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GUEST ARTICLE by RADIO CATSKILL

Peace, love and taxes

After 20-year tax break, Bethel Woods seeks another exemption that could result in school revenue loss

By KIMBERLY IZAR

BETHEL, NY — Bethel Woods Center for the Arts is seeking another property tax exemption for the next 10 years from the Sullivan County Industrial Development Agency (IDA), but the Monticello Central School District says the extension would result in a $5.1 million loss in school tax revenue.

The extension request follows Bethel Woods' original payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) deal that has already been in place for 20 years.

Monticello Central School District Superintendent Dr. Matthew Evans urged the Sullivan County IDA to reconsider the extension in a February 5 letter to the Sullivan County IDA.

As part of its original PILOT agreement established in 2006, Bethel Woods agreed to pay $69,676.52 annually to the Sullivan County IDA from February 2007 to February 2026. In his letter to the Sullivan County IDA, Evans wrote that the Monticello Central School District receives $31,703 from the total sum the IDA receives from Bethel Woods each year.

However, Evans said that "if [Bethel Performing Arts Center] were to pay its full value of taxes on the parcels included in this PILOT exemption, it would owe the Monticello Central School District approximately $504,693 in the current fiscal year."

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RR photo by Liam Mayo

Interim Borough Manager, Kevin Kundratic, sits in on a borough council meeting.

New management sought for Honesdale

By LIAM MAYO

HONESDALE BOROUGH, PA — Honesdale Borough could soon see a change in its day-to-day leadership, as it advertises for a new chief administrative officer (CAO) and current interim manager Kevin Kundratic does not intend to apply for the position.

The CAO will perform the same responsibilities for the borough as those currently performed by the borough manager. The new title allows the borough to take advantage of grant funding for the first few years of that position.

The borough began to advertise the position in mid-January, and has set a February 27 deadline for applications to be returned. Kundratic told the **River Reporter** that he did not intend to put himself in contention for the role.

"I thought about it long and hard," Kundratic said. "I really wanted to stay, my heart was really, really in it, but because of some of the—I don't even know how to word it—antics and some things that had transpired with a councilor, I decided that it's just not worth the trouble and the stress that these things bring to the position."

Kundratic began in the role in April 2024 on an interim basis. He says his tenure largely consisted of addressing pre-existing, "bombshell" issues within the borough—for instance, his first day on the job, Honesdale's entire Department of Public Works (DPW) quit.

Kundratic said that when he came in, a lot of contractors wouldn't do business with the borough for one reason or another. He had to build those relationships back, he said.

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GUEST ARTICLE from SPOTLIGHT PA

Why a $193M injection for rural health care in PA isn't easing closure worries

By MARLY PARISH of SPOTLIGHT PA STATE COLLEGE

BELLEFONTE, PA — The outlook for rural hospitals in Pennsylvania remains grim as the state prepares to make the best of decreased federal investments and faces budgetary challenges that officials say make it impossible to absorb the cuts.

Policy experts say the five-year Rural Health Transformation Program, which allocates $50 billion to cover the entire country, won't offset deep Medicaid cuts approved in a sweeping federal budget package that slashed spending by roughly $1 trillion over the next decade and tightened eligibility requirements.

Pennsylvania officials estimate the state will lose about $20 billion in federal Medicaid funding over 10 years starting in 2028.

Katherine Hempstead, senior policy adviser at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, said the federal program was offered almost as a "consolation prize" to ease fear that more hospitals would close because of the Medicaid cuts.

While $50 billion is a lot of money,

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A great ski



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IN BRIEF

Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers receives federal grant

HONESDALE, PA — On February 12, U.S. Rep. Rob Bresnahan, Jr. (PA-08) announced Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers has been awarded a $936,981 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Health Center Program. The funding will strengthen health care access and services for people across northeastern Pennsylvania, according to Bresnahan's office.

"Our communities know what hard work means, and they deserve health care that works just as hard," said Bresnahan. "This grant will help Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers continue providing reliable, quality services close to home, ensuring our neighbors have access to continuous, trusted care."

"We are deeply grateful for HRSA's continued support through this base grant funding. This investment is essential to meeting the growing health care needs of our communities across rural Northeast Pennsylvania," said Terri Lacey, CEO of Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers. "Without this critical funding, patient access to primary and preventative care would significantly decrease, and our region would face the very real risk of becoming a maternity desert, leaving families without local access to prenatal, obstetric and postpartum services. This funding directly strengthens health outcomes, preserves access, and advances health equity throughout our region."

The Health Center Program grant provides essential resources to community-based health centers, enabling them to deliver comprehensive care regardless of a patient's income or insurance status. This funding will help Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers broaden access for local families, enhance services and facilities, and sustain programs that promote community health.

Bresnahan announces funding for Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

WILKES-BARRE, PA — On February 10, U.S. Rep. Rob Bresnahan, Jr. (PA-08) announced the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center has been selected for critical infrastructure upgrades as part of a nationwide initiative by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). These improvements will directly benefit veterans across northeastern Pennsylvania, helping ensure the facility remains safe, reliable, and able to deliver the high-quality care our veterans have earned.

"The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is a vital resource for our district, serving veterans across our community," said Bresnahan. "These upgrades will ensure the facility can continue providing the care our veterans deserve and give each of them the support and resources they need today and in the years ahead."

"Under President Trump, VA is putting Veterans first, and this historic investment underscores that fact," said VA Secretary Doug Collins. "Improved facilities, equipment and infrastructure mean better care for Veterans, and these funds will enable VA to achieve that goal."

This announcement is part of a $5 billion nationwide VA infrastructure initiative, and the focus for our region is ensuring Veterans in northeastern Pennsylvania benefit first-hand from these improvements.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center has been selected for Quarter 1 of Fiscal Year 2026 to receive a series of critical upgrades, including:

Renovations to the 9th Floor Mental Health unit

- Boiler plant safety improvements
- Repairs to the salt shed
- Replacement of fire doors
- Garage upgrades

Assembly Member Kay appointed to environmental conservation committee

ROCK HILL, NY — Assembly Member Paula Elaine Kay (D-100) announced that she has been appointed to the Standing Committee for Environmental Conservation. Kay thanked Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie for the appointment. She continues to serve on the Agriculture, Economic Development, Insurance, Racing and Wagering, and Veterans Committees.

Kay said, "The 100th district is one of the most beautiful and environmentally sensitive regions of the state. I'm proud to work toward continued preservation and sensible use of our resources."

In the last session Kay cosponsored a bill to permit the use of crossbows anywhere long bows are permitted for hunting. Kay is currently sponsoring legislation to provide free sporting licenses to Veterans who are 100 percent disabled. She adds that she welcomes the governor's creation of 90 new positions in DEC to expedite permitting applications. Kay is also a cosponsor of the Sustainable Affordable Housing and Sprawl Prevention Act, and the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act.

Kay represents the 100th Assembly District which is composed of most of Sullivan County and the City of Middletown and the Town of Wallkill.

The NYS DEC's mission is "To conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being." It has nine regional offices and 24 divisions.

Milford Borough gets street safety funding

HARRISBURG, PA — Sen. Lisa Baker (R-20) and Rep. Jeff Olsommer (R-139) announced on February 10 that Milford Borough will be receiving more than $300,000 in state funding through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Automated Red-Light Enforcement (ARLE) grant program to improve traffic safety and accessibility at key intersections.

Milford Borough was awarded $307,857 to make walking safer and more convenient for residents and visitors. The project will install rectangular rapid-flashing beacons and re-stripe crosswalks at 11 key intersections along Harford Street. In addition, traffic signals at the Broad Street and Harford Street intersection will be retimed to include an all-pedestrian phase, giving people a safer way to cross in every direction.

"Investing in pedestrian infrastructure—like rapid flashing beacons, refreshed crosswalks and enhanced signal timing—is a critical step toward safer streets in Milford," the legislators said. "With this award, we're taking meaningful action to protect residents, encourage walking and strengthen our downtown's accessibility and vitality."

"The monies received through the ARLE program will go a long way toward making the streets safer for our residents and visitors," said Milford Borough Council President Joe Dooley. "I and others in our small town have personally experienced near misses with vehicles while crossing Milford Borough streets. The grant will be used to purchase crosswalk signs and other safety measures to protect the public and make Milford Borough a truly walkable community. Kudos to Sen. Baker and Rep. Olsommer for working with us to secure this critical funding."

The ARLE program funds projects that enhance safety, improve mobility and reduce congestion at signalized intersections. Funding is generated through fines collected from red-light violations in Philadelphia and reinvested statewide in traffic safety improvements.

See a My View on the subject of the red-light violations funding program on page 6.

Municipal meeting this week

Thursday, February 19

Shohola Planning Committee
6:30pm, 159 Twin Lakes Rd. 570/559-7394.

Town of Rockland Board
7pm, 95 Main St. & Zoom. 845/439-3775.

Village of Hancock Planning Board
5pm, 85 East Front St., hancockpartners.org.

Village of Liberty Board
7pm, 167 North Main St. 845/292-2250.

Monday, February 23

City of Port Jervis Common Council
6:30pm, 20 Hammond St. 845/858-4000.

Honesdale Borough Council
6pm, 958 Main St. Judith 570/253-0731 x10.

Texas Township Planning Commission
7pm, 506 Old Willow Ave. 570/253-6216.

Tuesday, February 24

UDC Committee Meetings
6:30pm, Water Use/Resource Management Committee; Upper Delaware Council, 211 Bridge St. 845/252-3022.

Tusten Planning Board
7:30pm, 210 Bridge St. 845/252-7146 x1001.

Wednesday, February 25

Town of Bethel Board
7:30pm, 3460 Route 55 or Zoom. townofbethelny.us.

Town of Fremont Planning Board
7pm, 12 County Rd. 95, 607/498-6198.

Town of Highland Planning Board
6pm, 4 Proctor Rd. 845/557-6085.

