

Young people
step up to help
in food drive

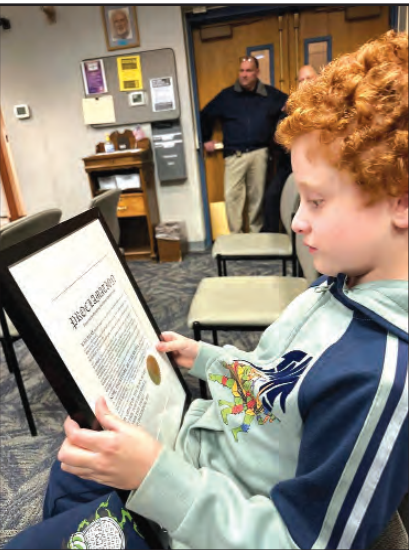
By Alexander Tsahalis

In 2024, the Fishkill Food Pantry provided over 140,700 meals to people in need. These meals feed about 300 families per month. The food to feed all these people comes from all over the community. This year, young members of the community are showing that you're never too young to make a difference by organizing food drives.

Abraham Knapp is only seven years old. At a time of year when most kids are worried about what they're getting from Santa, Abraham was helping his mother prepare 140 meals in bags.

"I have a food drive every year for my birthday," said Marilyn Knapp, Abraham's mom. "I've done the food pantry a couple of times before and when I saw the meals in a bag on TikTok I thought it would be a great idea with the holidays coming up."

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Abraham Knapp was presented with an award from the Town of Fishkill recognizing his contributions to the town by working to combat food insecurity. Photo courtesy of Eddie Colon

Anderson – DCC ‘ribbon’ grows
as gifts arrive for holidays

By Morgan E. Maier

The Anderson Center for Autism twinkles for the holiday season. Among the friendly house-decorating competition, each light builds to the gleaming campus-wide anticipation. Here, a holiday promise is fulfilled for the second year in a row. A visitor is soon to arrive, gifts of clothes, toys, and biggest wishes in tow.

December 18 marked the completion of the second annual Dutchess Community College (DCC) Holiday Gift Drive for the Anderson community. Led by Ron McKeon, HVAC supervisor at DCC, the drive inspires the entire Dutchess community to bring cheer to their neighbors. In search of a local organization to benefit from the donation drive, Beacon resident McKeon looked to Anderson. Having watched a friend's child grow up with an autism diagnosis, McKeon was touched by the school and its mission.

Gifts are placed in six boxes across the DCC campus and collected by McKeon and his crew. Items in droves landed at the Physical Plant, the "hub" where McKeon and his crew emptied the filled boxes alongside regular workday operations. Staff and families at Anderson passed along tips for recommended items, which were listed on each box to guide gifters with their shopping.



A van full of gifts arrived at the Recreation Center at the Anderson Center for Autism on Dec. 18, courtesy of the staff and students at Dutchess Community College. From left are Anderson Recreation Coordinators Nancy Dalmacy and Anna Gustafson with DCC staff Nelson Perez, (Building Maintenance), Ron McKeon (HVAC Supervisor), Judy Spanhake (Principal Program Assistant) and Matt Palmatier (Warehouse Supervisor). Photo by Curtis Schmidt

Campus-wide emails were sent throughout the drive to the DCC community. Student workers in the library promoted the drive on social media. The posts encouraged donations and spread further awareness of the drive.

"It's spreading out a little more. We're

getting people from all over. People all over the county work here, so they're spreading the word. We're getting a lot of support from the students; it's been great," McKeon said. "I can't ask nothing more from this college than what they've

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New Year's Eve Millbrook 2025
to offer music, magic and community

By Kate Goldsmith



The Grumbling Gryphons are one of several family-friendly performers featured at this year's New Year's Eve Millbrook event. Courtesy photo

The Village of Millbrook will once again offer a family-friendly event to help ring in 2026. New Year's Eve Millbrook will take place from 4 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 31. Featured entertainment includes music from three bands – The Hammerhead Horns, Nite Train, and Paula & the Twang Busters – along with The Bubble Bus (back by popular demand), a magic show, puppet performances, community activities and more.

New Year's Eve Millbrook is hosted by the Millbrook Rotary Club, Millbrook Arts Group, the Millbrook Library, and the Village of Millbrook; supported by the Millbrook Police Department; and made possible by many sponsors and volunteers.

Entertainment will take place in the parish halls of Lyall Community Church (30 Maple Avenue) and Grace Church (3328 Franklin Avenue), said Bob Button, who not only organized the musical acts for the event, but

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Young people step up to help in food drive

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From left: Eddie Colon, Abraham Knapp, Marilyn Knapp, Becki Tompkins, and two food pantry workers stand behind a table loaded with meals. *Courtesy photo*

Knapp put out a message on her Facebook page asking her friends to donate, and donate they did. The average donation was about seven meals' worth of loose goods, with some of her friends donating 10 or 20 meals in a bag.

The bags are a quick and easy way of distributing food. Each one contains several non-perishable or long-term shelf-stable ingredients and a recipe card explaining what the dish is and how to make it. The different meals include: beef stew with mashed potatoes, casseroles, burrito bowls, chicken and dumplings, and even a turkey dinner with all the fixings.

"I'm so lucky to have this village and community. When I asked, they showed up," said Knapp. "I surround myself with kind-hearted people and we can do wonderful things like this." Word of Abraham's efforts reached the Town of Fishkill. On Dec. 3, he was presented with an official proclamation recognizing his outstanding contributions to the town by working to combat food insecurity.

The Fishkill food pantry also worked with several local schools during food drives. At St. Mary School Fishkill, they've done several food drives to help others in need.

"Last year we implemented a food drive in June for those who have food insecurities over the summer," said Diana Robles-Rios, the school principal. "I think it's important that we do it throughout the year for those in need." They've also had them at Super Bowl time to help those struggling through the winter months. The food drives have had a strong impact on the students, with several also volunteering at the food pantry as part of their confirmation project.

"Collecting food for the food bank was fun because I knew it was for a good cause," said Nicole, an eighth grader. "I [feel] bad for everyone that has to rely on

donations for food and I love giving to those in need so they can be as fortunate as I am." Beyond food drives, St. Mary's has also collected socks for nursing homes and written Christmas cards to those in need. "They're the future," said Robles-Rios. "If we don't teach them to help others, we're at a loss."

Fishkill Elementary School also had a food drive promoted by the Girls on the Run club. Each season, the club completes a community service project. The food drive was run by the girls who created flyers and gathered donations from the school community to make it a success. They collected six large boxes of food and walked them over to the food pantry on a flatbed cart.

All of this may sound like a lot of donations, but to the food pantry, it's never enough. "This pantry is like a revolving door," said Eddie Colon, who runs the pantry. "Food comes in and goes right back out again." The pantry doesn't turn anyone in need away, and they try to ensure people always have access. They're open five days a week, and every evening before they close, they stock a community fridge outside. The generosity of the community never fails to astonish him, though. Besides the schools, several local businesses ran food drives, and local people dropped off donations. One of the most successful food drives was at BJ's, where 480 bags of food were collected.

The Fishkill Food Pantry is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9 a.m. - noon, and Monday and Wednesdays from 2:30 - 6 p.m. They are always in need of donations with the most needed items being: cereals, canned meats and beans, soups, canned veggies, coffee, rice, canned fruit, pasta and pasta sauce, powdered milk, dish/laundry detergent, soap and body wash, and toilet paper.

Retiring code enforcement officer reflects on 25 years of service

George A. Kolb Jr., currently working for the Town of Union Vale, has decided to retire from code enforcement after 25 years of service to three municipalities: the Town of Union Vale, Village of Wappingers Falls, and Town of Wappinger. A retirement party was held on Dec. 11 at the Millbrook Inn situated in the Town of Union Vale.

Many past elected officials, employees, friends and associates were there to wish him well. Many memories and stories about his time served as a building inspector and the interaction with those communities were looked back on.

Kolb was instrumental in restructuring various departments and amending Codes provisions to allow for more streamlined efficiency in the various building departments under his leadership.

"I would like to personally thank everyone that I've had the pleasure

to help and work with in the Village of Wappingers and the towns of Wappinger and Union Vale," Kolb said. "It has been my honor and privilege to serve you. I hope I have made lasting impact for the safety and quality of life in of all the communities I have served and everyone I have the pleasure to work with."



George A. Kolb Jr. is retiring from code enforcement after 25 years of service to three municipalities: the Town of Union Vale, Village of Wappingers Falls, and Town of Wappinger. Among those wishing him well at his Dec. 11 retirement party were (from left) former Town of Union Vale Supervisor Lisette Hitsman, Kolb, former Town Clerk MaryLou DeForest, former Supervisor Town of Wappinger Joseph Ruggiero and (in back) current Town of Union Vale Supervisor Steven Frazier. *Courtesy photo*

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Anderson – DCC ‘ribbon’ grows as gifts arrive for holidays

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done already."

For the first year, people donated cash to the cause. Between work at DCC and his other job, McKeon took to the store, purchased gifts with donated cash, alongside his own shopping for the drive.

On delivery day, McKeon and fellow workers haul everything to Anderson, where the gifts soon mix with smiles, anticipation, and the type of waiting to unwrap gifts that everyone dreads on a holiday morning. For the inaugural collection in 2024, McKeon dressed as the Grinch to transport the gifts from campus to campus, bringing the holidays to the houses at Anderson. It is an especially delightful experience for residents who may not leave campus for festivities with family.

"We love the community support we get at Anderson. We value it, we treasure it, and we put it to good use. There are a lot of organizations beyond Anderson that could benefit from this type of action," said Eliza Bozenski, chief development officer at Anderson. "It represents the kindness and thinking of others that we typically highlight at the holiday season, but we would love to see highlighted every single day of the year."

The event is only one ribbon of the

relationship between these two community partners. From the college's support of Anderson's international programs to hands-on internships supplied to DCC students, the institutions are tied by years of mutual support.

"When people make the effort to deliver gifts or deliver a fun experience, it's really meaningful. It's meaningful to the students. It's meaningful for the staff because they feel supported as well, and also for the families, who are really touched so much by the outpouring of support from the community," said Bozenski.

A study by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) found that, worldwide, 15% of people aged 15 or older volunteer at least once a month. This drive is one of many volunteer-run initiatives in Dutchess County this season.

"Volunteerism is really declining, like that 15% they claim now. It seems like everybody's so busy - and everybody is busy - but you have to make time for certain things," said McKeon. "It's a great feeling, the energy is great, and it's a great cause. I'd love to see, within five years, us bringing a semi-truck full of toys."

