others might be under quarantine.

During that same time period in the high school, there were four to 13 freshmen participating in remote learning; 10 to 23 students in 10th grade; 16 to 26 students in 11th grade; and 24 to 40 seniors. About

10 percent of the district's students have opted to learn entirely remotely this year, said Deputy Superintendent Tim Kaltenecker.

There will likely be additional cohorts created starting on Apr. 19, Lamia said.

She said her office explored bringing students back 80 percent of the time, but it could not be achieved without shrinking the distance between desks to as little as three feet, a move that administrators are uneasy about. Last week the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued revised its guidelines to allow students to be within three feet of one another.

"I don't want to alienate those kids that

are in because they are trusting in what we're doing is safe and the fact that we've had so many COVID positive cases and quarantines that have not affected the kids in class, I'd say we continue to do this at six feet for now," Lamia said.

As of last week, the district has recorded 137 positive COVID-19 cases and have had 50 quarantines since the start of the school year in September.

Board of Education member Scott Levy said he was encouraged by the move.

"It seems like a very feasible plan," he said.

Croton-on-Hudson Delays Leaf Blower Ban, Will Revise Proposal

continued from page 6

village would benefit from something more consistent.

Currently, the operation of leaf blowers or other motorized lawn or garden equipment is allowed Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., excluding holidays, Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sundays between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Pugh added that while there is environmental justification to switch to electric-powered equipment, the village's counsel has advised the board to narrowly tailor the law around noise instead of focusing on the impacts gas-powered leaf blowers have on the environment.

"It's about minimizing disruption to

people's living, creating a nuisance and quality-of-life issues," Pugh said. "My feeling also is that it's better for everyone for it to be simple and straightforward."

In crafting a law, the village would join about a dozen other Westchester communities that have either passed similar laws or are attempting to impose regulations on the equipment.

Last September, New Castle officials unanimously approved a law prohibiting the use of gas-powered leaf blowers from June 1 through Sept. 30. In Greenburgh, the Town Board is mulling a proposal that would only allow blowers – both gas and electric – to be used from Mar. 1 to May 15 and October through Dec. 15.

During those specified periods, use of blowers would be permitted between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends and holidays. All types of blowers would be prohibited the remainder of the year, according to Greenburgh's proposed law.

Pleasantville officials are also discussing a leaf blower ban to limit noise and air pollution and reduce health impacts. The proposed ordinance would allow leaf blowers to be used only in spring for two weeks and for a three-week period in fall. The weeks where they could be used would depend on the weather. Operation would be allowed after 10 a.m. on Saturday and after noon on Sunday.

FAMILY COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

In the Matter of

ROSARIO ESQUIVEL-GARCIA
ANGEL ESQUIVEL-GARCIA

SUMMONS

Docket No. NN-07345-20
NN -07346-20

F/U No. 143336

A Children Under Eighteen Years of
Age Alleged to be Neglected by

ANGEL ESQUIVEL-MANCILLA,
Respondent.

NOTICE: PLACEMENT OF YOUR CHILD IN FOSTER CARE MAY RESULT IN YOUR LOSS OF YOUR RIGHTS TO YOUR CHILD. IF YOUR CHILD STAYS IN FOSTER CARE FOR 15 OF THE MOST RECENT 22 MONTHS, THE AGENCY MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW TO FILE A PETITION TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS AND COMMITMENT OF GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY OF THE CHILD FOR THE PURPOSES OF ADOPTION, AND MAY FILE BEFORE THE END OF THE 15-MONTH PERIOD. IF SEVERE OR REPEATED ABUSE IS PROVEN BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE, THIS FINDING MAY CONSTITUTE THE BASIS TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS.

UPON GOOD CAUSE, THE COURT MAY ORDER AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE NON-RESPONDENT PARENT(S) SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A RESPONDENT; IF THE COURT DETERMINES THE CHILD SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM HIS/HER HOME, THE COURT MAY ORDER AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE NON-RESPONDENT PARENT(S) SHOULD BE SUITABLE CUSTODIANS FOR THE CHILD; IF THE CHILD IS PLACED AND REMAINS IN FOSTER CARE FOR FIFTEEN OF THE MOST RECENT TWENTY-TWO MONTHS, THE AGENCY MAY BE REQUIRED TO FILE A PETITION FOR TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THE PARENT(S) AND COMMITMENT OF GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY OF THE CHILD FOR THE PURPOSES OF ADOPTION, EVEN IF THE PARENT(S) WERE NOT NAMED AS RESPONDENTS IN THE CHILD NEGLECT OR ABUSE PROCEEDING.

A NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT HAS THE RIGHT TO REQUEST TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT CUSTODY OF THE CHILD AND TO SEEK ENFORCEMENT OF VISITATION RIGHTS WITH THE CHILD.

TO: ANGEL ESQUIVEL-MANCILLA

The petition under Article 10 of the Family Court Act having been filed with this Court alleging that the above-named children are neglected children;

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to appear before this Court at 111 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., 3rd Floor Annex, White Plains, New York, on the **10th day of MAY, 2021, at 2:30PM**, in the forenoon of said day for the purposes of a an Inquest hearing to answer the petition and to show cause why said children should not be adjudicated to be a neglected children and why you should not be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Article 10 of the Family Court Act.

PRIOR TO YOUR COURT APPEARANCE, please contact White Plains Family Court at (914) 824-5500 for confirmation that the matter will still be heard virtually and not in-person at that time OR for further instructions on how to appear virtually.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE, that you have the right to be represented by a lawyer, and if the Court finds you are unable to pay for a lawyer, you have the right to have a lawyer assigned by the Court.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE, that if you fail to appear at the time and place noted above, the Court will moved forward with the Inquest Hearing and determine the petition as provided by law.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE, that Federal and State law may require the Commissioner of Social Services to file petitions to terminate parental rights when children have been in foster care for fifteen (15) of the most recent twenty-two (22) months.

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/s/
CLERK OF THE COURT

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Gate of Heaven Solar Farm Public Hearing Set for May 17

By Martin Wilbur

A public hearing has been scheduled for May 17 to hear comments on the 5.6-megawatt ground-mounted solar farm proposed for an unused portion of Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne.

The Mount Pleasant Planning Board set the date after the applicant, CES Hawthorne Solar, LLC, sufficiently answered enough questions that planners had posed last September. Planners had requested information on a variety of issues, most notably specific details on the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program that would be paid to the town, maintenance of the panels and removal of the equipment.

Last year, the Town Board approved a zoning text amendment that allowed for solar arrays if the applicant received a special permit.

Gate of Heaven, which has been owned and operated by St. Patrick's Cathedral since 1916, is planning to set aside 46 of its roughly 200 acres at the cemetery for the panels. The array, which would produce about 7.2 million kilowatts of energy each year, would be spread over about 32

acres. Gate of Heaven is not planning to use the acreage for graves for at least the length of the 25-year lease.

