Eastview Student Named to Rangers Pee Wee Team

Dante Palombo, a sixth grader at Eastview School in White Plains, was named to the 2016 New York Rangers Pee Wee Quebec Ice Hockey team. He is one of only three players from the Westchester area selected for this 12U team to compete in the largest youth international tournament ice hockey tournament in the world. Hockey's equivalent of the Little League World Series Tournoi International Pee-Wee Quebec takes place February 10 to 21, 2016, the NY Rangers program is run by Doug Messier, father of hockey legend Mark Messier. Selection is based not only on exceptional skill but also on character, dedication and focus, both on the ice and in the classroom. The intense tryout process began on August 1, 2015 and ran through November 16, 2015. It included over 20 hours of highly competitive ice sessions as well as off ice work. Close to 90 players started the process from a 100-mile radius vying for one of the 14 coveted skater positions. The team will travel to Quebec in February to compete against other NHL franchises and club teams sending teams from the U.S. and Canada, Russia, Finland, Czech Republic and other countries. During the week, some 200,000 spectators will attend the tournament.

Westchester’s DA Nominated for New York State’s Highest Judicial Position

By Pat Casey

On Dec. 1, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo nominated Westchester County District Attorney Janet DiFiore for the position of Chief Judge of the State Court of Appeals. If the State Senate approves the nomination in January, DiFiore, age 60, will replace Judge Jonathan Lippman, who is facing mandatory retirement at age 70 at the end of this month.

As he made the announcement, Cuomo said: "Chief judge is a very, very important position and I think she's going to do an extraordinary job." Cuomo also noted DiFiore’s nearly 10-year tenure as Westchester’s DA, and her years as a prosecutor and judge, with an extensive background in judicial and legal reform as reasons for his nomination.

Commenting on the governor’s website DiFiore said: “I am humbled by the incredible honor of being nominated to serve as Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals. My professional life has been devoted to the fair administration of justice, and I would gladly continue my service to the people of New York on our state’s highest court. I am grateful to Governor Cuomo for this nomination.”

If confirmed, DiFiore would be the second female chief judge in New York continued on page 3

Kaplowitz: ‘Financial Degradation a Danger in Proposed County Budget

By Martin Wilbur and Pat Casey

Board of Legislators Chairman Michael Kaplowitz (D-Somers) sounded alarms last week over County Executive Rob Astorino’s proposed $1.8 billion 2016 budget, charging that it lacked "structural integrity" and could lead Westchester to financial ruin.

Kaplowitz, whose comments came before what was expected to be a marathon day of fiscal decision making yesterday (Monday), contended that a potential $22.6 million shortfall in sales tax revenue and the likelihood of using unrestricted fund balance could jeopardize the county’s AAA bond rating because the reserves could dip below 8 percent of general fund expenditure.

He said that if the county has to use significant reserves to balance next year’s budget – the chairma’s projects fund balance to sink $16 million to $128.3 million – then Astorino would fail in one of his two key goals, protecting Westchester’s rainy day fund.

"This is telling us that at this rate we’re going to be potentially running out of money,” Kaplowitz said, “and this is on the road to Rockland County.”

Astorino’s mistakes are compounded, according to Kaplowitz, because he is also overestimating sales tax revenue for continued on page 2

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next year. That revenue line is projected to be about $505.5 million by year's end, rather than the $528.1 million that was forecast. For 2016, the administration has estimated 4 percent over the $505 million figure, or nearly $525.8 million, when it should be budgeting only 2 percent over that number, he said.

Kaplowitz said close to 99 percent of the sales tax shortfall resulted from plunging gas prices, which have fallen $1.10 a gallon on average in the county during the past year.

Furthermore, the currently proposed 2016 budget fails to include money to settle any of the county's union contracts, all of which will be up by Jan. 1, he said. Then Astorino want to bond tax certioraris.

The county executive has also made some "penny wise and dollar foolish" cuts to various nonprofit agencies, Kaplowitz added.

That's a sign of financial degradation of condition and is a problem and it can also wind up costing the taxpayers interest and further expenses," Kaplowitz said. "This is a huge, huge problem and it belies the county's main goal and that's why the goal posts have come down."

Legislator Benjamin Boykin (D-White Plains) agreed with Kaplowitz. On Monday he told the Examiner he expects to be working until at least midnight to find new revenue sources to cover the budget line items the Democratic caucus wants back in.

A member of the Budget and Appropriations Committee, Boykin said there were deep problems to consider overall with Astorino's budget and that an auditor's report received Monday indicated there could be an additional $4.2 million in revenue shortfalls.

In particular, Boykin said he was concerned about the $1.6 million in cuts to non-profits, 25 currently occupied employee positions that would be cut as well as was $1 million in cuts to Public Safety.

"This proposed budget is cutting into the bones of the County's services," Boykin said. "This is definitely not the time to be cutting the Public Safety budget with everything going on in the world."

"There is little flexibility in this budget with more on the downside than there is on the upside," he added.

However, Ned McCormack, Astorino's communications director, said the fiscal picture is nowhere near as bleak as Kaplowitz and some others are portraying. His office currently estimates a $15 million shortfall, which represents less than 1 percent of the operating budget, he said.

Also, from 2012 through 2014, there were times when the county was projected to have a deficit, which didn't materialize, and was able to maintain a fund balance of between $141 million and $144 million, McCormack added.

What often happens is if a line looks like it's coming off, the county executive makes mid-year adjustments, he said.

"I think the county executive has decided that he's not going to raise taxes and that he's going to protect the reserves," McCormack said. "We think we have a very responsible budget in terms of the spending."

Although some legislators and supporters of some nonprofit organizations have emphasized the proposed cuts, there are no reductions in the Department of Social Services budget, day care money and many other programs.

Projections also conclude that the 4 percent sales tax revenue over the latest projection for 2015 is accurate, McCormack said.

"Everyone's entitled to an opinion on the budget," he added. "It's the public's money."

Late Monday afternoon, the League of Women Voters of Westchester released a statement advising the County Executive take a change in direction.

Citing job cuts in the Planning Department and Board of Elections that would result in insufficient expertise to supervise the 2016 primary and presidential elections as well as capital projects currently being approved and advising against emergency borrowing, the LWVW asked the BOL to consider a tax increase. "County taxes are a relatively small portion of the tax burden on Westchester residents. An increase to the 2 percent cap currently permitted by the State would impact each household very little while helping the County make up the deficits of the past, avoid jeopardizing its AAA credit rating and preserve the quality of life now enjoyed by nearly one million residents in the County," the LWVW statement said.

The Board of Legislators spent most of Monday mulling additions. On Wednesday, legislators will consider deleting items prior to the third public hearing in the evening. An approved budget could be reached as early as next Monday, Kaplowitz said. The final budget must be approved by Dec. 27.
State history. The first, Chief Judge Judith Kaye, was nominated by Governor Mario Cuomo.

DiFiore has held her current position as District Attorney of Westchester County since January 2006, and is now serving her third term.

Over the course of her tenure as District Attorney, she has targeted a broad array of crimes involving everything from gang-related violence to identity theft and environmental pollution. She also has considerable experience with domestic violence issues, and has spearheaded efforts to improve the investigation and handling of child abuse cases. Early in her first term, DiFiore also designed and launched the Westchester Intelligence Center, which helps coordinate resources and information sharing among local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

In addition to her responsibilities as District Attorney, DiFiore has co-chaired the New York State Justice Task Force since 2009, leading investigations of cases involving wrongful convictions and identifying reforms that will prevent such cases from occurring in the future. She was appointed to this position by the current Chief Judge, Jonathan Lippman.

DiFiore is a past president of the New York State District Attorneys Association, and has served on the New York State Commission on Youth, Safety and Justice, which recommended both statutory and administrative reforms pertaining to the prosecution and imprisonment of youthful offenders, as well as the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics as its Chair. She received her B.A. from C.W. Post College, Long Island University and a J.D. from St. John's University School of Law.