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MOW of Greater Hyde Park needs more delivery drivers

Volunteers are the life blood of many local organizations and that is definitely true of Meals on Wheels of Greater Hyde Park.

Board member Melinda Heady said their volunteers work as drivers that deliver meals to clients or packers that work in the kitchen to prepare lunch and snacks to supplement the hot meal. "Many of our volunteers are retired and have worked within the organization for years," she said.

Meals on Wheels (MOW) of Greater Hyde Park has recently lost four drivers due to age and/or illness. Heady said the drivers work in teams and many are married couples or friends who have chosen to devote their time to ensuring seniors are delivered hot nutritional meals five days a week (Monday-Friday). The commitment varies where some drivers only work one or two days per month as substitutes when needed and others work one day a week or bimonthly. There are five routes that must get covered every day Monday-Friday. Drivers work from 11

a.m. to 1 p.m. delivering meals to a certain geographic area in the Hyde Park Central School District or Village of Rhinebeck.

Heady said, "Drivers usually have a set group of clients and get to know them. All of our clients are welcoming and extremely appreciative of the service. The chance to make a difference in the life of a senior is a huge positive."

The drivers check in, make sure clients are okay and provide human contact. "Without MOWs, these clients would probably not be able to live independently in their homes," she said. "Although most of our drivers are retired, the flexible limited hours are also perfect for someone who wants to volunteer, but can only do a few hours per month." Prospective volunteers can fill out the application form on Meals on Wheels of Greater Hyde Park Facebook page. All volunteer drivers use their own car/gas and must have a current driver's license and insurance.



From left, Carol Gershowitz, 2nd Vice President of Meals on Wheels of Greater Hyde Park stands with Beverly Broadbright and Janice Foreschler with chests of food ready for delivery. Below: Driver Gary Courtney holds copies of the newsletter for Meals on Wheels of Greater Hyde Park as he walks to his car. *Courtesy photos*



Give blood or platelets this holiday season

Time is critical for patients this December. The American Red Cross urges donors to make an appointment to give blood or platelets now to keep the blood supply steady over the busy holiday season. Types O positive, O negative and B negative blood donors are especially needed now and in the coming weeks.

December is National Month of Giving, and your Red Cross blood or platelet donation can bring hope and healing. Create a new holiday tradition and help spread comfort and support life-saving care. When the unexpected happens, it's the blood products already on the shelves that matter.

Redefine the meaning of a gift bag; give something that means something and schedule a blood or platelet donation appointment by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Those who come to give through Jan. 4, 2026, will receive an exclusive Red Cross long-sleeved T-shirt, while supplies last. For details on December offers, see RedCrossBlood.org/Gifts. If you're unable to give, consider making a financial donation to support our lifesaving mission at redcross.org.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities

COLUMBIA
Claverack: 12/27, 8 a.m.-noon, Claverack Library, 629 NY-23B

DUTCHESS
Hyde Park: 12/30, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., St. James Episcopal Church, 4526 Albany Post Rd.

Poughkeepsie: 12/30, noon-5 p.m., Poughkeepsie Galleria, 2001 South Road
Tivoli: 12/26, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., The Masonic Lodge in Tivoli, 7 N Rd

GREENE
Coxsackie: 12/26, noon-5 p.m., Gospel Community Church, 121 Mansion Street

ORANGE
Monroe: 12/29, 1-6 p.m., St. Paul Lutheran Church, 21 Still Rd.
New Windsor: 12/27, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.,

New Windsor Fire Department, 275 Walsh Ave.

Port Jervis: 12/30, 1-5 p.m., St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 31 W Main St
PUTNAM

Patterson: 12/30, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Town of Patterson Recreation and Parks, 65 Front St, PO Box 278
ULSTER

Highland: 12/29, noon-5 p.m., Highland Hose Company 1, 25 Milton Ave

How to donate blood

Simply download the American Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit RedCrossBlood.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enable the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device to make an appointment or for more information.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NOTE: Letters to the Editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Dutchess News. Letters must be e-mailed to be considered for publication. We cannot accept handwritten or faxed letters.

Is Venezuela adventure worth possible loss of U.S. military lives?

To the editor:
With Trump’s huge armada near Venezuela, and now seizing and intimidating oil tankers, Venezuela’s financial lifeblood, it might seem that the U. S. holds all the cards.
Well, no. While Congress just missed, in a close vote, the opportunity to rein in or end Trump’s buildup in the Caribbean, that is likely to hold only if there are no U.S. casualties.
Venezuela countered Trump’s intimidation of oil tankers by providing a military escort. Now, Trump has to decide if combat to halt the tankers is worth the possible loss of U.S. military lives in a sea battle.
Since the current Venezuela adventure is wildly unpopular, any minor gain against Venezuela is unlikely to be worth lives of U.S. sailors or aviators.
Trump holds all the cards – until there are U.S. casualties. Then the obvious question, from the parents and legislators, will be, “Was it worth it?” and “What was it for?”
Recently, Trump claimed that the U.S., which many years ago helped start the Venezuela oil industry (and the resulting pollution) owns those facilities as a result. Does Nissan have a claim on Canton, Mississippi, where it has a car factory?
Ultimately, the absurdity of the Administration’s claims, and unwillingness to justify loss of life in combat, may wind down the Venezuela caper. If that occurs, after huge expenditure with no result, the resignations of Secretary of State Marco Rubio and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller would be logical.

Frank Stoppenbach
Red Hook

Trump’s ‘Quid Pro Quo’ approach

To the editor:
In this Christmas season of peace, good will and present giving, President Trump has a new real life show called “Quid Pro Quo” (something given or received for something else) - take from the poor to enrich the wealthy. It reminds me of the singer Tennessee Ernie Ford with his “16 tons and deeper in debt” and maybe “eating at the tall trough with the big hogs.”
1. Fortune magazine (10/25) lists 37 companies and people donating to Trump’s \$300 million “White House Ballroom” that have or are looking for government contracts, pardons, merger approvals, ambassadorships, etc.
2. Some pay backs have a different tone like his speaking to the faith leaders at the Museum of the Bible about his high-profile crime crackdown in Washington, DC. He said that “a little family fight shouldn’t be counted in the statistics.” Tell that to the women with black and blue marks, in the hospital or dead. (This is) further evidence of his anti-women personality. Are votes the payback, making the statistics look better, or an attempt to destroy 177 years of women suffrage in U.S.?
3. We have the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts now called Trump-Kennedy Center after firing former directors and installing Trump people.
4. The \$400 million Boeing 747-8 jet plane gift to Trump from Qatar. There are always paybacks.
You can still see some good in this world, such as the joy and excitement of a little child’s face running alongside their parent in the store, or perhaps riding through the beautiful Christmas “Wonderland of Lights” at the Fairgrounds in Rhinebeck.

David F. Queen
Red Hook

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- Letters referring to news stories must mention the headline and date of publication.
- The Northern Dutchess News will not be used as a vehicle to place misinformation.
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- Letters appearing on the Viewpoints page are the views of the writers alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Dutchess News.

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Utility Reform Bill
co-sponsored by Jacobson,
Hinchey signed into law

A bill that makes utility rate increase requests more transparent, co-sponsored by Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson (D-104) and Senator Michelle Hinchey (D-41), has become law.
Governor Hochul signed the bill (A2736/S8213) into law last week. According to the new law, any utility that makes a request for a rate increase must fully and publicly explain all capital expenditures included in the request. This would include the purpose and cost of the capital project, as well as any benefits to ratepayers.
“Since utilities receive a greater return on capital expenses than on other expenses, transparency is essential when they’re requesting a rate increase,” said Jacobson. “The public and the Public Service Commission (PSC), which determines such requests, deserve to know.”
“Our legislation requires transparent and public reporting on utility capital expenditures to prevent companies from inflating project costs to pad profits and increase rates,” said Hinchey. “New

Yorkers deserve fair rates grounded in facts, and this new law gives us the leverage to push back against unchecked utility increases.”
Central Hudson has made repeated requests for rate increases in recent years. The PSC approved a 5% increase for the utility starting in July 2024, followed by another increase last August of more than 10% for electricity and more than 20% for gas over the next three years.
This is the latest effort by Jacobson and Hinchey to reform utility practices. Their previous legislation (A4055/S4234), which was passed into law last year, requires utilities to bill within three months of the end of a billing period, or they lose the ability to charge for that period.
The legislators added: “We thank Governor Hochul for signing this bill and joining us in our quest for fairer utility rates.”
The new bill will go into effect immediately.

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Workshops, farm visits, local fairs: Golden Fleece 4-H Club – one lamb at a time

Editor's note: This article is a reprint from the August Youth in Agriculture supplement.

By Haley McCord

The Golden Fleece 4-H Sheep Club is more than just a group of young livestock enthusiasts—it's a tight-knit farming family where learning, leadership, and responsibility take center stage. Based in Dutchess County, this 4-H club focuses on raising and showing sheep, but the impact goes far beyond the barn.

Members, ranging from five years old to high school seniors, get hands-on experience in caring for sheep, including feeding, preparing their animal for show and health management. Through workshops, farm visits, and local fairs, these young learners develop skills in animal husbandry and gain confidence in public speaking, record-keeping, and teamwork.

A core part of the Golden Fleece experience is participation in county and state fairs, where members showcase their animals and compete in showmanship and market classes. These events offer a chance to demonstrate hard work and dedication while learning how to handle pressure and communi-

cate with judges and peers.

But the club isn't all work. The Golden Fleece 4-H Sheep Club also emphasizes fun, service, and community. Members often participate in service projects such as food drives and educational outreach at schools they go to. Club meetings blend learning with camaraderie, creating a welcoming environment for everyone, regardless of experience level.

Some members who do not have animals on their property are still given a chance to engage in our club meetings to gain knowledge and experience with our members.

Guided by committed adult leaders and supported by local agricultural organizations, the Golden Fleece 4-H Sheep Club continues to be a cornerstone of youth development in the area. Alumni frequently credit their time in the club for helping them develop lifelong skills in leadership and responsibility by teaching our members about important skills they will carry on with themselves in this program.

As agriculture evolves, the Golden Fleece 4-H Sheep Club remains a proud example of how tradition and innovation can thrive together—one lamb at a time.

New Year's Eve Millbrook 2025 to offer music, magic and community

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performs in one of them (The Hammerhead Horns), and also serves on the Millbrook Arts Group board of directors.

The Hammerhead Horns is a five-piece band based in the Capital District, where Button and his wife used to live before coming to Millbrook.