The solar farm would generate electricity for about 200 residences. Local residents would have a chance to sign up to be part of the program, saving an estimated \$360 a year on electric bills, said Steven Onidshin, project manager for CES Hawthorne Solar. Area churches and Catholic schools would also benefit from receiving power at a lower cost.

Last September, the applicant had estimated the project would generate 7.5 million kilowatts annually and power up to 1,000 homes.

"It's important to point out that this particular parcel currently produces no taxes," Onidshin said. "So the cemetery is a nonprofit organization; therefore, this project will be providing some additional income for the town without putting a strain on schools or infrastructure."

Onidshin said that the tentative PILOT program would bring in \$47,800 a year in revenue for the town for the duration of the lease.

He assured board members that the array and the site would be kept in good condition, landscaped



The Mount Pleasant Planning Board will be opening a public hearing in May on the 7.2 million-kilowatt solar farm project proposed for a currently unused portion of Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne.

with grass and screened with shrubs and trees on the perimeter. Any equipment related to the array would be stored in containers that are not visible to passersby, Onidshin said. There would also be no equipment from other solar farms projects that would be brought to Gate of Heaven.

Onidshin outlined the environmental benefits of the array. The energy produced during the 25 years would help save emissions from 328 million

passenger car miles, 5.6 million bags of trash trucked to a landfill and 280 million pounds of CO₂. The current trees that are on site would only help reduce about 1.2 million pounds of carbon, he said.

Several points and questions were raised last week, which will be addressed more extensively at the public hearing. Chairman Michael McCarthy said he didn't believe it was appropriate for churches and parochial schools, which don't pay any taxes, to

benefit from the projected reduced energy costs.

"If that's the case, then what you are doing, in essence, is having the public taxpayers support a part of the cost," McCarthy said. "If St. Pat's or the (archdiocese) want to benefit their schools, there's a way for them do to that and that is to give them back some money."

Board member James Collins said he wants to make sure the town notifies a larger assortment of property owners than is required by local law for the public hearing. He said only adjoining property owners need to be formally notified but there are no adjoining property owners in this case because the cemetery is so large.

One possibility would be to contact Robert Place residents, who are directly across the Sprain Brook Parkway from the site, he said.

"I don't think it's good enough for us to rely exclusively on members of the public to self-notify," Collins said. "I just think that we have to make sure the experts are engaged and we have to make sure the public is engaged."

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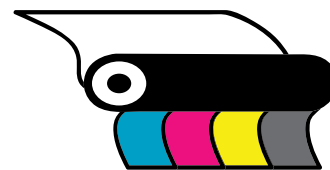
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Former Mt. Kisco Trustee Proposes 16-Unit Residential Building Downtown

By Martin Wilbur

A former Mount Kisco village trustee has proposed a four-story, 16-unit apartment building on land he owns downtown behind the AT&T store and Frannie's Goodie Shop on Main Street.

Isi Albanese has introduced a conceptual plan that calls for 12 one-bedroom apartments and two studios and two-bedroom units each on a plot of land that is now a 19-car parking lot on nearly 13,000 square feet in the rear of 134 Main St. There would be a gym on the building's first floor and the roof could contain solar panels on one portion along with a terrace for socializing.

There would be covered parking of about 16 spaces on the ground level with the building's three floors of living space directly above.

Albanese, who also owns and operates Exit 4 Food Hall, said the building is designed for younger and working adults, residents who would be commuting into the city or White Plains by train or work locally.

It is proposed in the current commercial business zone (CB-2) but is within the Downtown Overlay District that would allow for its development under the updated Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, it is set far enough back from Main Street where height and massing may not be an issue, he said.

"I think all the talks that we've had in the



A rendering of the four-story residential building proposed by former Mount Kisco village trustee Isi Albanese behind 134 Main St.

past, the Comprehensive Plan, the overlay zone, is to bring people downtown where the businesses are. One of the things is to shop local," Albanese said.

He said he is scheduled to meet this week with Building Inspector Peter Miley to review what variances may be needed from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

If constructed, it would be situated between the building that housed the old Winston restaurant, which went out of business last year, and the now-shuttered movie theater.

Albanese said the building would also be near the pocket park that serves as a cut-through between Main Street and South Moger Avenue between Frannie's and the theater.

"It's a meeting place for people to gather, and I know these days we don't want to even hear that word gather, but hopefully in a year from now people will really want to meet again, and people who live up on Grove Street, can walk down and make it a walkable community," he said.

Members of the village's Planning

Board who listened to Albanese's Mar. 9 presentation were encouraged by the proposal, although they cautioned it is a conceptual plan with various site plan and zoning-related issues that will need to be addressed.

"I really like the idea," said board member John Hochstein. "I think it's a great use of the space. I like putting the new building further back so it doesn't hit you in the face when you're walking on Main Street. I think it's a great idea and I especially like the rooftop idea."

Acting Board Chairman John Bainlardi said he sees lots of promise in the conceptual application, saying that it creatively makes excellent use of a space that might otherwise be difficult to develop.

"It's a great start, it's creative and I'm happy you're going to undertake this," he said.

Albanese said while plans are still being developed the studios could be around 750 square feet with the largest units at more than 1,100 square feet. Rents would depend on construction costs, but an early estimate could be between \$1,500 and \$2,800.

The village's planning consultant, Jan Johannessen, said once a formal site plan application is submitted there would be a better idea of the types zoning and planning matters, such as build-to lines, that need to be addressed that are related to the overlay zone.

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Editorial

Proposed Recycling Bill Deals Devastating Blow to Community Papers

By Michelle K. Rea

State Sen. Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach) and a host of colleagues have introduced legislation that shifts the responsibility and costs of recycling from municipalities to the producers of packaging and paper products. The legislation is called the Extended Producer Responsibility Act, and in other countries around the world, newspapers have been exempted from these recycling initiatives. New York should follow suit.

In Canada, this product-focused approach is referred to as product stewardship. And while each Canadian province has adopted different stewardship models, there are strong similarities in how newspapers are treated. Their approach is consistent with how newspapers are managed in recycling regimes all over the world.

Newspapers have been treated differently in recognition of the fact that they provide a public benefit, that they can make a significant contribution to public education on recycling and that they are not a packaged good like other materials in the recycling stream.

Newspapers perform an important role in our democracy, and they are not a consumable product – there are no contents and no packaging – the two are indistinguishable. Treating newspapers

like packaged goods discriminates unfairly against newspapers; the packaged goods industry makes no investment in contents of their packages, just the packaging itself.

Further, newspapers have been good stewards of the environment for decades. In 1989, New York's newspaper industry entered into a voluntary agreement with the state to increase its usage of recycled newsprint to 40 percent by 2000. Recycling damages the fiber in newsprint, so a minimum of 50 percent new fiber is required to maintain quality. Newsprint with too little new fiber tears when the presses are running and causes the ink to blot.

Newsprint accounts for less than 7 percent of solid waste in a typical community.

Newspapers are environmentally sound; publishers use the remains of what other industries discard – recycled fiber. Newspapers are compostable (you can use them in your vegetable garden) and they are re-manufactured (used to produce home insulation and packaging materials). They are reusable, biodegradable and the ink is non-toxic, made from organic materials such as soy and linseed oil.

