

BEACON FREE PRESS

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180TH DUTCHESS COUNTY FAIR

**Stilt Circus
seeks to inspire,
bring joy to all**



Fair visitors can expect to see Stars & Stripes costumes, created to celebrate America's 250th anniversary.

-Photo by Curtis Schmidt

By Francesca Oliva

Stilt Circus will return to the Dutchess County Fair for its fifth year, bringing colorful costumes and towering performances to fairgoers of all ages. This year is especially significant for the company, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Founded in 2006, the award-winning Stilt Circus has performed across the United States, dazzling audiences with their elaborate costume designs and stilt work. Starchild, Stilt Circus' President and Creative Director, designs each of the company's more than 350 handcrafted costumes with the help of partner Richard Dalton.

"The Dutchess County Fair has become one of our favorite annual traditions," Starchild said, "The fair has such a wonderful community atmosphere, and we always look forward to reconnecting with familiar faces while creating new memories with first-time visitors."

Continued on page 3

Red carpet meet-and-greet set with 'Sweet Treat' the calf

By Francesca Oliva

"Sweet Treat" the calf, known for her part in the Dutchess County Agricultural Society's Adopt-a-Calf program will be making a special appearance at the Dutchess County Fair this year in a red-carpet meet-and-greet. Visitors can stop by to meet the calf and learn more about the Adopt-a-Calf program.

"Sweet Treat" will be located in Barn 30 at the Dutchess County Fair for those looking to meet her and learn more about the Adopt-a-Calf program.

The meet-and-greet comes after the immense success of the Adopt-a-Calf program, which launched earlier this year to connect students in local classrooms with dairy farming. The DeForest/Lawrence family, the 2025 Farm Family of the Year, raised the Brown Swiss calf at their farm, Stormfield Swiss in the Town of Wappinger.

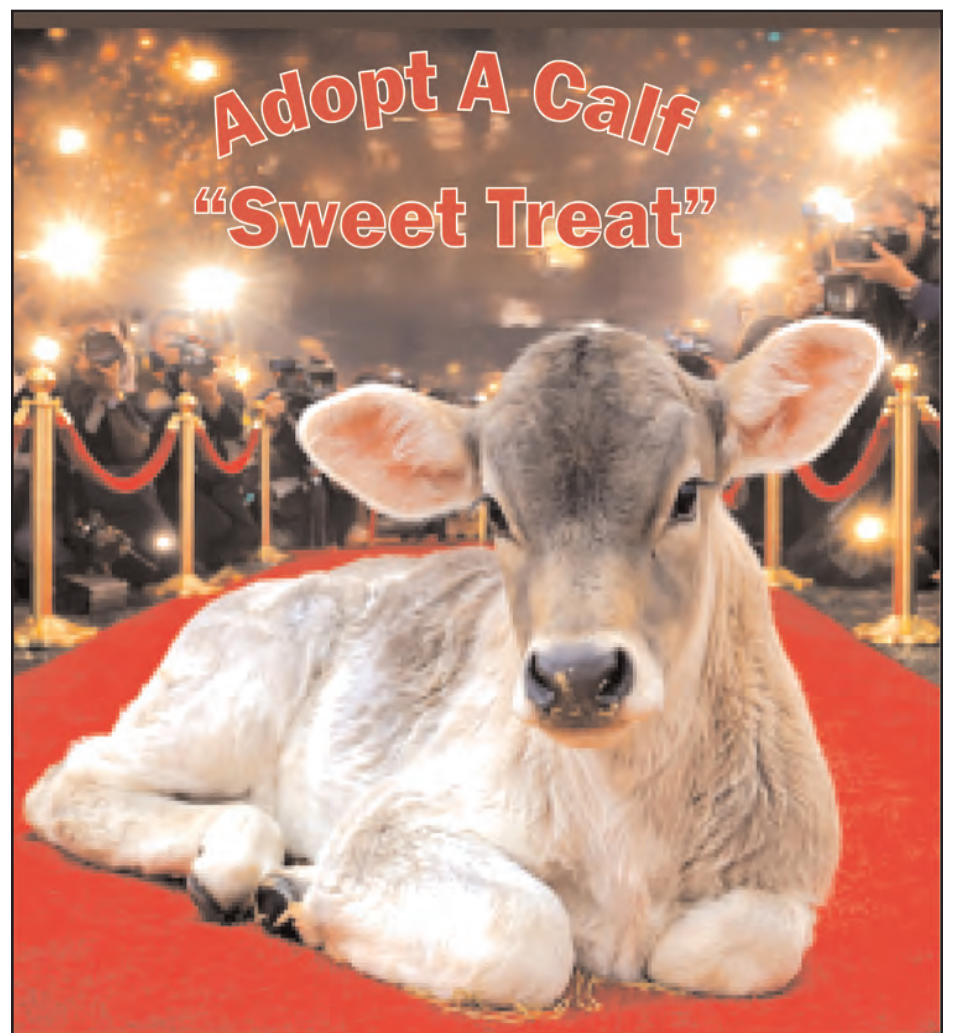
Each month, students followed Sweet Treat's growth through videos, photos and educational activities. At the end of the year, students were able to meet Sweet Treat during classroom visits.

"For a lot of them, it was the first time they got to be that up close and personal with a live farm animal," said Cassie Messina-Rainbolt, agricultural educator for the Dutchess County Agricultural Society.

The fair will be an opportunity for many students to reunite with Sweet Treat and show their families the calf they had been learning about in school.

"They're definitely going to be kids who make their parents come to the fair to go meet Sweet Treat again," said Messina-Rainbolt. "Throughout the entire year, they were looking forward to the end of the year when they would meet her for the first time."

By bringing Sweet Treat to the fair, Messina-Rainbolt hopes that more people will be able to learn about the program and explore the fair's agricultural



"Sweet Treat" will be located in Barn 30 at the Dutchess County Fair for those looking to meet her and learn more about the Adopt-a-Calf program.

-Courtesy photo

exhibits. The program exceeded expectations this year, initially planning to reach 20 classrooms and quickly expanding to presentations in more than 100 classrooms across Dutchess County.

Due to the success of the program, the

Dutchess County Agricultural Society is already planning its next chapter. Messina-Rainbolt said they are discussing expanding the program to include more species, with more details expected to be announced this fall.

Law enforcement investigating dangerous 'door kick challenge'

The Dutchess County District Attorney's Office, Dutchess County Sheriff's Office, New York State Police and Town of Poughkeepsie Police Department are investigating multiple incidents in the Town of Beekman, Town of Poughkeepsie and Town of Lagrange involving the dangerous social-media trend commonly known as the "door kick challenge."

District Attorney Anthony Parisi warned that violently kicking the door of an occupied home, especially while masked and during the overnight hours, is not a joke, a prank or harmless teenage behavior. To the family inside, it may appear that individuals are attempting to force their way into the home, which can be terrifying to the

adults and children who are occupying the home.

Let there be no misunderstanding: this is dangerous criminal conduct that could get someone killed, stated a press release from the D.A.'s Office.

Someone who violently attacks the door of an occupied home cannot know how the occupants will respond. A frightened resident may reasonably believe that a home invasion is underway and may be armed or take immediate defensive action. What participants intend to record as a few seconds of social-media content could end with someone being shot, seriously injured or killed, it was stated in the press release.

The District Attorney's Office,

Sheriff's Office, New York State Police and Town of Poughkeepsie Police Department are working together to identify every person involved. This includes not only those who kicked or struck the doors, but also anyone who drove them to the locations, recorded the incidents, acted as a lookout or otherwise assisted or encouraged the conduct.

Those responsible should expect to be identified, arrested and held accountable, stated the release. The Dutchess County District Attorney's Office will prosecute these matters to the fullest extent permitted by law. A claim that the conduct was "just a prank" or part of an online challenge will not excuse it.

Continued on page 3

INSIDE: 180TH D.C. FAIR SUPPLEMENT



180TH DUTCHESS COUNTY FAIR

Flour Power - celebrating scratch-made kitchen literacy



Some of the baked items entered during a previous Dutchess County Fair.

By Francine Wizner

In late August, the final preparations are underway for a beloved cornerstone of our regional heritage - the 180th Dutchess County Fair. While thousands of fairgoers anticipate rides, music, vendors, and livestock showcases, amateur bakers are hard at work refining recipes for the home-arts exhibit.

The Fair holds a culinary competition to celebrate traditional home cooking and baking. Participants must create dishes entirely from scratch without using any commercial mixes. Contestants may enter a variety of categories—including home-made pies, cookies, jams, jellies and marmalades. Expert judges evaluate the entries and provide written feedback to help the cooks refine their recipes. Debby Payne, Co-Chair of the Culinary Department for the Fair, shared some insight into the process of preparing for and judging this local competition.

Blue Ribbon Baking - The first step to a blue-ribbon bake is to follow the entry rules. Minor technical oversights—such as incorrect entry sizes or missing ingredient lists—are the most common culprits for disqualification. Even when an entry violates a rule, judges still write constructive critiques on the display card so the amateur baker can learn.

Next, contestants need to be aware of logistics. Because baked goods are perishable, timing is everything—bakers must strategically plan when to turn on the oven based on what they are making. Entries must be dropped off on Saturday, August 22, with the evaluations occurring the very next morning. That's when the judges focus on appearance, execution quality, and scratch-made flavor profiles.