Currently a Democrat, DiFiore was a member of the Republican Party, changing affiliations about 10 years ago.

This is Governor Cuomo’s fifth nomination to the New York State Court of Appeals. Governor Cuomo previously appointed Judge Sheila Abdus-Salaam and Judge Jenny Rivera, who were confirmed in 2013, and Judge Leslie Stein and Judge Eugene Fahey, who were confirmed in 2015.

DiFiore’s nomination has received much approval since the announcement.

Locally, County Executive Rob Astorino (a Republican) said: “I know she’ll be an excellent judge and administrator for the New York court system. I applaud the governor for choosing such a highly qualified individual as Janet DiFiore. New Yorkers will be well served.”

Westchester County Board of Legislators Majority Leader Catherine Borgia (a Democrat) said: “Janet DiFiore has always been a fair and prudent adjudicator of justice throughout her career and has been instrumental in making the residents of Westchester feel that they have safe communities to live in. During her tenure, she has handled several high profile cases and always demonstrated a professionalism that emanated through her entire office. Westchester’s loss will be the gain of the entire state as she hopefully takes her public service to the Court of Appeals. I urge all of Westchester’s Senators to vote in favor of her confirmation when the Senate returns in January.”

Santa’s Mailbox Has Come to White Plains

Santa Claus has set up a special mailbox on the front steps of City Hall. The city is honored that he has once again chosen White Plains for this very important purpose (we think it’s because we’ve been especially good this year). Santa has invited all City of White Plains resident children to write to Santa this Holiday Season using his special mailbox. Children may drop their letters in the mailbox any time between now and Friday, Dec. 18. Children should remember to include their return address so that Santa can send them a personalized reply. White Plains City Hall is located at 255 Main Street.
Architecture of White Plains, extensive renovations, including replacement of the exterior of the 15-story main building and the installation of energy efficient heating and air conditioning systems, windows and doors would be made. The Esplanade has been a landmark of White Plains’ recent history, opening in the late 1990s by an investment group. It was later added on the south side of Lyon Place and linked to the main building by a pedestrian bridge. As the hotel market in Westchester evolved, the property was acquired in 2003 by an investment group and renamed The Esplanade. The main building then became a residence for seniors while the Annex remained as a hotel.

According to the building’s owners, in recent years the building’s outmoded mechanical infrastructure has become increasingly problematic and engineering studies revealed that a piecemeal approach to bringing the building up to modern standards was impractical. They concluded that the only viable option was to totally revamp the entire complex. To enable a multi-year overhaul requires the building to be vacated and closed. Management has said that its first priority is to assure that the approximately 150 residents are treated with dignity and assisted with appropriate accommodations during this period of transition.

A press release announcing the planned renovation said: “The approval process will provide the time necessary for the residents and their families to explore suitable alternatives. Management recognizes its responsibility to see that the transition is handled with a minimum of stress. The residents and their families have been notified of the redevelopment of the property. It is not expected that construction will begin in the main building requiring residents to move out for at least six months. To assist the senior residents who have not relocated, the Annex will be made available for additional time for residents who require more time to find new residences. The Esplanade management and staff will also work closely with the residents and their families to find housing either at other Esplanade properties or non-Esplanade properties.”

As a residence, The Esplanade provides meals and housekeeping for seniors but is not licensed to provide assisted living care.

Esplanade Could Become Residential Tower
continued from page 1

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Matthew Welling, a Crowd Favorite at Radio City and Madison Square Garden

By Albert Coqueran

The New York Knicks and their local NBA Developmental League affiliate, the Westchester Knicks are both enjoying successful seasons so far this year. The Westchester Knicks are 7-2, after winning only 10 games all of last season. In fact, things are going so well this season for the Westchester Knicks that their Head Coach Mike Miller was named D-League Coach of the Month for November.

Jimmer Fredette, the Westchester Knicks first draft pick this season, is lighting-up the scoreboard at a pace of 27.5 points, 4.5 rebounds and 5.5 assists per game. However, Fredette has only played four games so far for the D-League Knicks this season.

Two days prior to the start of the season, Fredette was called-up by the NBA New Orleans Pelicans but returned to the Westchester Knicks on November 28. Fredette made his Westchester Knicks debut in spectacular fashion, while scoring 37 points against the Grand Rapids Drive, at the Westchester County Center, on November 30.

Downtown on 33rd Street and Seventh Avenue, the elder statesmen of the franchise, the NY Knicks are also riding their first round draft pick Kristaps Porzingis to a better season this year. The NY Knicks are 10-11, so far this season, after recording a dismal, 17-65 record last year.

Porzingis is certainly exciting the Madison Square Garden crowd, while averaging nearly a double-double with 14 points and over nine rebounds per game in 21 games.

Nonetheless, with all the excitement created by these aforementioned professional athletes, a young 10-year old boy from White Plains stole their thunder and touched many hearts when he sang at halftime of the NY Knicks versus Philadelphia 76ers game, on Wednesday, Dec. 2.

Matthew Welling, a fourth grade student at Mamaroneck Avenue School, spends much of his leisure time with his Music Therapists James Maxson and Donald Stevens at the Music Conservatory of Westchester in White Plains.

Welling as guided by his Music Therapist has transitioned into an accomplished drummer, keyboard player and vocalist at the young age of 10 years old.

But it is not Welling's age concerning his accomplishments that separates him from other achievers of this sort. It is Welling's determination with the help of his family, doctors, teachers and Music Therapists to overcome his serious health issues and pursue his love of music that differentiates him.

Welling was born with osteopetrosis, which is a rare inherited disorder that makes bones increase in size and fragility. Welling has endured two stem cell transplants and is also vision impaired.

The young 10-year old boy spent his first birthday at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and remained hospitalized there under treatment for 143 days.

After being released from Sloan Kettering, Welling remained in isolation at home for a year, while battling his illness. Then when Matthew was healthy enough, his parents Michael and Susie Welling, while seeking a place to incorporate their son back into the mainstream of society discovered the Music Conservatory of Westchester and the rest we say is history or Matthew's fresh breath of life.

"We found the Music Therapy Program that we thought would be a good way for Matthew just to learn how to interact and play with other children. Little did we know that we were going to uncover this musical talent," explained Matthew's father, Michael Welling.

Matthew through the Make-A-Wish Foundation got the opportunity to display his musical talents when he was selected to audition for the Garden of Dreams Foundation Talent Show at Radio City Music Hall.

Stacey Ann Jackson, the Director of Program Experiences for the Garden of Dreams Foundation, was inspired by Welling's performance, as was the capacity crowd at Radio City. Remarkably, as a result of his performance, Welling was invited to open this Holiday season's Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular.

Escorted onstage by a member of the Rockettes and introduced by Ziggy Marley, who called Welling his "friend." The young aspiring vocalist sang his own composition titled "Sunshine" to a standing ovation from the audience at Radio City.

Considering the overwhelming positive reaction from fans at Radio City, it was all the Garden of Dreams Foundation could do but to bring Welling back for an encore at the "World's Most Famous Arena."

Welling, as he was at Radio City, was accompanied by his Music Therapists James Maxson on saxophone and Donald Stevens on keyboards from the Music Conservatory of Westchester. "I have been working with Matthew since he was about four and a half years old. When he first came he was just a little guy exploring the world and just found how easily he gravitated towards music and grew from there," said his Music Therapist Maxson.

The young White Plains resident, while standing center court at MSG, spurred the Garden crowd into frenzy, as he performed his composition "Sunshine" to a reggae style beat. "I felt really comfortable and the good thing was that the lights were not so bright so I was able to see and move around, take the crowd and blow them away," said Welling backstage, after his memorable performance.

"Everyday, I feel like Matthew finds new ways for me to be proud of him. Today was just another day at a whole other level," said Matthew's father Michael.

"I am a proud Mama," exclaimed Matthew's mother Susie. "He amazes me everyday with his bravery, strength and talent. He is the happiest child I know," she added.