In November 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency reported the following recycling rates: Plastic 8.5 percent; aluminum 17.2 percent; rubber/leather

18.2 percent; glass 25 percent; and newspapers 68.2 percent.

Newspapers should be exempted from this legislation because they already recycle at a rate far higher than any other recyclable product.

The proposed legislation will not increase or improve the recycling of newspapers – it will simply shift the cost of recycling from municipalities to newspapers.

Newspapers are already suffering from revenue declines caused by COVID-19 and big tech platforms. Burdening newspapers with the cost of recycling will result in layoffs, further eroding citizen access to essential local news and information.

Newspapers are good citizens, and they are cheerleaders and watchdogs for the communities they serve. New York's newspapers will be pleased to enter into a voluntary agreement to support, promote and educate readers and community leaders about the importance of recycling. New York's legislators should consider the devastating impact this legislation will have on newspapers, and subsequently, citizens' access to local journalism.

Michelle K. Rea is executive director of the New York Press Association/New York Press Service.

Letters to the Editor

Consider the Benefits of Proposed Project at Yorktown's Soundview Site

There are so many negative comments about the project proposed for the Soundview Preparatory School site.

It will increase traffic; we already have traffic. This developer's plan is to enhance the traffic flow at Route 118 and Underhill Avenue. We can use that.

Residents are under the impression the beautiful main building will be destroyed. This building is going to be saved in its 19th century style. They plan to organize the interior and open it up to Yorktown residents. The interior architecture of this

building is magnificent. It will be saved for residents to enjoy, be it a café, a museum or a meeting place. Everyone is worried about this, but how many have actually been in that building?

There is concern over the other structures on the property; again, who has actually seen these structures? They are mostly dilapidated, mold infested and a liability.

The plan, as presented, shows three types of community living for seniors – townhouse living, condominiums and rentals. This provides nice housing diversity for our

seniors and their lifestyles. Allowing them to stay in the town they want to stay in; bringing in millions of real estate tax dollars; continuing to shop in our stores; and having no effect on our school system, which has been another concern.

The property will still have plenty of trees and will conserve the main building with its history. Yorktown has many old structures that were once home to residents from the 1800s that are now utilized as businesses. It's "Progress with Preservation." We need to grow. The traffic is not going to go away. Let that traffic stop and shop and visit some of the history we have to offer. Let's get that additional tax revenue, fix our infrastructure and help our schools.

Get the facts on the growth from all sides, not just the negative from those that do not want to see this town grow and move forward.

Jennie Menton
Yorktown

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How to Go Further Within at Home if You Enjoy Meditation

In the hurly-burly pre-pandemic world that now seems so long ago, I would only occasionally take a break to “go within” and space out in meditation to quiet my mind and body.

But now that we’re all stuck at home with our business and social rounds seriously restricted, I find that it is even more important to expand my four walls, at least in my mind, to survive the isolation made necessary by COVID-19 requirements. That’s when my experience with Vipassana meditation comes in handy.

I fondly remember a social gathering some years go with some fellow realtors where the subject of meditation came up and we were all quite open, even enthusiastic, talking about how and where we go within.

“I prefer doing it outside, observing nature,” one friend said, “and I do it with my eyes open.” That surprised me.

While Buddha was able to meditate outside under a tree, I lack that capability, finding outdoor sounds and even the breeze distracting.

“I can focus anyplace and anywhere I happen to be in my home,” said another realtor. That talent also eludes me.

Still, a third realtor, an office manager, said he meditated in his office, just taking a few moments when the need arises. That is something I did years ago when I worked a 9-to-5 job in the most dysfunctional office



By Bill Primavera

environment imaginable. I would sometimes retreat to the men’s room, perhaps two or three times a day, go into a stall and repeat the mantra, “relax, relax, relax.” This survival technique was abandoned after my boss asked me if I was having some kind of gastrointestinal problem.

At home, I suspect that many of us have our own special place dedicated to making contact with our inner selves and the universe. I was reminded of this a while back when I was told of a complaint from a seller who said that an agent left her business card on the homeowner’s “altar,” which would seem to be a violation of sacred space, and understandable. The agent, in her own defense, said “Gee, it looked like a regular sideboard to me.”

At the height of my spiritual quest some years ago, I explored an endless and seemingly discordant mix of meditative practices. These included listening to new age and gospel music, the sound of an indoor waterfall and a vibrating chime, all supported with the energies of crystal healing, along with a very heavy dose of Vipassana meditation and attendance at a then-popular men’s group. (In retrospect, I was lucky to survive the latter, where several of the guys only wanted to gripe about home life.)

It would have been impossible to engage in such an elaborate other-worldly plan either outdoors or in a public place. So I carved out a



space, actually an entire room, as my personal meditation room. I figured that it could double as a second guest room. Then, I started collecting crystals (minerals I called them to the outside world) and I became so obsessive about it, not so much for their metaphysical qualities but for their sheer physical beauty, that at one point my quiet place looked like an outpost of the American Museum of Natural History.

Our first house guest invited to sleep in that room refused. It seems that she had taken a different path to spirituality than I had, one that would classify any association with crystals as witchcraft. To each his or her own, I say.

Today my meditation room, pared of most of its crystals, has certain features that I would recommend for others who want to carve out their own quiet spaces. And the formula can be quite simple. Whether an entire room or a corner of one, the space should be uncluttered and capable of being darkened even in the morning or middle

of the day. There should be a system for producing sound, and I recommend that it be through earphones rather than ambient sound for better concentration.

Also, depending on one’s beliefs, there might be religious or spiritual symbols or a touchstone of some sort to set the mood.

Some can meditate on a floor mat, but there are those of us that are not that agile, so there should be a chair that is comfortable but not too comfortable, or there is the risk of falling asleep while meditating. What serves as my launching pad as my mind jettisons into altered time is an old wingback chair that has seen better days. But it serves.

Bill Primavera, while a writer and editor, is also a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate and founder of Primavera Public Relations, Inc. (www.PrimaveraPR.com). His real estate site is www.PrimaveraRealEstate.com. To engage the talents and services of The Home Guru to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.



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Taylored Menus Café Opens in Pleasantville

By Lisa Mockel

Like so many others in the food service and catering industry, Taylor Smelser had to rethink the way he did business when the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and social distancing requirements brought celebratory gatherings to a screeching halt last year.

The longtime owner of Taylored Menus, Inc. in Pleasantville, an upscale catering and event planning service, was used to catering events every weekend but needed to shift gears in order to stay afloat.

"As soon as this really took hold, my wife and I looked at each other and said, 'It's time,'" he said. "We did a little catering last summer but not on the scale we used to."

During Super Bowl weekend in early February, Smelser opened a storefront at 101 Castleton St. in Pleasantville – in the same building where he's operated a commercial kitchen since 2002.

