Tennis Bubble Opens at Delfino Park

Good news, tennis lovers, the City of White Plains together with Tennis Innovators Academy opened a year-round tennis bubble at Delfino Park last Wednesday.

The facility will be operated by Tennis Innovators Academy and will give residents access to courts from Labor Day through Memorial Day when White Plains’ outdoor courts are not open. With the opening of this facility, the total number of courts at Delfino Park has increased from six to eight, with existing courts upgraded and new Har-Tru courts created. The facility also includes a new tennis clubhouse with a lounge area, changing rooms and pro shop.

Tennis Innovators Academy constructed and will operate, manage and maintain the courts year-round at no cost to the City. White Plains residents will receive a 15 percent discount on court fees. There will be no membership or initiation fees charged.

During the ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the new facility, White Plains Mayor Tom Roach said, “We are very excited to offer this new year-round amenity to our residents. Tennis is a great game and a great way to exercise. Now, with this new tennis bubble, it doesn’t have to be something that is available only in the warmer months. We hope that this facility entices more residents to take up the game.”

Greenburgh’s Feiner On Train Crossing Safety

By Pat Casey

Last week Greenburgh Town Supervisor interviewed Robert Comer of Angels on Track Foundation, an expert on U.S. railroad crossing safety, during his morning WVOX AM radio program.

According to Feiner, Comer has investigated over 400 grade crossing crashes nationwide and has testified as an expert witness.

During the radio interview Comer suggested that an easy and immediate action that Metro North and other rail lines could take to increase crossing safety would be to place large billboards at every crossing with warnings of the dangers. “Large billboards could provide motorists with an extra warning, and encourage people to be more aware of the dangers. They have worked elsewhere. I am planning to write to Metro North and other lawmakers and will request the billboards at every crossing,” Feiner said in an email.

Feiner also noted that Comer believes commuter trains should have seat belts.

In other Greenburgh news, Feiner commented on the recent agreement continued on page 5
Parents and staff of GCA Academy have fought an aggressive campaign to save their school. The school’s board was disbanded last month as a letter was sent to prospective Freshman students that events for the incoming class were being cancelled.

Efforts to find an alternative location each turned up negative as the school tried to work with the Catholic Archdioese in New York to locate rental space for the full to capacity and functioning all-girl Catholic high school. The academy currently educates about 400 students.

Rumors that could not be substantiated because of nondisclosure agreements required by Stamford, CT-based real estate company CBRE, the broker handling the property sale, indicated that a bidder had come forth in the fall and had offered cash for the property with the understanding that the school could remain on the campus. It also indicated that the 20 or so nuns still living in the convent would remain and that the Chapel of the Divine Compassion, though possibly under ownership by another religious organization would still be accessible by the RDC.

A not-for-profit group formed by parents, GCA teachers, members of the RDC, alumnae of the school and others called Save Good Counsel Academy High School also claim to have found a backer and presented a bid to CBRE.

School also claim to have found a backer and presented a bid to CBRE.

It is not clear if this bid piggybacks on an offer already made and presented within the bidding deadline schedule or if it is a completely new bid.

That organization claims through emails and Facebook posts that the leadership team of the RDC, in particular the president of the order, Sr. Carol Wagner, will not consider their offer and has refused to speak with them and that CBRE offers them no answers as well. At this time the group does not appear to have the charter to run the school if it does manage to purchase the property.

Angered by the lack of communication supporting groups have committed to continue to push to save the school despite last week’s closure announcement.

A letter writing campaign initiated on Monday proposes faxing a form letter to go over everyone’s head and directly to the Pope’s office in Rome.

At a recent rally, GCA students approach Sr. Carol Wagner as she drives off the campus.
Olympian Orozco Returns to Home Gym to Help Youngsters

By Martin Wilbur

Chappaqua, is competing to once again be on the U.S. Olympic team in the London Olympics, trained for a decade as someone who provided tidbits of advice. “At such a young age doing such a desire to work hard to reach the highest echelon of his sport.”

Orozco, who finished eighth in the 2012 Olympic Games, was special as he was eight years old. On Sunday, he returned to his home gym to participate in separate clinics for the school’s boys’ and girls’ sessions. “I just want to show by example, being an inspiration, to point to Orozco and other coaches are able to train when he’s back in New York. His willingness to return to his home gym turns 22 this week, and was second in all-around at the P&G USA Gymnastics/John Cheng Photo O’Connor learned of the severity of the accident in Valhalla, when people began reading the news stories on their phones. Strangers who would typically have ignored each other began talking. O’Connor said she felt a strong sense of community and was compelled to help those affected by the crash by offering free support groups.

The first of six weekly group therapy sessions, which begin last Saturday at her Scarsdale office, aim to help more than those who lost loved ones in the crash or who were on the train that day. “I wasn’t on that train but I could just have easily been on that train, and it’s on the line where my office is, so [it was] just really feeling connected to the community around this line and, for me, just trying to really figure out what I can do to help and this seemed like a natural way to do it,” O’Connor said. Since O’Connor specializes in marriage and family therapy, her first thoughts were about the families who were sitting down to dinner when the accident occurred and wondering why their spouses were late. Feeling lucky that she was able to text her husband and let him know she was fine, O’Connor felt sympathy for the victims and their families. In the week following the accident, O’Connor has heard from people who weren’t directly impacted but who feel a loss of safety and security.

“You think of the train as a way to get to work every day that’s going to be safe. You don’t really think that something like this could happen,” she said. “So my feeling was even people who weren’t on that train, who weren’t even on that line but are suddenly thinking that could just as easily happen here” might need some help to cope with the accident.

Immediately following most traumatic events, people can be in a state of shock and want to stay close to home. As time moves on, they must return to their daily routines but some may feel stuck, O’Connor explained.

Her goal is to let people know that their feelings are normal and help them resume their lives by offering a forum to talk about their emotions with people who are going through the same struggles. O’Connor’s office is located at 14 Harwood Court in Scarsdale. Although the sessions are free, participants are required to register in advance by calling 914-355-0517 or by e-mailing info@breakthroughmft.com.