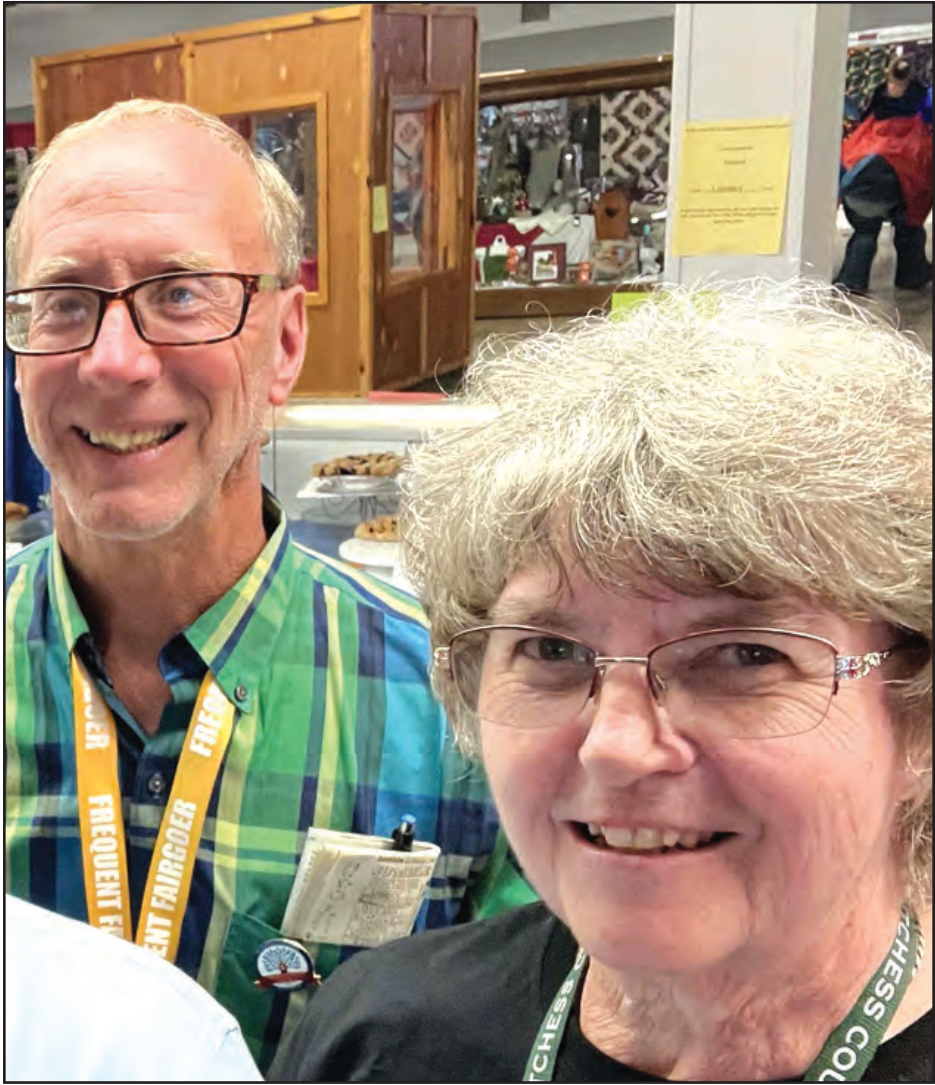
"When you eat, you eat with your eyes first, then taste, then texture," explains Debby. "So, in terms of criteria for judging, presentation is first, then the taste."

Crumb-believable: Separating the Sweet from the Savory - How do you taste your way through more than 80 food categories without losing your mind—or your palate? It requires a highly systematic approach. Payne divides the workload among four pairs of judges. For heavily populated classes—such as the adult King Arthur Recipe competition, which mandates strict adherence to a single recipe—initial pairs perform a preliminary weeding out. The remaining standout entries are then jointly scored by the broader committee.

Other entries mirror the seasonal bounty of our local agriculture. Submissions frequently include ingredients harvested directly from home gardens or local farm stands, ranging from apples and peaches to summer squash. Shifting dietary needs have also expanded the traditional roster. For example, the rise of the Celiac diagnoses prompted Payne to introduce gluten-free categories, which are evaluated by judges specifically trained to score alternative flour textures.

Some local bakers submit innovative recipes that yield surprising results. Payne recalls a remarkably accurate whiskey sour jelly and a rhubarb-flavored vinegar, demonstrating that the familiar garden stalk isn't just for sweet pies and jam. These unconventional submissions blur the line between sweet and savory. Local bakers rise to the challenge and push the boundaries of traditional tastes.

Soggy Situations Salvaged - For all of their ingenuity in the kitchen, culinary contestants are further challenged by our regional humidity, which can play havoc with delicate doughs. To maximize freshness, many experienced exhibitors bake before dawn on drop-off morning. The afternoon deadline can introduce last-minute panic. Payne has witnessed frantic contestants making emergency phone



Dave Murray and Debby Payne co-chair the Culinary Department at the Fair.

-Courtesy photos

calls or driving home to retrieve a forgotten recipe or fetch extra cookies to satisfy rigid quantity requirements.

In high-stakes moments, resourcefulness shines. Bakers have been known to wield cake-decorating tubes like caulking guns to patch cracked frosting at the eleventh hour. Some even transport a backup pie to safeguard against transit damage along winding roads.

A Celebration of Community Craft - Once judging wraps up, the remaining portions are prepared for display. On opening day, thousands of fairgoers can admire the entries alongside their winning ribbons. The top recipes are compiled into a booklet sold to cover copying costs, passing proven local recipes on to future generations.

Because professional bakers are prohibited from entering, the tournament remains a celebration of community craft. For Payne, the true legacy goes beyond the prize ribbons; it is about preserving essential home-baking skills. She strongly encourages parents to get children involved in the under-18 categories to build foundational kitchen literacy.

"We always hope that when the items are displayed, people realize that it's all home-baked, not boxed, and it can be done," Payne emphasizes. "Whether you win a ribbon or not, you receive constructive advice from the judges to improve. It's just fun to come to the fair and see your entry on display. You just never know if you will win or not, but you can't win if you don't enter."

BHS Class of '66 Reunion set for Sept.

Beacon High School Class of 1966 will hold a 60th Class Reunion on Saturday, Sept. 26 at 6 p.m. at Nicola's Italian Restaurant, 3620 Route 9, in Cold Spring, Putnam County.

For more information, please email

paulpappet66@gmail.com or call 845-831-7758.

Events include a Friday night football game at 6 p.m. on Friday and on Sunday, Spirit of Beacon Day Parade.

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180TH DUTCHESS COUNTY FAIR

Barretts preserve the art of weaving

By Matthew Fetzer

While weaving may be an outdated practice in modern-day culture, Bruce and Zelma Barrett of Century Museum Village are keeping the tradition alive through their efforts to share its history with others.

The Barretts know all about weaving, as Bruce started over 60 years ago. He later taught Zelma, his wife, how to weave in the 1970s. They have been doing it together ever since. With decades of experience in weaving, the two regularly demonstrate different techniques and tools used at the turn of the 20th century.

“We use frame looms a lot,” said Zelma. “We are making place mats right now. We’re making table runners, fancy table runners, wool rugs. Sometimes we weave those with cotton fabric. We call that rag weaving because at the time that it was introduced you would save your clothes, mount them up in a bag, and then when you were ready to make your rug, you would take everything out of the rag bag and use that.”

Bruce and Zelma have been a part of Century Museum Village for nearly 20 years. As larger looms were donated to the museum, located at the fairgrounds in Rhinebeck, the Barretts were quickly drawn to the opportunity to use them and share their knowledge with visitors.

Looms are devices used to weave threads together to make fabric. With looms on display at the museum, as

well as other accessories from the late 1800s and early 1900s, visitors have a chance to see what life was like over a century ago.

“We have a loom that people can try,” she said. “If they’d like to try weaving and see what it was like, they have the opportunity to do so. Sometimes we have a line of people waiting for that loom, and it goes all the way down the aisle.”

The public also has a chance to see how the Barretts “warp” their looms, which is a method of preparing the lengths of thread on the loom.

“We measure out our warp in front of everyone, and they’re always fascinated by what we’re doing,” she added. “My husband always said that we need to show people exactly how everything works, and that’s what we try to do.”

Despite weaving’s declining popularity in the 21st century, the Barretts have continued to do what they love. They will be in attendance at the Dutchess County Fair for all six days of the event, working 11-hour shifts each day inside the museum.

“I think that it’s very important to look back on what things were like,” Zelma said. “A lot of the time we tend to belittle those things, but things were not easy back then. People come and look at some of the things that we do and I think that many of them leave feeling surprised. They call weaving a ‘dying art,’ but there are many weavers in this area and I can promise that it’s not dead yet.”



Bruce Barrett is keeping the tradition of weaving alive.

-Courtesy photo

Stilt Circus seeks to inspire, bring joy to all

Continued from cover

Throughout the fair, performers stroll the grounds, interacting with guests through playful gestures and posing for photo ops. Joining the fair this year are performer Rob Crites, who combines juggling and stilt acrobatics, and Hannah Lemke, a new performer known for her outgoing and welcoming personality. Starchild hopes that both Crites and Lemke will create a fun and immersive experience for fairgoers.

Hannah Lemke, a new performer known for her outgoing and welcoming personality. Starchild hopes that both Crites and Lemke will create a fun and immersive experience for fairgoers.

Visitors can also expect to see brand-new Stars & Stripes costumes, created to celebrate America's 250th anniversary. The patriotic costumes were designed by Starchild, with Dalton helping select the fabrics and materials used to make the designs.

A stilt performer for over 27 years, Starchild says that seeing the impact the company has on children is one of the best parts of coming to the fair. At the California State Fair, a young boy named Mac met the stilt performers and told his mother he wanted to perform on stilts someday. She built him his first pair of stilts, and years later he auditioned for Stilt Circus. Now, at 14 years old, he performs as a member of the company.

“Stories like his remind us that a single moment of inspiration can truly change someone's life,” Starchild said.

As Stilt Circus celebrates its 20th anniversary, Starchild hopes fairgoers leave the fair smiling and with



Stilt Circus performers will take part in the 180th Dutchess County Fair.

-Photo by Curtis Schmidt

happy memories.

“If we can brighten someone's day, inspire a child’s imagination or remind someone to embrace joy and wonder, then we’ve accomplished our mission,” said Starchild.

Law enforcement investigating dangerous ‘door kick challenge’

Continued from cover

Parents and guardians are urged to speak with their children and teenagers about the dangers of this criminal behavior, it was stated.

Participating in this conduct can result in arrest, prosecution, financial liability for property damage, serious physical injury or death. No social media post is worth criminal prosecution or a preventable tragedy, stated the D.A.’s Office.

Residents who experience this conduct should do the following, according to Parisi’s office:

- Call 911 immediately and remain inside in a secure location.
 - Do not pursue or confront the individuals.
 - Preserve all surveillance, doorbell camera and cellphone footage.
 - Record descriptions of individuals, vehicles, license plates and direction of travel.
 - Provide original footage to law enforcement before editing or posting it publicly.
- Anyone with information, video footage or knowledge of those involved should contact the Dutchess County Sheriff’s Office immediately at 845-486-3800.

