

the Tide

OF MORICHES & MANORVILLE

MARCH 2024

13th Year, Issue 3
thetideofmoriches.com

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See our
St. Patrick's Day
guide inside

Moriches is snow-covered



MT/Pamela Bracken Morrison



MT/Kathleen Balsamo

Last month, the weather forecast predicted more than 5 inches of snow across on the South Shore and up to 7 inches along the North Shore of Brookhaven Town. Pictured is a view of the water off Main Street in Center Moriches, taken by local photographer Pamela Bracken Morrison. Also pictured is Kaler's Pond and TWA Flight 800 Garden taken by local photographer Kathleen Balsamo.

CENTER MORICHES 21ST ANNUAL

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY Parade

SUNDAY, MARCH 10TH STARTS AT 2PM

ST. PATRICK'S DAY DINNER PARTY
Friday March 8th - 7pm
At Rock Hill Country Club, Manorville, NY
For Tickets and Information Call 631.878.0003

GRAND MARSHAL GEORGE KELLER

ABOUT THE PARADE
Center Moriches will host the 21st annual St. Patrick's Day parade on Sunday March 10th at 2 p.m. on Main Street. The parade begins on Lake Avenue and ends at Railroad Avenue and includes floats, fire departments and pipe & drum bands. The Chamber's dinner will be held on March 8th at 7 p.m. in honor of George Keller. Tickets are \$75 per person. For more information or to request to be part of the parade, visit www.moricheschamber.org.

Don't miss the St. Patrick's Day parade!

Sunday, March 10, 2024
at 2 p.m. on Main Street

This year's Moriches Chamber of Commerce St. Patrick's Day Parade grand marshal has been announced as George Keller. The 20th annual parade will take place on Sunday, March 10.

Keller, a dedicated community member, originally moved to Center Moriches from Brentwood in 1976 with his wife, Terry. Together they raised two sons, Frederick and Patrick. Today, they live in Center Moriches and have two grandsons as well.

The 20th annual St. Patrick's Day parade will be held on Sunday, March 10 at 2 p.m. on Main Street. The parade begins on Lake Avenue and ends at Railroad Avenue and includes floats, fire departments, and pipe and drum bands.

Also, the Center Moriches St. Patrick's Day Dinner honoring Keller will be held on March 8 from 7 to 11 p.m. at The Rock Hill Country Club. Tickets are \$75; visit moricheschamber.org for more information. ■

Happy St. Patrick's Day - Congratulations to Grand Marshal George Keller!



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Get ready for school—by reading!

CM Library promotes 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program

BY NICOLE FUENTES

The Center Moriches Free Public Library wholeheartedly believes in the power of reading. With this in mind, they have been promoting their 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program.

“The 1KBK program is so special. It is amazing to see our newest of readers emerge before your eyes,” said library director Marcie Litjens. “Reading to your children opens up a whole new world of possibilities, including imagination and opportunities to learn. These experiences will carry them throughout childhood and into their adulthood.”

The program promotes early literacy—allowing children to know about reading and writing before they can read or write. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, by simply reading to children, reading aloud with young children is one of the most effective ways to expose them to enriched language and promote school readiness. Also, reading regularly with young children stimulates optimal patterns of brain development and strengthens parent-child relationships at a critical time in child development, which, in turn, builds language, literacy,

and social-emotional skills that last a lifetime.

Head children’s librarian, Margie DeCaro, has been running the Center Moriches Library program since its inception in 2013. The program, she said, has exponentially grown with just a few participants to dozens of patrons participating, varying month to month.

“1,000 books is the magic number to be more ready for school,” said DeCaro of the program. “They will be all ready to learn—it gives them a leg up.”

The program, she said, can start any time after birth—and rereading the same books over and over again is encouraged, as it creates repetition and counts as another book read. DeCaro said parents can read whatever they want!

“I think a lot of parents of infants don’t realize the importance of reading. There are so many reasons to read, and that also includes just sitting down and focusing on your child,” she added. “It’s just great for everyone in the family.”

Library visitor Sara Gross and her three girls, aged 11, 9, and 5, who are part of the Eastport-South Manor School District, have been participating in the program since her youngest was a baby. The 1KBK is her favorite library offering.

“We just finished up last summer,” she said of the program for her youngest daughter, who entered kindergarten this year. “It is so beneficial—and it is easy to do.”

This January, her daughter read her first book aloud.

“It was just a special moment,” Gross said.

Library visitor and Manorville resident Stephanie Tam-Plank said her children also did the 1KBK program and loved it.

“We always read at bedtime every night, so it was nice for the kids to be rewarded for doing so,” she said. “They loved getting the prizes at each 100 mark and especially the medal and taking the picture with the frame at the end.”

She said her children also enjoyed seeing their picture in the library newsletter after finishing the program.

“I think it’s a great program to encourage families to read at home,” she added.

Children’s librarian Dominique Nason also participated in the program herself with both her son and daughter.

“We were always reading and once they were old enough to understand, they loved to keep track. It’s a nice incentive to keep them reading, and it keeps them excited about books and picking out the books and coming to the library,” she said.

Participants receive sheets to mark off for every book read with 100 stickers. Those who participate will work toward submitting one sheet 10 times. For every 100 books read, participants get a sticker and a book for their home library! Once completed, each finisher gets a medal and a photo taken.

Visit the library to get one of their 1KBK book packs with choices of over 100 thematic book packs for your family to read and enjoy. Each pack includes 10 books and counts as one checkout and are available only to Center Moriches Library card holders. ■



Hattie Gross when she finished her 1KBK program this summer.



Bella is also a recent 1KBK finisher. Courtesy photos

The seeds are back!

BY NICOLE FUENTES

All you need is your library card to start planting a variety of seeds, provided by your very own local Center Moriches Library. “The mission of our seed library is to provide information, instruction, and education on sustainable gardening,” explained library director Marcie Litjens.

The CM Library’s seed program began in 2016, and since the inception over 10,000 patrons have “checked out” seeds for free with their library card. The program is funded in part by the Friends of the Library group.

All of the seeds are non-GMO and organic. Throughout the years, Litjens said that they have curated a selection of over 75 different types of vegetables, herbs, fruits, and flowers to choose from.

Also, if you are interested in learning how to grow a garden but don’t know how to begin, the library has many books to help you get started.

“Whether you have a yard for a garden or a small container to plant in, this fun and exciting program is a great way to engage all members of the community and a great family activity,” she said, excited for another year of planting.

Also, the library does not require that harvested seeds be brought back to the library, but they do encourage patrons to send in photos to show them what they have grown.

“Since the program has begun, people are very interested in coming in and taking advantage of it and growing their own garden,” said library clerk Donna Evans. “And they love it!”

WHAT IS A SEED LIBRARY?

It is a collection of seeds that you can “borrow” for planting at home or community garden. All of the seeds are organic and are purchased through Seed Savers or High Mowing Organic Seeds.

HOW TO GET STARTED?

Simply fill out the form on the library’s website and choose up to five packets of seeds. Then, you will receive a mailing from the library with seeds to plant in your garden. Slips are also available at the library. And, no, you don’t need to return the seeds! However, they do love to see photos from local library members’ success.

WHAT KIND OF SEEDS ARE THERE?

As for herbs, there are basil, mint and thyme, to name just a few. For veggies, there are options for cauliflower, zucchini, and squash, and for flowers there are options for marigolds and sunflowers. For a complete list of options, visit the drop-down menu in Selections on the library website. ■



Donna W. and Donna R. are part of the clerical staff that help prepare and package seeds for patrons to check out. Courtesy photo

Local senior takes on P.S. I Love You Day project

BY NICOLE FUENTES

Center Moriches High School senior Aiden Leuthardt helped light up the town in honor of P.S. I Love You Day on Friday, Feb. 9.

“P.S. I Love You Day left an impact on me when it was first brought to my high school after the pandemic,” Leuthardt said as to why he started getting involved. “I myself have struggled with mental health in a significant way, and seeing the school community come together to decorate the school was touching.”