There will be two sessions, one at 8 a.m. and the other at 9:30 a.m., with groups of 10 to 15 people each. O’Connor said the groups will meet for six Saturdays. Colleagues of hers are prepared to handle other sessions in the event there is more demand.
Vito Pinto to Step Down as Westchester County Veterans Chief

The director of the county's Veterans Service Agency and the Office of STOP-DWI and Drug Prevention, Vito Pinto, announced last week that he will be stepping down at the end of March.

It’s been my greatest pleasure to serve Westchester County veterans these past five years under the tremendous leadership of Rob Astorino, a true friend of veterans. I’m leaving my post but I will stay actively involved in helping our servicemen and women, active and retired. I also enjoyed my time working to educate young people on the dangers of drugs and alcohol and efforts to stop drunk driving, and will continue in those efforts as well,” Pinto said in a media statement.

As a former Democrat county legislator, councilman (Eastchester) and village trustee (Tuckahoe), Pinto served 27 years in elected office prior to being appointed by the County Executive in 2010 to lead the county’s efforts to assist veterans.

“Vito Pinto may have been the easiest appointment I ever made. He’s hard working, likeable and his care and concern for our veterans is exemplary. Part of the reason is that Vito was a veteran himself and also that care and compassion for others is just part of Vito’s DNA,” said Astorino. “I'm sad to see Vito go. He'll be tough to replace but he has most certainly earned his retirement and I wish him well.”

Pinto served eight years in the Navy and is a veteran of the Vietnam War where he flew combat missions as a Naval Aviation Officer (NAO) in the Fighter Squadron 96 aboard the carriers USS Ranger CVA 61 and USS Enterprise CVAN 65 in the Tonkin Gulf.

While Pinto was director, the agency worked in partnership with the Patriot Housing Initiative to provide housing for 75 homeless veterans in 100 days. The effort resulted in exceeding the goal and housing was found for 85. To date the program has housed 247 homeless vets. An annual Veterans Virtual Job Fair was held to match veterans with businesses looking to hire veterans. The “Smiling on America’s Heroes” program offered discount dental and vision coverage to veterans and their families. The Hudson Valley Honor Flight for World War II vets was launched out of the Westchester County Airport. A second flight is scheduled to take place on May 9, 2015.

Several positive changes also occurred in the Office of STOP-DWI and Drug Prevention including usage of the STOP-DWI simulator trailer at local schools and community events was increased.

The office also worked with the Westchester Coalition for Drug & Alcohol Free Youth to help train thousands of middle and high school students in leadership skills to interact with their peers to keep our youth alcohol and drug free. And, substantial grant funding was obtained to allow the county police and municipal police departments to conduct increased DWI enforcement through sobriety checkpoints and roving patrols to deter drunk driving in Westchester.

Flexjet Leaves New Jersey, Moves to White Plains

By Pat Casey

The Westchester County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) announced a series of incentives on Friday that will help Flexjet relocate its fractional jet charter operations from Teterboro, New Jersey to Westchester County Airport at Hangar “F.”

It is expected that the renovation of the hangar will take about four months.

According to a statement from the Westchester County Executive’s office, the move will bring an initial 38 high-wage permanent jobs to Westchester and create an additional 55 permanent jobs over the next five years.

Flexjet provides businesses and entrepreneurs with private air travel on corporate jets through various contracting opportunities. Robert Astorino noted in the Friday statement that such a high-level of global travel opportunities would attract business to Westchester County.

The financing and tax-exemptions made available through the IDA help defray the cost of the move from Teterboro and support the $5 million renovation project. The construction project is expected to begin in May and transform the hangar into a state-of-the-art facility and convert the current office space into a modern, technologically advanced passenger lounge.

The highly skilled and high-paid positions that Flexjet expects to create over the next two-to-five years range from pilots to maintenance technicians and supervisors to facility managers and inspectors.

In the same announcement, the IDA also announced that Friedland Realty Advisors, a commercial brokerage firm currently based in Yonkers, has decided to relocate to a larger space at 440 Mamaroneck Avenue in Harrison.

The 45-year old firm chose staying in Westchester over moving to New York City, Stamford or New Jersey, because, “Location, location, location,” said Ayall Schanzer, Friedland Realty Advisors president and CEO. “Westchester positions us to be a dominant regional player with close proximity to our target customers and desirable inventory.”

The IDA incentives will finance the renovation of their new space as well as purchases that will upgrade the firm’s technological capabilities. The firm anticipates hiring four executive-level employees and contracting with seven real estate brokers over the next year, adding to its existing seven full-time employees and 26 brokers.
Legacy Basketball Camp Finds New Sponsor in CityMD

If you've lived in White Plains for a while, you've probably seen children wearing many different color variations of MVP Basketball Camp's t-shirts. MVP has offered more than 20,000 weeks of summer camp since its inception with more than 30 percent of the campers paying no tuition for a full week under the umbrella of MVP's scholarship program.

For the 2015 season MVP camp has a new sponsor, CityMD urgent care, which arrived in White Plains in October with a new location at 222 Mamaroneck Ave., and made a pledge to donate $5,600 to MVP Basketball Camp's Youth Development Scholarship program, plus allocated an extra $3,400 to reduce the cost of the 2000 t-shirts that MVP gives to campers each summer.

Big changes are in store for MVP in 2015. Camp begins with two full weeks starting on June 29 at the Fox Lane Middle School and High School complex in Bedford. For the first time MVP will feature its 6 to 8 year old co-ed program and its program for older girls at this Bedford location, in addition to three age groups for boys ages 9 to 16.

Then, when MVP returns to White Plains on July 13 for four separate one-week sessions, the camp will use two new venues to host its programs for boys and girls ages 6 to 16, Ebersole arena at Delfino Park and the Rochembeau School.