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Audien Hearing

Legislature passes ban on sale, distribution of concentrated, synthetic kratom

From County reports

The Dutchess County Legislature voted unanimously at their Legislative Board meeting on Monday, Aug. 10 to ban the sale and distribution of concentrated and synthetic 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) products, the potent, lab-enhanced kratom derivatives increasingly sold in gas stations, convenience stores, and smoke shops, often in candy-like packaging. The measure targets the dangerous concentrates and lab-made analogs while preserving the right of adults to access natural kratom leaf for its traditional uses. The ban will go into effect once it’s filed with the Secretary of State, which will happen in the coming weeks once it is signed by the County Executive following a public hearing.

The law prohibits products that exceed a defined 7-OH concentration threshold, and it separately bans the named synthetic derivatives (MGM-15, MGM-16, and mitragynine pseudoindoxyl) along with any future structural analogue designed to skirt the rules. It carries strict liability and escalating, per-sale civil penalties, and it reaches out-of-county and online sellers who ship these products to a Dutchess County address.

According to a press release, Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino’s proposal would have banned all kratom outright, including the natural leaf that many adults use responsibly. The Legislature’s Resolution, by contrast, draws a sharp, defensible line between the traditional plant and the predatory, high-potency concentrates driving dependence and overdose and then hits those concentrates harder than the CE proposed. Rather than a flat fine, the new proposed law adds strict liability, escalating penalties for repeat offenders, a separate violation for every unit sold, and jurisdiction over

online sellers shipping into the County. It is a scalpel where the first attempt was a sledgehammer, more likely to survive legal challenges and far more effective at getting the genuinely dangerous products off local shelves.

County Executive Sue Serino said in a statement, “Last night, I urged the Legislature to act now and enact the full Kratom ban I proposed, because we must do everything possible to protect our neighbors. Too many lives have already been lost. A synthetic Kratom ban simply does not go far enough. It leaves dangerous, unregulated natural Kratom products on store shelves — products the FDA warns consumers not to use and that have been linked to severe health effects, including addiction, liver damage, respiratory failure, and even death.

“We’ve heard directly from families who have lost loved ones, including my friend Sandy Wilson, who bravely addressed the Legislature about the death of her adult son. Their stories are heart-breaking, and they underscore a painful reality: Kratom is unpredictable, unregulated, and unsafe.”

Serino continued, “Other counties in New York — along with municipalities and states across the country, including Connecticut and Vermont — have already enacted full bans to safeguard their residents. While the ban adopted last night is an important step, we cannot settle for a partial measure that still leaves the door open to further tragedy. I will continue pushing for a full ban that truly protects the health and safety of our community.”

“For too long, chemically supercharged kratom has hidden behind a ‘natural’ label while acting like an opioid. We are banning the dangerous concentrates and the lab-made analogs, not criminalizing the responsible adult who chooses the natural

leaf. That is the difference between a sogan and a law that actually works,” said Assistant Majority Leader Kristofer Munn (Red Hook), author of the Local Law.

"Our responsibility is to respond to emerging public health threats before they become larger crises. This focuses on the most dangerous concentrated and synthetic kratom products and gives our County Health Department the tools to enforce those protections. I believe this strikes the right regulatory approach," said Legislator Trevor Redl (Poughkeepsie).

“This law takes a meaningful step in the right direction by expanding on existing state law, which currently applies only to individuals under 21. Eliminating the sale and distribution of products with high concentrations of 7-hydroxymitragynine – levels typically found in synthetic kratom products - is necessary to ensure the safety of our residents. I am proud to sponsor this resolution because it addresses serious warnings from healthcare professionals, protects our residents, and allows for responsible access to the natural kratom leaf,” said Legislator Lisa Kaul (Poughkeepsie).

Background: Kratom and the 7-OH Problem

Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*) is a tropical tree in the coffee family, native to Southeast Asia, whose leaves have been chewed or brewed for centuries for energy and pain relief. Its leaves contain two compounds of note, mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), that act on the brain’s opioid receptors. In the natural leaf, 7- OH occurs only in trace amounts. The current danger is a different product entirely. Manufacturers now chemically concentrate or synthesize 7- OH to potencies far beyond anything found in the plant, then sell it as shots, gummies, tablets, and pressed pills - products nick-

named “gas station heroin.” Because they are marketed as “plant-based” and sold openly, many consumers believe they are taking something mild. In reality, concentrated 7-OH produces opioid-like effects and can cause tolerance, physical dependence, withdrawal, respiratory depression, and overdose.

Poison-center calls and adverse-event reports involving these products have climbed sharply. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved no drug containing kratom and warns that it is not safe for use as a dietary supplement, citing risks including liver toxicity, seizures, and substance use disorder.

The DEA has recognized the threat. On July 1, 2026, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration announced its intent to temporarily place concentrated 7-OH (above a specified threshold), together with three synthetic derivatives, mitragynine pseudoindoxyl, MGM-15, and MGM-16, into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, the same category as heroin and LSD, describing them as an emerging threat to public safety. Notably, that federal action is aimed at the concentrated and synthetic products; it does not target low-7-OH botanical kratom leaf.

Protecting Responsible Adult Access

Consistent with the federal approach, the new proposed law is aimed squarely at the concentrated and synthetic products, not at the plant. Responsible adults should retain the right to access natural kratom leaf for its traditional uses, including energy, focus, and pain management. The Legislature's proposed law rejects the idea that protecting the public requires prohibiting a botanical that adults have long used responsibly; the goal is to remove the predatory, high-potency derivatives from the shelf, not to police personal choice.

United Way to announce ‘Kindness Champion Award’ winners at annual Community Breakfast on Sept. 16

United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region (UWDOR) is set to hold their annual Community Breakfast on Wednesday, Sept. 16, from 7:30 - 9 a.m. at The Grandview, Rinaldi Boulevard, Poughkeepsie. This year’s event highlights the importance of early literacy and community kindness in building a stronger future for the community and region.

Center stage for this event is the Dolly Parton Imagination Initiative and the contributions it has made to the community. This program mails out free books to children from birth to five years old, to help encourage them to read more and launch early academic and literacy success.

The breakfast will also introduce Alex Geller, Director of the Red Hook Public

Library and United Way’s Community Champion.

United Way will announce this year’s top 3 winners of the ‘Kindness Champion Award.’ Following a peer-to-peer vote, 10 nominees will be recognized for their immense kindness and care toward the community. The nominees for this year’s kindness champion are: Yalitza Sepulveda, Laura

Nicholls, Angie Martinez, Amanda Lopez, Margaret Kranz, Christina Goebel, Amy Dittmar, Cecilia Deferrari, Andrea Cucci, and Robbie Jacobs.

The breakfast will be emceed by local radio personalities Anne Marie Leamy and Ryan Dutcher. Tickets for the event will be \$60 and can be purchased by going to www.uwdor.org/communitybreakfast.

NOTICE OF EARLY DEADLINE

Due to the Labor Day holiday on Sept. 7, the Sept. 9 issue of the Beacon Free Press will have an early deadline. All ads and editorial must be received by Thursday, Sept. 3. Contact cschmidt@sutchessnews.com for more information.

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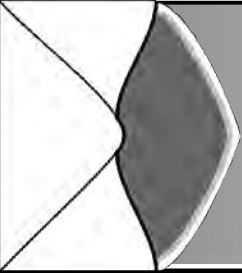
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**LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR**

Letters may be edited for legal considerations, reader interest and length. Please include a telephone number and address for verification purposes. **Deadline for letters is Friday at noon.** Letters must be submitted by e-mail to be considered for publication. Letters can be e-mailed to newsplace@aol.com, and the phrase “Letter to the Editor” should be included in the subject line of the e-mail.

Policy on letters:

- Letters that contain statements that are libelous or slanderous will not be published.
- Letters that include personal attacks will not be published, with the exception of political figures.
- Letters written in response to other letter writers must address the issue at hand, rather than mentioning the writer by name and must refer to the headline and date the letter was published.
- Letters referring to news stories must mention the headline and date of publication.
- The Beacon Free Press will not be used as a vehicle to place misinformation.
- Information must be attributed to a specific individual or published item (ie- tell us where or from whom you obtained the information)
- All letters must contain a name, hometown and phone number for verification.
- Letters appearing on the Viewpoints page are the views of the writers alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Beacon Free Press.

Hyde Park resident William Sleight Jr. honored for service during Korean War

Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino and the County’s Office of Veterans Affairs honored U.S. Navy Petty Officer Second Class (PO2) William “Bill” Sleight Jr., a respected Hyde Park resident who served during the Korean War era, at the County’s most recent “Veteran of Distinction” ceremony, held at The Community at Brookmeade in Rhinebeck on Aug. 11.

Serino said, “I’ve been honored to know Bill Sleight for years, often visiting him at Brookmeade, and he is a wonderful example of what it means to serve. He proudly wore our nation’s uniform, has worked hard, loved his family deeply and always found ways to give back to his community. His kindness, dedication and devotion have touched so many lives. We are incredibly grateful for his service, proud to call him one of our neighbors and honored to recognize him as a ‘Dutchess County Veteran of Distinction.’”

Sleight Jr. served in the U.S. Navy from 1951 to 1954 during the Korean War era as an Aviation Electrician aboard the USS Coral Sea, supporting naval operations with the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, earning the Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal and an Honorable Discharge. After his military service, AE Sleight built a career in the electrical trade and retired as a Maintenance Supervisor. A devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, he has

also remained active in his community as a lifelong member of American Legion John Livingston Post 1466 and a Life Member of the Moose Lodge in Hyde Park.

Dutchess County Veterans Affairs Director Adam Roche said, “Aviation Electrician Sleight served his nation, returned home to Dutchess County and continued to serve his hometown as a member of the American Legion and Moose Lodge. Through his military service, career, family and community involvement, PO2 Sleight personifies the dedication and commitment the Dutchess County ‘Veteran of Distinction’ program honors.”

Monthly “Veteran of Distinction” ceremonies take place on the second Tuesday of each month from April through November, hosted in the community where the honored veteran resides.