The purple tree and Main Street lighting was done in an effort to raise awareness for mental health issues and suicide prevention. The tree at the King Kullen

center was lit, as well as light posts on Main Street.

“I decided to do this because of how being a community can provide the support people who are struggling need,” he added.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 1 in 5 teenagers struggle with mental health issues.

P.S. I Love You Day is celebrated by schools across the nation to help raise awareness about the importance of mental health and suicide prevention.

This year, P.S. I Love You Day was celebrated on Friday, Feb. 9. The theme was “Love is meant to be given.”

Last month, Moriches residents were

able to see the purple lights on Main Street in Center Moriches to help remember those who are struggling daily, said Leuthardt.

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, please dial 988.

If anyone would like to make a donation to the cause for next year, mail contributions to Aiden Leuthardt at PO Box 104 East Moriches NY 11940 or venmo@Toni-smith-177.

For more information email Aiden at mainstreetmentalhealth@gmail.com. One hundred percent of the proceeds go directly to further awareness, encourage activism in teenagers, and local crisis and response centers. ■



Courtesy photo

Revamped ballpark for ESM baseball

Varsity team looking forward to great season

BY GARY HABER

This year's Eastport-South Manor team features one of the league's strong pitching staffs and an offense that coach Jim McGowan hopes will show improvement from last season.

"The goal for us offensively is to be better than we were," said McGowan, whose team hit a combined .211 and lost one of its top offensive players, all-county first-baseman Tristan Gatchalian, to graduation.

Gatchalian, who's now playing at Marywood University in Pennsylvania, led the Sharks in batting average (.365) and home runs (five) while hitting 15 RBIs.

He helped lead the Sharks to an 11-9 regular-season record and the team's seventh playoff appearance in McGowan's nine seasons.

With Gatchalian gone, the Sharks will look to their 16 returning players, including third-baseman Logan Walsh, outfielder Landon Davis and McGowan's sons

Drew and Brady, to lead the offense.

Drew McGowan, a two-time all-county catcher, led the team with 20 hits. He batted .345 last season with 10 RBIs and 15 stolen bases. A senior, he's committed to playing Division I baseball at Marist College next season.

Brady McGowan, a shortstop, made all-league last season as a freshman. He knocked in 11 RBIs and swiped nine stolen bases.

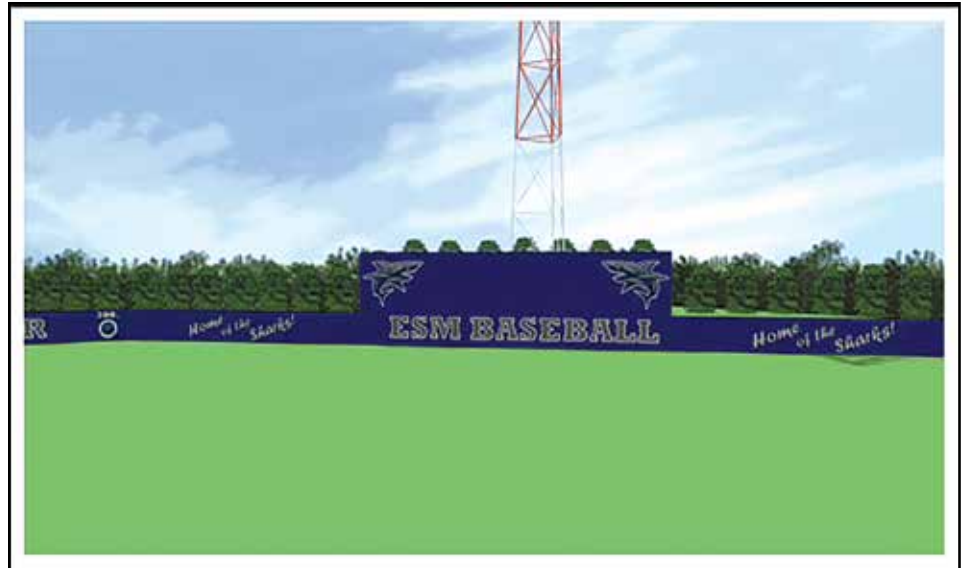
The Sharks return all seven pitchers from last season on a staff that posted a combined ERA of 3.22.

"They kept us in every game last year," McGowan said.

The pitchers include senior John Coffey, who went 4-1 with a 2.31 ERA and was named to the all-league team, and Cole Johnson, a left hander who posted a 3.68 ERA and has committed to play at SUNY Purchase next season.

Hard-throwing senior Luca Occhigrosso and Noah Kirwin, a junior who posted a 0.87 ERA and 21 strikeouts in 16 innings, round out a staff that will be among the best in what McGowan calls "a very, very competitive league."

Some of the other teams in the league



A rendering of Eastport-South Manor's baseball stadium which is undergoing a \$2 million renovation and is expected to be ready for the Sharks' home opener on March 25. Rendering

include powerhouses East Islip, Hauppauge, and Half Hollow Hills West.

The Sharks' home field is getting a \$2 million makeover with a new turf field, new dugouts, lights, a padded outfield

wall, and stadium seating.

The renovated ballpark is slated to be ready in time for the Sharks' home opener on March 25 when they take on Half Hollow Hills West. ■

CM hosts Section XI Division 2 wrestling tournament

BY KRAIG KLEIN

Center Moriches High School hosted New York State Public High School Athletic Association's Section XI Division 2 wrestling tournament on Friday, Feb. 9.

"We have hosted the Section XI Division 2 tournament a few years back on a few occasions. They asked us to host it again because our venue is ideal," Center Moriches School District associate principal Jeremy Thode said.

Ten teams from various Suffolk County schools grappled with each other in the high school's gym from 9 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. Teenaged athletes competed in matches in order to qualify for the tournament's finals. Victorious finalists were entered into a statewide championship competition.

"I wrestled for Center Moriches in high school and it brings me a lot of pride to [help coach]," Center Moriches wrestling team assistant coach John Fey said.

In order to be eligible for the tournament, athletes needed to have already competed in at least six matches during the sports season. Competitors in the tournament were divided into 13 weight classes based on their weight. The weight classes used for the tournament were 101, 108, 116, 124, 131, 138, 145, 152, 160, 170, 190, 215 and 285 pounds. Wrestlers had to weigh the same as or less than the weight class they were sorted into.

"This standardized weight range for wrestlers ensures that there isn't a massive size difference between athletes," Center Moriches wrestling team head coach John O'Neill explained.

During each match, wrestlers competed to earn the most points by executing certain physical moves against each other. Points could be won by knocking the opponent down to the ground while remaining on top of the opponent (also known as a takedown), escaping from the opponent, or exposing the opponent's back on the mat. A match could automatically end if one of the wrestlers is able to execute a pin against the other.

"A pin, also known as a 'fall,' occurs after a wrestler is able to expose his opponent's back for a count of five seconds, and is then able to secure the shoulders of his opponent to the mat for another two seconds," O'Neill explained.

The winners of the semifinal matches faced each other during the final matches. Only the finals were broadcast online, and the livestream can currently be viewed by subscribers to the National Federation of State High School Association's website.

The wrestlers that won the finals came from the school districts of Port Jefferson, Mount Sinai, Elwood, Bayport-Blue Point, Shoreham-Wading River, Mattituck and Babylon. The participants were honored at an awards ceremony after the last match of the finals. Attendees were invited to circle around the athletes to take photographs.

"They now place wrestlers at each weight class up to [sixth] place," Fey added. "[A] trophy was [given to] the team score champions, which was John Glenn [from Elwood]."

John H. Glenn High School's team won 306 points, making them the highest-scoring team that participated in the tournament.