Stan Greene founded MVP Basketball Camp in 1994 with the dream that no child would ever be turned away due to an inability to pay. Stan passed away in December of 2009 and is survived by his wife Gingie Greene, a White Plains resident who serves on MVP's Board of Directors. Stan's legacy is a basketball camp that has awarded over 5,000 scholarships since inception to economically disadvantaged children, plus scholarship awards to numerous children with a family member serving in the armed forces through MVP's "Hoops for Troops" program. Last year MVP awarded 339 full-week scholarships.

On the evening of Friday, March 20 MVP's Board of Directors and Junior Board will host their fourth annual Ping Pong Madness family night, an evening of games, food and drink at the Westchester Table Tennis Center in Pleasantville. All benefits fund camp scholarships. Tickets can be purchased at www.mvpbasketballcamp/community or at the door the night of the event. For more information call Executive Director Noel Muyskens at 914-946-1231

Greenburgh's Feiner On Train Crossing Safety —— continued from page 1

between HUD and New York State to allow the state to administer $5 million in funds on a one-on-one basis to Westchester communities formerly part of the Westchester Consortium.

Projects that Greenburgh had previously applied for and that it will apply for again include: Sidewalks at Saw Mill River Parkway (9A), $225,000; Manhattan Avenue repair, $120,000; street-scape for Union Baptist Church's 100th anniversary; Greenburgh Police Department Youth Program, $3,000; Senior Nutrition Program Enhancement, $18,000; Phase II of Saw Mill River Road Improvement, $197,032.

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The YMCA of Central and Northern Westchester has appointed five new members to its Association Board of Governors: Dr. Beth Coyle, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at the College of Westchester; Rachel Eckhaus, CFO of Strauss Paper Company; Bob Hyland, White Plains business owner and sports celebrity; Patrick Lynch, President of OLA Consulting Engineers, and Jose Tavares, Director of the Alliance for Global Learning of Berkeley Educational

services. Dr. Beth Coyle has more than 28 years in higher education experience, focused on academic affairs, administration, operations, and nonprofit and foundation management. She received her BA at the College of New Jersey and her MA from Rider University. A resident of Pearl River, NY, Coyle is active in the Phi Sigma Sigma Foundation and the College of New Jersey Foundation. She was the recipient of a full graduate fellowship with Nova Southeastern University’s Program for Higher Education where she earned her doctoral degree.

White Plains resident Rachel Eckhaus received her BA from Ithaca College. A CPA with more than 25 years of experience in accounting and finance, Eckhaus started her career in public accounting with Prager and Benton and Asea Brown Boveri before joining Strauss Paper, where she is a 17-year veteran. Eckhaus is the founder of the Westchester Symphonic Winds, and is Vice President on the Executive Board and a Trustee at Congregation Kol Ami.

Bob Hyland’s business experience has included over 16 years as a financial consultant with Northwestern Mutual Life and Massachusetts Mutual. He was an offensive lineman in the NFL for 11 seasons, and is a member of the Super Bowl Champion Green Packers of 1967. He also played for the Chicago Bears, New York Giants and the New England Patriots. A graduate of Boston College, he is the proprietor of the popular sports-themed restaurant The Sports Page Pub in White Plains.

Patrick Lynch has 26 years of experience of Berkeley College, and is Treasurer and serves on the Board of Managers of The Havens Relief Fund Society.

The YMCA-CNW operates three branches, the White Plains YMCA, Community YMCA in Somers, and Camp Combe YMCA in Putnam Valley. For more information about the programs and services of the YMCA-CNW, please visit our website, www.ymca-cnw.org or contact Anne Ring, Director of Fund Development and Communications at 914 949-8030, ext 221.

Tiesi Joins White Plains Hospital as SVP and COO

Jeffrey A. Tiesi, FACHE, has been named Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of White Plains Hospital. Tiesi has a long and successful track record in the management of healthcare institutions. He comes to White Plains Hospital from the Geisinger Health System in Danville, PA, where he has served as System Vice President and was responsible for the Geisinger Heart and Vascular Institute (GH&VI). Geisinger Health System is an integrated health services organization widely recognized for innovative delivery of healthcare, serving more than 2.6 million residents in central and northeast Pennsylvania. Before joining Geisinger in 2002, Mr. Tiesi was Vice President at the Guthrie Clinic in Sayre, PA, and also previously held multiple administrative positions at Winthrop-University Hospital in Mineola, NY. Tiesi holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Health Records Administration and a Master’s Degree in Health Services Administration from the University of Pittsburgh. He is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). In 1996, the ACHE recognized him as the “Young Healthcare Executive of the Year” for Long Island and, in 1997, the American Heart Association (AHA) of Long Island recognized him with the “Outstanding Service Award for Public Support.” At the national level, Tiesi is often called upon as a subject matter expert in service line development and regularly provides formal consultation services. “We are delighted to welcome Jeffrey Tiesi to White Plains Hospital,” said Susan Fox, President of the Hospital. “His experience in hospital administration and leadership is outstanding. Geisinger’s health system is well known for their patient-centered care and high-quality service delivery, and Jeff will be a welcome addition to our growing hospital. Our patients can expect to continue to receive the best possible care under Jeff’s leadership in conjunction with the rest of our executive team.”

Rev. Doris K. Dalton Joins MLK Institute as Executive Director

The Board of Directors of White Plains-based Westchester MLK Institute appointed Rev. Doris K. Dalton as Executive Director. Dalton began her duties on February 2. Dalton moved to White Plains from Philadelphia with her family last fall when her husband Rev. Tim Dalton was assigned to First Baptist Church at North Street and Bryant Avenue. Doris Dalton is an ordained Deacon in the United Methodist Church and also participates at Memorial United Methodist Church, also on Bryant Avenue in White Plains as well as the home base for Westchester Martin Luther King, Jr. Institute for Nonviolence. MLK Institute Board Chair Julie Davis Carran said she is pleased to be able to work with Dalton.