Nomination Requirements
Nominees must meet the following criteria:

- Be a current Dutchess County resident
- Have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and received an honorable discharge
- Have served during wartime or peacetime; there are no restrictions on service dates or duration

How to Nominate

- Applications may be submitted
- Online: dutchessny.gov/veteranofdistinction
- In person: Dutchess County Office of



William “Bill” Sleight Jr. was honored during the recent “Veterans of Distinction” ceremony on Aug. 11 in Hyde Park. Pictured with Sleight Jr., center, are members of his family, Deputy County Executive Gregg Pulver, left, and Office of Veterans Affairs Director Adam Roche, right.

-Photo courtesy Dutchess County Gov’t

Veterans Affairs, 1335 Route 44, Pleasant Valley, NY 12569
By email: veterans@dutchessny.gov
All applications must include appropriate military separation documents (DD 214,

WD AGO 53 55, NGB 22, or casualty report).
For more information, contact the Dutchess County Office of Veterans Affairs at 845-486-2060.

VETERANS NEWS WITH ADAM ROCHE

Vietnam veterans and their families eligible for benefits related to Agent Orange exposure

Did you know that August 10th was Agent Orange Awareness Day? This month serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by our Vietnam veterans and the enduring impact of their service on their health and well-being.

Veterans of the Vietnam War era, along with their families, have not only earned our nation’s deepest respect but also the full spectrum of benefits that their courageous service entitles them to. At the Dutchess County Office of Veterans Affairs, we are honored to guide our heroes and their loved ones through the array of benefits available to them, ensuring they receive the support they deserve.

One significant aspect of these benefits pertains to their military service in Vietnam, especially regarding the exposure to a powerful chemical used during that conflict. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes certain illnesses as “presumptive conditions.” This means that veterans are not required to prove that a medical condition was caused by their service; instead, if they meet specific service criteria, the VA presumes that connection exists.

Why this matters to Vietnam Veterans
The exposure to herbicides, including Agent Orange, has been linked to various

serious health conditions such as specific cancers, Parkinson’s disease, heart disease, diabetes and others. For Vietnam veterans who returned home only to face these challenges, understanding their rights and benefits is crucial.

If you or a loved one are a Vietnam veteran who has developed a presumptive condition, don’t hesitate to connect with a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) in our office, at 845-486-2060. A VSO can help determine eligibility for disability compensation and assist in the claims process.

Support for families
Another vital benefit for families of Vietnam veterans is Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). This benefit offers financial support to surviving spouses, parents and children of veterans who have passed away from service-related conditions. If a veteran’s passing was linked to an illness connected to their service, the surviving spouse may qualify for DIC. In many cases, the VA presumes this connection exists for conditions related to Agent Orange exposure.

It’s important to remember that it’s never too late for surviving spouses to explore their eligibility for DIC. If your loved one served in Vietnam and has passed due to a condition

associated with Agent Orange, please consult with one of our VSOs to discuss potential benefits.

Blue Water Navy Veterans
Additionally, veterans who served offshore during the Vietnam War can access benefits under the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. This law recognizes the sacrifices of those who served within 12 nautical miles of the Vietnamese shoreline between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975. These veterans do not need to prove they went ashore to be eligible for benefits linked to herbicide exposure; the VA presumes their ailments are connected to their service.

Surviving family members of these veterans may also qualify for DIC if their loved one passed from an exposure-related condition.

We’re here to help
The most important message for veterans and their families is this: Just ask. If any of this information is new to you or you believe your family may qualify for benefits, please reach out to the Dutchess County Office of Veterans Affairs at 845-486-2060, email us at veterans@dutchessny.gov, or visit us at 1335 Route 44, Suite No. 2, in Pleasant

Valley during normal business hours.

Many veterans and their families are unaware of their eligibility for benefits or may feel that the application process is too overwhelming. Some may even feel hesitant to seek help.

No veteran should ever feel ashamed to ask for assistance, especially after all they have sacrificed for our nation. We are here to support you, sitting down with our heroes and their families to explore the benefits they may qualify for and guide them through the application process.

Whether you served on the mainland of Vietnam or in the waters around it, please reach out to our office. If you are a surviving spouse of a Vietnam veteran, I encourage you to contact us as well. We want to ensure you fully understand the benefits specific to veterans of that era and how we can assist you in preparing a claim, if you qualify.

Regardless of the era, our veterans have served our nation with unwavering dedication to protect us from harm. Dutchess County is proud to ensure that these brave men and women — and their families — receive the respect, care, and support they deserve.

To all our Vietnam veterans, Dutchess County says, “Welcome home.”



11th Annual Back 2 School Block Party set for Aug. 22

I Am Beacon and Key Food will host their 11th Annual Back 2 School Block Party on Saturday, Aug. 22, from noon to 3 p.m. at South Ave Park in Beacon. The rain date is Sunday, Aug. 23.

“We’re excited to bring the Back 2 School Block Party back to Loopers (South Ave Park) for its 11th year,” said Reuben Simmons Jr., Founder and Executive Director of I Am Beacon. “This event is about much more than school supplies. It’s about bringing our community together, connecting families with resources and making sure local students know that their community is behind them as they begin a new school year.”

The annual community celebration brings together local families, students, community organizations and businesses to help children and families prepare for a successful school year. Admission is free and the afternoon will feature family activities, music, community resources and opportunities to connect with organizations serving the Beacon community.

The event will feature music by DJ Big Will, community organizations, family activities, school resources and more.

The day’s activities will get an early start with a snapshot of basketball skill building drills instructed by Twins Athletics followed by the Beacon Hoops All-Star Games, beginning at approximately 9 a.m.

I Am Beacon welcomes Sun River Health as the event’s first Title Sponsor. Their support, along with the generosity of this year’s sponsors, community partners and volunteers, is making the 2026 Back 2 School Block Party possible for another year, stated Simmons.

2026 Back 2 School Block Party Sponsors & Partners
Title Sponsor: Sun River Health
Presenting Partner: Key Food
Community Sponsors: The Roundhouse, State Farm – Caitlin McVicker, Beacon Teachers Association, Staples, Stewart’s Shops, CareFull MD, Salem Tabernacle Church, Hudson Highlands Properties, Mountainview Dental, MVP Health Care, Joker Ink, and Twins Athletics
Community Partners: Beacon City School District, Beacon Recreation and Beacon Hoops

I Am Beacon also encourages residents,

businesses and community organizations to participate in the “Stuff the Bus” effort by donating school supplies and hygiene products. Donations will support the Class in A Bag program, which works in partnership with the Beacon City School District to provide students with essential school and hygiene supplies.

A special gift for local families: The Beacon Historical Society will be joining this year’s celebration and donating copies

of its new book, “Hop on the Bus: Let’s Explore Beacon,” with a free copy available to the first 100 families attending the event.

“We are grateful to every sponsor, partner, volunteer and community member who continues to believe in this event,” Simmons said. “It takes all of us to make a difference, and every backpack filled, every supply donated and every volunteer hour helps a local student start the school year ready to succeed.”

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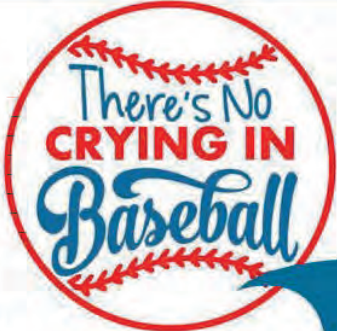


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RENEGADES FEATURE

Maika Niu off to hot start with late-inning home runs

By Morgan E. Maier

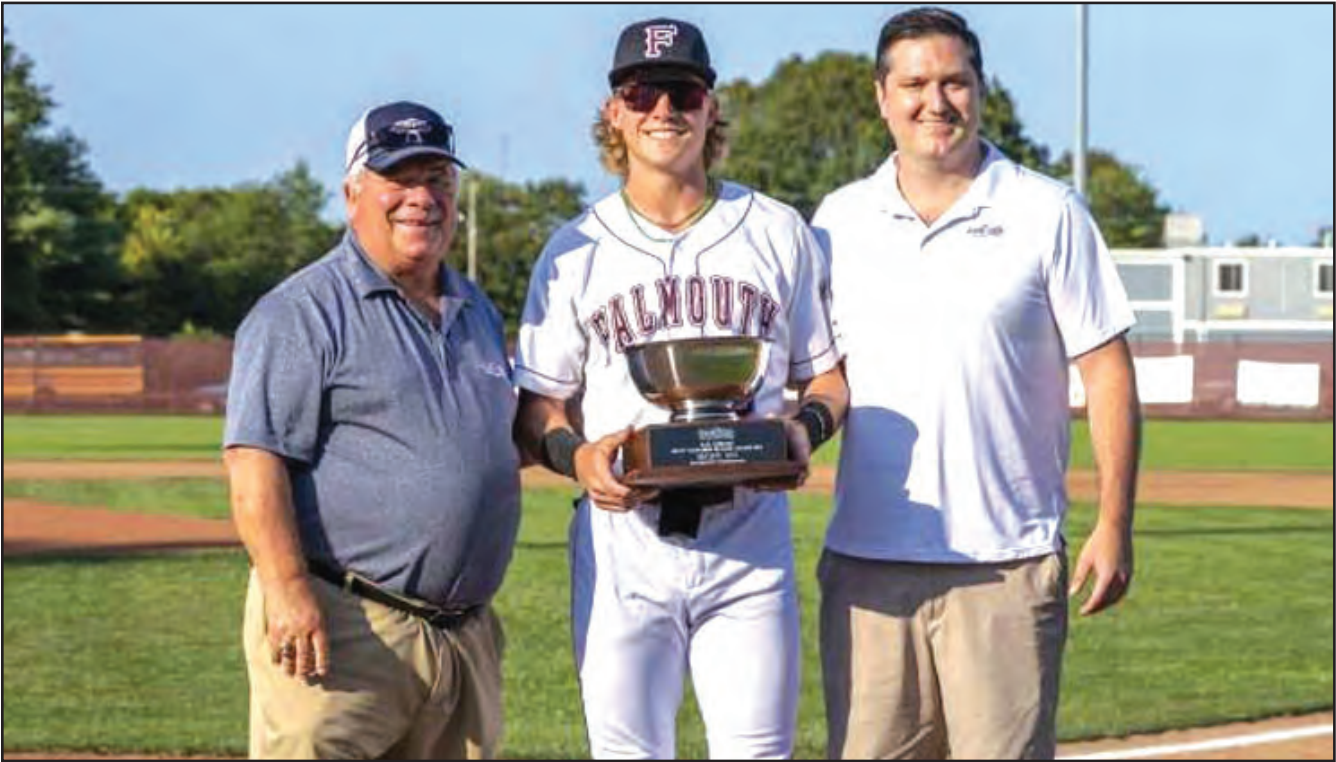
Maika Niu took no time to make his name known through Heritage Financial Park via a walk-off home run in his Hudson Valley Renegades debut.