"We play roots, ragtime, barrelhouse blues, a little gospel and swing music," he said. "We're very deep seated in the New Orleans street music groove. We're equally at home with Bessie Smith and Clarence Smith and with people like Ruth Brown, and we write our own music. It works out really well."

The Hammerhead Horns is a relatively new band, but four of the band members played in a popular Albany-area group call the Sharks and have known each other quite a long time.

"My wife and I lived in the Albany area for our careers [Button directed the Jazz Program at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute for three decades]. My wife is from Dutchess County, and when we retired we moved to Millbrook. ... [and] decided to do some volunteer work."

Enter Millbrook Arts Group. Button joined the board of directors, and he was asked to schedule some street performances for the Fall in Love with Millbrook community event a few years ago. He called one of his old buddy's from the Sharks, who agreed to play only if Button played, too. Turns out, they had a lot of fun.

"That became The Hammerhead Horns," Button said. "The Fall in Love with Millbrook festival was their first gig."

The band has been highlighted on WMHT's "AHA! A House for Arts Showcase." See <https://www.hh.horns.com/> and visit their Facebook page to learn more about them.

Button booked two other high-energy ensembles to get things moving. Nite Train (<https://nitetrainband.com/>) is an award-winning blues band from the Capital District.

"They've got a little pedigree," said Button. "They played at the Millbrook Farmers Market, that's why I picked them. They seemed to be very popular. Everyone does seem to respond positively to the blues."

Rounding out the roster is Miss Paula and the Twang Busters (<https://www.facebook.com/Twangbusters/>), "kind of a Texas swing band," said Button.

"We're doing a face-off: [The Hammerhead Horns are] on one end of Lyall Hall; we'll play a half-hour set, then pass it off to Miss Paula," Button said, adding that he'd like to generate some local interest in swing dancing.

"It's great for physical health," he said. "We'll go up to Kingston or Albany to do a swing dance; they start at 7-ish, and for two-and-a-half hours these people do not stop [dancing]. It's fun to watch."

The bands are on half-hour intervals from 4 to 7 p.m. Around 6:30, all the musicians will get together for a three- to four-song encore.

"I've always liked the whole idea of watching a concert with two to three bands, and at the end everyone gets together," Button said, adding "the venues are unique and acoustically gorgeous."

To amp up the festivities, there will be a sub-theme for the evening.

"We're treating it as a very early Mardi Gras festival," said Button. "There'll be beads flying around and waving handkerchiefs."

Additional entertainment and activities for all ages includes:

- The Bubble Bus will fill the village with bubbles, color, and laughter;
- Magic show by Cain Magic, featuring interactive tricks and illusions;
- Puppet performances that delight kids and adults alike;
- Crêpes Royale will serve warm, delicious sweet crêpes all evening long;
- The Grumbling Gryphons performing "Anansi: The Trickster Spider";
- Community activities at the venues hosting events;
- Balloon twisters, face painting and more.

Food and drink will be available to purchase at several locations in the Village.

Admission to the venues is a suggested \$5 donation, by purchasing a New Year's Eve Millbrook button. Each year a new button is designed by a student in the Millbrook Central School District. This year's design is by Lydia Kascak.

Buttons are available at Merritt Bookstore, Reardon Briggs, Hunt & Harvest, Millbrook Antiques Center; and also at the Thorne Center on Dec. 31 only.

Visit <https://millbrookrotary.org/> for updates to the schedule and more information.



Featured entertainment for New Year's Eve Millbrook 2025 includes, from top, The Hammerhead Horns, Nite Train, Miss Paula & the Twangbusters, and Cain Magic. Courtesy photos



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Arlington students & ‘Santa Joe’ spread cheer at Office for Aging

School Bus driver “Santa Joe” Torres and Arlington Central School District Union Vale Middle School Flute Orchestra led by Music Director Kriss Rizzo made their annual visit to spread holiday cheer to staff and residents of Dutchess County Office for the Aging (OFA) on Dec. 17.

This year, many seniors sang along as the students played music. There were other fun and exciting moments, such as - When Seniors asked the students to perform a rendition of Silent Night and Rizzo gave a solo performance on a violin.

This year was even more special with the help of the 4th grade students of Joseph D'Aquanni West Road Intermediate School and their teachers. These students created more than 40 Christmas Cards in two days.

Also, Santa Joe and his two student elves, Kayla Miller and Saneih Stephenson, presented residents with a handmade Christmas Card made by Mrs. Cory's class.

Dutchess County Office for the Aging Director Todd Tancredi said, “We always appreciate ‘Santa Joe,’ the young Union Vale Middle School musicians and their teacher, Ms. Kristina Rizzo, for sharing their time, talents and holiday spirit with our older adults. Intergenerational experiences like these are invaluable to both the seniors and the students, benefiting all involved and exemplifying this season of giving.”



Dutchess County Office for the Aging Director Todd Tancredi left, is joined by Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino, center, and OFA volunteers staff members. Right: Music Director Kriss Rizzo of Union Vale Middle School and Santa Joe Torres are pictured with four students who have been part of the holiday visits for three consecutive years. *Courtesy photos*



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News Group**



Cancer support groups for Jan. announced

Below is a list of Support Connection’s Support Groups this January for those impacted by breast, ovarian, and any gynecological cancer.

Jan. 5: Metastatic Breast Cancer Support Group, 7-8 p.m., via Zoom

Jan. 7: Breast, Ovarian and Gynecological Cancer Post Treatment Support Group, 7-8 p.m., via Zoom

Jan. 14: Offered Via Zoom – Ovarian and Gynecological Cancer Support Group, 7-8 p.m., via Zoom

Jan. 12: Breast Cancer Support Group-(Hybrid Format- IN Person and ZOOM videoconference option), 7-8 p.m., at NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital

Jan. 28: Breast and Ovarian Cancer Support Group-(Hybrid Format- IN Person and ZOOM videoconference

option) Soul Ryders Office

They have many other support groups for women with breast, ovarian, or other gynecological cancers. For details, please visit our calendar.

Advance registration is required for all groups. To register or to learn more, please call 914-962-6402 or 800-532-4290. Support Group meeting location for in person groups and/or Zoom login info will be provided to anyone who registers.

In addition to support groups, our professional Peer Counselors are available to provide unlimited one-on-one, individual support. Anyone dealing with breast, ovarian, or any other gynecological cancer can learn more by visiting www.supportconnection.org or by calling toll-free at 800-532-4290.

Town of Red Hook begins process to update Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Red Hook has begun a process to update its Comprehensive Plan. The comprehensive plan is a policy guidance document that identifies the goals and strategies that inform future decisions about zoning, land use, and other local policies and decision-making.

A comprehensive plan answers the question, “What do we want our town to look and feel like now and in the future?”

Red Hook’s current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1993, with minor revisions in 2011. The 1993 plan has played an important role in shaping the Red Hook we have today. Major themes of the plan include balancing growth with the needs of existing residents, maintaining the rural and historic character of the town, and preserving valuable agricultural land and natural resources.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee helps steer and support the development of an updated Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Red Hook. The committee works closely with the Town Board and the selected Comprehensive Plan consultant to ensure that the planning process is welcoming, inclusive and reflects best practices for community engagement, and that the

resulting Comprehensive Plan incorporates Smart Growth principles and accurately represents the priorities of the Town.

The Steering Committee consists of 10 members who represent a wide range of perspectives, experiences, backgrounds and interest groups in town and are familiar with municipal government, planning and public engagement. The Villages of Red Hook and Tivoli and Bard College may appoint liaisons to the committee. A member of the Red Hook Town Board also serves as a liaison.

Steering Committee members and liaisons include Laurie Husted, Dennis Kanuk, Jennifer Mañón, Chuck Mead, Hart Migdal, Sam Phelan, Tricia Reed, Ben Shute, Julia Solomon (Chair), Doug Strawinski, Bard College Liaison Taun Toay, Village of Red Hook Liaison Melkorka Kjarval, Village of Tivoli Liaison Sarah Imboden and Red Hook Town Board Liaison Christine Kane.

The Steering Committee will meet monthly throughout the comprehensive plan update process and meetings are open to the public. More information can be found at redhookny.gov/578/Town-of-Red-Hook-Comprehensive-Plan.

Now accepting students for the upcoming spring semester!

Giving back through life-changing experiences!

The Ridge School is a New York State Board of Regents Accredited School, Not-for-profit organization located in Dutchess County, New York dedicated to the creation of a rich and positive setting for students who are not succeeding in their current educational placements. The Ridge School is a day school for students who are diagnosed with High Functioning Autism.

845-505-5483

845-266-4283

The Ridge School

www.ridgeschool.org



Parisi thanks Legislature for restoring DA staff positions; Serino defends line-item vetoes

Compiled by Curtis Schmidt

As Dutchess County District Attorney Anthony Parisi thanked the Dutchess County Legislature for overriding County Executive Sue Serino's line-item vetoes last week and restoring staffing positions in the District Attorney's Office, Serino also gave reasons for her veto.

"These positions are essential to protecting the people of Dutchess County," District Attorney Parisi said in a press release. "By overriding the veto, the Legislature put public safety first and ensured that our office has the resources necessary to prosecute violent crime, support victims, and hold offenders accountable."

Serino initially presented a \$651 million budget with no layoffs and a 1.8 percent spending increase. During the legislative review process, lawmakers amended the budget, increasing spending and utilizing \$7.2 million from the county's fund balance.

As part of that process, Parisi addressed the Legislature to request funding for nine positions necessary to meet the growing demands imposed by New York State's revised Discovery Laws, while also allowing his Office to be proactive in protecting vulnerable populations and pursuing effective, data-driven prosecutions. Acknowledging the county's fiscal constraints, DA Parisi said he worked collaboratively with lawmak-

ers and identified what he sees as the five most critical positions required to maintain core prosecutorial functions. The Legislature unanimously approved an amendment restoring funding for those five positions in the District Attorney's Office.

In addressing the members of the Legislature, Serino said, "Your budget amendments, for the most part, use Fund Balance or the Community Benefit fund, which are one-time revenues, to fund or add funds for one-time expenses including grant programs such as the Housing Trust Fund and a new Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program. However, the amendments to add five positions to the District Attorney's Office using fund balance creates new, ongoing operating costs without recurring revenue to pay for them – and kicks the tax burden down the road to next year's budget."

She added, "My vetoes offer a compromise – keeping two of the positions for the District Attorney, which can be supported by the \$200,000 in recurring property tax revenue that you amended into the budget. However, without an ongoing revenue source, I could not support the additional three positions. How do you justify adding five positions for just one agency, when across the board, there are 10 deleted positions and 17.5 positions held vacant, with no other department adding positions?"