"[The Section XI Division 2 wrestling] tournament has been ongoing for many years. It will continue yearly moving forward," Thode continued. ■



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Let's Press RESET

Reset Meditation Sessions at Ocean Spa

By Nicole Tzen

We have all unplugged an electronic device or rebooted our computers when some sort of malfunction occurs. But what do we do when we need to reset our minds and bodies? If you are human, there is no doubt the stressors of life sometimes steal your thunder. But in truth, stress can do a lot more than that. Most illnesses are linked to or exacerbated by stress. The flood of chemicals released by our bodies when we experience stress interfere with proper digestion, increase inflammation, compromise the immune system, accelerate the aging process and can cause anxiety, depression and insomnia.

Although we may not find ourselves running from a bear in day to day life, many of us are triggered into the "fight or flight" response due to stress. This is the work of our sympathetic nervous system. It is designed to get us out of a dangerous situation by releasing adrenaline and other stress hormones into our system. This essentially puts all the restorative systems of our body on hold to help us "run away from the bear". It makes sense. If a bear was chasing you, getting away fast would certainly be more important than digesting breakfast or fighting a little cold. And so the blood supply to our organs is decreased and there is an increase in blood flow to arms and legs to give us the energy to escape. The problem is if we spend too much time in this state, our bodies and minds will pay a price.

Conversely, when we are relaxed our

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parasympathetic nervous system switches on. This stimulates the release of endorphins and serotonin. These chemicals make us feel good. Endorphins are natural pain killers and serotonin is a natural mood elevator. In this state our organs are supported and nourished allowing the maintenance systems of the body to function optimally. We feel better, sleep better and often even look better.

Ocean Spa offers monthly Reset Sessions to help you turn off that "fight or flight" response and get the feel good hormones flowing! These unique workshops combine movement and meditation to clear stagnation, stimulate vitality and connect you with your highest self. Sessions are enhanced with aromatherapy, reiki and sound healing. You will walk away with simple tools and practices to help you press reset when things get a little overwhelming, so the healthiest happiest version of yourself can navigate through life's challenges with ease and grace. What are you waiting for? Register for an upcoming Reset Session now using the QR code or by visiting oceanspali.com.

Nicole Tzen is a Licensed Massage Therapist, Certified Yoga Instructor and Reiki Master. She has been a part of the Ocean Spa team for three years but has been working and teaching within the spa and wellness industry for over twenty years. Nicole uses her experiences and expertise to cultivate a nurturing environment and to inspire overall wellness and healing.

Bull's eye: 'Newsies' at CMHS is a hit!

BY C. E. PARRY

From Jack (T. J. LaClair) and Crutchie's (Victoria Pendzick) poignant but hopeful duet "Santa Fe" in its prologue, to its finale featuring the entire company, Center Moriches High School's Drama Club production of "Newsies" delivered, playing to a full house for all three performances Feb. 9, 10 and 11. An enthusiastic audience, some of whom were seen rocking to the score in their seats, was engaged and entertained by the exuberant cast directed by Nancy Harkin and Patrick Campbell, jazzy choreography by Katie Lemmen and Anna Mocerri, and the superb pit band directed by Sara Greene that made it a truly special evening's entertainment.

Jack Kelly, a 17-year-old newspaper hustler on a gritty patch of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, dreams of a better life in Santa Fe, but his moral compass keeps him anchored in place. Such is the plight of this turn-of-the-last-century David, who chafes against the inequities imposed by one of the Goliaths of the newspaper publishing establishment, Joseph Pulitzer, when he's compelled to forgo his own dreams to take up the cause of his newsie peers.

While set in a world long past, it is a world not unlike our own. It confronts issues of poverty, disenfranchisement, betrayal, bullying labor tactics to suppress unions and workers, immigrants scraping to get a toe-hold in a new city, dreams vaporized by harsh realities.

Originally a Disney production with a book by Harvey Fierstein, music by Alan Menken and lyrics by Jack Feldman, its characters are based on real people who stood up against reigning yellow



journalists, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, and organized the Newsboy Strike of 1899 that drew over 7,000 newsies—street hawkers, often kids from poor immigrant families working for pennies after school—together for a rally at Irving Hall in Manhattan. Led by 18-year-old Louis "Kid Blink" Balotti and 20-year-old David Simmons, it garnered support from prominent local politicians and union leaders and raised awareness of the newsies' plight.

The issue was fair compensation. The industry relied on street sellers for distribution of afternoon and evening editions of its papers. Prior to the Spanish-American War, a newsie would pay 50 cents for each 100 papers they hoped to sell; there was no refund for unsold papers. The war increased public appetite for papers, and publishers were able to capitalize on the increased demand, raising the cost to 60 cents per 100. Most reduced the price at war's end; Hearst and Pulitzer did not.

The actual strike was effective and resulted in a compromise: while not low-

ering the cost of the papers, it gave newsies compensation for unsold papers. Its success helped promote other efforts to organize and achieve better working conditions for labor and set in motion reforms in child labor laws.

The balance in the plot draws on an ensemble of hopeful young people. There's Medda's (Grace Marrin) boisterous burlesque to "That's Rich," an ironic take on wealth and broken promises; Katherine (Alexandria Gilroy), a young reporter hoping to break out of the social pages to which her writing is assigned; and street kids hoping their voices reach the powerful invisible publishers who exploit them. The serious themes are buoyed by the lofty, hopeful anthems against the power of the press.

"Newsies Stop the World" and "A Little Hyperbole Never Hurt Anybody" both mock and define their struggle against towering forces: Pulitzer published *The World*; hyperbole was yellow journalism's stock in trade. Later, when Katherine intones how, by telling the story

behind the story—"watch what happens when that story gets told"—she exhorts Jack to keep his resolve.

There's strength in numbers and the power of the press works in both directions. Or, as Jack declares in his decision to strike, it's "what stop the presses really means."

In a larger sense, the play addresses a quandary: how to organize, and maintain the morale of a group uncertain of its goals, its strength, or its power to affect change. The plaintive lyrics and dialogue—"courage cannot erase fear," "stare down the odds and seize the day"—remind us that commitment isn't always constant and change creates risk.

The issues "Newsies" raises are old but still relevant today: child labor; exploitation of immigrants and the disadvantaged; the power of strength in numbers when workers unite against unfair labor practices.

"Newsies" is still news. And Center Moriches' Drama Club production hit its marks. ■



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Another successful Catholic Week

Our Lady Queen of Apostles Regional Catholic School hosts annual events

BY NICOLE FUENTES

As part of their annual Catholic Week celebrations, Center Moriches' Our Lady Queen of Apostles Regional Catholic School hosted another year of events from Jan. 28 to Feb. 2. The weeklong celebration highlighted the impact Catholic education has on its students as well as the local community.

"Catholic Schools Week is a time when we celebrate the fantastic students and teachers here at Our Lady Queen of Apostles," said principal Dawn Waller. "We highlight our exceptional teachers and remarkable students who make every day extraordinary."

The national theme for Catholic Schools Week is "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community," and at Our

Lady Queen of Apostles, it is a week, she said, they set aside to celebrate their "amazing school community with fun, faith, family, and fostering a love for life-long learning."

The week kicked off with an open house on Sunday, Jan. 28, including a Mass at St. John the Evangelists R.C.C. in Center Moriches. The open house allowed those interested in enrolling to participate in a tour of the school and the opportunity to speak with faculty and staff as well as current students and parents.

During the week, students also dressed for success, portraying what they want to be when they grow up on Career Day. The day also included special visits from OLQA family members who answered questions about their individual careers.

This year was their first Career Day, with parents of current students in career fields including police officers, paramedics, nurses, a Suffolk County Judge, a restaurant owner, pharmacist, business

owner, physician, attorney, helicopter pilot, civil engineer, and a CPA.

Students also participated in Patriotic Day, where students wore red, white, and blue to show their appreciate and honor for America, and VIP Day, welcoming specially chosen family members to the school.

Later in the week, students were able to participate in an academic bowl, volleyball tournament, and a talent show.

The academic bowl included physical and mental game challenges, where students broke up into teams. Challenges included balance beams, math bingo, physical education stations, and academic elements utilizing math and reasoning skills.