Matthew's grandmother and Susie Welling's mother is Michele Schoenfeld, the longtime Clerk of the White Plains Public School's Board of Education. Schoenfeld was also in attendance at Madison Square Garden enjoying her grandson's performance.

Matthew's evening was highlighted when Jimmy Fallon, the host of the Tonight Show, left his courtside seat and came backstage to congratulate him and invited Matthew to a lip-singing contest on the Tonight Show.
The WP Sticky Fingers Crew Is Ready For Winter

The sticky fingers crew is ready with their White Plains snowplows, just in case DPW needs some help this winter. Sticky Fingers, a preschool arts and crafts class, has been offered by the White Plains Recreation & Parks Department for many years. Children use a variety of art media while developing coordination and fine motor skills. The class is taught by Loretta Crabbe. Two classes are offered: one for three-year-old children with a parent/caregiver and one for four and five year old children. Both classes run once a week on Mondays from 12:45 to 1:30 p.m. and 1:45 to 2:30 p.m. during the fall, winter and spring. Sticky Fingers meets at the Gillie Recreation Room. Fall classes just ended, but winter classes will begin on Jan. 1, 2016 and run for eight sessions.

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Dobbs Ferry HS Senior Wins Prestigious Award

Dobbs Ferry High School senior Arjun Chattoraj recently received the Acorda Scientific Excellence Award for his research project on the potential migration of the chemicals in styrene containers. As part of receiving the Acorda Scientific Excellence Award, Arjun has been featured on AM 1230 WAFS, where he spoke about his work. Arjun Chattoraj had long known that polystyrene containers were non-biodegradable, but after he noticed the sheer ubiquity of styrofoam containers at cafeterias, restaurants and home kitchens, he began to wonder if any of the harmful chemicals in polystyrene were making their way into the foods and drinks they contained. Arjun took 20 polystyrene cups from the cafeteria and cut them into small plagues, which were then inserted into jars and exposed to tap water and a number of simulated food samples with varying levels of acid, fat and oil content at different temperatures and durations. When the polystyrene plagues were removed, Arjun tested the remaining simulated samples and found that fatty and oily foods were more likely to retain traces of the polystyrene materials than water or highly acidic foods, and should not be stored in polystyrene containers.

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Greenburgh Police Department

Grand Larceny. On Nov. 30 officers responded to Building 4 at Warehouse Lane outside the Pepperidge Farm loading depot. The warehouse manager reported that his brand new truck was last seen on the previous afternoon by employees at the loading depot. There were no signs of broken glass or other forced entry. Several security cameras had views of the area where the truck was kept. The video was obtained.

Harassment. On the afternoon of Nov. 29, officers responded to Granada Crescent on a report of harassment. The complainant reported that during the early morning hours on the previous day she received a Facebook message threatening that she would be hurt. The complainant said she thought the sender of the message was jealous about her current girlfriend. No charges were made and the complainant was advised to contact police if anything further transpired.

Stolen Wallet. On Nov. 29 police responded to the Christmas Tree Shop regarding a larceny involving a stolen wallet. The complainant said she had stopped at a bench in the front of the store to put her son’s jacket on before leaving. She had placed her wallet on the bench as she put the jacket on and forgot to pick it up before she left the store. The wallet was described as a women’s yellow Fossil containing $55 cash and a TD Bank Debit Card, plus a checkbook and miscellaneous other cards. The store surveillance video showed the wallet being left on the bench, followed by a White female, with dark hair, wearing a black jacket, and dark colored pants sitting down on the bench and leaving with the wallet. The complainant was advised to cancel her debit cards and checking accounts.

Menacing Behavior. On Nov. 28, officers responded to Planet Pizza on Tarrytown Road on the report of an employee threatening a customer with a knife. The victim said that while driving through the restaurant’s parking lot, he observed a vehicle with a female driver coming towards him in the same lane. The female driver then allegedly stuck her middle finger up at him as she drove past. When the victim asked the woman why she had done that, she cursed at him, called him a name and said she was parking. The victim reported that he told her that there was no need to be so angry and realized that she was a delivery driver when they both walked into Planet Pizza. After placing his order with one of the employees, the victim went outside to wait in his vehicle. When he returned to Planet Pizza to pick up his food, a counter person said to be the delivery driver’s boyfriend, threw his order of pasta at him. The victim said that the pasta, which was wrapped in a brown paper bag, struck him in the face and then spilled all over a corner of the restaurant. When he confronted the server about why he had thrown the food, the server called him names, cursed at him and said: “Do not drive fast in my lot and do not talk to my drivers like that!” The store manager held the server back and took him into a back room. When the server returned to the counter area, he was carrying a large kitchen knife, and was pointing the knife at the victim in an aggressive manner. He motioned as if he was going to throw it at the victim. The victim said he was going to call the police, and the manager escorted him outside the restaurant to calm him down. The server was placed under arrest for Menacing and Criminal Possession of a Weapon and transported to police headquarters. The kitchen knife was entered into evidence and statements taken.

Petite Larceny. On the afternoon of Nov. 28 police responded to Best Buy for a shoplifter in custody. The suspect, a 60-year-old man, had entered the store, walked over to the mobile section where he took a set of headphones, then proceeded to the TV section and took a portable speaker, removed both items from the packaging, placing them into his front pockets. The total amount for the items was $246.94. He was observed passing all points of purchase where he was stopped and taken to the security office. Video surveillance was placed into evidence.
Letter to Chancellor Tisch/Members of the Board of Regents from State Assembly Reps

We were encouraged that, at their September meeting, the Regents directed the Commissioner to issue a statement outlining concerns expressing their willingness to make significant changes to APPR (Annual Professional Performance Review for teachers). Also, we applauded the Chancellor’s statement to POLITICO (made at the NYSSBA convention last month) that the Regents, working withSED, will lay out a set of legislative proposals based on a review of the standards, testing and evaluations. Your acknowledgement that APPR is not working reflects the long-standing sentiment of our superintendents, administrators, teachers and parents.

In passing 3012-d last spring, the Legislature believed that it was giving the Regents the time (until September, 2016) and resources needed to fix APPR. It is now abundantly clear that the Legislature and the Regents differed in their interpretation of the law especially with respect to deadlines and a broader use of multiple measures of student learning.

Moreover, we differ with regard to the creation and role of a task force. It has now become apparent that we need to take the time necessary to provide a thoughtful, thoroughly vetted APPR. To do this properly, we believe you must convene a task force of qualified practitioners and independent experts in the field of psychometrics and/or teacher evaluation to design an evaluation system that is research based, aligned with the learning standards, utilizes multiple measures of student learning over time and locally selected measures of student achievement or growth. In fact, creating this task force is even more important now that, as recently reported in The New York Times, the House and Senate approved a compromise framework for a new No Child Left Behind law, that “would let states decide whether or how to use students’ performance on tests to assess teachers, students and schools – ending federal efforts to tie those scores to teacher evaluations.”

If you believe that changing APPR requires legislative action, we respectfully request that the Regents direct SED to submit a departmental bill to the legislature to begin the process. This legislation could be as broad as authorizing a redesign of APPR, as narrow as imposing a moratorium to give SED the time needed to fix the system, or, it could propose that specific elements of the current law be nullified. As New York State’s governing body for education, the Legislature needs to hear from you as to what is needed to create a viable, sustainable teacher/principal evaluation system.

Also, in order to ensure that the process is proceeding in a timely manner and, as we will soon be receiving recommendations from the Governor’s Task Force on the entirety of Common Core, we would appreciate your giving us your legislative proposal(s) at the start of the legislative session so we can take the necessary legislative action.

We hope you will take our recommendations in the spirit with which they are offered, namely, a determination to support teachers’ professional development and provide our students with the best possible education. Together we believe we can make NYS a leader in teacher evaluation.