After finishing his collegiate career at Arizona, Niu went undrafted in the 2026 MLB Player Draft. It did not take long for New York to call. Niu signed with the Yankees on July 14, and was already impacting the team come Aug. 4.

A three-hit game on Aug. 15, including a home run, highlighted Niu's first homestand in the Hudson Valley. He was hit a walk-off winner in his High-A debut, leading off the ninth inning for Hudson Valley.

Just eight games into his professional career (stats as of Aug. 16), Niu has launched three home runs. And he's already used to giving his team some timely hitting theatrics — they've all come in the ninth inning or later.

Niu was revered in prospect spotlights for his pop and speed, an outfielder with attention-grabbing athleticism, and experience in the NCAA Tournament. He played for the Falmouth Commodores of the



Maika Niu is pictured with family members while playing for the Falmouth Commodores of the Cape Cod League. He received MVP honors in the Summer League with 23 RBIs and 15 stolen bases over 35 games.

-Courtesy photo

Cape Cod League before his transfer season at Arkansas. There, Niu's strong summer showing received MVP honors: 23 RBIs and 15 stolen bases over 35 games also earned him an All-Star nod.

League Standings

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE NORTH						
	W	L	PCT	GB	L10	STRK
Frederick BAL +	28	17	.622	-	9-1	W3
Greensboro PIT	27	21	.563	2.5	5-5	L1
Wilmington WSH	25	22	.532	4.0	4-6	L2
Hudson Valley NYY	25	23	.521	4.5	7-3	W2
Brooklyn NYM	24	23	.511	5.0	5-5	L1
Jersey Shore PHI	17	30	.362	12.0	3-7	W1

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE SOUTH						
	W	L	PCT	GB	L10	STRK
Bowling Green TB *	28	19	.596	-	3-7	L3
Winston-Salem CWS	24	23	.511	4.0	6-4	W1
Greenville BOS	24	24	.500	4.5	4-6	W1
Asheville HOU	22	25	.468	6.0	5-5	W1
Rome ATL	20	26	.435	7.5	4-6	L1
Hub City TEX	18	29	.383	10.0	5-5	L1



August

08/25/26	vs.Brooklyn	06:35 PM	An Ode to Cream Cheese WMCHHealth Club Lounge Tickets
08/26/26	vs.Brooklyn	06:35 PM	Welcome Back College Students WMCHHealth Club Lounge Tickets
08/27/26	vs.Brooklyn	06:35 PM	Copa de la Diversión™ presented by Cafe Con Leche; Hispanic Heritage Month Kickoff WMCHHealth Club Lounge Tickets
08/28/26	vs.Brooklyn	07:05 PM	Fan Appreciation Night WMCHHealth Club Lounge Tickets
08/29/26	vs.Brooklyn	05:05 PM	Dino Night WMCHHealth Club Lounge Tickets
08/30/26	vs.Brooklyn	02:05 PM	WMCHHealth Club Lounge Tickets Sunday Family Funday





Renegades Extra!





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Westchester Library System Awarded \$500,000; Grant to Expand Digital Navigators Program Across 9 Counties





Digital Navigators of The Hudson Valley



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RENEGADES ROUNDUP

Renegades roar back with wild wins to take four games from Wilmington



Jackson Lovich hit a three-run home run to cap a seven-run comeback in the 9th inning for an 8-5 victory over Wilmington on Aug. 15.

-Photo by Dave Janosz

By Morgan E. Maier
The Hudson Valley Renegades got the spark they had been searching for against the Wilmington Blue Rocks, to the tune of five straight wins dating back to the series against Greenville. Wild walk-offs wins, strong career starts and exciting offense were highlights in the series win over Wilmington last week.
The Renegades now own a 25-23 record in second-half play – good for fourth place in the Northern Division of the South Atlantic League (SAL). Hudson Valley is 4.5 games behind Frederick, Md.
Hudson Valley took the first two from Wilmington, starting with Maika Niu’s first career walk-off game-winner. Leading off the ninth inning, Niu turned a 3-1 count into a 3-2 win with a home run

to left field.
MLB rehabber Luis Gil pitched the first inning, then Franyer Herrera allowed two runs over the next six innings. Thomas Balboni Jr. got the win out of the bullpen, pitching a perfect 2.0 innings of relief with three strikeouts. Balboni would offer another scoreless outing on the Blue Rocks later in the week, stretching a 3.2 inning scoreless streak.
A historic, edge-of-your-seat comeback marked another wild walk-off win for the Renegades on August 15. In true ‘Baby Bomber’ fashion, Hudson Valley launched three ninth inning home runs. Four extra base hits, including a three-run game winner by Jackson Lovich (2-for-5, 2 HR, 4 RBI, 2 R, 2 K) capped the Renegades seven-run ninth inning, and the 8-5 win.

Hudson Valley has produced such a comeback twice since 2005, most recently against the Greensboro Grasshoppers on July 19, 2022. Then, Hudson Valley scored seven 11th-inning runs to prevail 16-10 over the SAL foe.
In the series finale, another massive inning proved the difference for the Renegades. Five runs in the second resulted in the home team’s 5-2 win. Wilmington strung up two runs across later innings, but could not overcome starter Allen Facundo (7.0 IP, 6 H, 2 ER, 6 K, 3 BB).
Another big day for Lovich had another 3-RBI day, a two out, bases-clearing triple which closed out Hudson Valley’s game-winning inning.
Hudson Valley next travels down to ShoreTown to face the BlueClaws. Back in the winning direction after taking four of six from Wilmington, the Renegades’ new-look roster is looking sharp, and hints at a future brighter than Jersey Shore sunshine.
They return home to begin the final homestand of the year on Tuesday, Aug. 25 to host the Brooklyn Cyclones for an Ode to Cream Cheese, the staple which was invented here in the Hudson Valley. It is also the final Tuesday for Baseball Bingo presented by Partner Rentals and Silver Gades Tuesday of the season. For tickets and more information, visit hvrenegades.com/tickets.

RENEGADES EXTRA



Pitcher Allen Facundo led the Renegades to a 5-2 victory over Wilmington in Sunday’s series finale. He gave up only two runs on six hits in seven innings and struck out six batters.

-Photo by Dave Janosz

47 years, still on-call: How one Fishkill volunteer plans to spend retirement

By Allison Long

“There’s not enough money in the world to pay me to do it, so I might as well do it for free.”

That’s the philosophy of Fishkill resident Rick Spola, who’s in his 47th year as a volunteer EMT with the Beacon Volunteer Ambulance Corps (BVAC). And now, even as he nears an end-of summer retirement from his day job as a radiologic technologist, Spola has no intention of slowing down; instead, he plans to dedicate more time to his EMS work and the community he loves.

But Spola’s story – and his unwavering volunteerism, particularly in the EMS space – is becoming a narrative few can emulate.

Spola started his EMS career in 1978, as a freshman at SUNY Albany. He initially joined the university’s student-run ambulance corps to meet friends and find community. “It was a fairly new concept at the time, to have a student-run EMS program,” says Spola. “I wanted to help people, make friends. And frankly, as a college student, it was a pretty great way to meet girls.”

What began as a social life sparkplug evolved into a lifelong passion. Wanting to continue his EMS work on summer break, Spola joined his local volunteer ambulance corps back home in Fishkill – and so his 47-year journey with BVAC began. In the decades that followed, BVAC shaped the trajectory of Spola’s life: he met his wife through the nonprofit, who was a member of BVAC’s Junior Corps before becoming a

nurse; the couple settled in BVAC’s area of coverage in Fishkill; he started a new career in radiology at the age of 50. And through it all, his volunteer shifts with BVAC stayed consistent.

Spola doesn’t take a paycheck for the hours he spends with the nonprofit each week – and hardly ever has. In his nearly five decades of EMS work, just four months of that time was spent in paid positions. According to Spola, the pull to EMS has always been fueled by the fact that it was mission-first and volunteer-based – neighbors helping neighbors, for the sake of helping neighbors.

“The most rewarding thing is the impact that simple neighborly connection can have. Familiarity brings so much relief to people in moments of total panic,” Spola says. “We’re a small community. Almost everyone is within a degree or two of separation. And in those moments of need, knowing that you or your loved one has a tie to the person in charge of your care – you just can’t put a price on that.”

Many would say that the world needs more people with such a genuine dedication to civic duty. But the math of volunteering simply doesn’t add up the way it did forty years ago. Everyday expenses have quadrupled, forcing today’s EMTs to work multiple jobs or longer hours just to keep a roof over their heads. Modern volunteering, then, is not only a sacrifice of time, but of survival.

The reality is even more jarring for vol-



Volunteer Rick Spola, center, with BVAC team members.

-Courtesy photo

unteer EMS squads: training requirements have more than doubled, recertification has gotten heavier, and unlike fire departments, EMS squads don’t get the funding or pension incentives that help attract and retain volunteers and aren’t considered essential services in New York State’s budget. This is why, building upon its volunteer-based roots, BVAC has evolved to adopt a hybrid service model, blending paid professionals with volunteers to ensure they’re able to meet the demands

of the community. BVAC also continues to train teenagers through its Junior Corps program in an effort to maintain a local workforce pipeline.

Spola knows the model is changing around him. But as he prepares to retire his day job and embark on yet another chapter of volunteering alongside fellow BVAC volunteers, paid staff and dedicated local community members, one thing hasn’t changed at all: his desire to answer the call.

Westchester Library System awarded \$500,000; Grant to expand Digital Navigators Program across 9 counties

Westchester Library System (WLS) has been awarded \$500,000 through Empire State Development’s ConnectALL Office to expand the Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley (DNHV) program, bringing free technology assistance to more residents throughout nine counties in the Hudson Valley Region. The project, known as Hudson Valley Connected, will recruit, train, and deploy Digital Navigators, or tech help, in libraries and organizations throughout nine counties. The program will also offer digital literacy workshops and information sessions, expand outreach efforts, and connect individuals with free and reduced-cost technology through their local libraries and community-based organizations.