Eighth graders participated in the volleyball tournament against their teachers. Special guests, including members of the Suffolk County Police Department, St. John the Evangelist Pastor Fr. Patrick Riegger and Tess Austin, director of Catholic Identity and Mission for the Diocese of Rockville Centre Department of Education, were also invited to

join in the game. According to OLQA, the Class of 2024 played a good game, but the teachers came out on top and remain undefeated.

The talent show ended the week celebrated by Fr. Patrick. In the talent show, they had students in grade 4 through 8 participate. Some of the talents were a magic show, stand-up comedy, tap solo, Irish step dancing, gymnastics/dance, solo singing, and piano solos.

"It's wonderful that the students can study and learn in a very prayerful, religious environment. It allows them to put God first, which can be challenging at times in our society," he said. "Through the lens of faith, Catholic Schools also foster community and teach children the importance of service and compassion. It's encouraging to be able to visit the students and share my faith with them as they grow in knowledge and understanding of God."

To learn about our Catholic School in Center Moriches, visit olqany.org. ■

Courtesy photos



Bond revote to take place March 19

CM Schools presents \$13.9M proposal

BY NICOLE FUENTES

The Center Moriches School District presented a modified and scaled-back \$13.9 million proposal last month. The revote will take place on March 19 at the Clayton Huey Main Street Gym from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Projects will now include sidewalks, asphalt, American Disabilities Act compliance, security upgrades, boiler replacement, and crawlspace abatement at Clayton Huey; and sidewalks, asphalt, auditorium renovation, roof replacement, boiler and storage tank replacement, security upgrades, interior renovations relating to health and safety, window/wall replacement, and outdoor track replacement at the middle school/high school.

Courtesy photo

According to the district, with smaller projects the proposal is expected to be completed within two to three years, depending on state permitting. However,

the project start date was pushed back to winter 2025 due to the revote.

The district also noted that all included projects are aidable at the 78 percent

building aid rate. The cost equates to \$0.22 cents on the dollar to get all projects completed. Taxpayer impact analysis will be updated and provided in future presentations. The current estimate is about \$200/average taxpayer in total at conclusion of all work.

The Center Moriches School District hosted their original \$45 million bond vote on Oct. 24, 2023, for two phases of projects, including major building upgrades as well as a turf football field. The vote ultimately failed, with 341 yes votes to 610 no votes for Proposition 1, and 258 yes votes to 690 no votes for Proposition 2.

A community forum will be hosted at the high school library on March 13 at 7 p.m. A bond brochure has also been mailed to all residents and a simple tax calculator will be posted to the website this month. For more information on the revised proposal visit: <https://www.cmschools.org/district/bond>. ■

Fashions and bears for a good cause

BY LINDA LEUZZI

Little fashionistas were carried or strutted into the Chapman Building wearing tulle dresses and skirts with hearts, ruby-red shoes and sneakers with blinking lights, along with glam tiaras and headbands. Even some moms like Alesayna Phillips got into the act, wearing a heart outfit with her daughter: Alesayna wore a red tulle skirt and daughter, Kalle, was a vision in green.

Young men took to dinosaur outfits and such.

It was Super Bowl Sunday, but the Moriches Rotary Valentine's Tea for Two, Me and You Stuff A Bear event at Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck, drew 100 people, said former president Barbara Caldwell, one of the Rotary Club organizers of the event with members Nicole Stork and Jennifer Gagliano.

They were there early and even the day before, setting up.

"We're always looking for funds for

our Rotary Club—it owns the camp. A few years ago, I said we should have something for younger children so they can see it," said Caldwell.

Judging from the high-pitched enthusiasm, the kids got into it, receiving bears from Emma Stork of the Westhampton Beach of the Rotary Interact Club, who handed them out with a bag of fluffy stuffing, along with a heart T-shirt they could draw on, an adoption certificate, and stickers for the bear house.

Carolyn Mirando, Nancy Burns, and Denise Mirando came with Carolyn's daughter, Hailey Burns.

"We thought it would be fun, and Hailey loves tea parties," said Denise Mirando.

Megan Slowey and Amber Gagliardi lined up with their kids, Mason Slowey, Kyle Gagliardi, Cassidy Slowey and Lily Gagliardi.

Lily, she of the snazzy tiara, yelled "Yay!" as Muriel Corcoran checked them in.

(It is good to be a kid!)

"We come here all the time. We love it here and live down the road. We're repeat customers," joked Amber Gagliardi.

Mom Anne with daughter Sophia Leogrande were having a grand (no pun intended) time stuffing Sophia's bear. And wow! Sophia's ruby-red slippers!

Zoe Saulino and Josie Okubo were making good headway with their creations.

Sariah and Sabella Brooks came with Rian Avery. Sariah informed us she was excited about her Afro.

Local businesses helped with food donations and prizes with coffee, tea, hot chocolate and chocolate chip cookies, including 7-Eleven, Nettie's (heart-shaped cookies, wow!), South Shore Plumbing & Heating Inc., as well as the Trainor family.

Most people in the area know about the camp, that it's been dedicated to special-needs individuals where they can

enjoy adaptive sports, music, campfires, and boating for 70 years on a beautiful 35-acre site.

"It costs \$1.4 million a year to run the camp," explained board member Newton Homan. Buildings had been updated over the years, including the Chapman Building, which is rented out for events. It is beautiful.

The money collected for the bear event would be directed to their Community Fund, which supports the food pantry and Kris Kringle Night, which offers presents to a deserving family. Their Spooky Walk is legend.

"I'm sure we made a profit; we're always happy to make some money for the camp," said Caldwell when asked after the event. "As far as the turnout, we were very pleased with it, considering the big game that day. It was fun to see the little girls dressing up the bears," she said, adding this funny observation.

"The boys acted like boys. They were pushing each other." ■



Nicole Stork, Barbara Caldwell, Jennifer Gagliano.



Carolyn Mirando, Hailey Burns, Nancy Burns and Denise Mirando.



Megan Slowey and Amber Gagliardi with Mason, Kyle, Cassidy and Lily.



Alesayna and Kalle Phillips.

All photos by Linda Leuzzi



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A book talk with author Lauren Rico

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hosts event

BY C. E. PARRY

You may have heard her show on WSHU FM, where she's a 34-year veteran classical music host.

Or maybe you're more familiar with her Whiskey Sisters novels, which she coyly refers to as "romantasy," or "Solo," "the one with the hot guy on the cover."

In town to promote "Familia," her new novel, and sign copies, the proceeds of which she donated to the library scholarship fund, Lauren Rico entertained her audience with stories about writing and her love of storytelling, which she likened to "distilling little bits of information into nutshells" to share between music selections programmed for her show.

Her self-effacing presentation further engaged the audience with details of personal setbacks that led her to begin writing fiction after training for years as a French horn player and a career on the radio.

A "bad patch" that included her mother's death, her own breast cancer diagnosis four months later and the ensuing depression, coupled with the need to clean out her mother's home, brought her to the point of despair. On the advice of her therapist, she began to write, generating the beginning of "Reverie," her first novel; within 18 months, there were three more books, all in the romance genre.

Learning how to incorporate fiction's elements—conflict, character and plot

development, dialogue—through writing these romance novels, she eventually found her way to write women's fiction, where the emphasis is on a woman's journey that, while it may include men, is focused on the woman's transition to a new point in her life.

"Familia," set in beautiful and exotic Puerto Rico, draws from her own experience. Having visited the island many times, she saw it only as a tourist, never realizing until recently how strong were her family's connections to the place. In fact, as she discovered, there were 25 generations going back to the indigenous inhabitants of the island. It made her wonder what else we miss when we don't look closely. The premise of the novel sets up a DNA mystery, a quest for identity, and the consequences of one day and its effect on a family.

Asked about the source of inspiration for her novels, she alluded to a kind of serendipity.