The storefront, which features a small café with seating for five where you can grab an espresso and quick bite to eat, sells soups, sandwiches, main courses and side dishes that can be eaten on site or as part of a pre-packaged "gourmet to go" meal kit.



Taylor Smelser, owner of Taylored Menus catering in Pleasantville, who has been able to survive the pandemic in part because of the opening of his accompanying cafe with meals to go.

With the arrival of spring, an outdoor dining area provides additional seating for 15 to 20 people.

The boxed meal kit, which ranges from \$125 to \$145, comes with everything needed to cook a gourmet dinner. Designed to feed a family of four to six people, the kits must be ordered by 9 a.m. for same-day pick up or local delivery. Pick up is Monday

through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Saturday between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the Taylored Menus Café.

Smelser changes the box offerings each week to keep things interesting. The kits include easy-to-assemble appetizers, main courses and desserts.

This week's box features a make-your-own noodle bowl, which includes chicken, mango and asparagus spring rolls with an orange ginger dipping sauce; cooked gluten-free rice noodles with a sesame sake broth; teriyaki pulled short rib of beef; Sriracha grilled chicken; various vegetables; and fresh fruit skewers with a coconut lime dipping sauce and mini coconut cupcakes.

Past boxes include the flatbread box, featuring marinara sauce, cheese, grilled chicken and other ingredients; the taco box, which has tortillas, cheese and marinated steak and chicken and the soup box complete with carrots, onions, celery, cooked pulled chicken and cooked rice.

Smelser, who launched his catering business in 1997 in White Plains, started out in the food business as

an undergrad making burgers and milkshakes at St. Michael's College café in Vermont.

"That was my first taste of the culinary world," he said, adding that his interest in cooking spanned back to his childhood – inspired by the cooking of his grandmothers.

He then moved to Colorado where he worked as a cook at a ski resort and attended Johnson & Wales University's satellite campus in Vail, earning a degree in culinary arts.

Smelser is excited about the new café and the recent easing of COVID-19 restrictions in New York permitting larger gatherings.

Easter is Sunday, Apr. 4. Check out www.tayloredmenus.com for the Easter menu.

"We can't wait to hear from you again with all your catering needs," he said. "With many milestone events coming up, we now have a cool storefront where you can come in, talk to an event planner, have a cappuccino and we'll set you up for your spring and summer events."

Business Spotlight

Bill Volz Westchester

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NWH Honors Health Care Workers a Year After First COVID Patient

Between 50 and 100 people gathered at Northern Westchester Hospital on Mar. 11 to remember those lost to the pandemic and honor the health care professionals on the one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 patient.

Members of the Mount Kisco Fire Department, patient families and visitors were on hand to commemorate the day as walkways around the hospital were lined with luminaries.

"This was a significant week at Northern Westchester Hospital as we recognized the day that we admitted our first COVID-19 positive patient on Mar. 11, 2020, and reflected on what the past year has meant for our entire organization," said Derek Anderson, the hospital's executive director. "We are incredibly proud of the resiliency and dedication of our team members and so grateful to the community, which rallied around us with their continued support."

"Over the past few days, we have had several opportunities to recognize our team members for the outstanding care they have provided over the past year and for the sacrifices they made in their personal lives so that they could be here for our patients and community. We also paid tribute to the lives lost during the pandemic."

A particularly moving moment was



Mount Kisco firefighters, patient families and visitors applaud Northern Westchester Hospital's health care heroes as they change shifts on the one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 positive patient admission.

the change of shift recognition. Hospital leadership greeted team members as they arrived or departed from their shifts. Each team member was invited to create

a luminary bag on which they shared a memory or word of inspiration. Each bag contained a prayer card that included the verse read by hospital chaplain Rev. Angela



Northern Westchester Hospital's health care workers receive applause during the shift change on the one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 positive patient admission.

Maddalone during a moment of silence.

The luminary bags also included a tea light, which staff lit before placing their bag in a growing lineup of tributes throughout the entryways. On the evening of Mar. 11, the luminaries were brought outside to spread the light across the campus at the end of the day.

Visitors were invited to join team members as the Mount Kisco Fire Department rang a bell at 7 p.m. to honor those who were lost during the pandemic. Large spotlights illuminated the campus, spreading light through the community.

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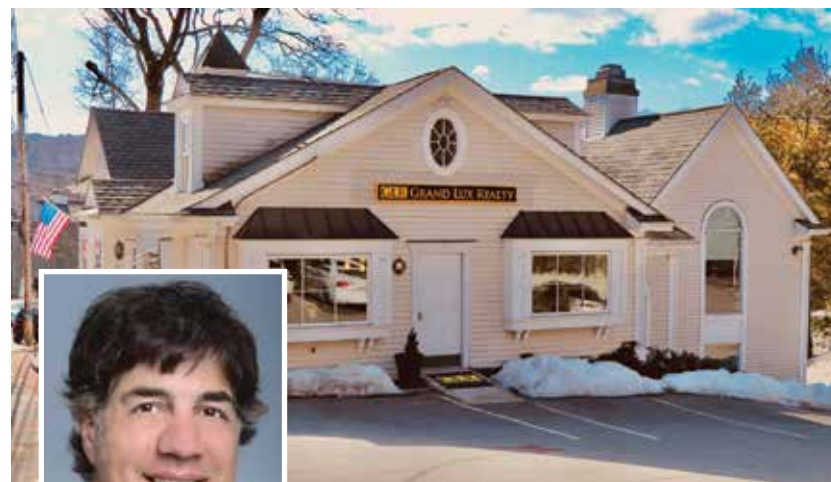
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Grand Lux Realty Relocates Armonk Headquarters to Chappaqua



The new Chappaqua home of Grand Lux Realty, which has moved from Armonk. Michael Levy, inset, the founder and principal broker of Grand Lux.

Grand Lux Realty, ranked by the Board of Realtors as a top 5 percent performing, locally-owned brokerage firm in Westchester County and the lower Hudson Valley, announced on Mar. 16 the opening of the company's new Chappaqua office at 101 King St. in Chappaqua.

The new office sits in a well-appointed and conveniently located building with plenty of parking and easy access to downtown Chappaqua, the train station and Starbucks.

"We established our Armonk office back in 2006," said Michael Levy, founder and principal broker of Grand Lux Realty. "This move is bittersweet,

but we are not saying goodbye to Armonk or our longtime clients. While Armonk continues to be an important coverage area for us, moving our headquarters to Chappaqua was a business decision that better positions us to meet the needs of a larger high-demand market."

Grand Lux Realty offers unique strategies for sellers designed to help them position their home against their competition to maximize their "buyer perceived value."

The firm is looking for more agents and offers the fastest no-fee route to 90 percent commission splits in the lower Hudson Valley.

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Passover: The Story of Faith in the Most Challenging of Times

By Rabbi Yehuda Heber

Passover is celebrated by Jews every year, commemorating the anniversary of the Jewish nation's miraculous exodus from Egyptian slavery, as told in the Bible.