[Publisher's note: Interested in attending one of these meetings regularly as a trained observer? Find out more about becoming a **River Reporter** *News Ambassador. Email social@riverreporter.com or call 845/252-7414, ext. 127.]*

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Citizens group opposes eminent domain for FIMFO

By LIAM MAYO

TOWN OF HIGHLAND, NY — Know FIMFO, a citizens group formed to advocate against the Camp FIMFO development project, released a statement responding to the article "Big Bad Wolf or Paper Tiger," published in the February 12 edition of the **River Reporter**.

The group chastised the **River Reporter** for stirring up "false controversy," and declared its opposition to the use of eminent domain. While the use of eminent domain as a land protection tool has not been suggested by any agency involved in the project, it is a tool available (under certain hypothetical conditions) to the National Park Service (NPS) to enforce its determination that Camp FIMFO does not comply with the Upper Delaware's River Management Plan, as reported by the **River Reporter**.

"We support the Park Service's authority and resolve, but there has been no real discussion of 'eminent domain.' No one wants that, including the park service," wrote Know FIMFO.

"What everyone wants, including the [Highland] Planning Board, the NPS and most importantly, the citizens of the Town of Highland (who have come out to speak at public hearings overwhelmingly against this project, and have written literally volumes of letters of concern about the environment, the nature and character of our town, our legacy, and how we protect it all for our children) is responsible development," the letter continues. "We look forward to projects that are consistent with our values and the rural nature of our town, that add value to our community and reject short-sited [sic] and inappropriate resorts and waterpark complexes designed solely to make money for an out-of-town corporate developer, at the expense of our well-being."



Photo and poster by Elizabeth Nelson

A poster ilustrated one line of community thought about the Camp FIMFO development at a September 28, 2022 public hearing about the project.

TAXES

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Bethel Woods' extension request to the Sullivan IDA says that the organization operates at a multi-million dollar annual operating deficit that is bridged through donations.

"As Bethel approaches its 20th anniversary, significant reinvestment is required across the campus, and continued stability through the PILOT enables responsible long-term capital planning while maintaining benefits provided to Sullivan County," said Bethel Woods CEO Eric Frances in his extension request.

Opened in 2006, Bethel Woods has served as a multi-venue hub that has attracted global artists like Bob Dylan, Lady Gaga and Cyndi Lauper for performances. The organization's net income was more than $2.9 million in 2024, according to its 2024 990 form.

PILOT extension draws concerns

Evans wrote in his letter that the proposed deviation would affect not only students and staff but also Sullivan County taxpayers.

"This loss in tax revenue ($472,990) represents 1.1% of our total tax levy for 2025-26. It represents programs that we are unable to offer our students. It represents loss in salaries and benefits potentially realized by our staff members. It represents a tax burden shifted to other taxpayers to foot the bill," said Evans.

He added in his letter that Bethel Woods has served as a "terrific cultural and economic resource" for Sullivan County and that its importance to the community was not in question.

PILOT agreements are typically issued in the early years of an economic development project to incentivize new businesses or developers to develop new projects in an area by granting real property tax abatements or other tax exemptions. Sullivan County IDA's own policy states "PILOT payment schedules will not extend beyond a twenty-year period."

Both the Monticello Central School District and the Sullivan County IDA declined an interview, but Sullivan IDA Executive Director Jennifer Flad told Radio Catskill that "any negotiation on the PILOT amount will be between Bethel Woods and the taxing jurisdictions. IDA is involved to assist in delivering the PILOT, where without IDA there would be no delivery mechanism."

Radio Catskill reached out to Bethel Woods Performing Arts Center for comment but originally did not hear back in time for publication. The organization responded with this statement after this article was published.

"For 20 years, Bethel Woods Center for the Arts has served as a catalyst for economic revitalization in Sullivan County, generating more than $1 billion in economic impact since inception. As part of that commitment, the organization voluntarily contributes a significant amount annually through a combination of PILOT payments, property and school taxes, and special assessments—even as a nonprofit performing arts center and Museum, proudly preserving the National Register-listed historic Woodstock site.

"Our priority has always been the long-term strength and viability of the community. We are committed to ensuring that our impact—economic, educational, and cultural—endures well beyond the next 20 years. We look forward to our collaboration with the IDA and local taxing jurisdictions to continue a thoughtful, sustainable path forward that allows Bethel Woods to advance its nonprofit mission, preserve this globally significant historic landscape, and pursue national landmark recognition as we approach the 60th anniversary of Woodstock in 2029."

At their January 21 meeting, the Sullivan County IDA Board discussed authorizing a PILOT extension for Bethel Woods for an additional 10 years from 2026 to 2036. The new PILOT agreement would increase Bethel Woods' annual payment to $113,035.72 to account for inflation and cost-of-living adjustments, increase its annual rent from $2,500 to $4,000, and waive any PILOT extension fees since Bethel Woods is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

The Sullivan County IDA Board originally had planned to authorize the PILOT extension on its February 9 meeting agenda, but removed the agenda item after they received Monticello Central School District's letter.

During the IDA's February 9 meeting, Sullivan County IDA Agency Counsel Walter Garigliano said he had connected the school district's and Bethel Woods' legal counsels to have "an adult conversation."

Garigliano, who was the IDA's legal counsel back in 2005, shared the backstory behind the original PILOT agreement involving Alan Gerry, founder and chairman of Bethel Woods, and local and county officials.

"It was the then-assessor of the Town of Bethel's belief that Bethel Woods was entitled to a full exemption from taxes. Alan Scott, who had previously been the supervisor for the Town of Bethel and representatives of the county, approached Mr. Gerry and asked him if he would continue to pay the taxes that were payable before Bethel Woods became Bethel Woods. That amount was $69,000 and some change," said Garigliano.

"This loss in tax revenue ($472,990) represents 1.1% of our total tax levy for 2025-26. It represents programs that we are unable to offer our students. It represents loss in salaries and benefits potentially realized by our staff members. It represents a tax burden shifted to other taxpayers to foot the bill."

— Dr. Matthew Evans Monticello Central School District Superintendent

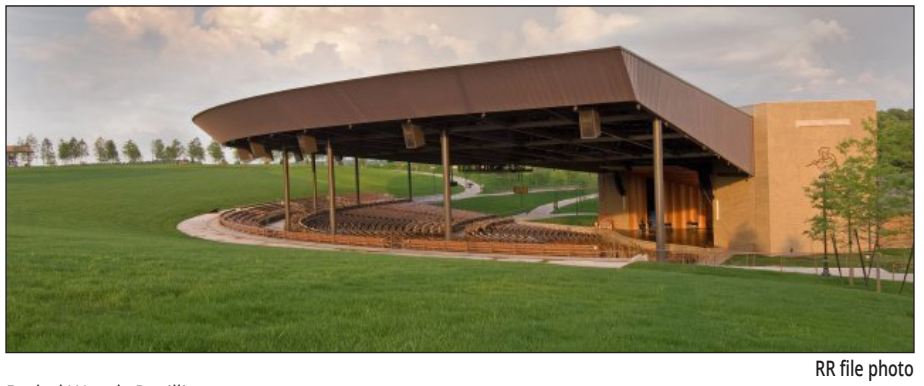
"If the assessor was right 20 years ago and the property qualifies for an exemption, if they had applied for an exemption, the levies would be zero. The project agreed to pay $69,000 a year to implement that."

Garigliano added that "whether or not the assessor or the school district or others feel [Bethel Woods is] entitled to be tax exempt, that's not our job."

After this article was published, Dr. Evans clarified that "our legal counsel is not in discussion with Bethel Performing Arts Center to reach an agreement." He added that the "Monticello Central School District is not a party nor signatory to the Bethel Performing Arts Center's (BPAC) application for a deviation from the Sullivan County uniform tax exemption policy (UTEP)."

Garigliano said at the February 9 Sullivan IDA meeting that "Howard [Siegel] pulled it from the agenda to give the school time to work with Bethel Woods to try and figure that out."

Disclosure: Bethel Woods Performing Arts Center is a financial supporter of Radio Catskill and the ***River Reporter****.*



RR file photo

Bethel Woods Pavillion

UDC grant supports Town of Tusten Open Space and Recreation Plan

NARROWSBURG, NY – The Upper Delaware Council (UDC) approved a $9,740 payment to the Town of Tusten on January 27 to support completion of its new town-wide Natural Resources Inventory, Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Tusten initiated Phase 1 of its project in 2024 with a $10,000 TAG award to develop a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) identifying key environmental and open space resources such as wetlands, wildlife habitats, flood zones, and forests within the town, with public engagement through meetings and a survey to list protection priorities.

Phase 2 in 2025 built upon the NRI to establish a vision for an appropriate balance of open space, public access, natural resources and public recreational opportunities.

As a recommended action in the town's 2021 comprehensive plan, the Open Space and Recreation Plan creates a roadmap for implementation of future conservation projects, new recreational opportunities and priorities for open space protection, with ongoing public involvement to seek community consensus and appropriate methods to complete such projects.

Available at www.townoftusten.gov/media/3236, with more information on its process at www.tustenopenspacerecreation.com, the plan can serve as a model for other Upper Delaware River Valley communities.

The Town of Tusten Conservation Advisory Council, composed of chairperson Jane Luchsinger, Cathleen Breen, Spencer Branch, Alexandra Climent, Bernie Lohmann and Donovan Sylvest, guided the project in collaboration with the town board and staff.

They received technical assistance from MJ Engineering, Architecture, Landscape Architecture & Land Surveying, P.C., project liaison Peter Manning from Genius Loci, the Sullivan County Planning and Real Property Services Departments, and the Delaware Highlands Conservancy.

The plan was also supported by a $75,000 Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund grant administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

This close-out finalizes the UDC's Fiscal Year 2025 Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program, which had also awarded $3,000 to the Town of Deerpark to update its "A Map of the Town of Deerpark: Gateway to the Upper Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River" brochure and $260 to Berlin Township to commission a set of 52 publicly accessible tax maps.

From 1988 to 2026, the UDC has awarded $968,463.50 to its member municipalities to fund 270 projects that support the objectives of the River Management Plan for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River in New York and Pennsylvania.

Please visit upperdelawarecouncil.org/grant-program/ or contact UDC Resources and Land Use Specialist Kerry Engelhardt at kerry@upperdelawarecouncil.org or 845/252-3022 for more information.