"Some will try to paint this as not supporting public safety, (but) nothing is fur-

ther from the truth. I will always do what is right for this County. This budget protects our residents. Public safety is not limited to the District Attorney's Office. Public safety includes making sure roads are plowed so first responders can arrive quickly, Child Protective Services to help children in abusive situations, Deputy Sheriffs on road patrol and responding to incidents of domestic violence, the Drug Taskforce getting drugs off our streets, Probation monitoring offenders released from jail, our Emergency Response and so much more. This budget accounts for all aspects of public safety and provides a fair and balanced approach."

Parisi commented, "Adequate staffing ensures timely evidence processing and disclosure while strengthening efforts to combat elder abuse and financial fraud, disrupt repeat and violent offenders, and support smart prosecutions that prioritize public safety, accountability, and prevention."

"I am grateful that the Legislature recognized that public safety is not an abstract concept, but a daily responsibility that requires adequate staffing and resources," Parisi said. "Unfortunately, the County Executive's vetoes failed to acknowledge the real-world consequences these cuts would have had on victims, law enforcement, and the safety of our communities. These positions are not optional; they are vital for justice to be done and our community to be safe."

While noting that she has been proud

to work with the District Attorney in expanding public safety initiatives since he took office last year, Serino also stated, "Between authorized positions and grant funded temp positions – the District Attorney's Office has more positions than ever before. Even with the vetoes I have made, his office will have 73 positions in 2026 compared to the 68 positions when he took office last year."

"But I also have a responsibility to our taxpayers, one I take seriously, and that is why I could not in good conscience approve his original request for an additional nine positions and an overall increase of \$2.2 million, which would have increased the tax levy 2% for his department alone."

"We have a lot coming at us in 2026, as I have already outlined to you – including millions of dollars in new costs for the CSEA contract, and right after that is the DCSEA contract (our corrections officers). So we have to be thinking about these future costs coming our way."

"Again, this is about compromise. This provides the DA with two additional positions funded by ongoing revenue, while still remaining under the property tax cap. You share in the responsibility for fiscal sustainability. We will need to compromise in the new year to work together to do what's right for our community, while minimizing the impact on taxpayers. Sustaining these vetoes is a good first step, and I look forward to working together in the new year."

Hinchey, McDonald bill to expand access to mental health courts signed into law

ALBANY, NY – Senator Michelle Hinchey (SD 41) and Assemblymember John T. McDonald (AD 108) recently announced that their bill to expand access to mental health courts in New York (S.8312/A.7563) has been signed into law. The signing comes a little over a month after the legislators joined DAs and mental health advocates from the Hudson Valley and Capital Region to call for the bill's approval, following its unanimous passage in both the Senate and Assembly.

Mental health courts focus on treating the underlying causes of behavior, diverting defendants to appropriate care by linking individuals with services like therapy and case management, which can break the cycle of repeat offenses and strengthen long-term public safety. Under

the new law, defendants with mental illness who are arrested and moving through the court system can have their cases transferred to a neighboring county's mental health court if their own county doesn't have one. Transfers can proceed only when all parties agree: the defense, district attorneys from both counties, and the receiving court, to ensure a fair and collaborative process.

Hinchey said, "We're thrilled the Governor has signed our bill to broaden access to mental health courts, opening the door to safer communities and a better path forward for folks who need treatment. No one should be denied the chance to get mental health care that can change their future and prevent repeat offenses simply because of where they



State Sen. Michelle Hinchey (at podium) and Assemblymember John T. McDonald (standing behind Hinchey to the right) advocate for S.8312/A.7563 at the NYS Capitol on Wednesday, Oct. 29, with the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York; District Attorneys from Albany, Ulster, and Columbia counties; representatives from the National Alliance on Mental Illness; and legislators, including Senators Patricia Fahy, Jake Ashby, and Assemblymember Gabriella Romero. Courtesy photo

live if their county doesn't have a mental health court. Our new law will help create a more equitable justice system that keeps our communities safe, and we're grateful to have the support of the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York, DAs from across the state, and NAMI, whose partnership brought this to the finish line."

McDonald said, "The new law will expand access to mental health courts (MHCs) and, in turn, increase access to treatment options for those living with mental illness. Studies have found that graduates of mental health court programs tend to show reduced recidivism. This measure will improve public safety, and I appreciate the support from the District Attorneys Association, Public Defenders, and mental health organizations."

District Attorneys Association President Mary Pat Donnelly said, "Expanded access to mental health courts with the opportunity to transfer eligible cases keeps the focus on treatment and

support, while promoting rehabilitation. It also alleviates pressure on the criminal justice system."

Dutchess County District Attorney Anthony Parisi said, "Today marks a significant step forward for our communities as this mental-health court bill is signed into law. By approaching mental-health challenges with compassion, accountability, and real support, we are giving people a path toward healing. I want to extend my deepest thanks to Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember McDonald for their leadership and dedication to this meaningful legislation."

Ulster County District Attorney Manny Nneji said, "This is astounding news. Those of us dealing with mental health policies and issues are grateful to Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember McDonald for championing this legislation that combines accountability with empathy and treatment for those who come into our criminal justice system with mental health needs."

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Save time by remembering it

Jim Croce wished he could save time in a bottle, but knew that days couldn't last forever. My creased and pin-holed 2025 wall calendar, with its scribbled appointments and social events tells me the same: Another year will fade away.

And like Decembers of yore, there are prompts to reflect on events of the past year. Whether we are at work or at gatherings with friends and family, we are bombarded with the "year in review," slideshows, or stories and tales of the past year's obstacles and achievements. This is also when the media assails us with plays of the biggest hit-songs and count-downs.

But year's end doesn't have to be about what famous name was on the Billboard top singles list or who sold the most gizmos, doo-dads, or thingamajigs. Sometimes "saving time in a bottle" can be a group effort to inform the future about events of the past or an individual's way of commemorating personal bests.

Time capsules from notable figures

One long-term group effort began when influential men, Samuel Adams and Paul Revere, placed a time capsule within the cornerstone of the new Massachusetts State House in 1795. Their capsule contained coins, a plaque, newspapers, and other items. Since its original placement by those men, it was removed in 1855, and again in 2014. In 2015, state officials resealed the capsule in place, with coins from the current era and a plaque.

The artist Andy Warhol created over 600 Time Capsules with various objects that can be described as a deconstructed scrapbook. The items contained in his Time Capsules included everyday ephemera, valuable artwork, and weird items, like nail clippings and signed underwear. They can be viewed at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.

Time capsules from Earth

NASA has included time capsules on several of its spacecraft to communicate the story of Earth and humanity to potential extraterrestrial life or future humans. The Voyager Space Probes contained records with natural and human sounds, music from various cultures and eras, greetings in 55 languages, images, and messages. The Lucy Spacecraft was launched to study Jupiter's Trojan asteroids, which are remnants from our solar system's formation 4.5 billion years ago. Its Prime Mission will conclude in 2033, but Lucy will continue to orbit the Sun, for, perhaps, millions of years. Lucy carries a plaque with data about Earth, poems, songs, and speeches. It is hoped that future humans, or other intelligent life, might one day recover it as a relic of our 21st-century exploration.

Personal time capsule

Objects of personal importance can be preserved digitally. But a physical time capsule requires a weatherproof container, such as an aluminum or stainless steel can, or a sealed PVC tube. Include only non-perishable items that represent your



Make a time capsule to create a snapshot of the current era. Photo by Francine Wizner

life, interests, and the current era.

To prepare the items for long-term storage, use acid-free paper and a graphite pencil or archival pen for any written documents. All paper items and photos need to be in individual plastic sleeves or envelopes to protect them from potential chemical damage. Metal fasteners, paper clips, and staples should be avoided. Add silica gel packets to absorb any moisture inside the container.

Once all items are packed and the container is tightly sealed, it should be marked with the current date. Choose a safe, stable location to store it. If burying it, the hole should be in a well-drained spot, at least 4 feet deep. Place the sealed capsule inside a plastic bag before burial. Record the capsule's location and the opening date on your calendar, in a digital document, or in your will, to ensure it won't be forgotten.

Developing children's interest in time capsules

As a fun and educational endeavor, a time capsule can be a collaborative project that connects a learning topic to children's lives and the future. I like the idea of scientific research and predictions about future discoveries.

Students could write letters to their future selves about science and their lives. The letters might include students' current scientific interests, questions they have, and what they hope to know in the future. What future advancements or technologies might exist when the capsule is opened?

Create a snapshot of the current era. Include a current newspaper, with a focus on scientific news, a new invention, or scientific event like an eclipse. Add a common piece of technology or a detailed description and image of one. Include wrappers from popular foods, trending media, and other items that reflect current consumer science and culture.

Personal information will also pique student interest. A class time capsule could catalog student data, such as their current heights, and tracings of their hand- or footprints. Photos of students, the classroom, and science projects also can provide a visual history of the year. Once labeled, sealed, and stored, don't forget to record where the time capsule is located so it can be found in the future.

Here is a way of creating a digital science time capsule for every month of the year: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/NEW-YEARS-DAY-SCIENCE-TIME-CAPSULE-WEB-QUEST-ENRICHMENT-7598301>

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.pleasantvalleymaplelodging.com>.

CORRECTION

The Hudson Valley Naturalist sincerely apologizes for her error in the Dec. 10 column. The Winter Solstice was on December 21, 2025, not the 25th as written.

-Francine Wizner

DOT-TO-DOT PUZZLE

See page 15 for finished puzzle (no peeking!)

Sets
Stop your line after completing each set, then skip to the next set and start your line again.

- 1 thru 6
- 7 thru 10
- 11 thru 26
- 27 thru 36
- 37 thru 51
- 52 thru 66
- 67 thru 82
- 83 thru 105

By David Kalvitis © 2005 Monkeying Around

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Wonderland of Lights runs through Dec. 28 at Fairgrounds

The Dutchess County Fairgrounds presents a Winter Festival highlighting the 5th annual Wonderland of Lights drive-thru Light Show.

The Fairgrounds has joined with North Pole Productions, celebrating its 25th Anniversary producing memorable experiences for thousands of families throughout the United States.

The Drive-Thru Light Show has become a family tradition for many of our friends and neighbors. The month-long celebration of Holiday Magic will run until December 28th. The event will span the Dutchess County Fairgrounds located at 6636 US-9 in Rhinebeck.

Tammy Peters, President of North Pole Productions said, "We are happy to once again be working with the team of professionals at the Dutchess County Fairgrounds. Our 5th Annual Drive-Thru Light Show will have many new light displays and offer something for the young and 'the young at heart.' We look forward to welcoming families back for another unforgettable year."