As the project’s lead financial partner and grant administrator, WLS will collaborate with Southeastern New York Library Resources Council (Southeastern), which leads the DNHV initiative, along with the Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS) and Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS), allowing the initiative to reach public libraries and communities across Columbia, Dutchess,

Greene, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties.

Through participating libraries and community organizations, Digital Navigators provide free, personalized technology assistance to those in need. Services include basic computer skills and assistance searching for affordable internet service, applying for a job online, accessing telehealth, navigating government websites or troubleshooting a device. Trained Digital Navigators provide one-on-one guidance that helps individuals build confidence and maintain independence using technology.

“The Westchester Library System is honored to steward this important investment in digital equity,” said Terry Kirchner, executive director of WLS. “This project exemplifies the power of regional collaboration, and by working alongside our partner library systems, we can expand Digital Navigator services, strengthen digital literacy across the Hudson Valley and ensure libraries continue to thrive.”

Since launching in 2022, the DNHV initiative, spearheaded by Southeastern, has



trained more than 178 Digital Navigators serving 94 public libraries and nonprofit organizations throughout the Hudson Valley. Together, they have provided more than 2,000 one-on-one technology assistance sessions, helping residents access affordable internet, use digital devices, complete online job applications, connect to healthcare services, navigate government resources and stay safe online.

“Libraries have always been trusted places for learning, and today that includes helping people navigate an ever-evolving digital world,” said Carolyn Bennett Glauda of Southeastern and the Digital Navigator Ambassador for Hudson Valley Connected. “Whether someone needs help applying for a job, accessing healthcare online, or simply learning how to use the settings on a device that doesn’t come with a manual, our Digital Navigators provide patient, personalized guidance. This funding will allow us to expand

those services so even more Hudson Valley residents can access the technology skills and support they need to succeed.”

Building on New York State’s continued investment as one of the only in the nation to expand digital equity following the loss of comparable federal funding, the expansion of the DNHV service aims to support low-income households and older adults in over-

coming key barriers identified in the New York State Digital Equity Plan:

- Assisting the 29% of New Yorkers who need professional device support because they cannot fix a device or do not have family or friends to help them.
- Supporting New Yorkers with low confidence in digital literacy, including 23% of older adults and 20% of low-income households.
- Supporting the 87% of New Yorkers who are concerned about online safety.

Empire State Development President, CEO and Commissioner Hope Knight said, “Access to technology is essential, but true digital equity also means ensuring New Yorkers have the skills and support to use it confidently. Through this \$500,000 ConnectALL investment, trusted libraries and community organizations will help more Hudson Valley residents access vital services, pursue employment opportunities and fully participate in today’s digital economy.”

As the lead financial partner, WLS is also coordinating the local investments needed to support the project alongside the ConnectALL grant, working with regional philanthropic partners to help ensure Hudson Valley Connected reaches all communities throughout the region.

To learn more about the Digital Navigator program or find a library near you offering these services, visit <https://hvconnected.org/>.

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hudson valley naturalist

by francine wizner



This solo act is a seasonal trifecta: Bloom, blush, and bark

If you have ever been caught in traffic on Route 9 near the Mid-Hudson Bridge, or hunted for parking in Rhinebeck on a chaotic Saturday, you know Hudson Valley life isn't always bucolic. Our Dutchess County has a quiet charm, but its busiest hubs can get overwhelmed. Tranquility lies a short drive away along less-traveled macadam – near orchards, split-rail fences, and pristine landscapes. “Going solo” is appealing. That is a lesson perfectly illustrated by the uniquely individual *Heptacodium miconioides*, the seven-son flower.

Adopting a sole survivor
The first plant purchase I made for my Pleasant Valley home was found four years ago on a discount rack. A bargain! When I bought it, I didn't realize I was adopting a botanical celebrity. The seven-son flower is monotypic, meaning there is only one species within the genus. While about 10% of plant genera share this lonely designation, the seven-son flower wears its isolation with confidence. It doesn't need a flock of close relations. I got two and planted them next to each other—because even a solo act appreciates harmony.

Heptacodium history
While the official botanical record claims the seven-son flower was “discovered” by Westerners in 1907, local people in China had known about this cliff-dweller for centuries. The early ecologists who took note of *Heptacodium* weren't looking to stock nurseries. Their goal was to take a small clipping, press it flat, and store it in a museum drawer.
For nearly a century, *Heptacodium* existed in the West only as a dead herbarium specimen. Following the Chinese Communist Revolution, closed borders paused cross-continental scientific exchange. This division lasted until the 1980 Sino-American Botanical Expedition – a historic, three-month trek that marked the first collaboration between Western and Chinese scientists since 1949. Looking at the shrub with modern eyes, they realized this museum curiosity could become a versatile landscape plant.

Coming to America
The seeds were brought to the Arnold Arboretum in Massachusetts, which subsequently distributed seedlings through-

out North America. Nearly all garden specimens today share that original lineage, including my two adoptees. However, conservationists continue to brave treacherous cliff terrain, gathering rare seeds from the few remaining wild populations to introduce vital genetic diversity.

What's so special?
“Meh,” you might be thinking, “What makes this shrub so special?” After all, in this space I've written about the trumpet-shaped blooms of *Weigela*, the reproductive details of winterberries, and regaled you with a variety of other scientific fascinations. What makes this shrub noteworthy are its unconventional displays.
In late August, most greenery is sun-bleached and readying for a winter nap. But *Heptacodium* is ready to party. It erupts with fragrant, white flowers. The blossoms appear in clusters containing two opposite rows of three, encircling a central bud. This central bud mimics an additional bloom to create the visual illusion of a “seventh son,” hence its common name. Butterflies and bees flock to the blooms like commuters rushing to Metro-North.

The prefix *hepta-* is Greek for seven, combined with *kodia*, meaning “head” – a nod to its seven-parted appearance. The specific epithet, *miconioides*, alludes to the plant's boldly veined leaves, which closely resemble plants in the tropical *Miconia* genus. I remember learning about *Miconia* from the National Geographic series, “*Strange Days on Planet Earth*.” The episode “Invaders” explained that *Miconia* became a highly destructive invader on tropical islands like Hawaii because it lacks limiting factors, such as competition or predators, to prevent its overgrowth.
Fortunately, the three prominent veins running from the base to the tip of *Heptacodium*'s leaves are simply a case of convergent evolution – a biological phenomenon where unrelated species independently develop analogous traits to adapt to similar environments. Despite the physical resemblance, *Heptacodium* is entirely unrelated to the tropical invader and behaves as a perfectly polite guest.
After its flowers fade, the underlying sepals expand and “blush” in varying shades of red as autumn progresses. This is a dramatic show that lasts through October. When November arrives and the



Peeling bark of the heptacodium.
-Photo courtesy of Flobbado, Creative Commons, Wikipedia



Heptacodium's white blooms will turn a blush color in the fall.
-Photo courtesy of Ptelea, Creative Commons, Wikimedia



Immature Heptacodium, or Seven-Son Flower, buds.
-Photo by Francine Wizner

solo act is the best way to stand out in the crowd.

Francine Wizner is a native of the Hudson Valley. She grew up in the Catskills of Greene County and spent over 3 decades teaching in Ulster County. She creates science-themed instructional materials and books, as well as being a Citizen Scientist in the management of her current home in an enchanted woodland of Dutchess County. Find her at <https://medium.com/@wiznerf>, <https://substack.com/@gkatzchronicle>, and <https://www.youtube.com/@PVMaPleLodge>.

Touch-a-Truck event set for August 23

The Rotary Club of Wappingers Falls is excited to bring back its popular Touch a Truck event on Sunday, Aug. 23, from noon to 4 p.m. at Schlathaus Park in the Town of Wappinger. Touch a Truck is a family-friendly event that gives children the opportunity to get up close and personal with a variety of trucks, vehicles, and equipment. The afternoon will also feature vendors, bouncy houses, food, live music, and plenty of activities for the entire family. Admission is \$20 per family. For an additional \$10, children can enjoy unlimited use of the bouncy houses throughout the event. Cash strongly preferred. The Rotary Club of Wappingers Falls will also be handing out free literacy books and coloring books to children, while supplies last.
Hungry? There will be two food vendors on site: Outback Steakhouse and The Creamery Ice Cream Truck.

Adding to the afternoon will be live music on the newly built bandstand from X and Y. Families are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets and relax while enjoying the concert and all the activities happening throughout the park. Parking is available at the New Hackensack Fire Department.
Proceeds from Touch a Truck will support the Rotary Club's community programs, including scholarships, Student of the Month, and the Adopt-a-Family program. The Rotary Club would like to extend a special thank-you to our generous sponsors, DCH Toyota, NBT Bank, and Casella Waste Management. Their support helps make this event possible and allows us to continue giving back to local students, families, and the community.
Organizers thank the Town of Wappinger for allowing them to host Touch a Truck at Schlathaus Park.

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Obituaries

Linda Schmitzer Esemplare



Linda Schmitzer Esemplare, a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend, passed away peacefully at her home on August 12, 2026, at the age of 87. Born on October 2, 1938, in Beacon, New York, Linda was the cherished daughter of Frank and Margaret Schmitzer.

Linda lived a life filled with love, dedication, and service. She graduated from Beacon High School and pursued further education at Albany Business School. Her educational pursuits were only a prelude to the life she would lead—one marked by devotion to her family and community. Linda was happily married to Pascal Esemplare, with whom she shared an extraordinary journey of nearly 66 years, having been married on October 1, 1960. Together, they raised six children: Michael, Mary, Patrick, Peter, Joanne, and Christine. She was also a loving mother-in-law to Anthony Gasbarro (deceased), Diane

Esemplare, and Patrick Olenick.

As her children went through school, Linda became increasingly involved in her community, eventually serving for 25 years on the Mountainside Board of Education. Her dedication to the schools and the families they served reflected her deep commitment to her community and to the well-being of future generations. A devout Catholic, Linda faithfully attended Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church and was an active member of the Rosary Altar Society, where she nurtured her faith and cherished the many friendships she made along the way.