HEALTH

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hospitals and health systems will feel the funding reductions "when they begin to address the needs of the uninsured," Lisa Davis, director of the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, told Spotlight PA.

Shapiro's $53.3 billion budget proposal, presented to the divided legislature in early February, mostly keeps hospital funding intact and adds $1 billion in Medicaid spending, primarily to cover services and keep up with rising costs. He also called for a higher minimum wage—from $7.25 to $15 an hour—hoping that could reduce the number of people who are insured through Medicaid.

But some health experts say it's still not enough to solve the problems making it hard for hospitals to stay open.

A recent analysis commissioned by the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, which has long warned about the pressures facing providers, estimates that a dozen more facilities could close over the next five years without more help from policymakers.

HAP, which represents 235 hospitals statewide, supports efforts to boost insurance coverage. However, President and CEO Nicole Stallings said hospitals need more. Rural communities often have older residents and treat people more reliant on government-funded insurance, which reimburses at lower rates than private plans and hasn't kept up with inflation.

"The governor's budget, for the most part, maintains funding for hospitals. But at a time when less than half of Pennsylvania's hospitals have margins necessary for long-term stability, the status quo is not enough. Access to care that our communities depend on is at risk."

— Lisa Davis, director of the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health

For rural hospitals operating on tight margins, that dynamic has meant cutting services or closing altogether, leaving patients with longer commutes and waits for care.

"The governor's budget, for the most part, maintains funding for hospitals. But at a time when less than half of Pennsylvania's hospitals have margins necessary for long-term stability, the status quo is not enough," she told Spotlight PA. "Access to care that our communities depend on is at risk."

Ahead of Shapiro's budget speech, HAP sent him an open letter asking that Medicaid reimbursement to hospitals "reflect the actual cost of providing care." At the same time, the group acknowledged the state's competing budgetary demands, so HAP proposed a mix of relief strategies, such as raising the base payment rates for some providers, creating new supplemental payments for things like emergency care and surgery, and boosting support for distressed hospitals.

And while the state Department of Human Services, which administers the Medicaid program, agrees the federal money won't offset cuts, an agency spokesperson said the new transformation dollars could expand rural health care access through wellness hubs, mobile medical units, workforce training and stipends, and other projects outlined in its funding request.

The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administers the $10 billion-per-year program, giving approved states $100 million annually, with the potential for more based on rural population, the number of health facilities, and other factors. Direct payments to providers are capped at 15 percent of total funds, so most dollars go toward workforce development, infrastructure upgrades, and new ways of delivering care. Any unspent money goes back to the federal program—giving states the chance to apply for more.

Pennsylvania's application detailed plans for so-called Rural Care Collaboratives—which would include elected leaders, business officials, health providers, patients, and schools—to identify needs and prioritize investments to meet specific goals for care.

The state pitched a short-term Rapid Response Access Stabilization Program for the first two years of the federal program to target investments in hospital and emergency services capacity, technology projects, and workforce initiatives.

Some of the state's application focused on legislation, including a bill that would bring Pennsylvania into a compact allowing for out-of-state physician assistants, also known as physician associates, to treat patients here.

Jennifer Campbell, president of the Pennsylvania Society of Physician Associates, said the agreement could expand access to care in rural areas and reduce administrative burden for health professionals, who wouldn't have to maintain licenses in separate states.

"It will expand the workforce in our state and then, hopefully, expand access to care for patients that need it," she told Spotlight PA.

The state cited the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine's regional training centers as a possible way to address service gaps in the field. With current plans to launch in Cambria, Crawford and McKean counties, Pennsylvania said startup funds could support another three centers over the next two years—offering certification programs in dental assisting and hygiene.

Helen Hawkey, executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health, said the goal is to train students in the communities that need providers most and encourage them to stay.

"You're not going to get a student that grew up in Pittsburgh to go practice along the New York border. That's just not going to happen," she told Spotlight PA. "But if you can grab a couple of those students from those rural areas and get them into dental school and get them trained, there's a better, much better chance they're going to go back to those areas and practice there."

Still, Hawkey said the cost of dental school is a major barrier, with many students facing roughly $500,000 in debt. Scholarships, she added, are "a much better way" to boost enrollment in Pennsylvania's dental programs, which have struggled to attract in-state applicants.

"You're not going to get a student that grew up in Pittsburgh to go practice along the New York border. That's just not going to happen. But if you can grab a couple of those students from those rural areas and get them into dental school and get them trained, there's a better, much better chance they're going to go back to those areas and practice there."

— Helen Hawkey, executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health

Even then, building a workforce pipeline takes time—far longer than the five-year federal program, she said.

While the money wasn't something states could afford to walk away from, Hempstead doubts it will lead to a full "transformation" of rural health.

"It's not new to think about rural workforce and transportation," she told Spotlight PA. "Will there be some big breakthrough that comes from these applications for these grants? Will we get lightning in a bottle somehow? I'm not going to rule it out, but I don't think it's preordained."

Some problems, she added, can't be solved through innovation alone.

"I don't think there's a startup or a tech solution, or AI, that can solve problems created by too few paying customers, really long distance, and just the complexities of delivering quality health care," Hempstead said.

Spotlight PA is an independent, nonpartisan newsroom dedicated to investigative and public-service journalism for Pennsylvania. Find more reporting from the organization at spotlightpa.org.

Court docs shed new light on Bar Veloce closure

By LIAM MAYO

NARROWSBURG, NY — A new filing in the legal proceedings for the upscale Narrowsburg establishment Bar Veloce provides more details about why the bar was closed in August 2025.

Town of Tusten Code Enforcement Officer Jim Crowley rescinded Bar Veloce's Certificate of Occupancy on August 28, 2025 with a notice reading, "You cannot open this eating and drinking establishment until fire and building code issues are addressed as per Section 107 Unsafe Structures and Equipment of the New York State Property Maintenance Code." Following that, Crowley issued several additional notices, specifying additional issues with the building.

A set of legal documents filed January 20, part of an effort from Bar Veloce to get the decision overturned, includes a list of known compliance issues at the property, compiled by Crowley. Crowley introduced the list as "reasons for revoking certificate of occupancy." See sidebar for the full list.

The list includes an engineer's report for the bar's rooftop deck. Bar Veloce submitted to the Town of Tusten in the summer of 2025 an engineering report purporting to prove the roof to be structurally sound; that document was later revealed to be a forgery, which Bar Veloce claimed to be the result of an internet scam.

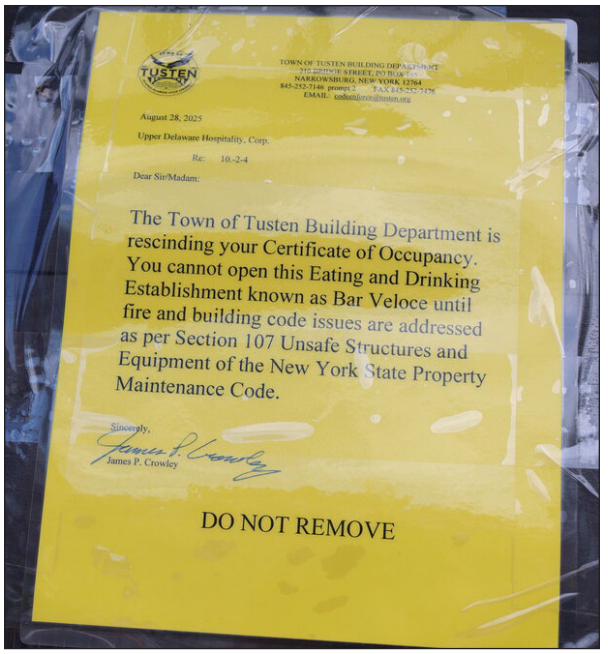
The list additionally includes the need for fire separation (i.e., fire doors, sprinklers and alarms) between the two uses of the building. Bar Veloce operates out of the building's second floor; the first floor operates as Narrowsburg Motors, a car sales and repair shop.

In the email that included the list, Tusten Town Attorney Ken Klein noted that "one of the items is a past due fire and safety inspection, the completion of which could identify additional compliance issues."

Making the case

Bar Veloce initially appealed to the Town of Tusten Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), asking the ZBA to overturn Crowley's decision. When the ZBA declined to take up the case, claiming the decision lay outside its jurisdiction, Bar Veloce challenged the ZBA's decision in court.

In the most recent set of legal filings, dated January 20,



RR photo by Liam Mayo

The notice closing Bar Veloce was placed on the business's door on August 28.

Bar Veloce reiterated its claim that the matter is within the ZBA's jurisdiction. Additionally, it claims that the section of the code used to justify the closure was improper; that section is meant to address immediate emergencies, of which this was not, according to Bar Veloce.

"Even where a genuine emergency exists, Section 107 authorizes only those temporary measures necessary to abate the danger and permit repair and restoration," reads Bar Veloce's filings. "It does not authorize the unnecessary and Draconian action of rescission or revocation of a Certificate of Occupancy, nor the permanent or indefinite closure of otherwise lawful uses."

"By collapsing the distinction between temporary emergency abatement and permanent revocation, Respondents transformed Section 107 from a narrowly tailored safety provision into a blunt enforcement tool, deployed without standards, without process and without exigency."

Reasons for revoking Certificate of Occupancy

1. Roof load engineer report for roof top deck built without a permit
2. Overdue fire and safety inspection
3. An updated third party electrical [inspection] needed
4. Handicap parking blocked with cones
5. Fire separation between the two uses: ex., fire door, sprinklers, alarms
6. Septic tank increase in size for occupancy, 1000 gallon to 2000 gallon
7. Bathroom needed in Narrowsburg Motors with toilet and sink as per Table 403.1 of NYS 2020 Plumbing Code
8. Section 903 automatic sprinkler system 903.21.2 Group A-2 occupant load 100 or more
9. Section 903.2.9.1 repair garage building with repair garages servicing vehicles parking in basement
10. Reports from third party engineer commercial insulation requirements for roof and window replacement

HONESDALE

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Additionally, he said, the biggest obstacle he faced was the newness of the manager's position. Because there had not been a manager with the borough before him, the borough council ran the borough's day-to-day operations. While that approach works in some municipalities, some of the decisions taken by council had gotten the borough into issues, which Kundratic worked to address.