This year, Passover is celebrated from Mar. 27 through Apr. 4. A Seder (a ritual and 15-step meal) is traditionally conducted on the first two nights of the holiday. This year that coincides with Saturday night, Mar. 27 and Sunday night, Mar. 28.

The Passover story is an inspiring one. It is the story of a nation brought from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light. It is the story of human beings in the most unfortunate circumstances, experiencing good fortune at last. It is the story of going from utter despair to sheer joy.

The Jews experienced harsh slavery in ancient Egypt for many years. How did they manage? What kept them going when the conditions were so brutal that their babies were being slaughtered to provide a literal bloodbath for the king to whom they were enslaved?

Their secret tool was their faith. They believed that one day the tide would turn and the slavery would end. They believed that God would hear their prayers and redeem them. They went to sleep with this faith at night, and woke up with it in the morning. With this hope in their hearts, they weathered the storms and survived to tell the tale.

The Jewish women even went so far as



to prepare tambourines and dances which they planned to use as a way of celebrating their freedom after their emancipation. So sure, were they, that the redemption was on its way! God rewarded their faith in kind and indeed redeemed them.

Our sages tell us that "In the merit of the righteous women were our ancestors redeemed from Egypt." They served as a

beacon of hope and optimism for the rest of the weary nation.

What exactly is faith? What does it feel like?

Faith is a feeling of calm that comes from the knowledge that God is running the world and that He knows what He is doing, so to speak. It is the understanding that while to our perception it seems as if

all is wrong, there is a master plan greater than what we perceive and that everything that occurs happens for a reason. It is also the feeling of hope that things will turn out well and that we will experience comfort and happiness again, despite current challenges.

It is difficult to believe that a full year has passed since Passover 2020, when the pandemic was at its height worldwide. The uncertainty and fear we all experienced are unforgettable. Let us draw strength from the Passover story and live with faith, too. This faith helps us let go of the need to control our circumstances and the outcomes of the situations we encounter.

Our job is to act responsibly and put forth our due effort. When things turn out differently than the way we plan them, we can find comfort in the knowledge that although we are not in control, someone far greater than us is. Our faith also encourages us to look to the future optimistically, to a time when we too will witness the tide turning for the good and experience our former freedoms once again.

For more detailed information on the history and customs of Passover, visit www.ChabadYorktown.com/Passover. You can also print a Haggadah and find recipes and tips for preparing and conducting the Seder.

Happy Passover to you and yours!

Yehuda Heber is the rabbi at Chabad of Yorktown.

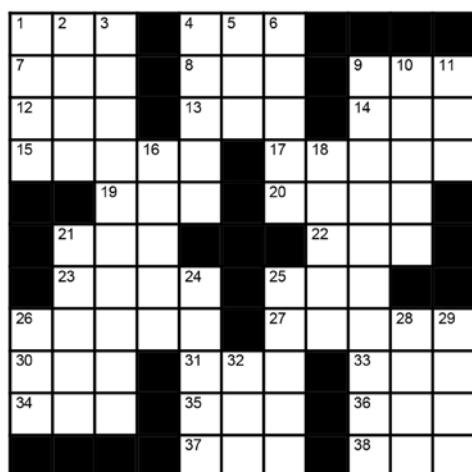
Crossword

Across

1. Distant
4. Leather-working tool
7. Wolfed down
8. Buck's mate
9. Rip off
12. Elmer, to Bugs
13. Tattoo letters sometimes
14. Time before
15. Smiley face is one
17. Pushed
19. Go with your ____
20. Steering rope
21. In addition
22. Biblical beast
23. Residence, slangily
25. Part of a play
26. Twelve
27. Mantelpiece
30. "____ you serious?"
31. "____ me" (phone intro)
33. Lobster eggs
34. Affirming word
35. Charge card charge
36. Chow down
37. Excess around the middle
38. A type of evidence

Down

1. Grow dim
2. Minuscule particle
3. Sees



4. Accept, as an error
5. Pursue romantically
6. Nocturnal mammal
9. On the rolls
10. Baking chambers
11. Garden part
16. Contest official
18. Get through to
21. Admire devotedly
24. Smell
25. Strong point
26. "Let's call it a ____"
28. Advance
29. Salad cheese
32. Green beverage

Answers on page 23

A Spiritual View

By Cantor Lilah Sugarman

"May we think of freedom not as the right to do as we please but the opportunity to do what is right."

--Peter Marshall

The Jewish tradition teaches that freedom is not the end goal but instead what we do with that freedom. With our freedom, we are empowered to commit to the care and growth of ourselves and our community.

We see this played out in the Jewish calendar. We are approaching the holiday of Passover, where we celebrate the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt. However, the story does not end there, and it is what is done with this freedom that is important. Fifty days after Passover,

we celebrate Shavuot, the holiday that commemorates the Israelites receiving the Torah (the Jewish bible) and all the laws. With their freedom, the Israelites committed to their community, God and the Torah.

As vaccines roll out and the weather gets warmer, we are gaining new freedoms that we could not have at the height of the pandemic. May we be grateful for these freedoms and, with them, commit to keeping ourselves, our families and our communities safe.

Lilah Sugarman is the cantor at Congregation B'Nai

Yisrael in Armonk and is part of the Armonk Faith Alliance. The alliance also comprises Hillside Church, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, St. Patrick's RC Church and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.



Southeast Democrats Endorse Pair of Candidates for Town Board

The Southeast Democratic Committee announced Monday its endorsement of Zach Disador and Gail Levine to run for two town council positions.

Zach Disador is a lifelong Southeast resident. He has worked for ARC (formerly PARC) since 2005, where he serves as the respite services coordinator and helped develop an afterschool program used by more than 100 Putnam families.

“Zach’s resume is impressive and a perfect fit for Southeast,” said Committee Chairwoman Cathy Croft. “He ran a great race in 2019 and it’s obvious that Zach still cares deeply about our town and its residents.”

Levine is an almost 30-year resident and is motivated by her desire to give back to her community. She is a writer and has taught free writing workshops for children

and adults locally.

“Gail is articulate, smart and will put her considerable energy into preserving and improving the town of Southeast,” Croft said.

Putnam County Sheriff Robert Langley leads the Democrats in his first re-election bid.

Croft said that the party has assembled a strong team who will bring hard work and a fresh perspective to local and county government.

“We are so encouraged by our strong ticket this year, from Sheriff Langley at the top and three strong Putnam County legislative candidates to our local candidates who are dedicated to upgrading our quality of life in Southeast,” she said. “We are proud and excited to support them all.”



Gail Levine and Zach Disador were endorsed by the Southeast Democrats Monday to vie for two Town Board seats this fall.

Residents Warned to Guard Against Unemployment Insurance Fraud

The Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board is warning residents to be on alert after numerous reports of people falling victim to unemployment insurance fraud during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, New York State has paid more than \$65 billion in unemployment benefits, but

the Department of Labor (DOL) has identified more than 425,000 claims to be fraudulent. Thousands of fraud cases have since been referred to federal prosecutors, who are working with law enforcement on the federal, state and local level to hold people accountable.