A portion of the proceeds will benefit The Make-A-Wish Foundation.

For schedule and to purchase tickets visit the website: thewonderlandoflights.com.



Photos courtesy of the Wonderland of Lights' Facebook page



We wish you a Merry Christmas!

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 1
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A & E CALENDAR

Through Dec. 28: Holiday Tours, Wilderstein Historic Site, 330 Morton Rd., Rhinebeck. Wilderstein is open for guided tours this holiday season. Come and enjoy festive Yuletide decor showcased through the mansion. Tours: Fri.-Sun., at noon, 1, 2 & 3 p.m. Tour includes the history of the family, landscape, exterior design of the mansion, first and second floors, and video (there are multiple steps, not ADA accessible). Admission \$20 per person; purchase tickets upon arrival. Suggested arrival 15 minutes early. (845) 876-4818 or www.wilderstein.org



Through Dec. 28: Wonderland of Lights, Dutchess County Fairgrounds, Rte. 9, Rhinebeck. Drive-through experience featuring hundreds of dazzling displays to delight the entire family. Hours: Thurs. & Sun., 5-9 p.m.; Fri. & Sat., 5-9:30 p.m. Tickets are available online or at the gate. www.thewonderlandoflights.com

Through Dec. 30: "A Gilded Age Christmas," Staatsburgh State Historic Site, Old Post Rd., Staatsburg. Guests can reserve a timed-entry stroll through two floors of the mansion at their own pace to enjoy the festive decorations. Docents will be stationed in the rooms to answer questions about the house and its residents, the Mills family. Open for timed entry, by reservation only, on Thursdays-Sundays (closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day & New Year's Eve). Payment is at the door. Make reservations via <https://millsfriends.org/visit/>.



Through Jan. 3: "Winter Glow," Heritage Financial Park, 1500 Rte. 9D, Wappingers Falls. Mile-long drive-thru journey of dazzling holiday light displays is perfectly synced to festive music. Open daily, 5-9 p.m. (except Christmas Day). Tickets & more info: <https://winterglowexperience.com/wappinger/>.

Dec. 31: Ars Choralis "A Quilt of Courage," Old Dutch Church, 272 Wall St., Kingston. Free New Year's Eve concert in partnership with the City of Kingston and Old Dutch Church, 6 p.m. Inspired by the lives of Hudson Valley people who changed the course of history in this country, Ars Choralis celebrates their selfless dedication to improving the lives of others. Cash donations accepted to benefit People's Place of Kingston. ArsChoralis.org.



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Sale Ends 12/31/25



Sing along with Luigi

Some popular holiday carols, re-imagined for a Coppola Christmas.

Well, it’s that time of year. Christmas carols and songs blaring on the radio and in the background in the restaurant. I started to think: What if the songs had an Italian slant to them?

I started laughing to myself imagining the songs and how they would sound. Then, naturally, my mind went to what a funny article that would be.

So ... here it is. My take on Italian Christmas Carols. Oh, and enjoy my recipe for Christmas Eve. Buon Natale!

Silenta Nighta

Silent nighta, noisy night,
Nonna snores — what a sight!
Panettone and vino too,
Papa’s singing an opera tune.
Family shouting all day,
Christmas the Italian way!

Silent night, pasta night,
Twelve more fishes in sight.
Cannoli stacked up high on the tray,
Zia says she’s on a diet — “Not today!”
Espresso keeps us awake,
Buon Natale, let’s celebrate!

Jingla Bells

Mama’s in the kitchen,
Cooking Christmas Eve,
Pasta, fish, and meatballs,
So much food you won’t believe!

Papa’s pouring wine,
Nonna shouts “Mangia!” loud,
Everyone is talking,
All at once — what a crowd!

Ohhh...

Jingla bells, jingla bells,
Pass the Parmesan!
‘O sole mio’ on the stereo,
Sing it if you can — hey!

Jingla bells, jingla bells,
Espresso all the way,
Oh what fun it is to eat
For twelve straight hours today!

Decka the Halls

Decka the halls with bowls of pasta,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-lasagna!
Nonna says you must eat faster,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-lasagna!

See the table piled with fishes,
Fa-la-la, fa-la-la, fa-la-la!
Papa pours more wine — he wishes,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-lasagna!

Family shouting, hands are flying,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-lasagna!
Opera voices, no denying,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-lasagna!

Eat cannoli, sip espresso,
Fa-la-la, fa-la-la, fa-la-la!
Buon Natale, tutti presto,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-lasagna!

**CIOPPINO:
A CHRISTMAS EVE TRADITION.**

Ingredients

Seafood

- 2 lobster tails, meat removed and cut in pieces
- 1 1/2 lbs. large shrimp (16 to 20),

meat removed

- 8 Littleneck clams, scrubbed
- 1 lb. Mussels, scrubbed
- 1 lb. cod filet, cut into pieces
- 6 sea scallops, cut in half
- 1 large king crab leg, cut in 2 or 3 pieces

Cioppino Broth

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 6 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 large fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- 2 stalks thinly sliced celery
- 1 carrot, peeled and finely diced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes (or to taste)
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 ½ cups dry red wine (Chianti works well for this)

- 1 32 oz. jar Coppola’s Marinara sauce
- 1 medium pinch saffron threads
- 3 cups seafood stock
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 handful fresh basil, finely chopped, for garnish

Instructions

- Add olive oil to a large Dutch Oven pot over medium high heat on the stove-top and heat until shimmering. Add garlic and onions and cook until garlic just starts to brown. Add butter to stop the garlic from burning.
- Add fennel, celery, carrots, bay leaf,

oregano, red pepper flakes, thyme sprigs, salt and black pepper stirring, until vegetables are softened, about 5 minutes.

- Add wine and boil until reduced about 3 - 4 minutes. Add shellfish stock, marinara sauce and saffron. Simmer, covered, 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
- Add crab, clams, mussels to the pot, cover and simmer until clams just open, about 5-10 minutes. Discard any clams or mussels that do not open after 7-10 minutes.
- Add the lobster, scallops and halibut pieces on top. Simmer, covered, until just cooked through, about 5 - 10 minutes.
- Add the shrimp last. Simmer, covered, until just cooked through, about 3- 5 minutes.
- Test for seasoning. Add more black pepper, salt and red pepper flakes if desired. Gently stir in parsley and basil. Discard bay leaf and thyme sprigs.
- To serve Cioppino, place fish pieces in bottom of shallow soup bowl or pasta plate. Ladle the broth on top. Serve immediately with grilled ciabatta bread on the side

Luigi Coppola is one of five brothers born to Francesca and Antonio Coppola. The Coppola family came to America from Naples, Italy in 1954. Antonio and his brothers opened their first restaurant in Poughkeepsie in 1961. Luigi and his brothers Nick, John, Antonio and Vincent have carried on the family tradition in the way their parents taught them, using classic recipes taught to them at their apron strings. Visit their website at www.coppolas.net.

EXHIBITIONS

Carole J. Wolf Gallery, 45 Pershing Avenue, Poughkeepsie. **Through Jan. 10, 2026:** The works of five Hudson Valley teens are featured in The Art Effect's Senior Project Exhibition. Featured artists in this year's show represent five different Hudson Valley communities: Phoenix Barra-Greenmyer of Middletown, Kenny Gray of Holmes, Sadie Pomerantz of Rhinebeck, Chanel Reed of Poughkeepsie, and Virginia Zengen of Stanfordville. Viewings by appointment, Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-4 p.m. thearteffect.org/senior-project or (845) 471-7477.

Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center, 9 &12 Vassar St., Poughkeepsie. **Through December:** Featured in the Victorian Gallery at 9 Vassar St. is accomplished landscape painter Arianne Wack. At 12 Vassar St., internationally known artist Elise Pittelman presents her collection of paintings in the Hancock Gallery, and in the Reception Gallery two artists share the space - award-winning documentary photographer Alfons Rodriguez presenting his exhibit "The Melting Age" and painter Maria Krasnopolsky whose plein air series, "Renditions," is showcased. Visitors must call the Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center Office at (845) 486-4571 for access. More info: cunneen-hackett.org

Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, 124 Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie. **Through Feb. 1, 2026:** "Chronostasia: Select Acquisitions 2020–2025," an exhibition that brings together more than s60 works acquired over the past five years. Closing Program: Thurs., Jan. 29, 5:30 p.m., in Taylor 102, artist talk with Cecilia Vicuña. (845) 437-5632 or <https://www.vassar.edu/theloeb>

Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, William J. vanden Heuvel Gallery, 4097 Albany Post Rd. (Rte. 9), Hyde Park. **Through July 7, 2026:** Special exhibition, "Signature Moments: Letters from the Famous, the Infamous, and Everyday Americans," During their extraordinary public careers, the Roosevelts interacted with a "who's who" of the 20th century. "Signature Moments" opens the FDR Library's archives and museum for an insider's view of the remarkable – and sometimes surprising – variety of personal exchanges with an amazing array of famous (and a few infamous) people, including golden age movie stars, queens and kings, scientists, and legendary military heroes. Visitors will see signatures of literary giants, celebrated artists, world leaders, and, of course, prominent politicians and political activists – including seven American presidents. Regular Library and Museum admission applies to view the exhibit. www.fdrlibrary.org

Henry A. Wallace Center, FDR Library & Museum, 4097 Albany Post Rd. (Rte. 9), Hyde Park. **Through Jan. 4, 2026:** "Hudson Valley Ice Yachts," display of authentic Hudson Valley Ice Yachts, presented by the Hudson River Ice Yacht Preservation Trust and

Hudson River Ice Yacht Club. The boats will be on display -- with full rigging -- in the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center, during regular operating hours (usually 9 a.m.-5 p.m.) Free public event. www.fdrlibrary.org

The Inn at Bellefield, 25 Old Vineyard Place, Hyde Park. Through January 2026: Arts Mid-Hudson presents an exhibition of alcohol ink paintings by Linda Lavin. Her semi-abstract images often echo impressionistic landscapes, alive with flow and movement. Working without brushes, she embraces the fluid, unpredictable techniques of alcohol ink on impervious surfaces such as tile, glass, and yupo paper, creating works that are both dynamic and distinctive. More info at artsmidhudson.org/art-at-the-bellefield.