Kundratic said things have improved over his tenure in the role. The borough has a reconstituted DPW, relationships with contractors have improved and clearer lines have been established between the day-to-day work done by a borough manager and the legislative work done by borough council.

"I think I've done most of the heavy lifting for the borough, and I think I've got things in an order where somebody else can come in and lead the borough and not be bogged down with some of the nonsense that I had to deal with," he said.

Kundratic said he expected the borough to try and have someone in the role by April, and that he expected to stay on for at least 60 days for a transition period to train the new person.

GUEST ARTICLE from DelAware

First female mayor of Milford Borough aims high for first term

By EMMA SIMMONS

MILFORD BOROUGH, PA — The first female mayor of Milford Borough, Candace Mahala, was elected to her initial four-year term in November 2025.

The choice on the mayoral ballot on November 4, 2025, was between Republican Peter Cooney and Democrat Candace Mahala. Mahala was declared the winner with 63.59 percent of the vote. Sworn in on January 2, her first term will expire at the end of 2029.

Mahala grew up in Milford and attended Delaware Valley High School from which she graduated in 2002. After attending college in Massachusetts and working around the Boston area, Mahala and her husband moved to Europe and then back to Milford about three years ago.

After coming back to Milford, Mahala did not initially intend to be involved in local politics.

"I started to notice a lot of things in Milford that frustrated me about public safety, so I attended council meetings and talked to representatives," she said.

After the incumbent mayor Sean Strub decided to step down after his two elected terms, Mahala decided to run for mayor to be able to have direct influence on the community.

"I didn't picture myself entering the political world, so I feel honored that the [Milford Borough] residents trusted me as the first female mayor and one of the youngest," she said.

The mayor's main responsibilities are to deal with community concerns and maintain oversight of the local police department. The Milford Borough's police department specifically is independent, meaning it has no connection to any regional police division.

Mahala's main goals in her role is to assist the police department and keep it independent through review and communication plans. Along with oversight of the police, Mahala intends to keep focus on prioritizing pedestrian safety in town, as well as implementing welcome packages for residents to give them more information about the borough.

"I want to make Milford a place where people can be safe and come together whether they live here, work here or own a business here," she said.

She relayed how important it is for community members to attend meetings and see how they can influence decisions.

"I don't think I even realized until very recently how much goes into the decisions that are made," she said.

After her four-year term ends, Mahala will have the opportunity to run for reelection indefinitely. "It's humbling to feel the responsibility that was entrusted to me, and I am excited to make as much of a positive impact as I can," she said.

EDITORIAL

Ban red-light cameras

Statistics show they lead to more accidents

By THOMAS MCCAREY

Boosters of red-light cameras don't want you to know that in many jurisdictions where red-light cameras are active, accidents and injuries have increased. [Ed. note: Red-light cameras take photos of vehicles that have entered an intersection after the light turns red.]

In Philadelphia, at Grant Avenue and the Boulevard, accidents increased 15 percent, with injury accidents increasing 27 percent. In addition, angle collisions did not decrease as promised. At Red Lion Road, accidents increased 18 percent. And again, cameras did not reduce angle collisions, as the red-light camera boosters promised they would.

In Los Angeles, at Manchester Avenue and Figueroa Street, at Westwood Boulevard and Wilshire Boulevard, and at Rodeo Road and La Brea Avenue, collisions tripled after red light cameras were installed.

So why did accidents increase at camera-enforced intersections? Local attorney Sherman Ellison said, "People see the light flash and they slam on their brakes. That's just human nature. As a result, more accidents, more rear-end accidents."

The Virginia Transportation Research Council found an increase of between 31 percent and 54 percent for rear-end crashes, and most likely an increase in angle crashes as well at red-light-camera intersections. And there was no decrease of rear-enders over time, as red-light camera boosters claimed would happen.

In Corpus Christi, TX, rear-end accidents increased nearly 33 percent, and accidents resulting in injury were up 28 percent at red-light camera intersections.

Red-light camera boosters don't want you to know that adding time to yellow lights reduces red light violations dramatically, and also makes intersections safer.

The Virginia Department of Transportation increased the yellow time by 1.5 seconds at one red-light-camera intersection. This increase in yellow time resulted in a 94 percent drop in citations.

To illustrate that most red-light violations are invisible, tenths-of-a-second violations, Winnipeg, Canada, added 0.3 to 0.7 seconds to 110 city intersections, which resulted in a 75 percent to 80 percent reduction in citations at red-light-camera intersections.

I predict PennDOT will refuse to allow any red-light-camera city to add yellow light time to improve safety by more than the cameras can achieve.

Why will it refuse? Likely because Automated Red Light Enforcement (ARLE) programs are for-profit ways for PennDOT to accumulate funds that it can pass out to communities it favors for whatever reasons. PennDOT gains power and influence in relation to its total budget, and the ARLE program increases its total budget revenue to give it more power and influence.

But if the yellow intervals are lengthened by one second to reduce the violation rates by at least 60 percent and more likely 70 percent to 90 percent, then ARLE cameras would issue too few tickets for the total fines to pay the $4,000-to-$5,000-per-month-per-camera costs, and the program would lose money. Without profits, PennDOT, the for-profit camera companies and red-light-camera cities will not be interested in the red-light program.

Adding one second to yellow lights would make intersections safer, but would make red light cameras unnecessary and unprofitable, not something that either PennDOT or red light camera cities want.

And yet, with all this, red-light cameras continue to operate and proliferate, without being subjected to proper investigative reporting. A big problem is that by Pennsylvania law, camera data is kept top secret from the public, so we can't find out what the cameras' failures and shortcomings are. We have to rely on the information the camera boosters put out.

Will they say anything that might kill the goose that lays the golden eggs? The huge amount of money that cameras generate, which creates a conflict of interest, is too tempting for the officials in charge to ban red-light cameras. Intersections would be safer with proper yellow-light timing and without red-light cameras.

The ability to punish drivers' inadvertent and non-dangerous behavior with gotcha technology reflects governments' desperate quest for ever more revenue. Red-light cameras increase accidents and injuries. Intersections can be made safer with longer yellow lights. Based on the facts, red-light cameras should be banned in Pennsylvania.

Thomas McCarey lives in Berwyn, PA.

Notes

Accidents in Philadelphia:

https://www.thenewspaper.com/rlc/docs/2013/pa-rlcresults.pdf

Why do accidents increase? https://ww2.motorists.org/blog/la-red-light-cameras-increase-accidents/

Accidents in Virginia:

https://www.thenewspaper.com/news/18/1844.asp

Accidents in Texas:

https://www.thenewspaper.com/news/27/2743.asp

Increased time for yellow signal in Virginia:

https://ww2.motorists.org/issues/red-light-cameras/red-light-citations-drop-below-one-per-day-2/

Increased yellow signal time in Winnipeg, Canada:

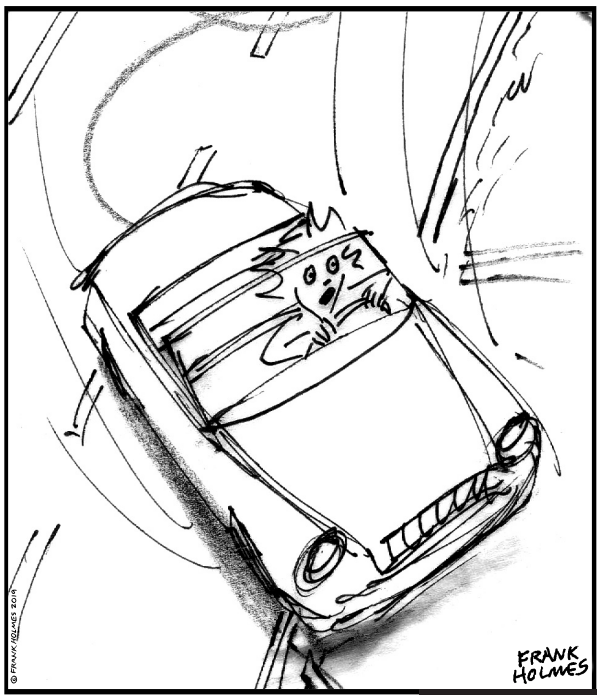
https://www.thenewspaper.com/news/70/7025.asp

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

VISIT RIVERREPORTER.COM/QUOTE
FOR A REFLECTION AND MORE QUOTES

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."
—Shirley Chisholm

DR. PUNNYBONE



Auntie Lock Brakes

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tread carefully in railroad merger

Good government requires patience, diligence and a willingness to ask tough questions, even when the process feels slow or inefficient. During my years serving Monroe County, PA, I saw firsthand how careful review and thoughtful decision-making lead to better outcomes for communities.

The merger application submitted by Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern needs careful scrutiny. If it's approved, it would be a massive consolidation of power. Naturally, the first question people should have is what the impact will be on competition.

Major rail mergers are not routine transactions. They affect local economies, supply chains, land use and job availability in communities across Pennsylvania and the nation. If Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern intend to merge, competition must be strengthened, not weakened. Reduced competition could have detrimental consequences, chief among them higher costs across the board.

As someone who now serves on a township zoning hearing board, I understand how federal decisions can ripple down to the local level. The Surface Transportation Board's (STB) job is to protect the public interest, so careful handling of this early stage is imperative.

Our state's past, present and future are tied to America's rail industry. The STB should not rush to judgment simply for the sake of moving things along. The STB needs to take a measured and responsible approach and make sure a merger of this magnitude boosts competition. I hope our federal leaders will continue to support the STB in holding this application to the highest possible standards.

Josephine Ferro
Middle Smithfield Township, PA

Thompson Dems to interview candidates

The Town of Thompson Democratic Committee is seeking letters of interest from town residents wishing to receive the Democratic endorsement to run for the following positions: Town of Thompson Supervisor, currently held by Scott Mace (R), and Town of Thompson Council, currently held by Richard Benjamin, Jr. (D), for the November 3 election.

Submit letter and brief resume postmarked on or before February 23 to Lori Orestano-James, Vice Chair, TOTDC, 255 Harris Road, Harris, NY 12742.