"These things just kind of fall from the sky and hit me on the head sometimes! A snippet of conversation, or some tiny, poignant detail in a news story will stick with me. Advice columns, true crime shows, and social media platforms. I'm like a little magpie—I see something and I want it for my nest."

The nest, of course, includes a process, as personal for a writer as his or her "voice" on the page.

Here again she draws upon a kind of happy accident. "I like to know where I'm starting, where I'm ending, and what a 'few points of interest' will be along the way. Everything in between, I just figure out as I go along."

"I find that music is a great way to get



into the right frame of mind when I need to write emotional scenes," she continued, "and over the years, I've created several playlists with titles like 'Meltdown,' 'Girl Power,' and 'When I need to make myself cry.' Music just gets my head in the right space to create... both music and writing are like pops of color in my world—bright and brilliant moments that illuminate the rest of my life."

And, without doubt, she favors Bach. "He shows up quite a bit on my writing playlists. His music is so calming and centering. I feel like Bach balances my left and right brains. Aside from Bach, Philip Glass, Ludovico Einaudi and Max Richter are my go-to guys to set a creative writing atmosphere."

But with so many other choices available, is classical music still relevant?

"It's hard not to be affected by our historically turbulent times. Classical music is one of the last refuges from all of it. It's soothing, calming, centering, and it can work on our subconscious, playing in the background, filling some of those spaces in the mind that are vulnerable to negativity, fear, and fretting. It's also one of the few spaces where everyone is welcome. When it seems as if there's no common ground between 'us' and 'them,' we can all lean into music."

"Classical music is like a balm that washes over you, body and soul. It finds all the cracks and fills them, it smooths out the rough edges, then firms up the foundation. Music prepares us to take on the start of each day and the thing that refortifies us at its end so we can do it all again tomorrow." ■

Dougie finds a home

BY C. E. PARRY

There were balloons, party hats, and Prosecco in tiny white paper cups as 20 or more well-wishers waited in the Almost Home office, each pausing to look expectantly from time to time at the main entrance.

Finally, at 3:15 p.m., the guest of honor arrived, along with Robin and Damian Moreno, his new family, who were met with cheers and laughter. And, like the gentle soul he is, Dougie made the rounds, pausing before each excited guest, his tail wagging, face burrowed as he nuzzled each greeter.

Many of those who had worked so hard to make this moment happen looked on approvingly at the changes having a home had brought: weight gain; a soft and shiny coat; a bright demeanor; and a passion for any chew toy that caught his eye.

According to Robin, the decision to adopt Dougie was an easy one to make.

"We'd lost our dog a year ago," she shared. "We were ready to adopt again, but knew it had to be right. We live a few minutes from Almost Home, so we decided to volunteer right before Christmas, to help walk the dogs so they get some exercise. When we were asked if we could take Dougie home and foster him for the holidays, we were happy to do it. Then a friend showed us the newspaper. We found out Dougie's a star. We love him."

After a suitable time for photos and happy tears, Robin approached the desk, where a red folder holding adoption papers awaited her signature as Damian looked on.

Thinking she was finished, Robin looked up, ready to rejoin the party. But there was one more paper to sign. "In case you want to return him," the director said gently, sliding the form forward. She knew all too well that had happened before and could happen again.

Anchoring the page with her left hand, Robin signed her name one more time. "He's not going anywhere," she said. ■



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CHAMBER UPDATE

The Chamber of Commerce of the Moriches is hosting the St. Patrick's Day Dinner honoring 2024 grand marshal George Keller on March 8 at the Rock Hill Country Club. Tickets are \$75 per person. There will be a buffet dinner, open bar, music by Chain Reaction Band, and Irish step dancers! Visit moriches-chamber.org or call 631-878-0003 for tickets! The St. Patrick's Day parade will be held on Sunday, Mar. 10 starting at 2 p.m. Main Street Center Moriches is honoring grand marshal George Keller.

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

November: Nick Gentile



The Moriches Chamber of Commerce recently awarded Nicholas Gentile, a senior at Center Moriches High School, as the November Business Student of the Month.

Gentile is president of the school's National Honor Society, Mathematics Honor Society, DECA, and the CEO of the Virtual Enterprises International Business Class. He's also an inductee in all of the school's other honor societies, and a member of the varsity tennis club. He represented the community as a national finalist in the MathCON competition in Chicago last spring, and was selected this past summer to participate in American Legion New York Boys' State, a weeklong statewide leadership conference.

This month, Gentile will be installed as cadet commander of the Civil Air Patrol, 9th Suffolk Cadet Squadron, U.S. Air Force Auxiliary, NER-NY 311. He has held many other important positions with the squadron, including flight commander, first sergeant, primary repre-

sentative for the Cadet Advisory Council, Emergency Services NCO, cadet lobbyist for National Legislative Day and USAF National Youth Cyber Education Cyber-Patriot specialist. He has also been officer in command for many civic and community volunteer activities, such as the Making Strides Breast Cancer Walk, 106th Rescue Wing Breakfast, and the Memorial 5K Run for Briggs, as well as a participant in many additional activities. He is the Long Island Group Cadet NCO of the Year and a current nominee for the statewide honor of New York Wing Cadet NCO of the Year.

An accomplished musician, Gentile has been selected as a participant in several scholastic county and state honors concert bands and jazz ensembles, in addition to serving as a section leader in the CMHS symphonic band, jazz band and pep band. These past two summers, he has donated his time as a trumpeter for military honors funeral ceremonies with the United States Armed Forces Honor Guard at Calverton National Cemetery, and has also volunteered to perform for VFW events, the Center Moriches Fire Department 9/11 memorial service, and the street-naming ceremony in memory of Air Force Maj. Andrea Brian O'Keefe.

Gentile will be attending the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, S.C., Johnson College of Business at Cornell University in the fall.

December: Andrew Foster



Andrew Foster is a senior at Center Moriches High School pursuing an International Baccalaureate Diploma. Andrew is actively involved in many sports and extracurricular activities and is in the top 10 percent

of his class. Andrew is secretary of the senior class, president of DECA Club and a member of the National Honor Society, English Honor Society, Foreign Language Honor Society, Math Honor Society, Science Honor Society and Social Studies Honor Society.

Andrew also plays varsity baseball and varsity soccer at Center Moriches High School, where he is captain of both teams, received all-league recognition for soccer in his senior year and was awarded the Scholar Athlete award by Section XI. Andrew has represented Center Moriches High School at several leadership and mental health programs, including the Section XI Using Our Voices Conference, Student Leaders for the Ambassadors of Compassion Conference and Gov. Hochul's Youth Mental Health Invitational Conference.

In addition to his school-related commitments, Andrew volunteers with Moriches Bay Little League and Red Devils Youth Baseball organizations to work with young players during the winter months to help develop their baseball skills and works at 365 Athletics to help players with baseball fundamentals. In the summer months, Andrew works in the hospitality industry as a valet and employee transport at Dune Deck Beach Club.

Andrew intends to pursue a degree in finance when he starts college in the fall.

January: Julia Hromada



Julia Hromada is a senior at Center Moriches High School. Julia is actively involved in many sports and extracurricular activities. Julia is a member of DECA Club and a member of the National Honor Society,

Foreign Language Honor Society, Math Honor Society, and Social Studies Honor Society.

Julia also plays Varsity Volleyball and Varsity Flag football at Center Moriches High School, where she has been captain three years for volleyball and two years for flag football. Her volleyball accolades include Rookie of the Year (9th Grade), All-Conference (10th and 11th grade) and All-County, All-County Tournament Team, All-State tournament team, All-State First Team, and Player of the Year during her senior year. She was also recognized by Newsday as Top 25 on Players on Long Island both Junior and Senior year as well as Newsday's All-Long Island Second Team her senior year. For flag football, Julia received All-County her junior year, and was the Newsday Athlete of the week her junior year. She was also selected to participate in the first NFL Flag Football Quarterback Challenge.