In response, the Westchester Putnam Workforce Development Board is urging

residents to protect themselves against identity theft.

“The unemployment insurance benefits the New York State Department of Labor has been able to provide New York State and Westchester County residents during the pandemic has been exceptional,” aid Thom Kleiner, executive director of the Westchester-

Putnam Workforce Development Board. “But, unfortunately, fraud has been pervasive, so it’s essential that it be reported as soon as those affected are made aware of it.”

If you believe you are the victim of fraud, report it to the New York State Department of Labor at on.ny.gov/uifraud.



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Putnam Arts Council Announces Opening of Spring Exhibit

The Putnam Arts Council invites the public to visit its first 2021 exhibition featuring 72 artworks in a virtual show on the council's website, www.putnamartscouncil.com, through Apr. 18.

Participating in this exhibit is a benefit of membership and showcases the vast breadth of media and subject matter created by many of the Putnam Arts Council's members. Most of the works are for sale and all are reasonably priced. The show is, of course, available 24/7.

The council is also announcing its return to a monthly Featured Artist Series, also



a benefit of membership. Artists will be selected to be featured on the website permanently, in the vestibule for three months and in time-appropriate e-blasts.

Visit the Putnam Arts Council's virtual exhibition and stop in and see the terrific collages created by current featured artist Joan Gillman Smith of Brewster.

Spring classes will begin in late April and art classes and workshops for adults, teens and pre-teens will be offered. The council is also in the midst of planning its summer art program for children six to 12 years old, which will be offered in August.

The Putnam Arts Council is a nonprofit organization housed in the Belle Levine Art Center, a renovated 1800s barn, once the home of cartoonist Bud Fisher, creator of Mutt and Jeff. The council received its charter from the state Department of Education for museum and educational purposes and has been serving artists and the community since its inception.

Programs are supported, in part, with public funds from Putnam County and with

public funds received through the state Council on the Arts. All of its programs are open to the public and admission to the gallery is always free.

The Putnam Arts Council can be reached Tuesday to Friday from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.

and evenings or weekends by appointment at 845-803-8622. You may also e-mail the council 24/7 at joyce@putnamartscouncil.com.

Crossword Answers



Special Delivery



Carmel Supervisor Kenneth Schmitt delivered an ice cream cake last Saturday to Mahopac resident and World War II veteran Mario Porto to celebrate his 97th birthday. Schmitt was joined by Councilman Frank Lombardi for the visit.

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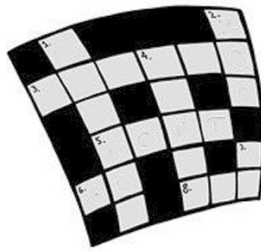
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Geothermal Systems Company Expands With Move to Mt. Kisco

By Martin Wilbur

Many homeowners want to do their part in contributing to a cleaner environment, and if they can save money on energy bills along the way, that's even better.

A company that recently expanded and moved to Mount Kisco is looking to keep up with the demand of those heightened sensibilities.

Dandelion Energy, which installs geothermal systems for single-family houses in the Hudson Valley and western Connecticut, recently relocated its warehouse from Peekskill to the Diamond Properties complex at 333 N. Bedford Rd. Its corporate offices, which had been in Manhattan, have also been switched to the company's 31,000-square-foot headquarters, a more centralized location to serve the growing number of homeowners in the region who recognize the value in geothermal investment.

Michael Sachse, Dandelion's CEO, said geothermal reduces the amount of energy that a homeowner needs to heat their home by 80 percent and cuts energy to cool a house by 30 percent in summer.

"The houses that we think benefit the most are the ones that usually use fuel oil or propane because those are the most



Michael Sachse, the CEO of Dandelion Energy, a company that installs residential geothermal systems.

expensive fuels, but also for folks who are building a new house and are doing a major renovation, there's a lot of attractiveness there as well," said Sachse, who leads the



An aerial photo of crews drilling to install a geothermal system on a property in Rhinebeck.

company that was established four years ago by its President Kathy Hannun and now employs just over 100 people.

After tax incentives and rebates, a geothermal system costs between \$20,000 and \$25,000 for the typical home of 2,000 to 2,500 square feet, Sachse said. Perhaps the optimum time for those interested in geothermal is before an aging oil furnace needs to be replaced, he said. Between the cost of a new furnace and the expense for oil or propane each year, a homeowner can recover the cost of the system in about seven years if paid with cash.

Depending on what type of energy is used, a homeowner could cut their utility bills nearly in half, Sachse said. It also increases the value of a house.

In 2018, the federal government approved a federal tax incentive for geothermal ground source heat pumps realized through personal tax credits. The incentives save homeowners thousands of dollars.

A homeowner can also qualify for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) New York State Clean Heat Program.

Sachse said the land for the overwhelming majority of parcels in the region can handle the drilling that's needed to install the ground loop that has to be placed about five feet below the surface outside. The ground loop is where the heat is exchanged, Sachse explained, while the heat pump is placed inside the house.

Since the temperature at that depth remains relatively constant at about 50 degrees, it helps save money on heating and cooling costs.

Once installed, there isn't much in the way of maintenance or replacement costs.

"The ground loop is going to last for at least 50 years," he said. "It will outlive all of us in all likelihood. The heat pump will last for 20 years. It's a very long-lived system."

The biggest challenge for Dandelion is to find the right spot on a homeowner's parcel to conduct the drilling for the installation of the underground ground loop. Sachse said sometimes on steep slopes it can be difficult to find a good spot and you can also hit rock or find soil that isn't conducive to house the underground portion of the system.

It's one of the reasons why geothermal remains somewhat under the radar as opposed to solar, but a home can have both, Sachse said. Whether a homeowner uses oil or propane or supplements with renewable energy, geothermal helps maximize the heating and cooling of a house, thereby reducing expenses.

"In New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts there are 2.6 million homes that are using fuel, oil or propane for heating and none of these homeowners are happy with what they have," he said. "They may want to go to something cleaner, they may want to go to something cheaper and geothermal is a fantastic option for all of them, and we're finding that now that it's gotten to a more affordable point, many people are eager to get going."

To learn more about Dandelion Energy and geothermal systems, visit www.dandelionenergy.com.

Arco Cleaning Celebrates 75 Years of Service in the Local Area

Arco Cleaning Maintenance Company of Mount Kisco celebrates 75 years of providing commercial and residential cleaning services throughout Westchester and Putnam counties.

In 1946, George and Jean Arco founded Arco Cleaning as a part-time family business, starting with one small waxing machine. In the early 1980s, George Arco took over the business from his parents and began to expand services, as well as include commercial office cleaning. Under George's leadership, Arco Cleaning has expanded from serving Mount Kisco customers to clients throughout Westchester and Putnam.

Today, Arco Cleaning provides office cleaning; move-in and move-out cleaning; electrostatic cleaning and disinfecting; area rug carpet cleaning; floor maintenance; upholstery cleaning; window cleaning; house cleaning; and post-construction cleaning and debris clean up.