Members of the Assembly: Fred Thiele, Charles Lavine, Michelle Schimel, Todd Kaminsky, Amy Paulin, Thomas Abinanti, David Buchwald, Sandy Galef, Kenneth Zebrowski, Ellen Jaffee, Aileen Gunther, Frank Skartados

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Obituaries

Rose Cooper

Dr. Rose A. Cooper, a 36-year resident of White Plains, died at home on Dec. 4, at the age of 96 following a brief illness. Dr. Cooper was born in Poland and at age 12 immigrated to New York City in the early 1930s with her family who sensed the looming threat of Nazi Germany. She met her late husband, Dr. Ira Cooper, at the City College of NY and settled in White Plains several years after obtaining her doctorate in education at Columbia University.

She had a long tenure as the college admissions counselor at White Plains High School before embarking on an equally long stint as a dean at Westchester Community College. Her career as an educator, touching the lives of countless young people, only came to an end upon her retirement a few months prior to her death.

Dr. Cooper is survived by a daughter, Dr. Gale Cooper of Albuquerque, New Mexico, a son, Dr. Glenn Cooper, of Sarasota, Florida, his wife, Tessa Cooper, and their son, Shane Cooper. In addition, she is survived by her sister, Ann Kaplan of New York City, who was also her best friend.

There will be a reception 7-9 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9 at the Ballard-Durand Funeral Home, 2 Maple Ave, White Plains. The funeral service will be held Thursday, Dec.10 at 9:30 a.m. at Congregation Kol Ami, 252 Soundview Ave, White Plains.

In lieu of flowers, donations are encouraged to the Westchester Community College Foundation, Hartford Hall, 75 Grasslands Rd, Valhalla, NY 10595.

Ralph Ricci

Ralph M. Ricci, of White Plains, passed away Dec. 4 surrounded by his loving family. He was born December 5, 1927 in the Bronx to the late Romeo and Carrie Ricci.

During WWII Ray served with the United States Maritime Service.

On October 22, 1950 he married Mary Masiello at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in White Plains.

Ray was a White Plains Police Detective for 30 years, retiring in 1984. He also was a member of the White Plains P.B.A. and the Order of Sons of Italy, Antonio Meucci Lodge.

He is survived by his loving wife Mary, of White Plains and his beloved children; Linda (Michael) Vecchiolla of Cortlandt Manor and Mary Ann Herdman of White Plains, a brother Michael Ricci. Also surviving are seven adoring grandchildren and four great grandchildren. He is predeceased by his brother Robert Ricci and his son-in-law John Herdman.

William Heidenberg

William Jay Heidenberg, MD, of White Plains, passed away Dec.1. He was 79. William was born October 27, 1936 in the Bronx, to the late Fannie and Benjamin Heidenberg.

For the past 45 years, until his retirement in 2005, William was a physician and former Chief of Cardiology at White Plains Hospital. He served honorably in the United States military in the US Public Health Service.

On June 18, 1967 William married his wife Iris at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York. NY.

Besides his wife Iris, William is survived by his two sons, Larry (Mary) of Newark, DE and Mike (Alexis) of White Plains. He was a loving father and husband, caring physician, and loyal friend. He devoted his life to helping others.

Letters Policy

We invite readers to share their thoughts by sending letters to the editor. Please limit comments to 250 words. We will do our best to print all letters, but are limited by space constraints. Letters are subject to editing and may be withheld from publication on the discretion of the editor. Please refrain from personal attacks. Email letters to pcasey@theexaminernews.com.

The White Plains Examiner requires that all letter writers provide their name, address and contact information.
Healthier Holiday Eating for Seniors

Depriving oneself fully of favorite holiday fare can actually backfire and bring on more intense cravings and spark overeating. Instead, the key is to consume fewer unhealthy foods and revel in festivities at the same time. But how? The following tips can help.

Plan ahead and choose wisely. Forget winging it at holiday functions. Consider eating a light protein snack before the party and bring healthier foods instead of the function including a vegetable or fresh fruit tray. Know basic calorie counts. Checking the calories in favorite holiday foods can motivate seniors to indulge a bit, but curb the temptation to have a second slice of pie or take home leftover fudge.

Mingle or sit away from the dessert platters and buffet tables. Hovering too close to the ready-at-hand foods invites mindless munching.

Select smaller portions. Sample a few bites of “off-limit” foods and practice eating in moderation overall. Choosing a smaller plate also can help with portion control.

Ease up on alcoholic beverages. At holiday celebrations and parties, alternate between drinking spirits and drinking nonalcoholic, calorie-free drinks. Stay hydrated and avoid water throughout a gathering.

Be aware of emotions. Socializing with loved ones during the holidays can stir up tender and unresolved issues. Even the smell of certain holiday foods can trigger a painful emotional response.

Account for travel fatigue and stress. Allow for energy and sleep adjustments for seniors who travel to holiday gatherings. The busyness of holiday prep, shopping, etc. can add its own toll. People tend to overeat when tired or frazzled.

Fit in exercise. Throughout November and December, keep up a regular workout routine or opt for indoor exercises such as stair climbing. After a holiday meal and before dessert, invite everyone to go for a walk together. (The dishwasher can wash.)

Substitute instead of skip out. Citrus, vanilla and cinnamon are delicious substitutes for full amounts of sugar in recipes. Unsweetened applesauce or mashed bananas work well for fat ingredients. The Mayo Clinic issued a substitution guide for replacing ingredients with healthier choices.

Savor the celebrations. Laughter and uplifting conversations can increase the body’s natural defense system and lower blood pressure. Endorphin hormones released through laughter alone lower pain sensation and foster positive emotion.

A number of common holiday foods are actually packed with nutrients and can prove beneficial to encouraging older adults to join in the revelry without compromising their dietary health:

- Cranberries – The tart fruit retards bacteria that are common in urinary tract infections. Cranberry sauce can be sweetened lightly with sugar or a sugar substitute.
- Green Beans – Packed with vitamins K, C and A, this naturally low-calorie vegetable helps protect bones and is delicious served with a light sprinkling of olive oil and lemon.

By Lou Giampa

If Santa keeps a list for “naughty” eating and “nice” eating during the holidays, many older adults would see a checkmark next to their name with the note: “nibbled too much/overindulged.” The list of fattening holiday foods is endless: mashed potatoes and gravy, pecan pie, iced gingerbread, eggnog. Pile on the artichoke dip and sweet potato casserole, and the extra calories, fat, sodium and sugar expand from Thanksgiving through New Year’s.

Many aging individuals get off track nutritionally during the holidays because they are already dealing with health conditions that affect diet, including diabetes, arthritis and recovery from surgery. The year-end sugary treats and rich foods can exacerbate an already poor diet, especially for seniors malnourished from eating convenience foods or empty-calorie foods. Eating a well-balanced diet boosts brainpower, adds energy and strengthens muscles and bones, but over the holidays, many older individuals turn to noshing on fattening foods with limited dietary value. The taste and smell of food can change with aging, also prompting the elderly to simply eat more of a food to try to discern the flavor or aroma.

Finding a healthy balance of nutrition and celebration over the holidays is a challenge for many seniors and their family caregivers. Yet with a few proactive steps, cooking for festive occasions and eating during them can be a blend of wholesome foods and plenty of enjoyable times with family and friends.