Ymca Names Five New Members to Association Board of Governors

Rev. Doris K. Dalton Joins MLK Institute as Executive Director

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Local State Reps Pen Critical Letter to NYS Education Chancellor Merryl Tisch

In the wake of much criticism regarding the evaluation of teachers in New York State, Assemblywoman Amy Paulin (D-Scarsdale) penned the following letter, which was also signed by local representatives David Buchwald (D-White Plains), Thomas Abinanti (D-Greenburgh), Ellen Jaffe (D-Rockland), Steve Otis (D-Rye), and Kenneth Zebrowski (D-Rockland).

We believe that New York State’s Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process fails to accomplish the purposes for which it was developed, and provides unreliable data rather than accountability and transparency. While we believe that teachers and principals should be evaluated by trained administrators and held accountable for their performance, for the reasons set forth below we do not believe that the APPR, as currently constructed, is a reliable measure of teacher or principal performance. Nor do we believe that the APPR process contributes to the professional development of teachers or principals. And although Education Law Section 3012-c purports to expedite the process for termination of ineffective teachers and principals, it actually has the opposite effect.

1. The APPR “HEDI” scale is seriously flawed and makes it impossible for an evaluator to differentiate meaningfully among educators. A teacher receives scores on three subcomponents of the APPR: (i) student growth on state assessments (worth 20 points), (ii) locally selected measures of student growth (worth 20 points), and (iii) locally developed teacher “premium measures,” mostly classroom observations (worth 60 points). The composite score that a teacher must receive on the three subcomponents of the APPR in order to be deemed Effective is 75 out of a possible 100 points.

The scale doesn’t work because the percentage of available points required by the state for an Effective score on the first two subcomponents (45%) is much lower than the percentage of available points required for an Effective composite score (75%). Imagine a teacher who receives a 9 out of 20 points on the first two subcomponents, which deems her Effective. In order to achieve a composite score of Effective, she must receive 95% of the available points on the third subcomponent, which is negotiated by the school district.

With a very narrow point range to work with, i.e., 57 to 60 points, an administrator can misleadingly differentiate among effective teachers through the scoring of the third subcomponent, the locally developed teacher practice measure.

We urge you to recommend that the Commissioner fix these inconsistencies in the scoring ranges as part of the annual review process.

2. The APPR sets up for failure good teachers, good principals, and good schools. A teacher who earns a rating of Effective or Highly Effective may in a subsequent year earn an Ineffective rating because his new class of students did so well in the prior year that there is no room to demonstrate the amount of student growth required for a higher score. Even if his students do extremely well on standardized tests compared to similar students across the state, he may receive a poor APPR score.

A principal too can be penalized for setting high standards for his students. A principal may receive a score of “Developing” if the school does not offer more than five Regents as is required for a higher score. Many high performing school districts give their own, more rigorous exams in lieu of a Regents exam, and thus do not meet the threshold for a higher score. Another criterion for receiving a score of “Effective” or “Highly Effective” is the percent of students scoring 80% or more on the Algebra I Regents in ninth grade. In many districts throughout the state, the stronger students take the Algebra I Regents in eighth grade, and the weaker students take it in ninth grade. The scoring does not account for the students who took and passed the exam as eighth graders, thereby penalizing the principal.

3. The APPR is designed for less than 20% of all teachers. Only teachers of fourth through eighth grade ELA and math receive student growth ratings based solely on state standardized test scores. Teachers of other grades and content areas (more than 80%) must work with their principals to agree on student learning objectives (“SLOs”). A teacher teaches a course that has a state-mandated assessment, such as a Regents exam, that teacher’s SLOs must include as evidence the results on those assessments. Teachers who teach other grades or non-regents subjects will have SLOs that may include test results from third-party vendors, district or BOCES developed assessments, or locally developed assessments — and the target outcomes are determined locally.

Although SLOs are treated as if they are comparable in reliability to standardized test scores, they can’t be comparable simply because they are locally developed, with locally determined target outcomes. Even if one accepts—which we do not—the premise that results on ELA and math tests are a reliable indicator of student achievement or educator effectiveness, it is clear that it is unfair and unreliable to compare teachers whose ratings are based solely on state standardized test scores with teachers whose ratings are based on SLOs.

4. Most teachers do not receive appropriate professional development based on their APPR scores. A better designed APPR would require principals to work with all teachers, including those rated Effective or Highly Effective, on their professional development. It would require principals, as educational leaders in their buildings, to develop the most appropriate evaluation tools and the best professional development program for all teachers in their schools. New York is missing an opportunity to incentivize our best teachers to become leaders among their peers.

5. Education Law Section 3012-c makes the dismissal of ineffective teachers more difficult than under prior law. The APPR is supposed to enable administrators to identify those teachers who are ineffective, and to use the APPR ratings in an expedited 3020(a) proceeding. However, the use of the APPR in disciplinary proceedings requires two consecutive annual ratings of Ineffective, the development and implementation of a teacher improvement plan, and validation of those Ineffective ratings through at least three observations by an independent validator. The result is that ineffective tenured teachers will teach for at least two years before they can be removed from the classroom based on their APPR scores. Even worse, the law makes the termination of ineffective probationary teachers and principals more difficult than was the case under prior law.

New York State’s APPR process fails to accomplish the purposes for which it was developed because it provides a one-size-fits-all approach that does not adequately take into account differences in educator experience, class composition, subject and grade level taught or other factors. It is unreasonable to assume that the same standardized evaluation tool will fairly and reliably rate an experienced PE teacher in a rural middle school, a brand new fourth grade teacher in an urban school, a mid-career guidance counselor in a high-performing suburban school, and a principal of a BOCES career and technical education program. Because the tool is unreliable, the data it produces is also unreliable. Therefore, the proposed increased reliance on standardized testing would unfairly penalize, or fail to identify weaknesses in, teachers, principals, schools and school districts.

We believe that the Regents and the State Education Department must convene a group of superintendents, principals, teachers, school board members, and parents who can advise the legislature, based on their broad knowledge and expertise, how to improve Education Law Section 3012-c so that it will achieve the important goals of increasing educator accountability, encouraging professional development to develop great teachers and principals, and expediting the termination of ineffective teachers and principals.