Julia has represented Center Moriches High School at several leadership and mental health programs, including the Section XI Using Our Voices Conference, and selected to participate in the 1st Athletic Leadership Conference in Albany, N.Y. In addition to her school-related commitments, Julia has commitments outside of school. Those include volunteer work: libero tracking during the Center Moriches boys volleyball games, Clayton Huey field day, and events at IGHL in Manorville.

Julia intends to pursue a degree in graphic design when she starts college in fall.



KEITH'S CORNER

Helping America's VetDogs

On Feb.16, members of Friends of America's VetDogs visited Helping Makes U Happy, where founder Keith Caputo presented them with a \$6,000 check to help sponsor a service dog for an honorably discharged veteran. The service dog this check will help to sponsor will be named by the Friends group after someone who has brought great honor or credit to the military—in this case, "Protector," after Lt. Michael P. Murphy. The

idea for the donation was brought about by Keith's desire each year to help in the area of suicide prevention on P.S. I Love You Day. Keith is a strong supporter of our veterans and was saddened to learn that approximately 17 veterans commit suicide each day. It is our hope that Protector will provide the emotional and physical support necessary to help a disabled vet who has sacrificed for our country. Pictured is Renee DiMeo and Keith.



Published Monthly at 20 Medford Ave., Patchogue, NY 11772
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Letters policy: Letters to the Editor are always welcome. Letters must be 300 words or less, in good taste and not libelous, signed and include a daytime telephone number for confirmation of authorship. Our email address is ADVletters@optonline.net.

AROUND TOWN

Sunday, March 3

Sermon Series – The South Bay Bible Church's on-going teaching series, "Returning to Reverence: Embracing God's Work in Malachi," will be presented Sundays, in person or online at 9 and 11 a.m. Visit www.southbaychurchli.org or call 631-909-8241.

Thursday, March 7

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support – Monthly group meets at the Mastic Beach Branch of Community Library, 6:30 p.m. Support for those who care for someone with dementia or memory loss. To register, call 631-399-1511 or email dgallucci@communitylibrary.org.

Friday, March 8

International Women's Day – A global day celebrating the historical, cultural, and political achievements of women, and in support of taking action against gender inequality around the world.

Saturday, March 9

Community Yard Sale – Indoor sale at Masury Ballroom, 67 Old Neck South, Center Moriches, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The estate ballroom, bowling alley, and sunroom will be filled with treasures to shop from. Proceeds to benefit the estate's restoration fund. Email office@hbpoz.com for info.

Wednesday, March 13

National Good Samaritan Day – Also known as Good Samaritan Involvement Day, the day is celebrated every March 13 to encourage kindness and selflessness, despite our differences.

Sunday, March 10

Daylight Savings Time – Set clocks forward one hour. The Firefighters Association of New York encourages all residents to use this annual event to test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors as well as check battery life and alarm expiration dates.

St. Patrick's Day Parade – Join the Center Moriches Chamber for its 21st annual parade down Main St., Center Moriches, 2 p.m.

Sunday, March 17

Happy Saint Patrick's Day

Saturday, March 23

4-Leaf Clover 5K Run/Walk – Rotary Club of Seatuck Cove run/walk consists of a fast, flat 5K through scenic streets of East Moriches, rain or shine. Start Time: 9 a.m. at East Moriches Middle School, 9 Adelaide Ave. To register or get more information, visit www.events.elitefeats.com/244leafclover#info or call 631-878-0254.

Home Improvement Series: Home Exterior – Join Brian at Mastic-Moriches-Shirley Community Library for a discussion on your home's exterior, including framing, termites, water damage, load-bearing walls, roofing, and more, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Register online or call 631-399-1511, ext. 2014.

Saturday, March 30

Falconry on Long Island – Join master falconer Mario DiDomenico at Community Library to learn about the history of falconry and meet the birds used in this ancient sport, 9 a.m. Register online or call 631-399-1511, ext. 1028.

Sunday, March 31 Happy Easter

Of Note ...

Cat Spaying Season – Most feral kittens are born in spring, therefore rescue and community cat groups recommend pre-emptive spaying in February. Two local providers: Brookhaven Animal Shelter 300 Horseblock Rd., Medford. Call 631-451-6950. Services: Voucher for FREE spay/neuter at Integrative Veterinary Therapies, Ridge. Must call clinic at 631-924-7700 for an appointment once you have a voucher. Clinic at Kent Animal Shelter, 2259 River Rd., 631-727-5731, ex. 2 or visit kentanimalshelter.com. Services \$90 includes

spay/neuter surgery, rabies vaccine, ear tip.

Tell Us About Your Event – We print local events free of charge for the towns of Moriches, Center Moriches, East Moriches, and Manorville, for our "AROUND TOWN" section. For inclusion, please submit information by no later than the 15th of the month prior to the event.

Domestic Violence – Is a loved one attacking you physically, verbally or emotionally? Contact the L.I. Against Domestic Violence. 24-hour hotline: 631-666-8833. Tell them, they'll listen. For more information, visit www.liadv.org.

Retired Volunteer Firefighters – The New York Volunteer Firefighters Association seeks new members to stay connected with the companies and firefighters with whom they served. Yearly dues, \$25. For membership information, call 518-459-6332 or visit www.nyrvfa.com.

Food Pantry – The Presbyterian Church of the Moriches serves the community each Monday night, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Volunteers welcome. Call 631-878-1993 or visit www.pcusacm.org.

Free Counseling – The Brookhaven Youth Sanctuary Program Bureau offers individual or family counseling for town residents ages 12-21. Call 631-451-8011 to speak with a licensed social worker.

YEARS AGO

75 Years Ago

MARCH 1949

A packed house greeted the Teen Town show held at Center Moriches High School. Highlights of the show were **Carol Mae Bernstein** singing "Kiss Me Again"; a duet between **Helen Maschek** and **Donald Roth**; and **Charles Ratigan's** rendition of "Nobody."

Mrs. Harriet Viscuso was installed as president of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Eastport Fire Department. Other members installed were **Mrs. Dorothy Raynor**, first vice president; **Julia Kostuk**, second vice president; **Mrs. Josephine Friedel**, recording secretary; and **Mrs. Stella Capozzola**, treasurer.

Gary Lukert, the grandson of the late **Joseph A. Titmus**, officiated at the unveiling of a plaque in memory of his grandfather in the Presbyterian Church, Center Moriches.

Katherine Foster received first prize in a poster contest sponsored by the racing team of the Eastport Fire Department.

Mrs. Theodore Osman and **Alice Osman**, both of Manorville, attended a recital of Finnish poetry.

"Ted Drops In," a comedy, was presented at Eastport High School by the senior class, under the direction of **Julia Tunnell** and a cast featuring **Edward Heil**, **Paul Daniels**, **Charles Mercer**, **Jessie Raynor**, **Arlette Rafuse** and **Janet Knight**.

Mrs. Lillian Bliss was elected as president of the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 414, Center Moriches.

Louis Strobel Jr. was elected president of the newly formed Model Builders Club at Center Moriches High School.

A magazine drive is being conducted by the seventh and eighth grades of the East Moriches Middle School for the benefit of the graduating class to purchase class rings. **Gary Gehrig** is captain of one team and **Barbara Howell** captain of the other.

John Moseley and **George Dosiack**, both of Manorville and both ardent boxing

fans, made a trip to Manhattan to enjoy a "Golden Gloves" exhibition.

T.M. Fields was elected rear commodore of the Moriches Yacht Club at a meeting of the group at the Long Island Hotel.

Playing in March in **The Center Moriches Theatre**: Jack Carson in "John Loves Mary"; John Garfield in "Force of Evil"; and Gregory Peck and Ann Baxter in "Yellow Sky."

50 Years Ago

MARCH 1974

The Center Moriches Board of Education appointed **William Culhane** as district principal of Center Moriches Schools. Mr. Culhane has been serving as acting district principal since Nov. 1.

Mastic Cub Scout Pack 282 held its Blue and Gold dinner at the Brookhaven Manor. Among the honored guests were post commander **Tom King** and **Mrs. King** of Moriches Post 929.