Knowing that some foods can benefit health, here are tips on how to enjoy the holidays without compromising their dietary health:

- Depriving oneself fully of favorite holiday fare can actually backfire and bring on more intense cravings and spark overeating. Instead, the key is to consume fewer unhealthy foods and revel in festivities at the same time. But how? The following tips can help.
- Plan ahead and choose wisely. Forget winging it at holiday functions. Consider eating a light protein snack before the party and bring healthier foods instead of the function including a vegetable or fresh fruit tray.
- Know basic calorie counts. Checking the calories in favorite holiday foods can motivate seniors to indulge a bit, but curb the temptation to have a second slice of pie or take home leftover fudge.
- Mingle or sit away from the dessert platters and buffet tables. Hovering too close to the ready-at-hand foods invites mindless munching.
- Select smaller portions. Sample a few bites of “off-limit” foods and practice eating in moderation overall. Choosing a smaller plate also can help with portion control.
- Ease up on alcoholic beverages. At holiday celebrations and parties, alternate between drinking spirits and drinking nonalcoholic, calorie-free drinks. Stay hydrated and avoid water throughout a gathering.
- Be aware of emotions. Socializing with loved ones during the holidays can stir up tender and unresolved issues. Even the smell of certain holiday foods can trigger a painful emotional response.
- Account for travel fatigue and stress. Allow for energy and sleep adjustments for seniors who travel to holiday gatherings. The busyness of holiday prep, shopping, etc. can add its own toll. People tend to overeat when tired or frazzled.
- Fit in exercise. Throughout November and December, keep up a regular workout routine or opt for indoor exercises such as stair climbing. After a holiday meal and before dessert, invite everyone to go for a walk together. (The dishwasher can wash.)
- Substitute instead of skip out. Citrus, vanilla and cinnamon are delicious substitutes for full amounts of sugar in recipes. Unsweetened applesauce or mashed bananas work well for fat ingredients. The Mayo Clinic issued a substitution guide for replacing ingredients with healthier choices.
- Savor the celebrations. Laughter and uplifting conversations can increase the body’s natural defense system and lower blood pressure. Endorphin hormones released through laughter alone lower pain sensation and foster positive emotion.
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Winter Wonderland at Kensico Dam Plaza Lights Up the Holiday Season

On Nov. 27, a 24-foot Christmas tree lighting ceremony and special holiday celebration kicked off Winter Wonderland at Kensico Dam Plaza in Valhalla.

Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino joined with New York Rangers Alum Adam Graves, Friends of Westchester County Parks and the Westchester County Parks Department to keynote the event.

To pay tribute to the presenting sponsor, Westchester Medical Center, Astorino invited Victoria Ricotta, a former patient at Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital – a sector of the hospital’s health network – and her family to light the tree with him. Victoria’s life was saved thanks to the doctors, specialists and nurses at the hospital after she was diagnosed with a rare bacterial infection as a result of being born without a spleen.

A new partnership with the New York Rangers enabled a new feature at the dam plaza – a Rockefeller Center-sized ice rink called “Rangers Town.” Rangers Alum Adam Graves attended the celebration to participate in a special children’s “Try Hockey for Free” session sponsored by the team. To add to the fan experience, the Rangers will also provide special perks over the holiday season each Friday, Saturday and Sunday night for guests to enjoy. This will include special hockey sessions with Rangers alumni and photo opportunities with the Rangers’ player bench.

Other highlights of Winter Wonderland include:

Jack Frost Holiday Cirque Spectacular, which will feature performers from across the world, including the juggling dexterity of the Aristov Family, World Record Hula Hoop Champion Tatiana and incredible acrobatics. Jack Frost Holiday Cirque Spectacular will perform every night at 5:30, 6:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Strolling carolers will greet and serenade guests with holiday tunes.

The Westchester Chordsman will perform on designated evenings.

The Hope Players, a local community theater troop that works in partnership with Hartsdale-based The Hope for Change Foundation for breast cancer awareness, will perform on Sundays.

Storytelling by Santas Elves will be available on Friday nights. Children will be able to sit and listen with wonder as elves spin tales about favorite holiday legends.

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- Other new features include: a candy cane forest of lights at the entrance of the event; the addition of a third amusement ride for children; a shopping village of artisan crafts and gifts; and gourmet delicacies from an array of food trucks.
- General admission pricing is $15 per person. This ticket price allows unlimited access to amusement rides, ice-skating and rentals, and visits with Santa Claus. Children ages 5 and under are free.
- Westchester’s Winter Wonderland will run through Sunday, Jan. 3. Now through Dec. 20, the event will be open Fridays and Saturdays from 5 to 10 p.m. and Sundays from 5 to 9 p.m. Beginning, Monday, Dec. 21, the program will be open weekdays and weekends.

Cranberries – The tart fruit retards bacteria that are common in urinary tract infections. Cranberry sauce can be sweetened lightly with sugar or a sugar substitute.
Come holiday time, my wife Margaret and I have always engaged in a practice I suspect many homeowners share: in addition to buying gifts for each other, we also buy gifts “for the home.”

Over the years these have ranged from practical choices, such as new appliances, to objects d’art found during our frequent visits to antique stores and auctions. A gift I was considering for this holiday was an antique decorative screen that would have been perfect for covering a central air control panel in our dining room, but Margaret is now fonder of modern décor so I agreed to let it go.

After so many years of gifting our home, we’re hard pressed to think of anything more for it. But thinking back, if I had it over again I would have invested more in purchasing gifts that would be not only modern but technologically advanced enough to turn our abode into a “smart home.” I checked around for what I might recommend to others to accomplish this goal.

First I considered temperature control. Of the many options available, the Nest Learning Thermostat has won over many users by putting its sleek digital appearance in service toward ease of use, even for only moderately wired individuals like myself. After a short time tracking the temperature adjustments you make to the Nest, the device will learn your patterns and begin to anticipate them. What’s more, if it doesn’t and your presence, and a motion detector for several hours, it will assume you are not home and will adjust the climate accordingly to save energy.

All well and fine, although I hope that binge-watching “Breaking Bad” for an afternoon won’t inadvertently cut the heat off.

Lighting was next on my exploration list, and the choices grew more complicated. Should the bulbs themselves be smart, linked in small groups via a hub or your wireless device? They are the easiest to install, but I will have to overcome decades of habit and remember to leave the switches on when I leave the room. Turning them off will render the smartest bulb inoperable.

Smart switches require more expert installation, but allow for more variety of bulbs and fixtures. No matter which system you choose, there is still a learning period. One Forbes Magazine reporter recently discovered that the system might decide to turn on all your lights in the wee hours of the morning.

In the area of security, the August Smart Lock seems promising. Allowing you to open and close the deadbolt on your door through your smartphone or phone send a visiting guest or service person an invitation allowing them access. It sounds like a lifesaver for parents and homeowners who need to be at work all day, but be certain to use a strong password that resists hacking. In fact, I would personally hold off on this one until the security standards in the smart home industry develop further.

In the meantime you might go for the Ring, the smart video doorbell. It sends a video image of your visitor to your phone – even alerting you of their approach before they ring the bell – and allows you to converse with them from inside via a speaker. You can see and speak with the person at your door even if you aren’t home, while still giving the impression that you are inside.

Are you ready to make your home a smart home? Well, I suppose it depends on your tolerance for technological systems that still have some bugs to be worked out. For example, if you try to install a new app on your phone and get a message saying it can’t be done, do you quickly hop onto Google to see how others solved the problem? Or do you call up the “complacent person” in your family for yet another favor as I do? Maybe you do neither, and instead give up on the app altogether while saying “this is why I hate computers!”

If you are in the third group, or if you don’t have a resident computer genius in your family, you may want to wait a few years for smart home technology to become more standardized. However, if you find that the benefits and excitement of this technology outweigh the occasional hassle of trouble-shooting, then proceed with appropriate caution.

As for me, I will step back for this year and try to talk to my wife into some decidedly non-smart décor for our home, possibly from another century – if I can find the room, that is.


The Prudent Portfolio

By Bill Primavera

The advances of science in the realm of wine continue to redefine, and even redefine, our understanding of wine appreciation.

Our perception of wine is influenced more by our sense of smell than by our sense of taste. Since our olfactory sensors are present in the nasal passages and in the back of the throat, they bombard our brain with significantly greater impulses than those sensors in our mouths and on our tongue. Yet we often find it difficult to express words that describe the aromas in a glass of wine.

Scientists at Northwestern University have unraveled one aspect of the mystery of aroma perception. Research has discovered the connection between how the brain processes aromas versus visual or auditory signals.