Thank you for your consideration and for all that you do for the students of New York State.
Westchester Assembly Delegation Opens Budget Forum, Monday, Feb. 23

The Westchester Assembly Delegation invites the public, community leaders, municipal and school officials to offer comments on the Governor’s proposed New York State budget for 2015-16 on Monday, Feb. 23, at Greenburgh Town Hall, 177 Hillside Avenue, Greenburgh.

From 2 to 4 p.m. general comments will be heard on all aspects of the budget, and from 4 to 6 p.m., the focus will be on the education portion of the budget.

Register Now for Spring Volleyball Tournament

Registration is now open for the Westchester County Coed Volleyball Tournament, to be held Monday and Tuesday, April 6 and 7 from 11 p.m. each night, at the Westchester County Center in White Plains.

The tournament is open to men and women, 18 years of age and older. The tournament will be played in Round Robin format on Tuesday to determine the ranking of each team, with a double-elimination tournament for the championship round on Wednesday. The tournament will be played in two levels of competition: recreation and power recreation. Awards will be given to the winning teams and runners-up in each division.

Fee is $195 per team, with a limit of 20 teams. Deadline for registration is Friday, April 3.

The Coed Volleyball Tournament is sponsored by Westchester County Parks and Friends of Westchester County Parks, Inc. The Westchester County Center is located at 198 Central Avenue in White Plains. Parking fees apply. Visit parks.westchestergov.com to download an application, or to receive an entry form by mail call 914-231-4034.

White Plains Youth Bureau Skills Training Seminars

The White Plains Youth Bureau is offering Hospitality and Retail skills training on Tuesdays and Thursdays, March 3 to April 28.

Learn the value of offering great customer service (what every manager is looking for), meeting quality service standards, answering questions regarding the store and its merchandise, being able to communicate effectively with employees and customers, learning and comprehending store policies and practices, preparing merchandise, and other useful skills.

Save the Date: 2015 Friendly Gathering, Saturday, March 14

Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester and former White Plains Mayor Joe Delfino will be honored at the 2015 Friendly Gathering to be held on Saturday, March 14 at 6 p.m. at Kearney Gymnasium, 52 North Broadway, White Plains. The event benefits The RDC Center for Counseling & Human Development.

The Friendly Gathering features a corned beef and cabbage dinner, Irish songs and a performance by The O’Rourke Academy of Irish Dance. There also will be a Live Auction for golf foursomes at Westchester and Bonnie Briar Country Club.

Obituaries

Dolores Myers

Dolores Myers, a White Plains resident and formerly of Yonkers, died February 13 at the age of 82. She was born March 8, 1932 in Yonkers to the late Dave and Elsie Costa.


Dolores worked as a Payroll Clerk for Otis Elevator and retired after 27 years of service. She continued to work as a Payroll Clerk for Medicaid and Ehrbar and finally retired in 1999.

She is survived by her son Richard and his wife Jerilyn Myers of White Plains, her brothers, Ed (Margie) Costa and Joe Costa and her sisters, Joan Tobias and Carolyn Wisniewski. Also surviving are her grandchildren, Richard and John Myers. She is predeceased by her brother Dave Costa.

Dolores, a.k.a. “Grandma D” was the leader of the family and the life of the party. She loved to cook, ask questions and tell stories. She instantly made friends with anyone she met and will always hold a special place in the hearts of all who knew her.

Guido Doria

Guido Doria of Austin, Texas, formerly of White Plains, passed away February 12. He was 62. Guido was born May 31, 1952 in Italy to the late Elisabeth (Iezzi) and Salvatore Doria.

For many years Guido worked as a restaurateur both in New York and Texas.

Guido is survived by his sister Maria Doria and brothers Vincent (sister-in-law Frances) Doria and Joe (sister-in-law Lina) Greto. He is also survived by nieces Gina and Julia Doria and nephews Vincent Jr. and John Doria and Sal, Joey and Robert Greto.
Plan to Strip Pensions from Corrupt Officials Gains Crucial Support from Governor

By Assemblyman David Buchwald

When I was first elected to the New York State Assembly in 2012, I promised my constituents that I would work to restore the people’s faith in our government and root out public corruption. That is part of the story. As the Wall Street Journal reported, I was one of only a handful of members to immediately speak up in the Democratic conference on this issue last year, the bill had gained 60 Assembly co-sponsors and it then passed the Assembly Governmental Operations Committee, marking the first time a state constitutional amendment to strip state pension benefits from public officials convicted of felonies that involve a breach of the public’s trust. This year the bill number for this idea is A.377. New Yorkers I speak to – young and old – left, right and center – simply won’t take seriously the notion that we’re cleaning up Albany so long as taxpayer dollars continue to go to those convicted felons who sit in prison for having violated their commitments to the public.

Governor Cuomo’s ethics proposal has put the issue front and center. The Governor is joined in his support for this constitutional amendment by editorial boards across our state and good-government groups including the League of Women Voters of New York State and Common Cause New York. In 2011, the Assembly passed the Public Integrity Reform Act, which was a step in the right direction. This law strips pensions for officials who abuse their power; however, it only applies to those who entered into the state pension system after the law’s enactment, and therefore it covers only a very small percentage of today’s public officials. This loophole in the law must be closed so that anyone who violates the public’s trust – including those who entered the pension system before the 2011 law was put in place – would forfeit their pensions.

Recently, those efforts took a substantial step forward. Some might think that’s a reference to Sheldon Silver having stepped down as Speaker of the State Assembly. As the Governor’s ethics proposal gains crucial support from Governor Cuomo, I welcome Governor Cuomo’s call for a five-point ethics platform, and particularly the component of that plan that would reform a broken and nonsensical aspect of the state pension system. For two years I have served as the lead Assembly sponsor of a bill that seeks the identical result as Governor Cuomo’s proposal – a state constitutional amendment to strip state pension benefits from public officials convicted of felonies that involve a breach of the public’s trust. This year the bill number for this idea is A.377. New Yorkers I speak to – young and old – left, right and center – simply won’t take seriously the notion that we’re cleaning up Albany so long as taxpayer dollars continue to go to those convicted felons who sit in prison for having violated their commitments to the public.