LAND Gallery, 30 Charles Colman Blvd., Pawling. **Through December:** "Journeys: Chasing Light in the Catskills," photographs by Jane Haslam. (845) 490-2281 or www.landgalleryonline.com

Morton Memorial Library, 82 Kelly St., Rhinecliff. **Through Dec. 30:** Floral Fantasy & Junk Art: Collage Art for Holiday Gifts. (845) 876-2903

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Start the New Year with a hike

Governor Kathy Hochul recently encouraged New Yorkers to start their year off with wellness at the forefront by participating in a First Day Hike for free. New Yorkers will have an opportunity to “Get Offline, and Get Outside” this holiday season, by celebrating the New Year at state parks, historic sites, natural areas, canal trails, environmental education centers and various other public lands across the Empire State on Jan. 1, 2026. The 15th annual First Day Hikes program offers varied hike options for people of all experience levels at 117 locations across the state.

“Kick off the New Year in the great outdoors and put your mental and physical wellness first by joining our fellow New Yorkers for First Day Hikes,” Hochul said. “A fantastic and affordable tradition, this special event allows us to find comfort in the winter beauty of our public lands while also creating opportunities to connect with our communities, friends, and families, distraction free.”

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Canal Corporation are partnering to host the many walks and hikes taking place throughout the state as part of the 15th annual First Day Hikes program. To keep the event affordable for families in the holiday season, the normal parking fee at state parks and sites will be waived on Jan. 1.

NYS Parks Acting Commissioner Kathy Moser said, “First Day Hikes offer a welcome break from the holiday rush and a chance to reconnect with nature and one another. This annual event encourages you to refocus on your mental and physical well-being and start the New Year on a healthy, positive note. Ring in 2026 by getting offline, getting outside, and exploring New York’s state parks and historic sites on January 1.”

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Amanda Lefton said, “Participating in a First Day Hike is a great and affordable way to get offline and get outside to experience winter recreation in New York State.” Lefton added, “Connect with nature and join us at more than 110 events at State Parks, environmental education centers, campgrounds, wildlife management areas across the state.”

The First Day Hikes program advances Hochul’s Get Offline, Get Outside initiative which encourages New York kids and families to log off of their phones and put their mental and physical



Start the New Year with a First Day Hike at one of New York State's participating parks. *Courtesy photo*

health first as they head outside to get fresh air, play sports, enjoy nature, and see everything else our state has to offer. First Day Hikes is an important component of this initiative as it showcases the various winter recreation opportunities afforded to New Yorkers of all ages.

Most hikes are beginner and typically ranging from one to five miles depending on the location and trail conditions. This year, there are more than 125 individual hikes being offered at state parks, historic sites, DEC natural areas and environmental education centers, canal trails, and other public lands.

Hiking is one of the many ways children can participate in DEC’s “Get Offline, Get Outside Challenge” to help address the youth mental health crisis by encouraging teens to engage in interesting and exciting outdoor activities. For more information about the challenge, including suggested locations to help complete activities, upcoming events, resources and associated recommendations, visit the DEC’s Get Offline, Get Outside Challenge webpage.

Many First Day Hikes are led in partnership with ‘Friends’ groups who are stewards on State lands, as well as other partners across the state. This year, DEC and State Parks are partnering with the New York State Outdoor Guides Association (NYSOGA) on the event, to offer even more hiking opportunities to the public with several First Day Hikes led by New York State licensed guide

professionals. NYSOGA represents guides from every part of New York State and helps provide opportunities for the public to engage with the outdoors and try something new via fun and educational guided recreation experiences.

Hudson Valley/Catskills

Balsam Mountain (DEC), Pine Hill; peter@catskillmountainclub.org

Bear Mountain State Park, Bear Mountain; 845-786-2701

Catskills Visitor Center – Interpretive Loop and Upper Esopus Fire Tower, Mount Tremper; 845-688-3369

Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park, Yorktown Heights; 914-245-4434

Giant Ledge and Panther Mountain (DEC), Big Indian; smbelectric72@yahoo.com

Huckleberry Point (DEC), Elka Park; hoakhill@gmail.com

Hudson Highlands State Park / Little Stony Point, Cold Spring; 845-265-3175

Kaaterskill Rail Trail, DEC’s Kaaterskill Wild Forest, Haines Falls; mthsdirector@mths.org

Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Kerhonkson; 845-255-0752

Minnewaska State Park Preserve - Sam’s Point Area, Cragmoor; 845-647-7989

Neversink River Unique Area – Mullet Falls (DEC), Forestburgh; 908-447-8725

North-South Lake Campground, DEC’s Kaaterskill Wild Forest, Haines Falls; 480-381-9405

Olana State Historic Site, Hudson; 518-751-0344 (2 hikes)

Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park - Croton Gorge Park, Cortlandt; 914-693-5259

Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site, Yonkers; 914-965-4027

Red Hill Fire Tower (DEC), Claryville; 518-810-8977

Rockefeller State Park Preserve - Rockwood Hall, Sleepy Hollow; 914-631-1470

Schunnemunk State Park, New Windsor; 845-351-5907

Staatsburgh State Historic Site, Staatsburg; 845-889-8851

Sterling Forest State Park, Tuxedo; 845-351-5907

Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center, DEC’s Friends Support Group, Wappingers Falls; 845-831-3800, register

Taconic State Park - Copake Falls Area, Copake Falls; 518-329-3993

Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park, Highland; 845-834-2867

Willowemoc Wild Forest – Frick Pond (DEC), Rockland; 845-693-4181

A list of all New York State First Day Hikes, location details, format, advance registration requirements, and additional information can be found online for State Parks, DEC and Canals sites. Interested participants are encouraged to check the details of their preferred host site in advance and register if required.

\$542,000 in Changemaker Funding marks Community Foundation’s largest grant cycle ever

Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley (CFHV) has awarded its 2025 Community Grants, awarding a total of \$542,000 to nonprofits across Dutchess, Putnam and Ulster counties and marking the Foundation’s largest round of Community Grants ever. In Dutchess County, 55 local nonprofits have received a total of \$287,500, an unprecedented level of CFHV-driven support for the community.

This year’s Community Grant awards represent CFHV’s largest investment in both dollars and the number of nonprofits funded, reinforcing the foundation’s commitment to fueling innovative, high-impact programs that strengthen local communities.

“Over the past year, we listened closely to what people across the Hudson Valley care about most,” said Laura Washington, President & CEO of CFHV. “That community input guided this year’s

grants, helping us address the most pressing needs while continuing to support the wide range of programs that make this region such a special place to call home. We’re proud to award the largest Community Grants in our history and to stand with the organizations working every day to strengthen our communities.”

Community Foundations is extending its impact beyond funding by supporting Dutchess County nonprofits with essential educational resources and training. Through complimentary memberships to the Nonprofit Learning Lab, nonprofit leaders will gain access to expert guidance on fundraising, strategic planning, volunteer management and other critical skills. Monthly capacity-building workshops further strengthen organizational fundraising, governance and operations, communications, and financial management. These initiatives reflect

CFHV’s approach to philanthropy – providing nonprofits with both resources and expertise to expand their programs, launch new initiatives and amplify their impact across the community.

CFHV celebrated the 55 Dutchess County grantees at its annual changemaker event on December 11, 2025, at Unshattered, Inc. Awarded organizations include: Dutchess Outreach, Habitat for Humanity of Dutchess County, Hudson Valley Clubhouse, Fareground Community Kitchen, Red Hook Responds, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Camino al Exito Project for All, Art Effect, Teen Closet, Inc., DAY ONE Early Learning Community, Inc. New Pine Plains Herald, Pawling Free Library, Mid-Hudson Discovery Museum, Stony Kill Foundation, Grace Smith House, Community Action Partnership for Dutchess County, Mid-Hudson Works, I Am Beacon, Walkway Over the Hudson,

HUDSY Community Project, Upstate Films, Maya Gold Foundation, and many more.

“Unshattered is honored to be a recipient of a 2025 grant from the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley,” said Kelly Lyndgaard, Founder & CEO, Unshattered. “This support helps us achieve our mission of ending the addiction relapse cycle and helping those on their journey of recovery become good employees, neighbors, and community members. We are truly grateful for the opportunity to host this year’s Community Grants recipient recognition event and open our space to bring donors, nonprofits, and community members together.”

To discover how to support the CFHV mission, explore the full list of 2025 Community Grant recipients, or apply for a grant for yourself or your organization, visit CommunityFoundationsHV.org.

OBITUARIES

Richard Victor Contini



Richard Victor Contini of Salt Point, NY passed away on December 18, 2025 after a brief illness. He was born in Greenwich Village in Manhattan on March 12, 1954. The son of Victor Michael Contini and Josefine Wilhelmina (nee Landers) Contini, Richard grew up in Esopus, N.Y.

Richard was graduated from Saint Peters School and John A. Coleman Catholic High School in Kingston, NY. He was a graduate of Dutchess Community College. Richard was a parishioner of St. Stanislaus Koska Catholic Church in Pleasant Valley, NY.

Richard worked in the construction industry in his youth. Together with his uncle Orazio Contini they installed the flagstone and brick sidewalk around the Old Dutch Church and Ulster County Courthouse in Kingston, NY. He helped in the restoration of stone buildings and older homes throughout Ulster County. Richard built his home in Salt Point, NY in 1984. His ability to visualize and estimate projects made him a popular consultant in building materials sales.

A partner with his brother in BROCON Communications, Richard produced programs for the Archdiocese of New York's presence on a local television station in the early 1980s. Among their independent projects were The Wearing of the Gray, a history of New York City's famed 7th Regiment. He produced a history of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement at Graymoor, Garrison, NY. Richard helped produce A Storied River, a promotional program for the Hudson River Maritime Museum written by Howard Koch of Casablanca fame.

An avid equestrian, Richard enjoyed riding his horse Sherman and later Goldie early in the morning. He was a life member and served as president of the Landsman Kill Trail

Association. He enjoyed clearing riding trails for the club in northern Dutchess County.

Richard recently traveled to the Village of Mouacourt, France with his family to dedicate a monument to his father's WWII unit, the 121st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The Contini family commissioned the monument in cooperation with the village and the French Army. The dedication took place in October and included a French Army honor guard and an honor guard composed of 75 French reenactors of American WWII units. Richard rode in a WWII ambulance along the route his father, a senior medic, followed after the liberation of the Foret de Parroy.

As part of this last of many trips to visit family in Europe Richard joined his son Daniel, daughter Katie and grandson Donovan for a visit to Normandy where his father, Staff Sergeant Victor M. Contini, came ashore in the Summer of 1944. The trip ended with a visit to Paris and Notre Dame Cathedral, a favorite destination for Richard.