Town of Thompson Democratic Committee
Harris, NY

DMV points system has changed

The New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association (NYSTPBA) is reminding motorists about a sweeping new license point system that took effect on February 16.

The most significant change applies to any alcohol- or drug-related conviction or incident and aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle. Both offenses previously carried zero points but will now result in 11.

Offenses involving the safety of others or infrastructure damage—including passing a stopped school bus, speeding in a construction zone, and incidents involving over-height vehicles or bridge strikes—now carry 8 points. Driving while using a cell phone remains at 5 points.

The threshold for license suspension or loss is currently accumulating 11 points in 18 months. Under the new rubric, the 11-point threshold remains the same, while the lookback period has been extended to 24 months.

The NYSTPBA supports maximum penalties for reckless, impaired or criminally negligent drivers. But it also reminds drivers that while its members are tasked with upholding the law, they do not write it.

"Historically, state troopers bear the brunt of drivers' frustration at traffic stops," said NYSTPBA President Charles W. Murphy. "When an irate driver realizes at the side of the road that a single citation can result in sufficient points to lose their license and drive up their insurance coverage costs, it is our members who may well face that anger.

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LETTERS ¬ Page 6

This is why it's imperative that New Yorkers understand the changes that are about to occur."

The NYSTPBA is 100 percent in support of holding accountable those who endanger fellow motorists by driving impaired or at 30-plus miles per hour over the speed limit. But it is incumbent on the state to ensure that all drivers are aware of any impending points changes to ensure the safety of the men and women who protect the public and put themselves at risk every time they pull a car over to the side of the road.

New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association
Albany, NY

West Coast policies don't belong in PA-08

Northeastern Pennsylvania does not need a carpetbagger representing us in Congress. Mayor Paige Cognetti may be running in PA-08, but she is not from here. She was born and raised in Oregon, educated at an Ivy League school, and now presents herself as someone who knows what's best for Scranton and the surrounding communities. That disconnect matters.

We do things differently in NEPA. Our values are practical, community-focused and rooted in lived experience, not ideological experiments imported from the West Coast. Even many local Democrats here are not far-left socialists, because that brand of politics simply doesn't reflect who we are.

The results speak for themselves. The progressive, West Coast-style policies Cognetti has brought to Scranton haven't worked, and there's no reason to believe they would suddenly work better on a larger scale in PA-08.

NEPA deserves a representative who knows us, not someone trying to remake us.

George Schottmiller
Scranton, PA

Scranton's crime is a serious problem

I am writing as a concerned Lackawanna County resident who has watched recent reports of violent crime in Scranton with growing alarm. Incidents involving serious assaults and homicides have left many in our community feeling unsettled and questioning the direction our city is heading.

Scranton has long been a city where families felt safe in their neighborhoods. Today, many people are asking what is being done to address the rise in violent crime and to restore that sense of security. We deserve clear communication from city leadership about the specific steps being taken to support law enforcement, prevent violence and protect our neighborhoods.

Public safety should be a top priority. I urge city officials to provide transparency about their plans, outline measurable strategies to reduce crime, and ensure that residents' concerns are heard and addressed.

Our community's future depends on strong, effective leadership and a renewed focus on keeping Scranton safe for everyone.

Thomas Tasker
South Abington Township, PA

On the attempted murder of a policeman

The executive board of the Sullivan County Patrolmen's Benevolent Association issued the following statement in response to the conviction secured at trial in the case involving the attempted murder of a police officer:

"We are deeply grateful to Brian Conaty and the Sullivan County district attorney's office for its tireless work, professionalism and unwavering commitment to justice in successfully securing a conviction in this case. This outcome reflects the dedication and skill of prosecutors who carefully prepared, presented the facts, and ensured accountability through the judicial process."

The union also expressed sincere appreciation for the work of the local law enforcement agencies involved, including the New York State Police and Village of Monticello Police, as well as the investigators and first responders, and the support personnel, witnesses and jury who contributed throughout the case.

"This conviction is the result of countless hours of investigative work, coordination and perseverance by officers and detectives who refused to let violence against law enforcement go unanswered. From the earliest moments of response through the conclusion of trial, their commitment to public safety and to one another never wavered."

The attempted murder of a police officer is an act of violence that strikes at the heart of community safety. The conviction sends a clear message that attacks on law enforcement officers will be thoroughly investigated and vigorously prosecuted.

"While this verdict cannot undo the harm caused, it represents an important step toward justice," the union said. "We also want to recognize the officer and his family for their courage and resilience throughout this process. Their strength is a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who serve and protect."

The Sullivan County Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, the union representing the members of the Sullivan County Sheriff's Patrol Division, remains committed to supporting law enforcement personnel and ensuring that those who endanger the lives of officers—and members of our community—are held accountable.

Sullivan County Patrolmen's Benevolent Association
Rock Hill, NY

Emergency appeal in NY redistricting

Attorneys for Rep. Nicole Malliotakis and the New York State Republican elections commissioner have filed emergency appeals to the United States Supreme Court seeking to stay the decision of the Manhattan Supreme Court in the NY-11 redistricting matter.

The filings demonstrate that the Supreme Court decision made by Justice Pearlman is contrary to both the state and federal constitutions and seeks to create a racially motivated gerrymander of NY-11. The parties have filed appeals to the New York State Court of Appeals and the Appellate Division, First Department.

Due to the impending start of the election process on February 24, Republican petitioners could no longer wait for a final decision on a stay by the First Department of the Manhattan Supreme Court.

The filings are available at bit.ly/4azFTlJ and bit.ly/3OfMEl3.

"The decision by Justice Pearlman prevents any congressional election in the entire State of New York and will result in extreme disruption of the election process in our state," said NYGOP chair Ed Cox. "The decision is flawed on many bases, as the submissions to the Supreme Court of the United States make clear."

"Gov. Hochul and Democratic legislative leaders' actions in this case are outrageous. Gov. Hochul and the legislature, on a bipartisan basis, enacted the current congressional map in 2024 by wide margins. That plan did not change the outlines of NY-11 by a single person, leaving in place the district created by the special master in 2022. NY-11 has existed as a Staten Island/Southern Brooklyn district since 1982 and is compact, reflects communities of interest, and is politically competitive."

"The nakedly partisan decision by Justice Pearlman would impose a racial gerrymander, contrary to U.S. Supreme Court precedent. The case was brought by extreme Democratic partisans and is an insult to the voters of NY-11."

"Gov. Hochul and Attorney General Letitia James have failed to act in the best interests of the law and the people of New York State. Such extreme and unproductive partisanship has characterized their time in office."

New York State Republican Committee
New York City, NY

Transparency needed in drug pricing

I am a cardiac patient relying on daily blood thinners to stay alive and avoid another medical emergency. Missing a dose or losing access could have serious consequences. That reality makes me pay close attention to proposals that affect medicine availability and future innovation.

Most Favored Nation (MFN) pricing is not the correct path forward. Allowing foreign governments to influence U.S. drug pricing risks limiting access and slowing the development of new treatments. America leads the world in medical innovation because we invest in research, not because we copy systems that restrict it.

If lawmakers want to help patients like me, they should demand transparency in the 340B program. Hospitals benefit from steep drug discounts, yet patients often face high out-of-pocket costs with little explanation. Savings meant to support vulnerable patients should not disappear behind closed doors.

Pennsylvania patients need policies that protect both access and innovation. I hope that Congress will reject MFN-style price-setting and restore accountability to the 340B program so that savings go to patients, which could help ensure the health care system actually works for us—especially those of us who depend on care every day.

Veronica Comfort
Fogelsville, PA

Hernandez would target Medicaid fraud

Joseph Hernandez, Republican candidate for New York State comptroller, responded to recently reported Medicaid fraud schemes that have cost New York taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and have exploited some of the state's most vulnerable residents.

A recent report from the Department of Health and Human Services revealed that New York's Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program was plagued by fraud, up to $196 million in improper claims. This includes undocumented trips, unlicensed drivers and false billing paid out under the program.

In addition, federal authorities also announced charges in a $120 million kickback and prescription fraud scheme involving social adult day care centers in Queens. These operators allegedly bribed and threatened seniors to generate fraudulent Medicaid claims.

"Pervasive Medicaid fraud is becoming the norm and it's a symptom of a broken oversight system that New Yorkers cannot afford and shouldn't be required to fund," said Hernandez. "Medicaid is meant to protect the most vulnerable, not subsidize fraudsters. When taxpayers' dollars are stolen, it's real harm to our retirement security, health care access and community services."

One company in particular, Medical Answering Services (MAS), which is responsible for distributing Medicaid funds, had its $1 billion contract expanded in 2023 by Gov. Kathy Hochul.

"Despite the state admitting that some of the improper spending may be due to errors by MAS, Gov. Hochul continues to allow taxpayer money to be siphoned away with little accountability," said Hernandez.

Hernandez highlighted that billions of dollars in federal and state Medicaid funds are spent without the kind of independent audit, real-time fraud prevention and fiscal accountability that New York desperately needs. This direct failure is caused by a lack of strong oversight by Tom DiNapoli, state comptroller.

"Drivers billing for trips that never happened, day care centers that turned into racketeering schemes, and seniors coerced into fraud are in our headlines and Tom DiNapoli is doing nothing about it. New Yorkers deserve better," said Hernandez. "I am running for state comptroller to stop fraud before the money walks out the door, and I will not just conduct audits years after the damage is done."

"New York's Medicaid budget is one of the largest in the country, and without true oversight, it becomes an easy target for scammers," Hernandez added. "As state comptroller, I will fight to reclaim every dollar stolen from hardworking taxpayers and ensure public programs serve those they were created to help."

To learn more about Joseph Hernandez's plan to modernize the Office of State Comptroller and protect taxpayers, visit hernandezforny.com.

hernandezforny.com
New York City, NY

OBITUARIES

GARY J. EMEIGH SR.

Gary J. Emeigh Sr., aged 71, passed away peacefully on February 10, 2026 after a battle with cancer.



Gary was born in Bellmore, NY, the son of the late Perry and Gloria (VanDeven) Emeigh. He was raised in Long Island, where he met and married the girl one block over, Debbie Higbie, beginning a love that would last over 53 years. While living in Long Island, he was part of a community he loved, the Bellmore volunteer fire department, a fire department his father Perry had been the former chief of.