Bart Spadaro, owner and operator of Spadaro's International Airport in East Moriches, received his credentials as a new member of the Moriches Rotary Club from president **John Newhouse**. Mr. Spadaro is not only a mechanic on airplanes, but instructs flying and constructs his own advertising banners, which he tows behind his planes above South Shore beaches.

Army Staff Sgt. **Thomas P. Donnelly** of Longfellow Drive, Mastic Beach, has been assigned as a section chief in the 240th supply and service company in Germany.

James Huey, of Center Moriches, was elected vice president of the student body at Missouri Valley College in Marshall, Mo., where he is a junior majoring in education.

A series of paintings by **Robbin Matteson**, of Center Moriches, is on display at the Center Moriches Public Library, featuring scenes of Maine, an abstract, several animals, and two French villages.

The grand opening of the village shop-



March 1974: Sky diving was the topic of entertainment at a Blue and Gold Dinner of Cub Scout Pack 23 of Center Moriches held at the Brookhaven Manor. Mike Flynn of the Long Island Sky Divers was on hand with a film on sky diving parachutes and demonstration on parachuting.

ping plaza on the Moriches Bypass was held with a ribbon cutting attended by **Dr. A.J. Stampfl**, **Len Perrier**, Legis. **Alex Prios**, superintendent of highways **Harold Malkmes**, Security National Bank president **Dorothy Payne**, and **Emil C. Voll**, member of the advisory board of the North Fork Bank.

Bill Vigliotta, of East Moriches, who is a junior business and economics major at Belmont Abbey College, N.C., was elected president of the North and South Carolina District of Sigma Phi Epsilon National Social Fraternity.

Moriches Rotary Club vice president **Jim Dineen** sent off exchange student **Lee Donohue** to Australia and welcomed **Jackie Cump** from "Down Under."

The Moriches Bay Garden Club was formally chartered at the State Federation of Garden Club's annual meeting, which is led by president **Mrs. John New-**

house and vice president **Mrs. Albert W. Butt Jr.**

The Center Moriches Women's Club held a meeting at the K of C Hall on the Bypass in Center Moriches to coordinate committees for the Welcome Spring Dance, with **Ms. Angela Ruffing** as chairperson.

The Center Moriches milestone was returned, intact, to its rightful place at the junction of Montauk Highway and the Moriches Bypass in Center Moriches after it was removed for the bulldozing of the newly opened Village Shopping Center, according to Moriches Bay Historical Society vice president **Jean Lauer**.

Playing in March at local United Artists Theatres: **Diane Keaton** in "Sleeper"; **Steven McQueen** and **Dustin Hoffman** in "Papillion"; and "American Graffiti."

- Compiled by **Vanessa Graniello**

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Long Island Game Farm to reopen for the season

BY NICOLE FUENTES

The Long Island Game Farm operators are currently working on putting their official schedule together, but have announced a reopening in March on weekends and for spring break on March 28, 29, 30. They will be closed for Easter. The farm will also open officially in April, Thursday through Sunday and spring recess, April 22 through 26. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Throughout the winter, the farm was open by appointment only, and as of last month they were open by reservation,

weather dependent. Advance reservations include VIP tours, zookeeper tours, and pony experiences.

This year, according to owner Melinda Novack, the Foundation for Wildlife Sustainability will present culture, education, and wellness programs throughout the year.

Last year, the farm welcomed a troop of three squirrel monkeys. However, because they like the warmer weather, they won't be on display until May. Events will also be announced for April.

The Long Island Game Farm has been rehabilitating and rehoming exotic ani-

mals for over 50 years. As the largest combined children's zoo and wildlife park on Long Island, The Long Island Game Farm offers a natural environment to learn about wildlife and animals through education and entertainment.

The game farm features hundreds of animals including wallabies, bison, Barbados sheep, peacocks, and the only lemurs born and bred on Long Island. Their animal collections include both exotic and indigenous breeds, with various breeds of buffalo, parrots, zebra, camels, emus, tortoises, and more.

The farm has rescued and rehabilitated or re-homed Sicilian miniature donkeys, alpacas, African Sulcata tortoises, peacocks, rabbits, goats, sheep, alligators, and Gomez, a sulfer-crested cockatoo, and Nala, an African Serval cat.

The Long Island Game Farm is located at 489 Chapman Boulevard, Manorville, N.Y. For further information, please contact info@longislandgamefarm.com or call 631-878-6670.

To book a private tour, donate or visit: <https://www.longislandgamefarm.com/contact-long-island-game-farm/>. Tickets can be purchased at the farm. ■



Stanley the fox's winter coat is especially stunning this time of year!



Nala the African serval cat.
Photos by James Carey



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SAINT PATRICK'S DAY Parade



**GRAND MARSHAL
GEORGE KELLER**

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MARCH 10TH
STARTS AT 2PM**

ST. PATRICK'S DAY DINNER PARTY

**Friday March 8th • 7pm
At Rock Hill Country Club,
Manorville, NY**

**For Tickets and Information
Call 631.878.0003**



ABOUT THE PARADE

Center Moriches will host the 21st annual St. Patrick's Day parade on Sunday, March 10th at 2 p.m. on Main Street. The parade begins on Lake Avenue and ends at Railroad Avenue and includes floats, fire departments and pipe & drum bands. The chamber's dinner will be held on March 8th at 7 p.m. in honor of George Keller. Tickets are \$75 per person. **For more information or to request to be part of the parade, visit www.moricheschamber.org.**





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GRAND MARSHAL GEORGE KELLER



The Grand Marshal of the Moriches St. Patrick's Day Parade for 2024 is George F. Keller Jr. George has been a pillar of the community of Center Moriches for the better part of 50 years. He grew up in Brentwood, Long Island where he met his wife, Terry. They were married in 1975 and settled in Center Moriches in 1976. They raised their two sons, Frederick and Patrick, in this small community and have made it their home.

George is an active man who has always had a commitment to service to his local community. He has been involved in many organizations, both faith and community based, with the goal of providing support and enhancing the lives of others. As his sons grew, George started to contribute to the community volunteering as a coach for Catholic Youth Organization soccer at St. John the Evangelist, for several years in the early eighties. In 1988, George became involved with the Center Moriches Lynvets Dolphins youth football team. He noted that there were no opportunities for players to continue to participate in the sport as they grew older. In response, he founded the Moriches Seahawks PAL Football organization along with John DiBella in 1990, with Christopher Vigliotta contributing as the first head coach. He managed the organization until 2015, contributing a full 25 years to supporting youth football in Center Moriches. The Seahawks later became known as the Red Devils.

George also became involved in scouting, motivated by a desire to assist his sons in developing into well rounded and adept young men. He was a leader in Cub Scout Pack 23 from 1985 to 1989. George then moved to Boy Scouts Troop 414 and acted as an Assistant Scoutmaster until 1997. At that time, he moved to the Troop 414 Committee and became the Committee Chairman in 2001, a position he still holds today. During his over 35 years in scouting, George has assisted many boys on their path to adulthood, helping at least 98 boys achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. This included his two sons Frederick and Patrick. Recently, his Grandson Riley also achieved the rank of Eagle Scout.

George became a member of the Queen of All Hearts Knights of Columbus, Council 4126, in 1992. The organization focuses on donating their time and efforts to raising funds to support St John the Evangelist Church, St. Jude's Children's Hospital, East End Hospice, Catholic Charities, and OLQA. They also provide support to American Legion, VFW, Wounded Warrior Project, and other organizations that assist those in need. In his 30 years of services, he has held many positions including Grand Knight from 2012-2014. He is the current Financial Secretary.

George is solid in his faith and is very involved with his parish, St. John The Evangelist in Center Moriches. He is a weekly lector and volunteers



for many functions and activities. He recently sat on the 125-anniversary committee and was able to help make all events celebrating this milestone successful and engaging for the community and parish members. He is also a member of the men's prayer group which meets every Saturday. George has long been such a part of the parish community that he was called upon by the Pastor to assist in daily operations at the church.