What we see is generally the same as the next person. What we hear is generally the same also. (Yes, I know, there are exceptions and anomalies, just as with every other aspect of our interface with fellow Earthlings.) Yet with our sense of smell, our perception of the reality of aromas can be widely disparate from the next person.

Scientists have concluded that a portion of the brain, the piriform cortex, manages our olfactory sensors. Yet the electric impulses sent by these olfactory sensors are assimilated in a different manner than those in which our brain manages our other four senses.

The gyrius areas of our cerebral cortex directly manage visual input, and we create the words we use to identify these senses. The piriform cortex is an outlier, intercepting olfactory signals on their pathway to the gyrus region. Electrical impulses from our olfactory sensors are transmitted to the piriform cortex, resulting in rather garbled output when it relays signals to the gyrus region. This unique pathway influences the formation of words in the gyrus region. The process varies from person to person, creating vocabularies that may differ greatly.

Scientists have concluded that this is a primary factor in the disparate descriptions we assign to aromas. Each time the olfactory sensors are bombarded by aromas, the signals to the brain are interpreted “on the run” through the piriform cortex, making it difficult to translate a smell into a descriptive word.

What does all of this science mean to the average wine consumer?

1. It explains why it is sometimes difficult to verbalize aromas.
2. It explains why we don’t have the same perception of a wine as wine critics. This can be intimidating if we don’t smell the violets or graphite or Meyer lemon, which professional wine critics pinpoint in their wine critiques. We are not inferior, we are simply different.

The challenge is how to improve our sense of smell. It is more a sensory refinement than a scientific procedure. If we continually and diligently focus on identifying aromas in our glasses of wine, our brain will build a data bank of these perceptions. Eventually, each impression of the characteristics of a wine will be stored as a fixed memory, enabling us to describe instinctively a particular aroma. Just as the visual and auditory processing centers of the brain create and store language (our memory), the piriform cortex enhances the aroma impulses in creating memories of aromas.

And of course, our memory plays a significant role in our sense of smell. When we encounter a particular food or wine, our brain searches our memory banks for similar past experiences. This is why we can verbalize the vanilla scent in a Chardonnay or the hint of chocolate in a Cabernet Sauvignon. This is how I enjoy wines: “Continuous experimenting results in instinctive behavior.” Now I have the weight of science behind my credo.

And the same credo may be stated for our sense of taste, although in a much narrower range (five senses of taste versus tens of thousands of senses of smell).

Next week: The science behind how we taste.

Nick Antonaccio is a 40-year Pleasantville resident. For over 20 years he has conducted wine tastings and lectures. 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.
By Jerry Eimbinder

Eight hours of celebration are planned for New Year's Eve at the Westchester Broadway Theatre in Elmsford, and with 500 seats available, that should keep Executive Chef Alexandra Sampaio busy.

A performance of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's classic musical "Show Boat" is part of the evening's entertainment. The cost is $370 per couple, which includes dinner, show, beverages, party favors, taxes and gratuity.

The evening's festivities begin at 6 p.m. in the lobby with the buffet-style serving of hot and cold hors d'oeuvres and an open bar. A revival of "Show Boat" follows on stage at 7 p.m.

The first dinner course, a fresh greens salad, is served during the play's intermission; the second and third courses arrive after the show ends.

After dinner, the stage is transformed into a dance floor and The Tuxedo Parc Orchestra entertains. A champagne toast ushers in New Year's at midnight, but the party continues until 2 a.m.

Sampaio said hors d'oeuvres include chilled lobster, shrimp cocktails, clams casino, pigs in blankets, antipasto, empanadas and fresh fruit. There is the choice of three dishes – beef, chicken or fish and the signature Peach Melba will be served as dessert. A basket of dinner rolls includes fresh baked corn bread.

The open bar policy applies all night with beverage service, including cocktails, wine, coffee, tea and soft drinks, provided by the wait staff.

"Show Boat" recalls a time in history (the musical's opening is set in 1890) when the Mississippi River showboat was a remarkable early American entertainment venue. The first act deals initially with racism as the show boat's female star, accused of being black though appearing to be white and married to a white man, is banished from her role.

The play is noted for its departure from comedy to drama in a musical on the early Broadway stage. The score is incredible and includes "Ol' Man River," "Can't Help Lovin' That Man," "Life Upon the Wicked Stage," "Bill, Why Do I Love You," "Goodbye My Lady Love" and "You Are Love."

A beautiful duet, "Only Make Believe," is sung early in the first act by soprano Bonnie Fraser (playing Magnolia, daughter of the riverboat captain) and John Preator (Ravenal, a gambler and Magnolia's first and only love). The touching "After the Ball" is sung in the second act in a beautiful rendition by Fraser and other cast members.

Sampaio joined the Westchester Broadway Theatre as executive chef on March 1, 2012. At 16, she worked as a busgirl at the theater when her uncle, Tony Dinis, was executive chef. Little did she suspect that one day she would take the same job her uncle had held for more than 30 years.

Born and raised in Tarrytown, Sampaio attended high school at Our Lady of Victory Academy in Dobbs Ferry. While a student at Westchester Community College, Sampaio signed up for adult-education BOCES courses in cooking and baking.

"After only a few classes, I began thinking seriously about a career in the food industry or in pastry baking," she said. "I wasn't that interested in cooking when I started working as a busgirl, although I did like to bake," Sampaio recalled. "My father, in fact, would have preferred for me to choose almost any other profession for a career. But when he and my uncle Tony realized that food was the highlight of my life, they became my mentors and influenced me tremendously."

She enrolled at the New York Restaurant School in TriBeCa (now the Art Institute of New York) in 2003 and after graduation joined the Greens at Greenwich, an upscale assisted living facility in Greenwich, Conn.

Mistura also has an $8 lunch special menu. Chef and owner Ayde Huggins grew up in Lima, Peru’s capital and largest city. She began learning to cook at seven years old by helping her mother prepare meals for their five-member family. She attended a culinary program at Westchester Community College and was a chef at White Plains Hospital for nearly five years before leaving to open her new restaurant. Mistura is located at 106 Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains. A municipal parking lot is directly behind the restaurant for a dollar an hour. For more information, call 914-607-7244.

Opening day participants (from left): Luis Marino, the first Latino to be elected a Port Chester trustee and a Peruvian immigrant, White Plains Mayor Tom Roach, and Mistura Chef and owner Ayde Huggins.
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LEGALs

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NOTICE of Formation of M&R Account Services LLC Art. Of. Org. filed with SSNY on 10/14/2015. Office Location: WESTCHESTER COUNTY. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail process to: M&R Account Services LLC, 29 Scenic Dr Apt O, Croton on Hudson, NY 10520 Purpose: any lawful purpose.

NOTICE of Formation of Frawley Coaching, LLC. Arts of Org. filed with NY Secy of State (SSNY) on 9/14/15. Office location: WESTCHESTER COUNTY. SSNY is designated agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail process to: 7014 13th Ave, Suite 202, Brooklyn, NY 11228. Purpose: any lawful activity.

NOTICE of Formation of Dovetail DB LLC Arts of Org. filed with Secy. of State of NY(SSNY) on 9/15/2015. Location: WESTCHESTER COUNTY. SSNY designated as agent for service of process on LLC. SSNY shall mail process to: 55 East 76th St., 1D, NY, 10021. Purpose: any lawful activity.

NOTICE of FORMATION OF TTL Photography, LLC. Articles of Organization filed with Secy. of State of NY (SSNY) on 09/16/2015. Office location: WESTCHESTER COUNTY. SSNY designated agent whom process may be served and shall copy of process against LLC to principle business address: 1304 Midland Avenue, Ste B-60, Yonkers, N.Y. 10704. Purpose: any lawful act.

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The White Plains Examiner
The Holiday Season is upon us, so whether you’ve been naughty or nice, time to make plans with friends and family. If you are going out, here are more festive venues for every palate, each offering a good dose of Holiday Cheer. 