A Best of Business Award recipient from 914INC. in 2019 and 2020, Arco Cleaning has achieved recognition as one of the premier cleaning companies in Westchester. George and Jean Arco would be proud of their son who serves as the company's president today.

"I want to thank our customers, friends and community for supporting us and using our services for three-quarters of a century," Arco said. "When my mother and father started the company, they never envisioned we would celebrate



George Arco, the president of Arco Cleaning Maintenance Company, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year.

such a milestone. Thank you to our customers, cleaners, supervisors and office staff that have made us a success. We hope to continue the Arco Cleaning brand for years to come."

Arco Cleaning Maintenance Company is located at 2 Cottage Place in Mount Kisco. Hours of operation are Monday to Friday from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, visit www.arcocleaning.com or contact George Arco, president, at 914-666-7229 or via e-mail at George@arcocleaning.com.

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These Savory and Sweet Easter Recipes Will Have You Hoppin' for Joy

The appearance of brightly colored foods and decorations filling store aisles can only mean one thing: Easter is here! This year, the beloved springtime holiday lands on Apr. 4, which also happens to be International Carrot Day.

To celebrate the Easter Bunny's all-time favorite food, McCormick has released a collection of savory and sweet carrot-forward recipes to get you inspired.

"We have seen a significant rise in searches online for carrot recipes over the past couple years, particularly around Easter," said Kevan Vetter, McCormick's executive chef. "The carrot is having a moment and being appreciated for its many possibilities and flavors."

Here are seven reimagined takes on favorite classics that make carrots the star.

1. Air Fryer Maple Glazed Carrot Fries. Sprinkled with cinnamon and ginger, this treat is topped with bacon and finished with a maple glaze providing the perfect sweet and savory holiday side dish. Here's a tip: You can bake in your oven or try with other veggies by swapping the carrots with parsnips or halved Brussels sprouts.
2. Vegan Carrot Bacon. In under 20 minutes and armed with a vegetable peeler, you'll be able to satisfy your bacon craving with these crispy ribbons of carrots. Vegan carrot bacon is spiced to perfection with garlic, onion, paprika and mustard – don't say you weren't



3. Slow Cooker Cinnamon Glazed Carrots. Finished with a brown sugar glaze, this delectable recipe gives hints of warm cinnamon and spicy ginger. Featuring just six ingredients and only five minutes of prep, these carrots are super easy and hands-free, giving you time to get outside and hunt for some Easter eggs.
4. Carrot Shaped Waffles. Okay, these waffles don't actually call for any carrots, but they do celebrate them! Hop on down the bunny trail toward an Easter-themed brunch staple the whole family will love. Fluffy on the inside and crispy where it counts; pure vanilla adds a warm sweetness to this colorful, whimsical treat.
5. Carrot Cake Swirled Cheesecake Bars. Is it carrot cake or a cheesecake bar? It's

both! This treat combines the cinnamon and nutmeg-spiced sweetness of traditional carrot cake with the creamy smoothness of cheesecake for an irresistible Easter dessert.

6. Carrot Cake with Vanilla Cream Cheese Frosting (Can also be made for vegans). Carrot cake, spiced with cinnamon and nutmeg, is made especially delicious with a cream cheese frosting. Try the classic preparation or go vegan with a few easy plant-based substitutions. Either way, this cake can be layered or jazzed up with sprinkled pecans as a crunchy topper.
7. Cinnamon Carrot Ice Cream with Cookie Crumble. Inspired by classic carrot cake, this delectable creation is perfectly spiced with cinnamon, vanilla and ginger. This dessert dream-come-true can be topped off with a simple, yet oh-so-sweet cookie crumble for an easy, but decadent finish.

To help make your Easter celebration extra egg-cellent, McCormick is your resource to help you plan your entire menu and kid-friendly crafts, including Easter Carrot Slime. Visit www.mccormick.com/easter for full recipes, egg dying tutorials, and more to create the ultimate Easter celebration that every bunny will love.

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Westchester Parks Foundation Expands Pitch in for Parks for Earth Day

Westchester Parks Foundation is expanding its largest volunteer initiative Pitch in for Parks this year while following COVID-19 guidelines.

The annual event, held in partnership with the Westchester County Parks Department, will take place throughout Westchester from Monday, Apr. 19 through Saturday, Apr. 24, rain or shine. Pre-registration and masks will be required.

"During the pandemic we have seen record numbers of people coming out to not only enjoy our parks in Westchester, but to help give back to the parks they love," said Joe Stout, executive director of Westchester Parks Foundation. "As a result, we decided to expand our largest clean-up event to a weeklong initiative to help keep people safe and adhere to COVID-19 guidelines. We encourage people to sign up to help us improve the quality of life in our community by pitching in to help clean up parks across the county."

Volunteers, working as individuals, families, corporations, local businesses or groups, are needed for trash clean up, clearing trails and shorelines, restoring wildlife habitats, removing invasive vines from trees, painting, raking and preparing and planting flower beds. Projects will take place at the following locations throughout Westchester County Parks:

- Monday, Apr. 19: Pitch in For Parks Kick Off, Lenoir Preserve, Yonkers.
- Tuesday, Apr. 20: Edith Read Wildlife Sanctuary, Rye.
- Wednesday, Apr. 21: Willson's Woods Park, Mount Vernon.



Regardless of age or where you live in Westchester, volunteers can easily pitch in to help clean up parks throughout the county during the week of Apr. 19 leading into the Earth Day celebration.

- Thursday, Apr. 22: Earth Day Celebration with local businesses.
- Friday, Apr. 23: Cranberry Lake Preserve, North White Plains.
- Saturday, Apr. 24: Blue Mountain Reservation, Peekskill; Kensico Dam, Valhalla; Tibbetts Brook Park, Yonkers; and Bronx River Reservation at the Westchester County Center.

Volunteers will be separated in shifts, required to wear their own masks and practice safe social distancing as per state guidelines on outdoor gatherings. All tools will be sanitized, and hand sanitizing stations will be available for volunteers.

"Parks have become a naturally essential part of everyday life and keeping our facilities clean is important not only for all who come out to enjoy our parks but also for the environment," said county Parks Commissioner Kathy O'Connor. "Thank you to

Westchester Parks Foundation for continuing this annual event safely."

Pre-registration is required in order to participate. For more information on how to volunteer for Pitch in for Parks, visit <https://www.thewpf.org/volunteer/pitch-in-for-parks/>

To pre-register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/westchester-parks-foundation-7926070818>

Town Residents Sought to Volunteer for Friends of Yorktown Parks

Recently formed by several area residents as a charitable and educational organization, the Friends of Yorktown Parks and Recreation Inc. will support, enhance, educate and promote programs and services offered to all town residents by the Yorktown Department of Parks & Recreation and the Yorktown Parks and Recreation Commission. Founding members are Kevin Ferri, Sean Murphy, David Reggina and Bob Giordano.