Richard was predeceased by his parents Victor and Josefine. He is survived by his children Richard F. Contini and partner Sarah at home, First Sergeant Daniel Contini, his wife Megan (Tanzillo) and daughter Autumn of Clinton Corners and daughter Kathryn and son Donovan of Maine; siblings Michael J. Contini and wife Vicki (Manuel) of Pasco, WA, Alexander F. Contini and wife Deborah (Morishita) Contini of Beekman, NY, and Katherina M. Contini of Esopus, NY; nieces Regina (Contini) and Neal Powers of Richland, WA, Christina (Contini) and Ben Heater of Ritzville, WA; and nephew Robert J Contini and Adrienne (Kutil) of Glenville, NY. He also leaves behind his good friend William Kahrs of Poughkeepsie.

Richard found comfort in his Catholic faith in the rough years following the departure of his wife.

Calling hours will be held on Friday, December 26 from 5-8pm at the McHoul Funeral Home, Inc., 895 Route 82, Hopewell Junction. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on December 27th at 10 AM in Saint Denis Catholic Church in Hopewell Junction followed by a graveside service at St. Denis Cemetery in Hopewell Junction.

Geraldine Herbst

Geraldine Herbst, 92, an area resident since 2014, died on December 12, 2025 at Archcare at Ferncliff in Rhinebeck. She had previously resided in the Bronx, Hopewell Junction and The Fountains at Millbrook.

Born in the Bronx on May 28, 1933, she was the daughter of the late Benjamin and Marion (Barry) Sommer. Geraldine received her Master's Degree from Iona University and was employed as the Director of the Department of Telecommunications for the

City of New York.

Geraldine had been a parishioner of St. Denis Church, and a member of the St. Denis/St. Columba/St. Kateri Widow and Widowers Group, the East Fishkill Seniors and the Beekman Seniors.

Geraldine was predeceased by her husband, Donald Herbst; her children, Eugene Herbst and Doris Herbst; and her brother-in-law, James Drum.

Survivors include her daughters, Tracy Moccio and Patricia Massa; her grandchildren, Tara and Jorge, Tyler and Megan, Tina Marie, Mark and Tia, and Ami and Billy; her sisters, Marie O'Brien and her husband James, and Helen Drum; 7 great-grandchildren with a new great-granddaughter arriving in January; and several nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews.

Calling hours were held at the McHoul Funeral Home, Inc., Hopewell Junction. Interment took place in Mount St. Mary's Cemetery in Flushing.

Memorial donations may be made in Geraldine's name to Hudson Valley Hospice (<https://www.hvhospice.org/donate-now/>).

Robert D. Mitchell

Robert D. Mitchell, 86, passed away on December 14, 2025, at Green Meadows in Catskill, NY.

Robert was born on October 26, 1939, in Reno, Nevada, to the late Robert A. Mitchell and Marion Stoddard Mitchell. Right out of high school, he proudly enlisted in the United States Army, beginning a life marked by hard work, responsibility, and dedication.

In 1978, Robert married Eileen Rabbett Schloemer, and together they welcomed their daughter, Chrisie, who remained the center of his world. Robert built a long and successful career in the grocery and retail industry. He served as a Regional Manager for Grand Union for a number of years before going on to own and operate several convenience stores. He remained actively involved in his businesses until his retirement, taking pride in the work he built and sustained over many years.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Eileen Mitchell (Rabbett) of Red Hook, NY; his daughter, Chrisie Mitchell of Red Hook, NY; his brother, Mike Mitchell of Reno, NV; and other family members and friends who will miss him deeply.

In addition to his parents, Robert is predeceased by his sister, Marilyn.

In keeping with Robert's wishes, services will be held privately in the Spring.

Funeral arrangements are entrusted to Burnett & White Funeral Homes, Red Hook, Red Hook, NY.

Barbara Sue Richardson

Barbara (Barby) Sue Dombach Richardson, age 88, passed away on 4 November 2025 from complications due to her dementia at her home in Concord, GA. Barby was born to Jay Trout and Dorothy Mayer Dombach on 19 January 1937 in Oil City, PA. She is a graduate of Hempfield High School in Landisville, PA in 1954. She then attended Pennsylvania University and graduated with a nursing degree. She was a registered nurse. She met Gerald (Gerry) Alan Richardson a cadet at the United States Military Academy in 1955 and on 11 May 1957, she married Gerry the love of her life and who was then a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army. She became a military spouse traveling to Fort Knox, KY; Fort Bliss, TX; Germany: Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD; Spain; West Point, NY; Hemet, CA while Gerry served in Vietnam; Fort Lee, VA; Paraguay; and back to West Point. Barby worked as a nurse while at Fort Knox, Hemet, and West Point. While in the military, Barby and Gerry produced three "Army Brats", Bryan, Wayne, and Gordon. Following Gerry's retirement from the Army in 1974, the family moved to Stormville, NY. Gerry and Barbara worked as Insurance Agents for Northwestern Mutual Life. Then, they started Mountainside Agency, a Property Management Company owning and managing properties in Dutchess and Orange Counties. Barby was the epitome of a military

wife learning how to organize and entertain military, organizational, and family events. They were active in the Poughuag United Methodist Church and Hopewell Reformed Church and participated in humanitarian missions in Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and supporting Hurricane Katrina victims. They retired from the property management business after 26 years, moved to Woodcrest Villa, a senior living community in Lancaster, PA; and then as Covid was winding down to Concord, GA to be with family. Gerry loved to travel with Barby.

Throughout his military and their leisure travels, they visited 94 countries throughout the world. They loved finding excuses to visit family and have family reunions. After 63 years together, Gerry passed away on 4 July 2021 and Barby remained living in Concord with her son Bryan, and daughter-in-law Kathy.

Barby is survived by her sons Bryan and his, wife, Kathy of Concord, GA; Wayne and his wife, Carol, of Minneapolis, MN; and Gordon and his wife, Amybeth, of Leavenworth, KS; brother-in-Law, Charles Richardson of Fillmore, CA and sister-in-law, Kathleen Richardson of Ripon, CA. Barby has seven grand-children: Barbara Richardson Pessolano (Jon) and Christina Richardson; Christopher Richardson, Megan Richardson Shy, and Colin Jones (Lindsay); Benjamin Richardson (Taylor) and Ethan Richardson. She has six great grandchildren: Katlyn Braun, Lawson and Remy Shy, Jonathon Pessolano, Amelia Jones and Haeden Richardson. Also surviving are numerous nieces and nephews.

Friends may join the family for a service on 16 January 2026 starting at 10:00 am at the McHoul Funeral Home, Inc., 895 Route 82, Hopewell Junction. Following the service, the final memorial and graveside services will be held at the United States Military Academy Cemetery in West Point, NY where she will rest forever next to her husband, Gerry.

Thomas Rochfort

Thomas Anthony Rochfort, 64, of Amenia, NY passed away Saturday, December 13, 2025 at his residence. Mr. Rochfort was a longtime Millbrook resident moving to Amenia in 2020. He was born on July 26, 1961, in Bayshore NY, to Thomas J. and Barbara Ann (Davis) Rochfort. He was a 1980 graduate of Millbrook High School. After graduation he went straight to work as a plumber for Spagnola's Plumbing and Heating. In 1985 Mr. Rochfort began employment with the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union, Local 21, retiring in August of 2022.

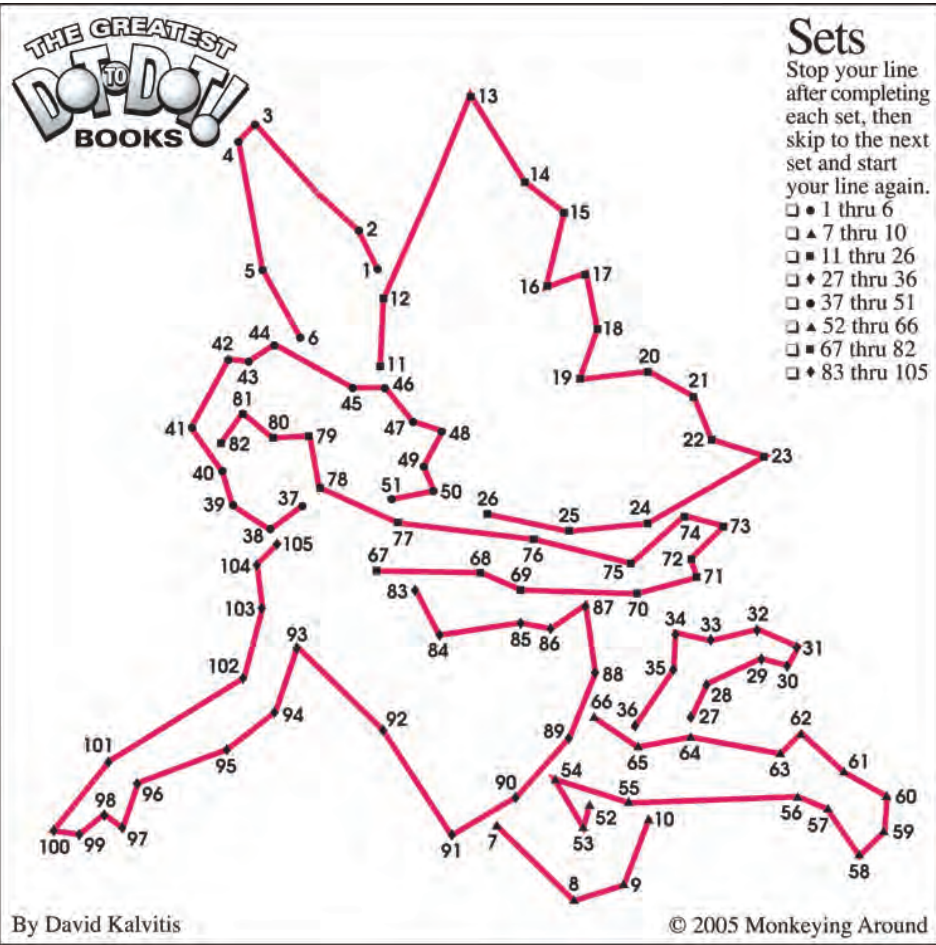
Tommy was noted for his passion for his hobby of owning corvettes, Nascar Racing, Dallas Cowboys and the New York Yankees. He enjoyed his many visits to Nova Scotia Canada to visit with his maternal relatives and close friends.

Mr. Rochfort is survived by his daughter Deanna Hempstead and her husband Josh and their daughter Kennedy of Knoxville TN. Three sisters, Patricia Macura (John) of Amenia, Catherine Rochfort and Elizabeth Bonadonna (Michael) of Millbrook; Five brothers Joseph A, Peter J., (Amy), Philip J., (Allison), and Mathew F. all of Millbrook, and Michael P. of Orlando Florida; one Aunt Heather A. Davis of Nova Scotia, Canada; maternal cousins of Nova Scotia and paternal cousins of Long Island. Tommy is also survived by his beloved nieces Juliana Macura, and Victoria Bonadonna; his beloved nephews Michael and Christopher Bonadonna and Steven and Aaron Rochfort.