Linda's love of life was reflected in the simple pleasures she cherished. She found peace and fulfillment in gardening. Her door was always open to family and friends, who were welcomed with warmth, generosity, and one of Linda's unforgettable hugs. Christmas held a special place in her heart, and she embraced the season with enthusiasm and love. Her legendary Christmas cookies became a cherished family tradition, bringing sweetness to the holidays.

Linda is survived by her devoted husband Pascal, her five children, and her sister Mary Donahue. She leaves behind a legacy of love through her 13 grandchildren: Justina, Jesse, Anthony, Jenna, Kalie, Alyssa, Theresa, Patrick, Renata, Ryan, Nicole, Michael, and Nicholas, as well as 13 great-grandchildren: Christopher, Maria, Natalie, Kaylie, Caleb, Caden, Adelina, Renae, Ritchie, James, Tyler, Madison, and Chase. Linda was predeceased by her parents and her daughter Joanne, whose memory she cherished deeply.

The Visitation will be at Higgins and Bonner - Echo Lake Funeral Home 582 Springfield Avenue, Westfield, NJ 07092, on Wednesday, August 19, 2026, from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

A service to celebrate Linda's life will be held on August 20, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, located at 300 Central Avenue, Mountainside, NJ 07092. Family and friends are invited to attend.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made in Linda's memory to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, an organization close to her heart.

Linda Schmitzer Esemplare's life was a testament to kindness, service, and love. Her memory will forever be cherished by all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Ruth Mildred Ackert Queen



Ruth Mildred Ackert Queen departed this life on August 10, 2026, age 91, at home in Red Hook. Ruth was born on February 25, 1935 in Rhinebeck, the daughter of Russell E. Ackert and Mabel M. Bustard.

Ruth married David F. Queen on June 27, 1954 in the Dutch Reformed Church at Rhinebeck. To Ruth and David were born six children for whom she was Mom or Ma-Lynnette E., Diane A. (deceased), Denise A. Queen-Beneway twin sister of Diane, Suzanne M. (Richard Montross), David B., and James R. (Stephanie Hapeman-Queen). Ruth was predeceased by her sister Rose Ellen. She leaves behind seven grandchildren; Justin Beneway, Gabriel Beneway, Jeffrey Queen (deceased), Gregory Queen, Camille Queen, Katherine Queen, and Ava Queen. Ruth also leaves three great grandchildren: Xander L. Queen, Marshall J. Beneway, and Hudson R. Beneway.

Ruth graduated from Rhinebeck High School in 1952 where she played violin and brass instruments in the band followed by attendance at NYS University Cobleskill, receiving her Nursery Education Degree in May 1954.



After marriage and starting a family Ruth, continued her education at Marist College where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree on May 20, 1972 and was inducted into the Pi Alpha Theta honor society. Ruth then attended State University at New Paltz and received her Master's Degree in Education on May 27, 1979, while raising her family and with many late nights studying. Ruth went to work in the Rhinebeck School System as a high school Social Studies teacher until her retirement in 1995. She enjoyed when her former students brought their children to her house on Halloween and greeted her for many years when they met in public.

Ruth was active in a number of civic activities: President and volunteer with Rhinebeck Caregivers taking people to their health appointments, Treasurer of the Rhinebeck High School Alumni Association, an AARP officer, Secretary for St Paul Lutheran Church, Rhinebeck Grange and garden club. She also enjoyed camping with her children and travels that included a long 1964 trip to Alaska to visit David's brother Richard who was home-steading and his brother Bill who was in the State of Washington. There were trips in this country to the Grand Canyon, the California Sequoia forest; Atlantic Ocean at Plymouth, Michigan Mackinac Island where the movie "Somewhere in Time" was filmed. She also took Canadian trips to see the Rockies, Lake Louise, and Montreal Botanical garden; and overseas trips to Hawaii, Ireland, Scotland, and England.

Calvin M. Lawrence



Calvin M. Lawrence, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, veteran, community leader, and friend, passed away on August 11, 2026, at the age of 90. Calvin was born at home on June 10, 1936. He dedicated his long and fulfilling life to his family, his country, his work, and the community he loved.

He proudly served in the United States Navy from 1955 to 1959, serving aboard the USS Hyman (DD-732). His years in the Navy remained an important and cherished part of his life. He especially enjoyed attending reunions of the USS Hyman, where he could reconnect with fellow shipmates and share memories of their time together.

On November 8, 1959, Calvin married Yvonne Boulanger, beginning a marriage that would span more than 60 years. Together they raised their two children, Calvin C. Lawrence and Annetta M. Gigliotti, married to Thomas Gigliotti. Yvonne passed away on January 31, 2020. Calvin carried her memory with him throughout the remaining years of his life.

Calvin was a proud and loving grandfather to six grandchildren: Jennifer Gigliotti, Christine (Eric) Luksis, Sarah (Matthew) Dellaventura, Maria Gigliotti, Jessica (Michael) Nocera, and Calvin CA (Deanna) Lawrence. He was also blessed with five great-grandchildren: Matthew Nocera, Caroline Nocera, Easton Luksis, Hudson Luksis, and Emma Dellaventura. His family was one of the greatest joys of his life, and he treasured the time he spent with them.

A strong believer in giving back to his community, Calvin was a Life Member of the WT Garner Firehouse. He served the Village of Wappingers Falls as a Trustee and later as Mayor from 2003 to 2007. He also served as a Dutchess County Legislator, was a member of the Dutchess County Republican Party, and was active in the Rotary. Through each of these roles, Calvin gave his time, energy, and dedication to the people and community he cared about.

Calvin's working life reflected the same dedication. He spent 30 years working at Montfort Bros. and Southern Dutchess Sand and Gravel in Fishkill, New York, where he was known for his strong work ethic and commitment to his job.

When he wasn't working or serving his community, Calvin enjoyed life with his family. He loved traveling across the country and abroad, making memories along the way. He particularly enjoyed taking car rides through the local area, always keeping an eye out for wildlife, especially deer and eagles. He also looked forward to his USS Hyman reunions, which allowed him to maintain the special friendships and bonds formed during his Navy years.

Calvin lived a life of service, devotion, and love. From his Navy service and decades of work to his commitment to the Village of Wappingers Falls and his beloved family, he leaves behind a lasting legacy.

He will be deeply missed by his children, Calvin C. Lawrence and Annetta M. Gigliotti and her husband, Thomas Gigliotti; his grandchildren, great-grandchildren, extended family, friends, fellow veterans and shipmates, and the many people whose lives he touched throughout his remarkable 90 years.

Though Yvonne preceded him in death, Calvin's love for her and the life they shared remained an enduring part of his story. He now leaves behind the memories of a life well lived and a family who will carry his legacy forward for generations to come.

Fair winds and following seas, Calvin. Your watch is ended, but your memory, your service, and the love you gave your family and community will live on.

His Family received Friends on Sunday, August 16, 2026 at DELEHANTY FUNERAL HOME, 64 E. Main St., Wappingers Falls, NY; a Funeral Service was held 10am, Monday, August 17th followed by interment and military honors at Wappingers Falls Rural Cemetery, West Main St., Wappingers Falls, NY.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly asks that donations be made in Calvin's memory to the Tunnel to Towers Foundation, an organization supporting America's military and first responders.

Ved Shrivah



It is with profound sadness that we share the passing of our beloved father, educator, community leader, and friend, Dr. Ved Shrivah.

For more than five decades, Dr. Ved Shrivah dedicated his life to education, public service, and helping others. A life-long educator, he earned three master's degrees and a Ph.D. in Education and served as a professor of Mathematics and Physics.

Ved is best known for serving on the Wappingers Central School District Board of Education for 16+ years, including several terms as President. He is a respected advocate for educational excellence throughout New York State and for his work with the New York State Education Department and numerous community organizations reflecting his unwavering commitment to serving others.

In celebration of his lifelong commitment to education and service, the family has established the Ved Shrivah Foundation, which will provide educational scholarships for deserving students.

There will be a Memorial Celebration on Sunday, August 30 at the Carnwath Chapel in Wappingers Falls and the family warmly invites all whose lives he touched to join. In lieu of flowers, guests are invited to support the Ved Shrivah Foundation.

To learn more about Dr. Ved Shrivah's life, the Foundation and the Memorial Celebration, please visit: VedShrivah.com.

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Classified

SDN Subscriber ads

Champ, Dachshund
& Terrier Mix. Adult
3-8 yrs, Male, Small
0-25 lbs, Medium
coat, color,
White/Cream,
Red/Chestnut/Orange. He's Friendly,
Loyal, Loves kisses,
Protective and
Affectionate. Adopt:
ARF, Simons Lane,
Beacon NY



Coupon must accompany payment

Music, community to highlight Poughkeepsie PorchFest event on Aug. 23



*Brad Shur, founder of Paper Heart Puppets, strolls through Poughkeepsie
PorchFest with a friend.*

-Courtesy photo by Mary Reynolds



Shade trees provide a good spot to enjoy Poughkeepsie Jazz Project, an audience favorite.

-Courtesy photo by Julie Okoniewski



Crowds line Academy Street to listen to musicians.

-Courtesy photo by Julie Okoniewski

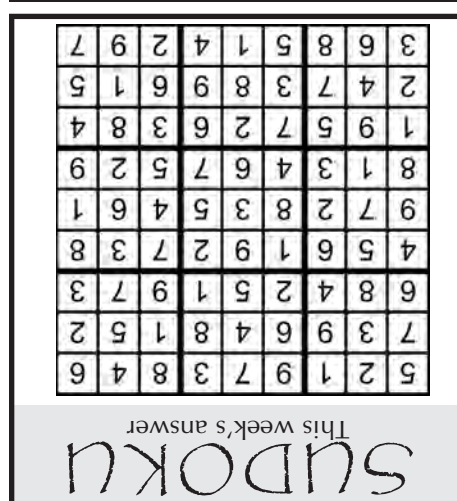
The Southside Historic District will host the 7th annual Poughkeepsie PorchFest from noon - 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 23. This family-friendly, free event features musicians from a wide variety of genres. More than 25 porches in Poughkeepsie's Academy Street & Garfield Place Historic District neighborhood will host musicians performing everything from jazz and spoken word, to pop, country and rock. The event draws up-and-coming performers as well as seasoned professionals from the region.