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Ultimately, as with any state constitutional amendment, this proposal will have to go before the people of New York in a referendum. I sincerely hope New Yorkers will demand that their representatives in Albany will give the public the opportunity to cast that vote. By embracing pension forfeiture, Governor Cuomo is on the side of the people of our great state. Now, with my existing legislation and the governor’s support for real ethics reforms, I believe we are headed in the right direction. Government officials who betray the public’s trust should not collect a taxpayer funded pension, plain and simple. The time to act on this is now.

David Buchwald is a member of the New York State Assembly representing District 93. He lives in White Plains.

Greenburgh Police Department

Credit Card Larceny. On the morning of February 9 police responded to a call from a victim in Hartsdale who reported that an unknown suspect had used her Visa card account to attempt to order two iPhones. Visa held the charges until they could verify with the victim. The charges were found to be fraudulent and the charges were canceled. The Visa account was also cancelled. The victim reported that when she went to the Verizon store on N. Central Avenue to buy a new cell phone, her credit card information was given at the time of purchase. She believes someone at that time may have given her personal information out to the suspect who made the fraudulent charges. The officer responding to this incident noted that reports for similar incidents from other parties not related to the current victim, who were customers at Verizon on N. Central Avenue, also had reported strange and fraudulent charges on their accounts after making purchases at Verizon. These various individuals also felt someone at Verizon may have been giving out their personal information.

Suspicious Incident. On February 10, police responded to a call from a residence in Hartsdale. Upon arrival, officers spoke with the homeowner who reported that at 10 a.m. his housekeeper observed a vehicle parked in the driveway. The housekeeper did not provide a license plate or description. When the homeowner returned home he noticed footprints in the snow around his house by every window. The incident has been documented.

Harassment. On the morning of February 10 a victim came to police headquarters to report that as he was walking Southbound on Manhattan Ave (near Florence Ave.) an unknown suspect struck him in the back of the head knocking him to the ground. He was unable to give a description of the suspect because his glasses were knocked off as he fell and he couldn’t see the suspect. The victim suffered pain to the back of the head and incurred a terrible headache from the blow. The victim could not recall any further details and was referred to a doctor for a checkup.

Possible Prostitution. On the evening of February 10, members of the Street Crime Unit responded to Spring Hill Suites for a complaint of suspicious activity involving possible prostitution. Hotel personnel reported several unknown males, possible patrons for prostitution, were inquiring about a particular room prior to proceeding to it. Upon arrival members of the Street Crime Unit set up surveillance. Loud music could be heard coming from the suspect room. After surveillance for approximately 15 minutes a loud commotion could also be heard over the loud music. Officers knocked on the door, which was then answered by what appeared to be a female. Officers indicated to the female that a noise complaint was lodged, at which time the female allowed officers to enter the room. While in the room, several condoms, cash, and multiple cell phones were observed in various locations. While interviewing the female, identified later as a transsexual, a second female was discovered hiding in the room under a desk. This female indicated to the officers that they were both waiting for clients to arrive. On a check of both females it was discovered that the first had an active bench warrant out of Nassau County. She was transported to police headquarters and then turned over to DET. The second female was released with no further incident.

Possession of Stolen Property. On the afternoon of February 11, in the parking lot of the Crossroads Shopping Center, members of the Street Crime Unit observed two suspects, both known by members of this department. The suspects were observed entering several stores in the Crossroads Shopping Center with empty duffel bags and shopping bags. When said parties exited the stores the duffel bags and shopping bags were obviously full with produce. One suspect was observed entering and exiting the store and placing bags into a shopping cart, while the first suspect continued to look around the parking lot and sidewalk. Both parties were then observed leaving in a Metro Taxi. A traffic stop was conducted on the vehicle. When officers approached the taxi, both parties attempted to hide the assorted bags between them, however officers could see numerous food items and candy bars in the bags and floor of the vehicle. Both parties were removed from the vehicle and one suspect did spontaneously state: "It's just a few things from Kmart." After further investigation both parties were found to be in possession of stolen property from 5 Below, Kmart and Valuable Drugs. Both suspects were placed under arrest and transported to police headquarters, where they booked and processed. The stolen merchandise was photographed and placed into evidence. Perishable items were returned to the store.

Guest Column

By Sheldon Silver

in the State Assembly. By the time I held a press conference in Albany on this
An Exercise in Matching Wine and Oscar Nominations

By Nick Antonaccio

The 87th Academy Awards show airs this Sunday. This is my sixth year of presenting the Best Picture nominees and creating hypothetical pairings of wine with the top contenders. I’ve distilled my list to five of the eight nominees.

1. Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance). This dark comedy praises and mocks Hollywood and Broadway in one tightly knit, absorbing film, often flirting between reality and fantasy. Risking his life savings and his reputation, Riggan Thomson foregoes a movie comeback as the superhero Birdman, and instead decides to write, direct and star in a Broadway play. One of the actors demeans Riggan’s motivation for staging the play: “Popularity is the slutty little cousin of prestige.”

New World Pinot Noir wines are popular for their linear taste and their low price point. Yet the sophistication and complexity of these wines pale in comparison to their French counterparts. Wines from the Burgundy region of France have been cultivated and produced for hundreds of years, building a prestigious legacy and a discerning following.

2. Boyhood. In one of the most ambitious and moving filmmaking ever, writer/director Richard Linklater follows the fictional life of a young boy from the age of five to 18 – over 12 years of shooting. We watch the actors evolve physically and emotionally through the camera lens. Even though the storyline is fairly mundane, the movie is still able to tug at our heartstrings as cinema vérité.

California Cabernet Sauvignon, popular for many years, has been cast into a rather mundane role as a go-to wine by consumers. We’ve watched it grow up, with fond memories of its impact on our wine education. Yet today it is taken for granted for being pleasant, but not that exciting.