Gary and Debbie were married on October 18, 1974. Together they would move to the country and raise their five children in Narrowsburg, NY, where he continued his volunteer work with the Narrowsburg Fire Department for a short time. Gary was a hard worker, told a great story and joke, and had an infectious laugh. He loved Sunday car rides and the Beatles. He could use some "colorful" language, and that made him who he was. His biggest gift and Accomplishment was the family he helped create. He was so proud of his children and his grandchildren.

Gary is survived by his beloved wife, Debbie; his children: Heather (Aaron) Cornish, Gary (Bridgett) Emeigh, Karen (John Fox) Little, Kenny (Roseann) Emeigh and Cheryl Tyler; his brother Perry (Jackie) Emeigh; sister-in-law Patricia (Vinny) Palazzola; and his brother-in-law Glenn (Marie) Higbie. Gary and Debbie's legacy also will live on through their grandchildren: JJ, Marissa, Austin, Justin, Reese, Brittney, Christopher, Zachary, Hunter, Angelina, Hannah, Addison, Payton, Gage and Elizabeth; the start of the newest generation (six great-grandchildren); and his good girl Luna.

He was predeceased by his parents Perry and Gloria Emeigh, his sister Catherine Emeigh Behar, and his mother- and father-in-law Dorothy and Harry Higbie.

The family will gather for a celebration of life at a later date. In lieu of flowers, consider donations to the American Cancer Society.

Life was not without struggles, but let the obstacles he overcame and the perseverance he showed be proof that you can do hard things!

Arrangements are entrusted to the Harrison Rasmussen Funeral Home of Barryville, 3412 Rte. 97, Barryville, NY 845/557-8010

DEATH NOTICES

Herbert Fred Baumann

Herbert Fred Baumann, 86, of Hawley, PA, passed away February 7, 2026 at Ellen Memorial Health Care Center in Honesdale, PA. Herbert was born September 16, 1939 in Brooklyn, NY. Inurnment will take place in the spring of 2026 at Green Gates Cemetery in Hawley.

John C. Boguski Sr.

John C. Boguski Sr., 88, of Waymart, PA, passed away February 8, 2026 at Wayne Memorial Hospital in Honesdale, PA. John was born March 21, 1937 in Simpson, PA. A memorial service was held February 14 at the Waymart Church in Waymart. Interment with military honors will be in the Cemetery at Canaan Corners in Waymart at a later date.

Dorothy I. Brown

Dorothy I. Brown, 103, of Equinunk, PA, passed away February 11, 2026 at home. Dorothy was born June 5, 1922 in Lackawaxen, PA. Private funeral services will be held at the convenience of her family. Interment will be in Pine Mill Cemetery in Manchester Township at a later date.

Barbara Buckman

Barbara Buckman, 82, of Narrowsburg, NY and formerly of Hortonville, NY, passed away February 10, 2026. Barbara was born May 26, 1943 in Jamaica, NY. Visitation was held February 14 at the Harrison Rasmussen Funeral Home in Barryville, NY. A firematic service by the Lava Volunteer Fire Department followed.

Vernon David Crum

Vernon David Crum, 87, of Milanville, PA, passed away February 7, 2026. Vernon was born October 21, 1938 in Paterson, NJ. Funeral services were held February 14 at Hessling Murray Funeral Home in Honesdale, PA.

Michael 'Mike' Ronald Darder

Michael "Mike" Ronald Darder, 69, of Long Eddy, NY, passed away February 10, 2026. Michael was born September 26, 1956 in Callicoon, NY. Services were held February 15 at Henderson-Biedekapp Funeral Chapel in Hancock, NY.

William Fasceski

William Fasceski, 60, of Honesdale, PA, passed away February 7, 2026 at home. William was born September 4, 1965 in Middlesex County, NJ. A visitation concluding with military honors was held February 13 at Howell Family Funeral Home in Waymart, PA. Burial will be private at a later date in Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetery in Mayfield, PA.

John J. Fitzgerald

John J. Fitzgerald, 84, of Damascus, PA, passed away February 11, 2026 at Geisinger Community Medical Center in Scranton, PA. John was born June 10, 1941 in the Bronx, NY. Funeral services will be held Saturday, February 21 at noon at the Damascus Manor United Methodist Church, 1720 Cochecton Tpke. in Damascus. Friends may visit prior to the service from 10 a.m. to noon.

Christopher Robert Fuehrer

Christopher Robert Fuehrer, 55, of Hawley, PA, passed away February 8, 2026 at Hospice of the Sacred Heart in Dunmore, PA. Christopher was born November 11, 1970 in Honesdale, PA. A funeral service was held February 13 at Teeters' East Chapel in Hawley. Burial followed at Green Gates Cemetery in Hawley.

Martin Joseph Giblin

Martin Joseph Giblin, 103, of Smallwood, NY, passed away February 4, 2026. Martin was born November 13, 1922 in Dromahair, Ireland. A memorial Mass was held February 13 at Saint Barnabas Church in Bronx, NY.

Martin E. Haeussler

Martin E. Haeussler, 77, of Lakewood, PA, passed away February 6, 2026 at home. Martin was born December 15, 1948 in Morristown, NJ. There will be no public services.

Jesse Paul Haley

Jesse Paul Haley, 89, of Hillside in Barryville, NY, passed away February 9, 2026. Jesse was born March 27, 1936 in the Bronx, NY. A Mass of Christian burial was held February 12 at St. Ann's Catholic Church in Shohola, PA.

Edward Kurre

Edward Kurre, 97, of Hawley, PA, passed away February 4, 2026 at Bethany Village in Bethany, PA.

Ronald John Malti

Ronald John Malti, 78, of Hawley, PA, passed away February 8, 2026 at home. Ronald was born May 19, 1947 in Honesdale, PA. A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated February 13 at Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Peace Church in Hawley. Interment will be in St. Mary's Cemetery in Honesdale.

Gail Vee (Blaine) Masker

Gail Vee (Blaine) Masker, 88, of Lords Valley, PA, passed away February 7, 2026 at home. Gail was born August 2, 1937 in Honesdale, PA. The funeral and celebration of life were held February 12 at Blooming Grove Baptist Church in Blooming Grove, PA. Burial followed at Lords Valley Cemetery, Lords Valley.

Stefan Pisocki

Stefan Pisocki, 95, of Glen Spey, NY, passed away February 12, 2026 at Milford Senior Care & Rehabilitation Center in Milford, PA. Stefan was born February 19, 1930 in the Ukraine. A liturgy Mass was held February 17 in Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Church in Glen Spey. Burial will be at the Glen Spey Cemetery in Glen Spey.

Joseph E. Sattler

Joseph E. Sattler, 69, of Spring City, TN and formerly of the Callicoon, NY area, passed away February 6, 2026 at the Spring City Care and Rehab Center. Joseph was born April 12, 1956 in Callicoon, NY. There will be no visitation or services.

Lynda Schadel

Lynda (Wilson) Schadel, 66, formerly of the Lake Huntington, NY and the Narrowsburg, NY area, passed away February 6, 2026. Lynda was born December 18, 1959. Services were held February 15 at Riddick Funeral Service in Norfolk, VA.

Carole Sue Sipple

Carole Sue Sipple, 83, of Hankins, NY, passed away February 7, 2026 at Garnet Health Medical Center in Callicoon, NY. Carole was born August 16, 1942 in the Bronx, NY. Services will be private and held for family only.

Patricia Tabacco

Patricia Tabacco, 73, of Callicoon, NY, passed away February 5, 2026 at Garnet Health Medical Center in Middletown, NY. Patricia was born September 11, 1952 in Glendale, NY. Funeral services will be private.

Arden Wendell Tewksbury

Arden Wendell Tewksbury, 93, passed away January 30, 2026 at Geisinger South Hospital in Wilkes-Barre, PA. Arden was born October 26, 1932 in South Auburn, PA. A funeral service was held February 11 at the South Auburn Methodist Church. Interment will be in the Jersey Hill Cemetery in Auburn Township, PA.

Eugene Paul Villaume

Eugene Paul Villaume, 99, of Honesdale, PA, passed away February 12, 2026 at Wayne Woodlands Manor in Waymart, PA. Eugene was born February 10, 1927 in Honesdale. A viewing will be held on Thursday, February 19 from 10 a.m. to noon at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 107 7th St. in Honesdale. The Masonic Lodge will conduct a service at noon, followed by the funeral service. Interment with military honors will be in the spring at St. John's Lutheran Cemetery, Honesdale.

WHEA provides outreach funding to Cooperage

HONESDALE, PA —The Wayne Highlands Education Association (WHEA) has a Community Outreach Program funded by teachers in the Wayne Highlands School District who participate in dress-down days throughout the year. Through this program, WHEA can donate money to local nonprofits in the area and give two $1,000 scholarships to Honesdale High School seniors pursuing a career in education.

The fourth recipient of the WHEA Community Outreach Program for the 2025-2026 school year is the Cooperage Project. The Cooperage Project, a community-building nonprofit at 1030 Main St., Honesdale, has collaborated for almost a decade with the Wayne Highlands School District.

The Pop-Up Club, a STEAM-focused afterschool club that has been running since 2017, is offered to WHMS students three days a week throughout the school year.

Instructors with the Bright Kids program join Lakeside and high school students (and occasionally faculty and staff) periodically to offer workshops in mindful movement like yoga, social emotional skills and stress management each year. Younger WHSD students are invited to monthly Romping Radishes workshops in the winter, and to Coop Camps in the summer.

Teens have a space in Stoneworks Youth Center at monthly Open Mic + Karaoke nights and Teen Art Lounge.

Amanda Masters, director of programming for the Cooperage Project, said, "We are so grateful for the positive attitude, creativity and communication offered by the administration, principals and countless teachers who welcome us into the schools to work together to provide support for our youth and families."

The Cooperage Project notes that it is committed to creating opportunities that bring the community together and works to offer a variety of events so that there is something of interest for everyone. The Cooperage's offerings "emerge from the interplay of meeting ever-evolving community needs and envisioning a thriving local culture where everyone belongs," it said.