George worked as a machinist at GE Aviation in Bohemia for 38 years. At work, he was part of both the safety committee and the emergency response team. He is now employed as maintenance supervisor at St. John's and has held this position since he retired from GE Aviation in 2022.

George's family has grown and remained in the Center Moriches area. Frederick and his wife, Kelly,

live in Manor Park, and Patrick and his wife, Lisa, live in Center Moriches. George also has two grandsons, Riley, who graduated from Center Moriches High School, and currently attends Stony Brook University, and Jameson, who is in 4th grade, is a cub scout, and plays on the Red Devil's football team. His sons have continued the tradition of contributing to the community and are both scout leaders in Center Moriches. ■



PAST PARADES





FAMILY PHOTOS





PAST GRAND MARSHALS



2003 Buddy Mazzio
2004 Vinnie O'Brien
2005 Joseph McHeffey
2006 Clayton Huey
2007 Arthur Rumph

2008 Rev. John J. Corcoran
2009 James Dineen
2010 Hon. Edward Romaine
2011 Miriam Gillies
2012 Lee W. Sinnickson

2013 Edward Morris, Sr.
2014 Gerry Sapanaro
2015 Tony Parlato
2016 Philomena Vigliotta
2017 Joe Maag

2018 Keith Caputo
2019 Arthur Gerhauser
2020 Elsie & Tom Tebbens
2022 Kenneth Johnson
2023 Joseph Townsend



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2024 St. Patrick's Day Parade
Grand Marshal
George Keller*



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PAST PRINCESSES




CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES

2024 ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

IRISH PRINCESS ALLIE DEMATTEO

Allie DeMatteo is a current senior at Center Moriches High School and is the valedictorian of her class. Outside of school, Allie is a member of the senior dance company at Stage Door School of Dance. She was selected to be a member of the 2023 New York All-State Choir. Allie is a working actress and is represented by DDO Artists Agency. This fall, Allie will be going to college to pursue a BFA in musical theater.





PAST ST PATRICK'S DAY PARTIES



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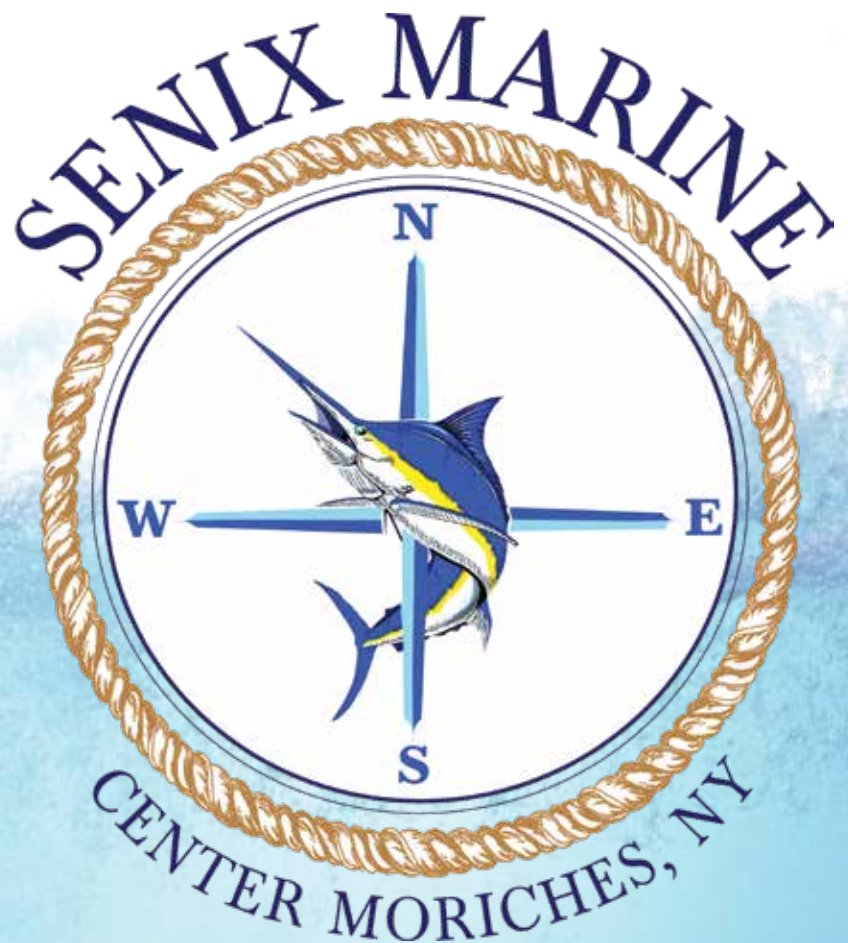
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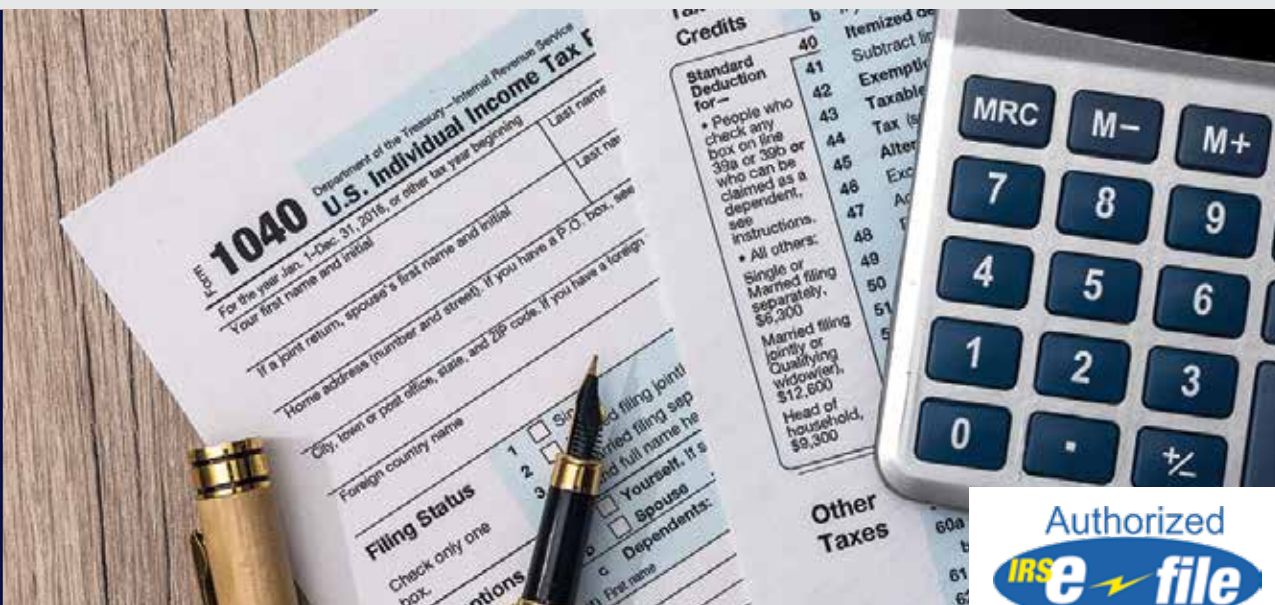
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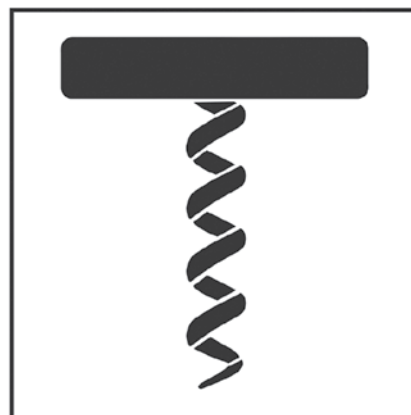
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St. Patrick's DAY
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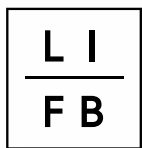
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