The organization will work with the town's Department of Parks & Recreation and the commission to encourage use and appreciation of the extensive parks and open space by residents; provide a forum for ensuring community input; increasing fiscal and human resources for parks and recreation projects; and developing environmentally sound events and programs that bring community members into the park system to learn, preserve, recreate and make friends. Goals include improving the quality of life and the economic vitality of the town.

"I am extremely excited to be a part of the Friends of Yorktown Parks and Recreation board," Reggina said. "From the beginning my career 15 years ago in the Westchester County parks system to now serving as an assistant commissioner on the local level, I have seen first-hand how the immense support of a successful Friends group can empower and provide meaningful solutions to a particular agency. I am grateful to bring forth passion, experience and commitment to the community in which I live."

Residents with an interest in volunteering and participating in the many committees and projects envisioned by the Friends are being sought. Individuals with experience and skills in marketing and communications, social media, fundraising, project and event planning and grant writing are needed.

Send your bio and resume to Bob Giordano at 914-874-4347 or at rgiord19@optonline.net.

Nature Wields the Ultimate Clout in the Winemaker's Vineyard



By Nick Antonaccio

Wine is both simple and complex, on planes that are both juxtaposed and contraposed.

On the one hand, its baseline is as a simple agricultural product, farmed similarly as a multitude of other agricultural products. The simple formula: understand the needs of grapes that are necessary to attain a stellar crop and a farmer will be rewarded with a praiseworthy bounty. Interfere with the natural order of agriculture and a farmer is doomed to long-term mediocrity.

On the other hand, grapes are living organisms and as such are influenced by their environment. The complex factors that impact the ultimate wine product may individually play a minor role, but in combination, they serve to create a wine that is distinct from other wines.

The commonly recognized elements that play into the simple yet complex nature of wine are terroir and the winemaker. Terroir centers on selecting an ideal vineyard site that suits the genetic profile of a particular grape varietal. A widely held maxim is that 90 percent of a wine is created in the vineyard. The role of the winemaker is to coax the best wine from the grape clusters once they are harvested.

But there is a third element that has a significant impact on the winemaking process. It is as critical to the success of a

winery as terroir and the winemaker, but may not be recognized as readily by consumers. It is a factor that does not yield to human intervention and may exert its influence in a seemingly random manner. I am referring to the clout wielded by nature, in the form of seasonal weather patterns.

It is the wild card in the winemaking process. It is what keeps winemakers up at night during the growing season. Weather will invariably affect the quantity and/or the quality of each season's grape harvest. Under favorable meteorological conditions, the seasonal life cycle of a grapevine will be consistent and follow the ideal maturation path. However, this is not a given factor each year. In fact, over the course of a six-month

average growing season, nature may wield its fickle hand multiple times, thereby affecting the quality and yield of a given crop.

Consider the annual cycle of a grapevine's growth and ultimate harvest. There may be weather-related problems throughout the

season:

1. Early Spring. As vines break from their winter dormancy, flower buds and shoots begin to form. Frost is a continuous threat; a single night of frost can kill a substantial portion of the grapevine's flower buds, dooming the entire season's productivity.

2. Late Spring. Once the danger of frost passes, grape clusters begin to fill out. Drought or heavy rainfall can stall or stop this process, significantly lowering yields.

3. Summer. As the clusters set and grape berries begin to develop, veraison begins. Via this process, berries develop, turning from



'the wild card in the winemaking process.'

green to their mature color. They increase in size and weight, developing sugars and water content. Too much rain during this period may literally dilute the vigor of the grapes; too little rain may result in shriveled clusters on the vine. Higher than average temperatures may cause grapes to ripen prematurely; cooler temperatures will slow down ripening.

4. Late Summer/Early Fall. As grapes near maturation, unusual variations in temperature or rainfall will not only affect the timing of the harvest but also their levels of sugar and water.

Of course, a growing season wouldn't be complete without a random act of

disruption from the fickle hand of nature. A freak hailstorm in the Champagne region in northern France has wiped out entire crops, ruining any chance of a meaningful harvest.

The soil composition, climate and topography of a vineyard, as ideal as they may be for growing a particular grape varietal, are no match for the whim of nature. Nor can the skilled hand of an experienced winemaker compensate fully for the unpredictability of nature.

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.

ArtsWestchester Announces Seven Winners of its 2021 Arts Awards

Seven individuals and organizations will be honored next month by ArtsWestchester at the organization's annual Arts Awards celebration.

Spanning a range of disciplines, the 2021 Arts Award winners are: Chairman of the Westchester County Board of Legislators Ben Boykin II of White Plains; Vinnie Bagwell of Yonkers; Dr. Judith Schwartz of Armonk; the Village of Sleepy Hollow Wishing Wall; The Westchester Chordsmen of White Plains; the Jazz Forum Arts Jitterbugs Program of Tarrytown; and photographer Elijah Goodwin of Tarrytown.

"The arts are very much alive in Westchester thanks to the dedication of area artists and arts organizations over this last year, creating virtual ways of delivering on their missions during the pandemic with invaluable support from arts patrons," said ArtsWestchester CEO Janet T. Langsam.

"ArtsWestchester celebrates the vision and commitment of the brightest stars in Westchester's cultural community at its Arts Award celebration annually. I congratulate our 2021 Arts Award honorees for their vital work in the arts and for their cultural leadership. They are part of the creative heart and soul that makes Westchester such a great place to live and work. And, they will be a critical part of the recovery of New York's economy."

Here is the full list of the 2021 Arts Award winners.



Ben Boykin, the chairman of the Board of Legislators, is one of seven honorees who will be recognized on Apr. 7 by ArtsWestchester at its annual Arts Awards celebration. Boykin will receive the President's Award for being a champion of the arts.

The President's Award

Chairman of the Westchester County Board of Legislators Ben Boykin: An esteemed government leader who has been a champion for the arts.

Emily and Eugene Grant Arts Patron Award Honoree

Dr. Judith Schwartz: A professor, curator, artist and collector, who lives and breathes the arts, especially the ceramic arts.

Community Award Honoree

The Village of Sleepy Hollow Wishing Wall: An ambitious mural project that brought the community together around the Hudson River.

Artist Award Honoree

Vinnie Bagwell: An American sculptor who has created "The Enslaved Africans' Rain Garden" in Yonkers, among other projects.

Arts Organization Award Honoree

The Westchester Chordsmen: A renowned male chorus dedicated to the singing of a cappella music.

Sophia Abeles Education Award Honoree

Jazz Forum Arts-Jitterbugs Program: A family music program bringing jazz to a new generation.

Lawrence Salley Photography Award

Elijah Goodwin: A talented photographer with a passion for nature and science.

Leaders from the county's civic, arts and business communities will gather to celebrate the stellar accomplishments of these honorees during ArtsWestchester's Annual Arts Awards celebration on Wednesday, Apr. 7 at 6 p.m.

For tickets, sponsorships, journal ads or questions, visit artsw.org/artswaward or contact Ann Fabrizio at 914-428-4220 ext. 326 or e-mail afabrizio@artswestchester.org.

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