3. American Sniper. Chris Kyle became an American patriot in his thirties, deciding to serve his country and fight terrorism. He became the most lethal sniper in American military history, with 160 kills, while serving the Navy SEALS. Kyle and many veterans suffer PTSD; this movie brilliantly brings the problem to the fore in all of its egregious manifestations.

“Birdman” is the life sum of his experiences. Similarly, the legendary Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines from the Rhone Valley of France are the end result of blending up to 13 grape varieties in varying ratios into one wine. Each wine bears the same outward symbol to consumers, but harbors a unique expression of its history and influences inside the bottle.

4. The Imitation Game. Breaking the German Enigma machine during WWII is virtually simultaneous usage Alan Turing, an enigmatic 27-year-old Brit, heads up a team that takes on this daunting assignment. Alan is off-putting and a loner with OCD and speech issues. Not a winning combination. However, he perseveres and his team creates the first digital computer and breaks the Enigma code. Alan’s life after the war is pure hell, and ends in shame and degradation.

In interviewing candidates for his team, he comments: “Sometimes it’s the very people who no one imagines anything of who do the things no one can imagine.” So too with the Zinfandel grape. It has evolved from a puzzling grape of uncertain origin; the code to its best expression has eluded winemakers for decades. It can be elusive in the hands of one winemaker and compliant in another. Its best expressions are each unique and complex, yet mysterious and alluring.

“Grand Budapest Hotel.” Is this the best Wes Anderson movie ever? If I could figure out the message I might agree. But the tale, including an elusive concierge, a young lobby boy, an eccentric heiress and her son and the theft of a painting left me perplexed, winded -- and parched.

4. So I reached for a glass of Alsatian Riesling, simultaneously sweetly dry, acidic yet balanced, complex yet simple. This panoply of characteristics came together in an intricate framework of finesse. It helped me appreciate Wes Anderson’s creativity. I felt better.

Which movie will win the coveted Oscar? Sit back on Sunday night with your favorite wine in hand and enjoy the festivities.

Nick Antonaccio is a 35-year Pleasantville resident. For over 15 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@theexaminenerews.com or on Twitter @sharingwine.

Itching for My First ‘Project’ in Years, and Opting for Quick and Easy

By Bill Primavera

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

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

But just last weekend, surprisingly, I found myself with a free Saturday for the first time in several years where I was caught up on all my assignments and just itching for something to do around the house. More than just itching. Starving.

As it happens, my wife and I were in the process of furnishing a new room that was able to make use of a small Shaker-like pine night table that was stored in our attic years ago and forgotten, but it seemed fit to our need perfectly. The only problem was that its surface was badly worn and needed to be refinished.

It had been more than 30 years since I had refinished furniture. In those days, I was a purist, insisting on the method of refinishing known as French Polish, where the old surface would be stripped with paint remover. After being sanded, the surface grain would be “filled” and sanded again with fine sandpaper to make it perfectly smooth. Then it would be coated with several coats of shellac or varnish that required a long time to dry, again being sanded with fine sandpaper between each coat to remove imperfections and to create a better bond for the next coat.

After three coats, I would finish the surface with two layers of Butcher’s Wax, buffed to perfection. The process took forever to accomplish because of the drying time between each coat and also because of the sanding required to remove the imperfections caused by the brush and dust. Shellac can take up to 36 hours to dry and, if you do the math, a project of refinishing would take forever.

With this method, a small tabletop could take me a couple of weeks of part-time effort to accomplish. I don’t have that kind of time, so my first decision was to think about whether I wanted to make the leap to use polyurethane. Polyurethane is a thermoplastic that combines the best features of plastic and rubber. It has gained popularity due to its ability to form a thicker and stronger film than coatings like varnish and shellac. It requires less coats, time and effort. Oil-based polyurethane typically dries in 24 hours, while water-based takes six or less, I’ll take the water-based, thank you.

This time around, devoid of any materials needed, I marched myself down to Home Depot and bought my small arsenal of products for an afternoon’s pleasurable pursuit: a pint of paint remover; a half-pint of Minwax Wood Finish (in Colonial Maple); a half-pint of water-based, fast-drying polyurethane; two 3M Sandblaster sandpaper blocks, one medium grade and one fine; and a cheap two-inch brush to apply the stripper and a good one-and-a-half-inch brush to apply the polyurethane.

In one small bag I was a weekend project warrior.

At home, I spread an old sheet on the floor, and with my cheap brush covered the table top, legs and drawer front with the stripper, let it do its thing for 15 minutes, then wiped it off with old rags.
Hudson Valley Restaurant Week Begins on March 9
107 Westchester and 10 Putnam Restaurants to Participate

By Jerry Eimbinder

Spring Hudson Valley Restaurant Week begins its tenth year on Monday, March 9 and the two-week program runs through March 22. [A November "second season" version of this event debuted in 2012 and will take place this year from November 9 to 22.]

Lunches and dinners cost diners exactly the same as they did in 2013 and 2014 — $29.95 per person for a three-course dinner and $20.95 per guest for a three-course lunch. Beverages from coffee to cocktails, tax and gratuity are additional. Some restaurants provide selections at higher prices but are required to also offer non-supplemented-cost choices on the menu.

Two hundred and five restaurants are participating in the March, 2015 program — up from 168 two years ago. One hundred and seven of the eateries are located in Westchester County, 10 in Putnam County, and the remainder are from five other New York State counties (Rockland, Dutchess, Orange, Ulster and Columbia) and Connecticut. Hudson Valley Restaurant Week had 70 restaurants participating when it launched in 2006.

The restaurants enrolled in the program can be viewed at the Hudson Valley Restaurant Week website: www.hudsonvalleyrestaurantweek.com.

The program is conducted by The Valley Table, a food and culinary magazine headquartered in Newburgh.

Stone Barns Center Introduces Spring-Break Cooking Classes for Kids

By Jerry Eimbinder

The Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture in Pocantico Hills has expanded its annual educational activities with the introduction of Spring-Break Farm Camps for kindergartners to third-graders.