For more information on the Cooperage Project, visit www.thecooperageproject.org. WHEA added that it is proud to support such a great program in our community.

Grahamsville VFD elects line, company officers

Honors Joseph Pond for 57 years of service

By WILLIAM A. BRENNER

GRAHAMSVILLE, NY — At a special meeting on December 11, 2025, the members of the Grahamsville Fire Department elected their line officers and company officers for 2026.

The members elected are:

Line officers: Chief Mike Kelly, 1st Asst. Chief Casey Grey, 2nd Asst. Chief Tony Costa, Captain Will Conjura, Lieutenant Andy Garigliano, 1st Engineer Douglas Hamilton and 2nd Engineer Jarrod Barnum Budd.

Company officers: President Larry Bracken, Vice President Andy Gargliano, Secretary Don Starner, Treasurer Will Conjura and Trustee Mike Mickelson.

At the December 19 membership meeting, after the Pledge of Allegiance, the members stood while fireman Doug Hamilton read the names, ages and fire departments of the firemen and first responders who died this past month while performing, or as a result of, their firematic or rescue duties.

Then Chief Michael Kelly honored Joseph Pond with a standing ovation for 57 years of dedicated, continuous service as a Grahamsville fireman. Besides being a rank-and-file fireman, answering the fire siren for buildings and wildfires in the Catskill Park Preserve from the Rondout Reservoir (Meriman Dam in Ulster County) up to the Ashokan Reservoir in Olive and assisting on mutual aid calls with the neighboring Neversink Volunteer Fire Department and Claryville Volunteer Fire Department up the hill, he also assisted with automobile accidents, and in finding lost hikers and hunters.

Joe Pond has been the treasurer in the Grahamsvillle Fire Department for as far back as anybody can remember. Unofficially, Joe is a waiter at the annual Neversink/Grahamsville Pancake Breakfast and the cashier at the Fireman's Sausage and Pepper Booth at the annual Grahamsville Little World Fair.

The Sausage and Pepper Booth

Each year, all Grahamsville firemen (with the help of the fire department's Ladies Auxiliary) participate in the New York Statewide famous Sausage and Pepper Booth. Some cut the onions and peppers (the latter are divided into sweet and extra-hot-pepper spicy), cook the fresh sausages in boiling water pots and then split and grill the sausages on the long grill, while those at the booth windows yell out the orders for "hot," "spicy" or "hamburgers and hot dogs" in frantic fashion. Joe calmly sits at the table with the cash box, collecting the money and giving change, and deposits the receipts.

Lesser known is the smaller group of firemen and ladies auxiliary members that arrive early in the morning each day of the fair, light up the grill, and sell breakfast and coffee to the concessionaires and early rising young folk who feed and take care of their displays, cows, horses, goats, sheep, chickens, rabbits and other exhibits.

This year the Fair Association fixed up and rebuilt parts of the booth. The Fair Association also fixed up and rebuilt the Tri-Valley Lions' soda booth, which supplements our firemen's booth just across the way.

A good year's work

Fire Chief Michael Kelly reported that the Grahamsville Fire Department responded to about 95 calls during 2025. At this year's end meeting, Grahamsville Fire Department President Larry Bracken gave heartfelt thumbs up to all the firemen and the ladies auxiliary for their contributions in 2025. He noted the wildfire this summer around Sundown on the Catskill State Park in which fire fighters from throughout many counties came to assist to fight the fire, and local people and organizations contributed food and supplies for collection in the Grahamsville Firehouse and then forwarded everything to firematic headquarters set up in Sundown.

He welcomed and thanked all the younger members, particularly from Tri-Valley Central School, who took the difficult FEMA firematic preparation courses—as well as the Grahamsville Fireman's tough "in house" firematic and health and fire truck training preparation and hazing for high school students.

We are very proud of their enthusiasm.

Next year the Sullivan County Volunteer People will march through Grahamsville.

Congratulations to all

At the 2025 Sullivan County Fire Department Parade in Monticello, Joe Pond, waving, rode in the front jeep, leading the Grahamsville firefighters. Congratulations, with our heartfelt thanks and appreciation, to Joseph Pond and the members of all the volunteer firefighters, first aid workers and emergency medical technicians throughout Sullivan County and throughout the United States.

Sign up for therapeutic riding

Spring session begins March 2



Photo from the GAIT newsletter

GAIT's next therapeutic riding session begins on March 2. The center is located in Milford, PA.

MILFORD, PA — GAIT will launch its next seven-week therapeutic riding session on Monday, March 2. The program is "a positive and supportive experience where participants can connect with horses and explore personal growth," GAIT said.

GAIT's mission is "To improve the quality of life of children and adults with special needs through equine activities and therapies, resulting in a more independent life in society."

In each 30-minute weekly lesson, a PATH International-certified therapeutic riding instructor and a team of trained volunteers teach basic horseback riding techniques to control the horse's movement, such as walking or stopping.

The rhythmic, multidimensional act of riding provides therapeutic benefits, including physical development (improvements in balance, posture, trunk control, motor function and coordination); and cognitive and social skills (fostering increased attention, communication skills, spatial awareness and socialization).

"Therapeutic riding is a wonderful opportunity for participants to have fun, make new friends, and work toward their personal goals in an engaging way," the center said.

All new participants must complete a program application before their first lesson. Returning riders must renew forms annually. Forms are available on gaittrc.org or by visiting bit.ly/46LD2om.

GAIT is located at 314 Foster Hill Road.

To register or learn more, call 570/409-1140 or email info@gaittrc.org.

Delaware Highlands Conservancy accepting scholarship applications

UPPER DELAWARE RIVER REGION — The Delaware Highlands Conservancy is now accepting applications from eligible high school seniors for the Vanessa Joy Van Gorder Memorial Scholarship. The $2,500 scholarship is open to students in school districts bordering the Upper Delaware River in New York and Pennsylvania, including Hancock Central, Deposit Central, Eldred, Monticello and Sullivan West in NY, and Wallenpaupack Area, Honesdale, Delaware Valley and Western Wayne in PA.

In 2015, the conservancy established the scholarship in memory of Vanessa Joy Van Gorder. A recent graduate from West Chester University with a degree in education, she was passionate about the outdoors and loved exploring the lakes, rivers and forests of the Upper Delaware River Region with her friends and family. The scholarship is open to high school seniors pursuing a career in education or environmental stewardship.

Students in eligible districts should contact their guidance counselors for applications. Applications must be submitted through the school's guidance counselor for transmittal to the Delaware Highlands Conservancy Scholarship Committee by March 20. Recipients of the scholarship will be notified in May.

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy's mission is to conserve the forests, farmland, clean waters and wildlife habitat of the Upper Delaware River region for present and future generations and to foster environmental stewardship through community engagement. For more information, call 570/226-3164 or 845-583-1010, or visit www.DelawareHighlands.org.

EcoScholars offers summer institute

LAKE ARIEL, PA — Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation's EcoScholars Institute is a four-day summer institute for students entering grades 8 to 10 who are interested in STEM and environmental science. The institute is accepting applications now.

Each of the four days focuses on a different area of ecology: forest ecology, limnology and water ecology, wildlife ecology and a guided canoe-based river investigation.

Students will participate in hands-on data collection, lab analysis and citizen-science projects. Lacawac educators, local scientists and professionals will guide students through activities such as water-quality testing, plankton and macro invertebrate surveys, tree and habitat studies, and conservation problem-solving. Students will also have time for teamwork, nature journaling, and short presentations to share their findings.

Program details

Dates: July 13-16, 2026 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Grade levels: Rising 8th-10th graders

Meals: Lunch and snacks are provided each day

Application and registration

Lacawac's EcoScholars Institute uses an application-based enrollment process. Students interested in participating in the 2026 program must complete an application. Follow the steps below to get started.

Lacawac staff will review each application and notify applicants of their application status. Accepted applicants will receive an email with the next steps, including a link to complete registration and information on scholarship opportunities.

Application and registration closes Monday, June 22. Space is limited.

The cost is $275 per participant, and scholarships are available. For more information, including cancellation policies, visit

www.lacawac.org/ecoscholars-institute.html.

Senior Living

Aging and engaging

By BENITA GOLDSTEIN

REGION — The concept of being a senior felt very empowering in high school and college, as we attained a status of seniority that was linked to a sense of having acquired a great deal of knowledge and experience.

Fast forward, as life does, and perhaps the greatest gift is to be doing something we love. For me, writing was always my first love. In 2024, I had an "Aha" moment when I saw an ad in the **River Reporter** for writers. I gathered up a number of articles I'd written over the years and before I knew it a lovely woman (now my editor) contacted me.

Finding topics that would be of interest to others was my goal, and here's one such story that developed about six months ago.

As many people, especially seniors, are aware, the Summer of Love referred to the 1969 Woodstock Festival in Bethel, NY.

This story begins two years later, and it was still summer for two young girls who became close friends.

It was 1971, and two girls, aged 16 and 18, were working as nannies for different families at a beach club in Westchester County. The younger one was local and the other was from England. Given that they worked with young children, they were clearly happy to find one another for socializing and laughing about their days on the job. Over the course of the summer, their friendship grew, and Benita reached out to Caroline to come for dinner at her parents' home. They continued to be in touch until Caroline went back to England, and then snail mail correspondence eventually stopped.

Fast forward 54 years—yes, you read that right—and I was at Bethel Woods, the new name of the venue where Woodstock occurred. It was September, and the Harvest Festival market, which featured many craftspeople, was in full swing. I was interviewing vendors for an article due out in November covering the Holiday Market.

I walked toward what I figured would be the last booth, attracted by the name Serenity & Co. Looking over the colorful hair ornaments, soaps and creams, I was clearly motivated by the name, which evoked peace and calm. The nice woman behind the table gave me a welcoming smile and said she would be with me shortly. Did I detect a British accent? When she turned my way, she suddenly asked, "What is your name?"

I said, "Benita, why?"