Mr. Rochfort was predeceased by his parents and brother Edward Rochfort. Calling hours were held Sunday December 21, at the Allen Funeral Home, Millbrook, NY. A Mass of t Christian Burial was offered Monday, December 22, at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church; burial followed in St. Joseph's Cemetery. Donations in memory of Tom can be made to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Pl, Memphis, TN 38105; Mutts Mansion Dog Rescue, 1031 Route 376, Wappingers Falls, NY.

send us your news
cschmidt@s dutchessnews.com

Answer to this week's Dot to Dot (puzzle on page 9)



Legal Notices

**TOWN OF PLEASANT VALLEY
NOTICE TO BIDDERS**
Sealed Bids will be received by the Town Clerk, Mary Beth Muir, of the Town of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, New York for Highway Materials and Supplies for the year 2026.
1) Stone, Gravel
2) Sand
3) Latex Bituminous Mix Hot
4) Bituminous Mix Hot
5) Plow Blades
6) Guide Rails

Legal Notices

7) Street Sweeping
All Bid packets are available at the Town Clerk's office. Bids will be received until Friday, January 16, 2026 by 12 Noon at the Town Clerk's office, 1554 Main Street Pleasant Valley, New York at which time bids will be opened and read aloud.
If there are any questions please call the Town Clerk's office at (845) 635-1111 Ext. 201.
The Pleasant Valley Town Board reserves

Legal Notices

the right to accept or reject any or all bids. The Pleasant Valley Town Board will consider bids as soon as possible thereafter.
ALL BIDS MUST INCLUDE AN ON-COLLUSIVE BIDDING CERTIFICATE.
By order of the Pleasant Valley Town Board
Mary Beth Muir
Town Clerk

REQUEST FOR BIDS
NOTICE
The Purchasing Agent, County of Dutchess, Poughkeepsie, New York, hereby invites the

Legal Notices

submission of sealed bids for: Bid #RFB-DCP-66-25
Equipment for EMS/Paramedic Instruction
Bids will be received until 1:00 p.m. on the 26th day of December 2025 at the Dutchess County Division of Central Services, 378 Violet Avenue, Suite 2, Poughkeepsie, New York 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

Legal Notices

845-486-3613.

PUBLIC NOTICE
REORGANIZATION MEETING
The Town of Milan will hold the Annual Reorganization Meeting on January 1, 2026, at 1:00 pm at the Milan Town Hall.
By Order of the Town Board
Catherine Gill, Town Clerk

LEGAL NOTICE –
NOTICE OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE

Legal Notices

EAST CLINTON FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the 2026 Organizational Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the East Clinton Fire District will be held on Wednesday January 14, 2026 at 7:00PM, prevailing time, at the East Clinton Fire District Firehouse, 9 Firehouse Lane, Clinton Corners, NY.
Regular meetings of the Board of Fire Com-

Legal Notices

missioners will be held on the Wednesday after the second Monday of each month at 7:00 PM, prevailing time, during 2026.
Dated: December 17, 2025
East Clinton Fire District Board of Commissioners
Carol Mackin,
Secretary

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

13 inclusive businesses throughout Dutchess awarded ‘Think Accessible’ certification

Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino recently announced the first businesses to earn recognition through the County’s “Think Accessible” Community Certification Program, the County Executive’s initiative which raises awareness about physical disabilities while encouraging small businesses to become more accessible.
Serino said, “These businesses are helping make Dutchess County a place where everyone of every ability feels welcome, supported and included. By making their spaces and services more accessible, they’re not only opening doors for people with disabilities, but also inspiring others to do the same. Their efforts are helping us build a stronger, more caring Dutchess County for all, and we thank them for joining us in this important initiative.”
Launched earlier this year, the “Think Accessible” Community Certification Program marks the next step in Dutchess County’s ongoing commitment to ensuring that residents and visitors with disabilities can fully participate in all that their community offers. This program invites businesses and municipalities to evaluate

their accessibility practices, implement improvements and earn certification at the Gold, Silver or Bronze level based on established criteria.
Dutchess County’s “Think Accessible” Community Certification Program is based on nine key accessibility categories, including physical accessibility, staff training, communication accommodations, sensory-friendly options and participation in formal accessibility assessments. Two businesses earned Gold certification, nine earned Silver status and two achieved Bronze. Inaugural Round of “Think Accessible” Certified Businesses:
Gold Certification (met at least seven criteria)
• Residence Inn, 2525 South Road, Town of Poughkeepsie
• Hampton Inn & Suites, 2361 South Road, Town of Poughkeepsie

Silver Certification (met at least five criteria)
• Curry Estate, 2737 Route 52, East Fishkill
• Trevor Zoo, 131 Millbrook School Road, Millbrook
• Fishkill Farms, 9 Fishkill Farms



From left: Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino, i2Evolve owner Kimberly Popolizio, Dutchess County All Abilities Program Director Dana Hopkins and Village of Red Hook Mayor Karen Smythe. Popolizio's business was given a window decal as part of the County's "Think Accessible" Community Certification Program. Below, From left: County Executive Sue Serino presents Nick Martucci, owner of E.P.C. Sports, and Steve Martucci, owner of Spider's Web Comics & Collectibles, with certificates. All Abilities Program Director Dana Hopkins presents each business owner a window decal. Photos courtesy of Dutchess County Government



- Road, East Fishkill
- Beatrix Farrand Garden Association, 4097 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park
 - Bardavon 1869 Opera House, 35 Market Street, City of Poughkeepsie
 - Sensory Stepping Stones, 1906 Route 52, East Fishkill
 - Friends of Spook Hill Park, 40 Reggie Drive, Wappinger
 - E.P.C. Sports, 946 Route 376, Wappingers
 - Spider's Web Comics & Collectibles, 900 Route 376, Wappinger
- Bronze certification (met at least three criteria)**
- Millbrook Inn, 3 Gifford Road, Millbrook
 - i2Evolve, 17 East Market Street, Red Hook

Certified businesses receive a certificate from Serino and a window decal to recognize the certification. Businesses and municipalities interested in applying for the next round of “Think Accessible”

certification will find application forms at dutchessny.gov/thinkdifferently.
Kimberly Popolizio, owner of i2Evolve, which features an accessible entrance, portable wheelchair ramp, and hosts the majority of its classes for neurodivergent individuals, said, “Receiving this Think Accessible certification means so much to us. Art should be for everyone, and we’re thrilled to create a studio where people of all abilities can feel welcome, included and inspired. We’re honored to play a part in building a more inclusive Dutchess County, and I thank County Executive Serino for this recognition.”
The “Think Accessible” Community Certification complements Dutchess County’s popular ThinkDIFFERENTLY initiative, established in 2015. Together, these programs strengthen Dutchess County’s position as a statewide leader in accessibility and inclusive community design, with more than 100 municipalities in New York State embracing the fundamental ThinkDIFFERENTLY principles and applying them to their respective communities.

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County celebrates a decade of ThinkDIFFERENTLY

Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino and Dutchess County Government marked the 10th anniversary of the County's successful ThinkDIFFERENTLY initiative with a special commemoration last Friday at the Bardavon 1869 Opera House, as part of the annual complimentary, sensory-friendly presentation of holiday classic ballet, "The Nutcracker."

Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino said, "For the past 10 years, ThinkDIFFERENTLY has made Dutchess County a more welcoming and inclusive place for everyone and aligns with our 'Think Accessible' initiative. This milestone is a chance to celebrate the progress we've made in promoting kindness and respect for people of every ability. Looking ahead, we remain committed to building on these values, creating more support, opportunities and ways for all our neighbors to fully participate in their community and thrive."

ThinkDIFFERENTLY encourages residents, businesses, organizations and municipalities to adopt a welcoming and inclusive approach toward those with disabilities. Conceived by then-County Executive Marc Molinaro in 2015, the initiative has guided significant enhancements in inclusiveness, strengthened community collaborations and expanded

programming designed to support individuals with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities, as well as their families over the past decade. More than 100 communities across New York State – and several others across the nation – have warmly embraced the overarching philosophy of ThinkDIFFERENTLY, inspiring their own communities, businesses and organizations to be more inclusive and supportive of people with disabilities.

Serino joined All Abilities Program Director Dana Hopkins, former County Executive Molinaro, families, community partners and disability service organizations Friday to reflect on how far the initiative has come since its launch in 2015.

Serino's Think Accessible initiative expands the ThinkDIFFERENTLY efforts by raising awareness about physical disabilities and encouraging efforts to help small businesses and municipalities make their locations more accessible. The County Executive

announced the first round of local businesses to earn Think Accessible Community Certification earlier this month.

Additionally, Dutchess County Government has supported the ThinkDIFFERENTLY initiative in many



From left: Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino, Abigail Molinaro, members of the New Paltz Ballet Theatre and former Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro. Below, from left: Dutchess County All Abilities Program Director Dana Hopkins, Serino and Molinaro. Photos courtesy of Dutchess County Government

ways over the past 10 years, including, among others:

- Reducing employment barriers for people with disabilities through its 55-a program, which allows qualified individuals with physical or mental disabilities to be appointed to civil service jobs without taking the standard competitive civil service exam;

- Hosting the annual "Think Jobs" roundtable forums to bring together businesses, employers and disability advocates to highlight the benefits of hiring people of all abilities, break down barriers and recognize inclusive employers;

- Investing in accessible infrastructure and universal design elements – including curb cuts, wheelchair ramps, accessible playground equipment and the like – through its Community Development Block Grant program;

- Hosting a multitude of inclusive events, including sensory-friendly picnics, a sensory-sensitive morning at the Dutchess County Fair and adaptive film screenings with lowered volume and raised lights to ensure individuals of all abilities feel welcome to enjoy a day at the movies;

- Funding Autism Supportive Environment Training, through a partnership with the Anderson Center for Autism, to assist businesses in designing an environment supports the needs of individuals with autism and their families; and

- Partnering with Dutchess Community College to establish the popular "Think Ahead" program, a two-year, non-degree experience that helps young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities build life, social and job skills through coursework and on-campus internships.

At the conclusion of the brief recognition event, hundreds of attendees enjoyed an hour-long, no-shush performance of "The Nutcracker," performed by the New Paltz Ballet Theatre. Bardavon staff adjusted the lights and sound to offer a relaxed, supportive environment and a comfortable experience for attendees with sensory sensitivities.

Information about additional inclusive events is available on Dutchess County's award-winning website, thinkdifferently.net.



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