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Half Moon Theatre presents Sondheim revue ... page 14

# NORTHERN DUTCHESS NEWS & Creative Living

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## DC Airport at the crossroads

Passions run high as county seeks to take Wappinger facility to new heights

by Ray Fashona

Emotions were running hotter than jet fuel last week at the Dutchess County Airport Advisory Committee meeting.

The topic: A newly released report that recommends, among other things, the county get out of the aviation business and turn running the airport over to a professional Fixed Base Operator (FBO). The 40-plus page report, prepared by Steven Baldwin Associates, explained that services such as fueling and aircraft storage come under the heading Fixed-Base Operations and "are almost always for-profit organizations," not government entities.

The recommendation for an FBO was just one of the issues that drew a standing-room-only crowd to the Advisory Committee's regular meeting March 13. On hand were pilots, airport tenants and employees, two county legislators – Francena Amparo, D-Wappinger, and Assistant Majority Leader Donna Bolner, R-East Fishkill/LaGrange/Wappinger – as well as former Wappinger legislator Sandra Goldberg.

The 640-acre airport is in the Town of Wappinger, abutting Route 376 and New Hackensack Road.

There to discuss the report were Public Works Commissioner Noel Knille, whose department oversees the airport, Assistant Commissioner Bob Balkind and Ron Hicks from the county planning department.

Advisory Board Committee Chairman Jeff Karn began the meeting by stating that he considered the \$75,000 report "a waste of money." He said the document did not take into consideration figures for 2013, when,

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## Dedicated arts volunteers perform vital roles at FDR

by Danielle Fried



Parent volunteer Michael Rivette, right, coordinates microphones as a sound design engineer during a rehearsal of the musical "South Pacific" at Franklin D. Roosevelt High School. At left is sound engineer Dave Talbot of Ballantine Communications & Staging of Pleasant Valley. Photo by Curtis Schmidt

Advocacy can mean the difference between a program that thrives, and one that just barely survives. Thanks to the volunteerism of dedicated parents at Franklin D. Roosevelt High School in Hyde Park, the art, music and theater programs are thriving.

"I am just so impressed with the parents that we have here and how much they contribute to the arts," said Paul Scatenato, Art & Music Director for the Hyde Park Central School District. "Fundraising is a component these folks have given their time to selflessly, many, many hours."

Many volunteers have art backgrounds and became involved to support their children's interest in the arts, but their efforts benefit many. Myrna Haskell, president of Hyde Park Art Parents, volunteers because she believes art affects the entire community.

"It nurtures the school. It gives kids who aren't athletic another outlet," she said. "I think it enhances the school atmosphere in general: there's artwork all over the place, there's the musical ... it just makes for a more vibrant school environment."

Art, music and theater parent volunteers coordinate fundraisers to pay for needed equipment, field trips, participation in competitions, student scholarships, and even serve meals to students rehearsing for hours for upcoming concerts and plays.

Scatenato credits parent volunteers with sheltering high school arts programs from budget cuts.

"We've been very lucky, and I think part of it is because of groups like the arts boosters," he said.

Parent volunteers play a role in public relations, writing letters to the editor of newspapers and speaking out at Board of Education meetings. Arts parent volunteers have also joined the District's budget advisory group.

"I've not once had to stand up at a board meeting and advocate for the arts program," said Scatenato.

In particular, Hyde Park Art Parents volunteers helped save the National Art Honor Society (NAHS) at FDR. When the funding for advisorship was cut, parents volunteered to run it. NAHS is a branch of the more familiar National Honor Society (NHS). Induction in NAHS distinguishes students gifted at, and passionate about, the arts, and awards scholarships.

Like NHS, membership requires community service. Last year, NAHS students designed and ran an art workshop for students at North Park Elementary School. Parent advisors supervised the 20 NAHS students that participated in the project.

Michael Rivette, a Theater Parents volunteer, assists with sound engineering. He said he wants to see the students' efforts showcased. While the school hires a professional to work with sound during school musicals, it's not enough.

"They [the school] can only afford so much, so having one person trying to do a

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## Power line issue impacts building, environmental concerns at Omega



This dining hall at the Omega Institute was in line for an \$8 - 12 million renovation, however, that project is on hold due to an uncertain timeline involving the proposed construction of power lines that could run through the Omega's western border. Photo by Curtis Schmidt

by Danielle Fried

*Editor's note: This story is one in a series focusing on the current impacts of the high-voltage power lines proposed to relieve an identified transmission bottleneck between Leeds and Pleasant Valley.*

In 1977, the Omega Institute "was founded on the holistic worldview that the well-being of each of us is deeply connected to the well-being of all living things," according to its website. And that includes the natural environment.

"We are serious stewards of the land," said Omega Institute CEO Skip Backus. "One of the reasons people come to Omega is to be in nature."

So it comes as no surprise when Backus says he can't imagine being able to offer the kind of experience people expect, while operating "in the shadow of the towers."

High-voltage power lines, or "towers," have been proposed by three developers to relieve an identified transmission bottleneck between Leeds and Pleasant Valley. In

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