This celebration of live music and community also includes children's activities, food vendors and more. Visitors are invited to stroll through the historic neighborhood, which features houses in a variety of 19th and early 20th century styles. The tree-lined streets offer shady spots to stand and watch performers.

A schedule will be available, and a map of porches and performers will be posted throughout the neighborhood. Parking is available on side streets or nearby municipal lots. The event takes place rain or shine, within reason. Follow

Poughkeepsie PorchFest on FaceBook and Instagram (@poughkeepsie_porchfest) for details and updates.

this week's puzzle solutions



Legal Notices

REQUEST FOR
BIDS
NOTICE

The Purchasing Agent, County of Dutchess, Poughkeepsie, New York, hereby invites the submission of sealed bids for: Bid #RFB-DCP-68-26
Uniform Rental and

Legal Notices

Facility Services for
Dutchess County
Public Transit

Bids will be received until 2:00 p.m. on the 10th day of September 2026 at the Dutchess County Division of Central Services, 378 Violet Avenue, Suite 2, Poughkeepsie, New York

Legal Notices

12601. Specifications and bid forms may be obtained by visiting our website <http://www.dutchessny.gov>, selecting "Government", then selecting "Bidding and RFP Opportunities". For additional information, call 845-486-3613.

Legal Notices

LEGAL NOTICE
Resolution 2026136
August 11, 2026
NOTICE IS HEREBY
GIVEN that a public
hearing will be held by
the County Attorney of
Dutchess County in
the County Office
Building, County At-

Legal Notices

torney's Conference Room, 5th Floor, 22 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, New York, on the **25th day of August 2026 at 10:00 AM**, on the following local law:
A LOCAL LAW PROHIBITING THE SALE AND DISTRIBUTION OF CONCEN-

Legal Notices

TRATED AND SY-
THETIC 7-HYDROX-
YMITRAGYNINE (7-
OH) KRATOM
PRODUCTS IN
D U T C H E S S
COUNTY-RESOLU-
TION 2026136.
Atsaidtimeandplace,
all parties interested
will be heard.
Dated:

Legal Notices

August 11, 2026
Susan Serino
Poughkeepsie,
New York
Dutchess County
Executive

The deadline for Legals is every Monday @ 12 noon for a Wednesday Publication* *When a public holiday falls on a Monday the deadline becomes Friday at noon.

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5		1			3		4	
				4			5	2
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9								1
	1	3				5		
	9				6	3		
2	4			8				
	6		5			2		7

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

Suguru

			2		
		4		4	
					2
5					
				2	
			1	3	

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The heavy lines indicate areas, called cages, from one to five squares in size. Fill each cage with unique digits, counting up from 1. So for example a 2-square cage contains the numbers 1 and 2; and a 5-square cage contains the numbers from 1 to 5. Adjacent (touching) squares, even ones that touch diagonally, may never contain the same number.

THEME: HAPPY BIRTHDAY

ACROSS

1. Thanksgiving tubers
5. ____ Patrol
8. Boo-hoos
12. Burn soothing plant
13. "Frat Pack" member Wilson
14. ____ ligation
15. Sound an alarm
16. Marvin, Majors and Greenwood
17. O. Henry's specialty
18. *Marilyn Monroe: "Happy Birthday, Mr. ____"
20. Sporting sword
21. Blue pencil marks
22. Knight's title
23. *One for every year
26. Custodian
30. Be in debt
31. Stay clear of
34. Accompanies relief
35. #1 Down, pl.
37. Owned
38. Subway in Paris
39. Shore extension
40. Per ____
42. Even, poetic
43. City in Netherlands
45. Like voice during laryngitis
47. Barents or Laptev, e.g.
48. Noah's passengers
50. Type of code
52. *Astrological sign for those born on New Year's Eve
56. Black one and white one, for Tchaikovsky
57. Crematorium jars
58. "The Odyssey," e.g.
59. Make this, not waste
60. Let it stand, to proofreader
61. Governmental space agency, acr.
62. The windows to the soul
63. Money in Myanmar
64. Theodora or Dorothea

DOWN

1. Bark or yelp
2. Relating to armpit
3. *"...and many ____"
4. Detected
5. *Like 16
6. Hiking sandals of a certain brand
7. Of the present month
8. *Greeting to the birthday honoree, sometimes
9. Bassoon cousin
10. Misery cause
11. Canny
13. Dated tunes
14. Make a logical connection (2 words)
19. Runs without moving
22. Lumberjack's tool
23. Another word for nutria
24. Look forward to
25. Not as old
26. George Lucas' warrior-monk
27. Concentration of a solution lab test
28. Shrek and Fiona, e.g.
29. Cotes du ____, wine region
32. Online room
33. As opposed to mishap
36. *"We want your presence, not your ____"
38. New Zealandian minority
40. Cuban dance syllable
41. *Quench it with punch
44. Precedes desist
46. Antonym of descent
48. *Traditional birthday celebration
49. Sleeper's woe
50. Up, up and there
51. Level a building
52. Crescent point
53. Colorful fish
54. Greet the judge, e.g.
55. March Madness org.
56. Pronoun

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18				19					20			
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	50	51				52				53	54	55
56						57				58		
59						60				61		
62						63				64		

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The solutions to the Sudoku, Crossword puzzle and Suguru can be found on page 14.

Steven D. Ziskind Memorial Scholarship awarded to local firefighter Morgan Doughty

By Kristine Coulter

The 2026 Steven D. Ziskind Memorial Scholarship was awarded to local volunteer firefighter Morgan Doughty.

Doughty described herself as “a student who loves learning to every degree and a first responder who thrives to be better,” in her letter to the committee.

Ziskind was set to graduate from SUNY New Paltz with a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering. He was also a first responder who gave countless hours back to his community of East Fishkill as member of the Wicoppee Fire Company.

Ziskind died from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident in May of 2020. That year, his parents, Polly and Martin Ziskind, his brother, Adam, and members of the Wicoppee Firehouse began the memorial scholarship in Steven’s name.

Adam commented to Beacon Free Press via email, “Every year, reading through the applications reminds our family why we started this scholarship in Steven’s name. The young people who apply, and the ones we choose, tend to share a quality Steven had in abundance: they show up for other people without being asked twice. Whether it’s through their fire company, coaching younger kids, volunteering at church, or just being the person their friends call in a crisis, they’ve already learned something a lot of adults are still working on—that being part of a community means carrying some of its weight. Steven was a volunteer firefighter because he genuinely believed that was how you take care of your neighbors. He didn’t do it for recognition.”

Doughty wrote in her letter to the committee, “I believe that true commitment is

not measured by the titles one holds, but by the weight of the responsibilities one is willing to carry when the stakes are highest. For the past few years my demanding schedule has been a choice; one defined by my personal values. I have focused on composing myself to be the best person I can, whether that is training as a firefighter to assist my community and team effectively, or as a family member, student, or friend. I prioritize the things I love over everything else.”

Doughty said she plans to major in Chemical Engineering at Stony Brook University.

“My background in high school and AP Chemistry, as well as an entry to Hazmat training sparked an interest in the chemical properties of materials and how they behave in our day to day lives. Therefore, in combination with that and my desire to solve complex, real-world problems I know that engineering will be an important steppingstone for me. On top of that while pursuing this demanding degree, I intend to continue my athletic career by walking on to Stony Brook’s Division I Track and Field team,” stated Doughty.

In a letter to the committee, Karl Vollmer, president of Hopewell Hose Fire Co. No. 1, stated, “It is my sincere belief that Morgan is well deserving of this scholarship.”

Vollmer explained, “I have known Morgan since she joined Hopewell Hose Fire Co. No. 1 as an active member in July 2024. Morgan is, and has been, a member in good standing with the company as well as the district. Morgan regularly responds to calls, participates in training, company work details and social events.” He added, “Since the time



Morgan Doughty, a local volunteer firefighter, was recently awarded the Steven D. Ziskind Memorial Scholarship for 2026 in honor of late volunteer firefighter Steven Ziskind. Pictured with Doughty, are members of Doughty’s family, members of the Ziskind family and members of the Wicoppee Fire Company.

-Courtesy photo

Morgan became an active member, I have personally observed that Morgan is a young adult with “old-school” values.”

Vollmer mentioned in the letter that Doughty improves on her skills and education, “and accomplished all this without complaint or excuses.”

“We have a saying in our firehouse, ‘If you can only give 10% of your time, we expect you that you give 100% of that

10% while you are here.’ Morgan exemplifies this request,” remarked Vollmer.

Adam stated, “Each recipient we’ve chosen has that same dedication. They work hard, they don’t complain, and they care about the people around them more than they care about being noticed for it. That’s what connects every recipient to Steven, and it’s why this scholarship means so much to our family.”

Beatrix Farrand Garden to present ‘Artists in the Garden’ project Aug. 29

On Saturday, August 29, the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association (BFGA) will offer two free events that will bring the power and beauty of art into the garden.

BFGA will present a free Artists in the Garden juried exhibition from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., featuring artwork created in or inspired by the Beatrix Farrand Garden, celebrating the beauty, complexity, and restorative value of gardens and nature. The juried exhibition will be at the Wallace Center, adjacent to the Beatrix

Farrand Garden. Works in the exhibit will include oil, acrylic, watercolor paintings, drawings, photography, papier mache, and mixed media. Subjects will include scenes from gardens to national parks, wildlife, and botanical art. Twenty-five local, highly talented artists will be featured, as well as a few budding young artists.

Visitors can also enjoy stroll through the garden and watch multiple local artists giving live demonstrations of their

various artistic talents: painting, sketching, photography, and more. Garden visitors, both adults and children, can observe the artists, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., ask questions, learn and enjoy – and are welcome to bring their own supplies and try their hand. Several artists will offer hands-on demonstrations.

The “Artists in the Garden” project is supported in part by Arts MidHudson, Destination Dutchess, Dutchess County,

and in part by select, generous donors.

The Beatrix Farrand Garden is located on the Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, attached to the yellow Bellefield Mansion, 4097 Albany Post Road in Hyde Park. Free and accessible parking, café, and restrooms are available at the Wallace Visitor Center. Although free, visitors are encouraged to make a reservation at the BFGA website: www.BeatrixFarrandGarden.org.

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A painting by Mira Fink shows a portion of the Beatrix Farrand Garden.

-Courtesy image