Celebrate like a Gaucho. Gaucho Grill is one of the most dynamic restaurants in Westchester, this Argentinean/Latin/Italian themed venue always offers vibrant food and atmosphere, casual yet sophisticated. Proprietors Alan Nussbaum and his wife Maria Rubiano are amiable hosts who watch over this sprawling 225-seat multi-faceted establishment with a diligent eye. There are private and semi-private party facilities for up to 80 guests for all types of occasions. The private banquet room is beautifully appointed. Chef Angelo Magno’s specialties run the gamut from hefty steaks and chops, classic Italian dishes and beautifully plated Latin fare. To the corner and named it Pizza Cucina where you can get all your favorites fresh-made. Pizza Cucina is located at 102 Post Road, White Plains (914-752-4611). On and off premise catering. Free and municipal parking. www.ernestosristorante.com.

Italian Holiday Classics. Proprietor Michael Vivolo and his wife Margaret of La Riserva, 2382 Boston Post Road, Larchmont (914-834-5584), have been serving ‘the Italian classics’ for over 38 years and the traditional atmosphere and friendly ambiance keep it a treat. Be seated in the lovely refurbished dining room, now part of a vintage photo gallery, and let the friendly staff suggest such specialties as: flavorful Polenta al Gorgonzola with shrimp; fresh Spiedini oozing its cheese; Angel Hair Abissi Marini, thin egg noodles in a light cream sauce with shrimp and mushrooms; Veal Chop alla Griglia, with mushrooms and roasted potatoes; or Branzino Mediterraneo. Michael’s son Dean operates Trattoria Vivolo in Harrison. Private party facilities. Open seven days for lunch and dinner. Free parking; www.lariserverestaurant.com. 

South of the border fiesta. Mexican food and culture meld beautifully with the Holiday season, and big, sprawling Rancho Grande Mexican Restaurant in the Highridge Shopping Plaza along Central Park Ave., Yonkers, offers an exciting environment for a good time. Owner Mary Maloney and general manager and host Jose Perez are ready fill you with seasonal cheer. It is a multi-faceted 320-seat dining room and bar/lounge strewn with colorful art and artifacts. The kitchen is manned by talented Executive Chef Angelo Magno who some may know from Gaucho Grill in White Plains. There is a lot of flavor in the Guacamole prepared tableside; Botanita Grande, combination platter of nachos, dry quesadilla, flautas, guacamole, chorizo, pico de gallo and sour cream; sizzling Fajitas with your choice of fillings; Alambre Mar Y Tierra, steak, chicken, shrimp, with mixed vegetables, white rice and chile poblano sauce; and the Puella Luisita. There is a vegetarian version, too. Daily Happy Hours: 4 to 7 p.m. Weekend entertainment schedule. Off-premise catering. Private party facilities. Free parking. Rancho Grande is located at 1789 Central Park Ave., Yonkers. 914-337-3056; www.ranchograndedemex.com.

Holiday comfort foods. Owner Michael Cuozzo of Tuck’d Away Bar & Grill, 90 Yonkers Ave., Tuckahoe (914-922-9162), wanted to open an eatery where customers could feel relaxed and comfortable, and where the kitchen would surprise patrons with a reasonably priced menu of gastro-tavern fare. Cuozzo, who practically grew up in the business at the long-running Casa Rina in Thornwood, premiered his 50-seat dining room and bar/lounge just over a year ago and it’s become a popular spot to tuck into for networking and indulging on Chef Ken Austria’s signature takes on comfort food. Selections include a Slider Trio, Baked Macaroni and Cheese, fabulous Chicken Wings in a variety of styles; BBQ Chicken Flat Bread, Simply Salmon Salad, juicy Burgers, overstuffed Wraps, and more. A bustling Happy Hour Monday through Friday from 3 to 7 p.m. features half-off selected cocktails and menu items. A 2-course lunch is served Monday through Saturday for $12. And a 3-course dinner is served Sunday through Wednesday for $20. Big TVs, lounge chairs and occasional live entertainment. Check ahead. Open 7 days; www.tuckedaway90.com.

Irish holiday fare. Dunne’s Restaurant & Pub, 15 Shapham Place, White Plains (914-421-1451) is a neighborhood treasure, an authentic Irish tavern with all the traditional Gaelic accouterments intact. It is a friendly, home-style place with a good kitchen to boot, dishing out generous servings of traditional Irish-style fare at prices that will leave some money in your wallet. Sean and his staff know how to pour that pint of Guinness while keeping the crown in spirited conversation. Try such kitchen favorites as their fabulous Corned Beef Reuben Sandwich, Plain Jane Burger served on a Kaiser roll, Beer Battered Fish & Chips, Grilled Irish Bangers, Cheddar Cheese Meatloaf served with Irish beans and mashed potatoes, or the Flaming Steak. There is an exciting live Irish music session every Wednesday night. And Oktoberfest is celebrated the first Thursday of every month. Open seven days for lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch. Municipal parking; www.dunnespubandrestaurant.com.

Morris Gut is a restaurant marketing consultant and former restaurant trade magazine editor. He has been tracking the food and dining scene in greater Westchester for 30 years. He may be reached at: 914-235-6591. E-mail: gutreactions@optonline.net.

Menu, Movers & Shakers

Delectable comfort foods at Tuck’d Away, Tuckahoe.

Where to Celebrate the Holidays, Part 2

Gaucho Grill, White Plains.
Tuesday, Dec. 8
Tuesdays at Dorry’s. Gathers “conversation partners” weekly for informal table talk. This week Hasan T. Arslan, Assistant Professor, Pace University, Criminal Justice and Security Department will speak about developments in Turkey during the past two years that involved what he calls the greatest corruption scandal in the history of Turkish politics. There is no charge. Just come and order your food from Sylvia and enjoy the discussion and the company. Please join us. No reservations are needed. 6 to 7 p.m. Food ordering starts at 5:30 p.m. Dorry’s Diner, 468 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains; 914-682-0005.

WPCNA Pizza with the Mayor. White Plains Council of Neighborhood Associations Dec. meeting features a pizza party (open to White Plains residents), network and meet with Mayor Tom Roach, the special guest; 7 p.m., Education House, 5 Homeside Lane, White Plains.

Wednesday, Dec. 9
Noonday Concert. Presented by Downtown Music at Grace. Tableau Vivant – Karen Marie Marmer, violin and Dongsok Shin, harpsichord, principals of the celebrated baroque ensemble Rebel, with guests David Ross, baroque flute, and Arnie Tanimoto, viola da gamba offer Telemann in Paris featuring works and Arnie Tanimoto, viola da gamba with guests David Ross, baroque flute, the celebrated baroque ensemble Rebel, Downtown Music at Grace. Tableau Tuesdays at Dorry’s.

Friday, Dec. 11
The North White Plains Fire Company No. 1 Christmas Tree Sale. All proceeds will benefit the fire company. Free parking: all ages welcome. North White Plains Fire Company No. 1 firehouse, 621 N. Broadway, North White Plains. 4 to 8 p.m. Tent prices priced according to size and type. Fridays from 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. through Dec. 19 (unless sold out). Info: 914-949-3575 or e-mail ncsfd1@optonline.net.

Toys for Tots Fundraiser. Silver & Sequins Christmas Charity Fundraiser hosted by Tia Maria Montemurro in memory of her son Guy; co-host Katrina D’Onofrio. FDR Band DJ Serg, dancers, tapas menu, bottle service, cash bar; $20 admission, bring unwrapped toy; 8 p.m. Coliseum Night Club, 15 S. Broadway, White Plains.

Saturday, Dec. 12
Winterfest Holiday Market. Nine-day holiday market in downtown White Plains begins, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Court Street between Martine Avenue and Main Street (same location as outdoor Farmers Market), White Plains. End date is Dec. 20.