The kids will participate in cooking, preparing and eating a snack based on what’s growing on the farm. They will harvest meal components and take home recipes. The campers will also help the Center’s farmers with seasonal chores such as egg collecting, sheep care, honeybee observation and composting.

Understanding how a farm functions, winning kids over to eating nutritious food, and raising poultry are also some of the topics covered in classes on the Spring, 2015 educational schedule of The Stone Barns Center.

At “Poultry School” a two-day program of intensive classroom instruction and hands-on workshops, attendees will become familiar with methods and techniques used to raise pastured poultry. Birds to be covered in these sessions include layer-chickens, meat chickens, turkeys and geese.

The registration cost for the March 28-29 program is $100.

The eleventh annual Sheep Shearing Fest is planned for April 25. The Center’s flock of Finn-Dorest sheep will be sheared.

By Jerry Eimbinder

The Restaurant Examiner

The Restaurant Examiner
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SYMPOSIUM TO PRESENT LEADING RESEARCH ON BRAIN ACTIVITY AND READING

Parents, educators, administrators, scientists, researchers, psychologists and guidance counselors are invited to a research symposium "Unlocking the Puzzle of Reading and the Brain" on Saturday, March 7 at 10 a.m. at the Pace Graduate Center (1 Martine Avenue in White Plains). The event is co-sponsored by The Center for Literacy Enrichment School of Education at Pace University, Burke Medical Research Institute and Sleepy Hollow School District.

The symposium will focus on advances in brain research as it relates to reading, learning, and the difficulties associated with them, including dyslexia and ADHD, and understanding the principles of brain organization.

Presenters Joanna A. Christodoulou, EdD and Tracy M. Centanni, PhD, both from the MGH Institute of Health Professions and the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT, will discuss the link between the brain and reading; genetics as it relates to learning and language impairments like dyslexia; current research in this area and a sneak peek into future research.

The symposium was the brainchild of Sr. John Delany, PhD, Director of The Center for Literacy Enrichment, who has become increasingly frustrated with the general lack of understanding between why children struggle academically and what goes on in their brains when they learn.

I see children every day who want to read, but lack strategies for decoding, or who do not have the necessary concept to make them competent readers," explains Sr. St. John. "Parents, teachers and administrators struggle to reach these young minds, but don’t know how. This symposium will help them understand the connection between their child’s brain and thought process, and how genetics affects it."

Dr. Christodoulou, who received her EdD from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the MGH Institute of Health Professions in Boston. She completed her doctoral training at the University of Texas at Dallas in Cognition and Neuroscience.

Dr. Centanni’s research involves bridging the gap between rodent models and the human condition to study the neurological and genetic basis of language and reading disorders.

The cost for the event is $35. Tickets can be purchased online at www.thecenterforliteracy.com or by calling 914-422-4135.

Follow the event on social media with the hashtag #CLEPace.
EXAMINER SPORTS

White Plains Hockey Senior Night, Rubenstein Wins 250th

By Albert Coqueran

The White Plains High School Hockey Team celebrated “Senior Night” with a 4-0 win over Pelham High School, on Thursday, Feb. 12, at Ebersole Ice Rink. The Tigers victory over the Pelicans had a special significance for Head Coach Howard Rubenstein, as he won his 250th career-game.

Rubenstein has been leading the Tigers Hockey Program for 18 years. In celebration of this season’s “Senior Night” Rubenstein and his trusted Assistant Coach David Lynch printed 25” x 20” action photographs of each senior and presented the pictures to them in the locker room before the game.

Rubenstein also spoke individually to each senior and thanked them for their commitment to White Plains Hockey. The parents of each senior were presented flowers during a pregame ceremony, as the mothers of each graduating senior were donned in a special Tigers hockey jersey made for the occasion.

White Plains will lose all three of their Team Captains after this season, including goalie Chris Stangarone, forward Michael Carrier and Defenseman Matt Conroy. Also celebrating “Senior Night” were goalie Teddy Buck, forward Nico Mancini, Defenseman Jarrett Sannerud and forward Anthony DeMaria.

Freshman James Carrier led the scoring against Pelham with two goals, while his older brother Mike Carrier, who was celebrating “Senior Night,” added one goal. Mike leads the team in scoring this season with 17 goals. "Mike is a four-year starter and has had a really great season this year. He works as hard has anybody and he is our leading goal scorer, so we will miss him too," Rubenstein added.

Conroy shifted from offense to defense this season and has 64 block shots. Conroy also leads the team in assists. The defensemen added three assists against Pelham to bring his total this season to 21 assists.

Although, all seven seniors will be missed by Rubenstein and Lynch, it is really a special departure for Stangarone, who grew-up in the program while playing six years of varsity hockey. “It is a big thing after six years and every group of guys I played with has been amazing. For this to be my last year is a little weird but you have to finish it off strong and do what you have to do,” said Stangarone.

Stepinac NLI Signing Day

On Wednesday, Feb. 4 Stepinac High School celebrated eight student/athletes, who signed National Letters of Intent to attend college after graduation this spring. Stepinac quarterback Brandon Coleman signed to play football for the historical US Naval Academy of the Division 1 Patriot League. There is no doubt that Stony Brook university of the Division 1 Colonial Athletic Association will have a great defense next season with Stepinac defensive standouts Gavin Heslop and Demarcus Miller both signing to play for the Seawolves. Stepinac running back Malcolm Major, who can run like a greyhound, will attend Assumption College and play for the Greyhounds of the Division II Northeast-10 Conference. Lineman Dwayne Scott signed to attend the university of Rhode Island of the Division I Colonial Athletic Association. Furthermore, defensive tackle Dante Ezkiel Francis signed to play for Division III College of Brockport State university of NY. He will join former teammate Sheldon Soleman, a White Plains resident who graduated from Stepinac in 2014, on the Golden Eagles. Also, Chris Jordan will attend Fayetteville State University of the Division II Central Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and Lacrosse Goalie Robert O’Toole signed to play lacrosse at Nazareth College.
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