Teaching Trails: A Community Path for Environmental Education. Join guided trail experience through the woodland forest. Discover who left that track. which tree makes the best animal home or which plant makes its own heat to help melt through the late winter ice. Program runs about 30 minutes. Greenburgh Nature Center, 99 Dromore Rd., Scarsdale. 11:30 a.m. Free. Every Saturday and Sunday. Info: 914-723-3470 or visit www.greenburghnaturecenter.org.

Wreaths Across America. Daughters of Liberty’s legacy remember war dead during the holiday season with the laying of wreaths at White Plains American Legion Post 135, 57 Mitchell Place at 12 noon.

WPHS PTA Holiday Craft Fair. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the White Plains High School PTA will hold its Annual Holiday Craft Fair. More than 70 vendors will display unique items including children’s books and toys, handmade jewelry, jewelry boxes, crocheted items, scarves, leather handbags, wooden Christmas ornaments, African art, organic coffee and tea, and more. Refreshments will be served at the Hudson Valley run by the PTA throughout the day. All proceeds from the event will go to the White Plains HS PTA Senior Recognition Fund, which goes to support college scholarships for White Plains High School seniors. Students who apply must perform community service to qualify. The Crafts Fair will be held in H Cafeteria at White Plains High School, 550 North Street, White Plains, NY.

Family Day at Castle Gallery. Featuring a curated selection of the Kate Canty Cèrche Collection, Nativity Scenes from the Americas the Castle Gallery on The College of New Rochelle’s main campus is holding a Family Day with art project 1 to 4 p.m. It is free and all ages are welcome. For general information, tours, and directions to the Castle Gallery and The College of New Rochelle, call 914-654-5423. The Castle Gallery is open Tuesday – Friday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Saturday-Sunday, 12 – 4 p.m. The Gallery is closed on Mondays and major holidays. The gallery will have limited hours on December 23, 26-30, 2015 and January 2-3, 2016. The exhibit runs until Sunday, January 10, 2016.


Sunday, Dec. 13
Pack Chat for Kids. Children will learn about the mythology surrounding wolves and the important role they play in the natural world. Guests will visit ambassador wolves Atka, Alawa, Nikai and Zephyr and the critically endangered red wolves and Mexican gray wolves. Bring a camera. Wolf Conservation Center, South Salem. 2 p.m. Adults: $13. Children (under 12): $11. Also Dec. 29 at 11 a.m. and Dec. 27 at 10 a.m. Pre-registration required. Info and pre-registration: Visit www.nywolf.org. A Madrigal Feast for All Ages. A Renaissance event with food, music, games and food from the 1500s and songs of the season. Performed by the choir and members of the congregation of the Community Unitarian Universalist Congregation; 2:30 p.m.; 468 Rosedale Ave., White Plains; 914-946-1660 or visit www.ccuw.org. Suggested donation $20 for adults, $10 for seniors and students, $5 for children 12 and under, $45 maximum for families.

Sunday, Dec. 13

Monday, Dec. 14
Neil Berg’s Broadway Holiday. The number one touring Broadway concert in America, brings Broadway’s finest stars and greatest songs together for an unforgettable holiday event. Five of Broadway’s brightest stars will take audiences on a journey through Broadway history with the music of Kander & Ebb, Rodgers & Hammerstein, Lerner & Loewe, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin and many more. Cast includes Rita Harvey, Carter Calvert and Danny Zollo. Westonbury Broadway Theatre, 1 Broadway Plaza, Elmsford. Lunch at 11:15 a.m. Show at 1 p.m. $64 (plus tax). Dinner at 6:15 p.m. Show at 8 p.m. $84 (plus tax). Info and tickets: 914-592-2222 or visit broawaytheatre.com.
41st Annual Royal Hanneford Circus Tickets are Now on Sale

The Royal Hanneford Circus returns to the Westchester County Center Feb. 13 to 15, with a new look and new acts for 2016.

Tickets are on sale now for the Royal Hanneford Circus, which will include the latest and greatest acts from around the globe. The Stars of 2016 Royal Hanneford Circus include Cuzin Grumpy's Pork Chop Revue, Grandma The Clown and The latest of The Royal Hanneford Family of Performers, Catherine Hanneford, displaying incomparable aerial excellence.

Tickets are on sale now at The Westchester County Center Box Office, Ticketmaster and Ticketmaster.com. Ticket prices are $32 for Premium Seats, $25 for Regular Reserved Seats. Groups and Organizations of 20 or more receive a discounted price of $21 for Regular Reserved tickets to the 10 a.m. or 6 p.m. Shows.

To charge by phone, call Ticketmaster (additional fees apply) 800-745-3000 or ticketmaster.com. Circus tickets make a great holiday gift for the family. The Stars of 2016 Royal Hanneford Circus include Cuzin Grumpy's Pork Chop Revue, Grandma The Clown and the latest of The Royal Hanneford Family of Performers, Catherine Hanneford, displaying incomparable aerial excellence.

Syrian Refugees Blanket and Coat Drive

The Turkish Cultural Center of Westchester is participating in a blanket and coat drive organized by Embrace Relief.

It is an effort to collect blankets and coats for refugees who have fled Syria for Turkey due to the erupting violence in Syria. The effort is to help Syrian refugee families in need during the harsh winter months what will soon be upon them.

Turkish Cultural Center is participating in this aid program with monetary donations and by collecting new or gently used, clean blankets and coats at several drop off locations.

If you want to make monetary donations, please note that cost of a blanket is $8 in the region. Mail your checks and/or drop off blankets and coats to: Turkish Cultural Center of Westchester, 133 E Main St #101, Elmsford, NY 10523; 914-418-5533; Wednesday - Friday - Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

WinterFest Downtown Holiday Market

WinterFest, presented by the City of White Plains and Bensidoun USA, kicks off on Saturday, Dec. 12 and runs through Sunday, Dec. 20. The market will be located on Court Street between Martine Avenue and Main Street (the same location as the Farmer’s Market) and will be open each day from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The event will feature artisans and crafts people selling one of a kind items, including high quality food and unique gifts.

WinterFest is modeled on the holiday markets found throughout Europe that bring communities together with festive music, food, and gifts and help usher in the holiday season as a meeting place for friends and family. That tradition will come to downtown White Plains and create an atmosphere of cheer as well as a friendly holiday gathering place.


In this time of great focus on refugees around the world, AJC Westchester/ Fairfield has opened a very special exhibit on a group of Jewish refugees who found safe harbor in Shanghai during World War II when no other country would accept them. This museum quality exhibit consists of 80 panels and is available for viewing exclusively during the month of December at The Jewish Community Center of Harrison, 130 Union Avenue, Harrison. Themes covered include: Fleeing to Shanghai, Refugee Life in Shanghai, the Hongkou Ghetto, Affectionate Neighborhood, Leaving Shanghai, and Unforgettable History.

This exhibit was launched on Dec. 1 with remarks from AJC, the Israeli Consulate and a Shanghai Ghetto survivor who now lives in New Rochelle and is featured in the exhibit. The exhibit is available for viewing during normal business hours, Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Call the synagogue office in advance to confirm availability, 914-835-2850. The exhibit will not be available on December 9th or December 25th.

AJC’s mission is to enhance the well being of the Jewish people and Israel, and to advance human rights and democratic values in the United States and around the world.

Silver & Sequins Toys for Tots Fundraiser

Silver & Sequins Christmas Charity Fundraiser hosted by Tia Maria Montemurro in memory of her son Guy, with co-host Katrina D’Onofrio once again comes to White Plains Coliseum Night Club. The fashionable event features the FDR Band DJ Serg, dancers, tapas menu, bottle service, cash bar; $20 admission. Guests are asked to bring an unwrapped toy. The fundraiser will take place Friday, Dec. 11, 8 p.m. Coliseum Night Club, 15 S. Broadway, White Plains.

Bensidoun USA manages the City of White Plains seasonal farmer’s market.
BLACKJACK BONUS

PLAY ELECTRONIC BLACKJACK ON THURSDAYS AND RECEIVE 7X POINTS

EMPIRE CITY CASINO