Her reply stunned me. "We first met as nannies in 1971," said Caroline—the same Caroline I had lost touch with many moons ago. It suddenly seemed as though no time had passed as we embraced. I bought some hair scrunchies and then was drawn to a cap with a dragonfly on it with the words: "whisper words of wisdom let it be." Caroline surprised me by saying, " I want you to have this."

I recently looked up the dragonfly's meaning, which read, "Connections between the physical and spiritual worlds."

As we got to know more about each other, Caroline shared with me that she always "believed that if you set an intention and take action, you can achieve what some may feel is impossible." Trusting in this tenet, she said, led her to a career in human resources, and during the pandemic, when people her age were retiring, she launched her own human resources consulting business.



Contributed photo

Friends reunited: Benita Goldstein and Caroline McGrath reconnected after decades.

All this made me reflect on writing for the **River Reporter**, and as they say, the rest is history, and also a fulfilling life.

Caroline said that aging meant engaging more deeply with her creative and spiritual roots. She then reflected on learning to knit at a young age amongst female relatives in the U.K. and said that "that heritage lives on at Serenity & Co…. I desired to create a space that people would find both serene and nurturing, opening this store with my daughter-in-law, Diana, in 2025."

Serenity & Co consists of handcrafted accessories, semi-precious jewelry, artisanal body care and candles, as well as hosting other local crafters. Embracing the dragonfly definition, Caroline added, "I am also an intuitive practitioner with over 20 years of experience, helping clients learn to trust their own intuition." Serenity & Co., co-owned by Caroline C. McGrath and Diana Vega, is located at 1129 Main St. in Honesdale, PA.

What is obvious from both of our storybook lives is motivation and interpreting the cues of life to engage in what we love to do. As everyone knows, if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life—so just keep the love going.

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EXPLORING HEALTH

Living in a body that resists

Obesity reconsidered

By HEDY SCHNELLER

If you are reading this and you live in a larger body, it is likely you have already tried almost everything. Changed what you eat. Moved more. Moved differently. Restarted plans with hope, only to meet disappointment.

But what if obesity is not proof of failure, but evidence of a complex biological signal acting over time?

Obesity is now recognized by the National Institutes of Health and global medical organizations as a chronic, relapsing, multifactorial disease. Genetics, neuroendocrine signaling, gut hormones, sleep disruption, stress physiology, medications, trauma, and environment all influence appetite regulation and fat storage. Research over the last year continues to confirm that the body actively defends its highest sustained weight through increased hunger signals and reduced energy expenditure after weight loss.

Culture is not neutral. Traditional foodways across many societies supported health through shared meals, whole foods, and natural movement. Modern environments normalize ultra-processed foods, oversized portions, sedentary defaults and chronic stress. Personal responsibility still matters, but culture determines how difficult healthy choices are to sustain over time.



Photo by Ravi Sharma on Unsplash

It's time to reconsider how we think about obesity. Extra pounds do not mean you failed morally, writes columnist Hedy Schneller.

Diet quality and movement remain essential pillars of health. A diverse, adequate, satisfying diet supports satiety, metabolic function and consistency. Physical activity improves insulin sensitivity, cardiovascular health, strength and mood, even when weight loss is modest. These practices are not moral tests; they are tools of care.

In the past year, GLP-1 receptor agonists and related medications have reshaped obesity treatment. These therapies do not create discipline; they restore disrupted hunger and satiety signaling for many people. Their effectiveness reveals an important truth: When biology is supported, behavior often follows. Medications work best when paired with nutrition, movement and medical supervision, yet insurance coverage remains inconsistent.

Responsibility still exists, but it is not synonymous with blame. Responsibility means seeking accurate information; addressing sleep, stress, trauma and medications; exploring nutrition, movement, therapy, pharmacologic or surgical options when appropriate; and advocating for care rather than accepting dismissal.

And if you're older and concerned about your weight?

As a rule of thumb, keep an extra 10 to 15 pounds. Move often. Eat what you cook. Sleep. Get your body into fresh air daily if possible. Done.

Dear reader, once all reasonable avenues to manage obesity have been thoughtfully investigated and acted upon as your biology, access and life allow, may you honor and celebrate yourself—not as a problem to be fixed, but as a human being worthy of dignity, respect and a full life, exactly as you are.

Hedy Schneller is the founder of illumia Skincare, which features products crafted with local, fresh and healthy ingredients. In her previous professional life, Schneller was an occupational therapist and rehabilitation director. In addition to her work with illumia, she writes an opinion column for the **River Reporter.** *Visit www.illumiaproducts.com.*

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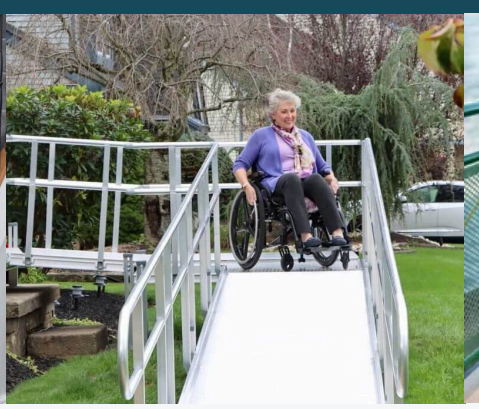
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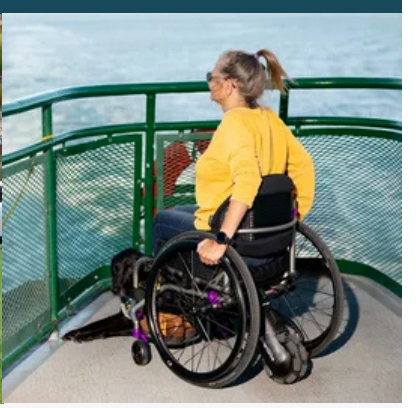
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A fund after death

PA changes law regarding estates of deceased with no will or surviving family

HARRISBURG, PA — A change to Pennsylvania law, which took place in January, ends a decades-old practice that directed the estates of Pennsylvanians who die without family or a will entirely to the state.

Act 50 of 2025 updates Pennsylvania's Intestate Succession law to ensure that when no heirs can be identified, a decedent's estate is placed into an endowed community fund at the community foundation serving the county where the individual lived. These endowed funds provide permanent, charitable support to local nonprofits and community needs.

The law is the result of a collaborative initiative led by the Registers of Wills & Clerks of Orphans' Court Association of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Community Foundations Association, and passed with unanimous, bipartisan support in the General Assembly.

Gov. Josh Shapiro signed Act 50 into law on November 24, 2025.

Prior to Act 50, Title 20, Section 2103 of the Probate, Estates and Fiduciaries Code required that when no family survived a decedent, the estate passed directly to the commonwealth to be used in the state's annual budget. Act 50 amends the law to add endowed community funds as the final successor before assets would pass to the commonwealth.

"This is a truly historic moment," said Ralph Serpe, president/CEO of the Adams County Community Foundation and a leader of the Pennsylvania Community Foundation Association's PA Intestate Legislation Action Team. "Pennsylvania is now the only state in the nation to ensure that intestate assets are kept local, endowed and charitable through community foundations."

Under the updated law, if a Pennsylvanian dies without a will or their will cannot be located, assets pass in the following order:

Decedent's children;

Decedent's parents;

Decedent's siblings and their children;

Decedent's grandparents;

Decedent's aunts, uncles and their children;

An endowed community fund at the community foundation serving the decedent's county; and

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, if no endowed community fund exists.

According to the Pennsylvania Community Foundations Association, every county in Pennsylvania is served by a community foundation with an endowed community fund or by a regional foundation that provides county-specific endowed funds.

"This reform ensures that dollars once lost to the state budget will now support local nonprofits and community services," said Judge Torren Ecker, former state representative and sponsor of the original legislation modernizing intestate succession. "Those assets will remain in the communities where these individuals lived."

"For too long, Pennsylvania effectively imposed a 100 percent tax on residents who died without family or a will.

Act 50 ensures that a person's life savings can now be remembered and celebrated by benefiting the community they called home—forever."

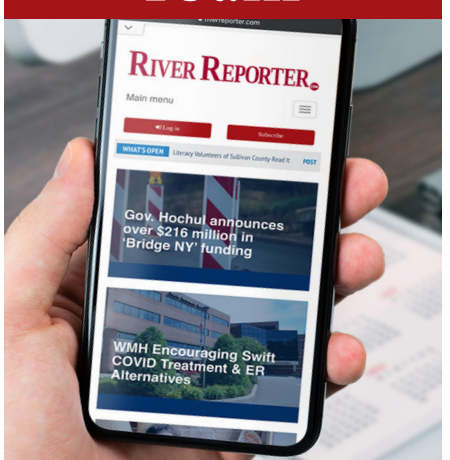
— Bryan Tate, York County register of wills, clerk of Orphans' Court and the president of the Registers of Wills & Clerks of Orphans' Court Association of Pennsylvania.

Act 50 was enacted as part of House Bill 1176, which combined three legislative proposals related to the Probate, Estates and Fiduciaries Code. The bill passed unanimously in both the House and Senate before being signed into law.

For more information about Act 50 of 2025, visit www.palegis.us/statutes/unconsolidated/law-information?sessYr=2025&sessInd=0&.

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Billed for a catheter you never received?

Catheter kit billing fraud is the Medicare fraud of the month in New York State

NEW YORK STATE — The New York StateWide Senior Action Council (StateWide), a 54-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the needs and well-being of the state's 3.6 million-plus senior citizens, announced its Medicare Fraud of the Month for February: catheter kit fraud.

The StateWide Fraud of the Month is a component of the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), the resource for New York State's older adults and caregivers to detect, prevent and report health care fraud, errors and abuse. StateWide is New York's grantee/administrator for this federal program.

"Medicare beneficiaries across the country are discovering charges for urinary catheter kits they did not need, did not request, and never received," Maria Alvarez, executive director of StateWide, said. "Scammers often bill Medicare for 200-plus catheter kits at a time, resulting in suspicious claims ranging from $1,200-$2,400 or more on Medicare statements."

How the scam works

Scammers use unsolicited calls, emails or online ads to collect Medicare numbers.

Medicare is billed for catheter kits that were never requested or ordered, and claims can appear legitimate because a familiar provider's name is listed.

The beneficiary is unaware until reviewing their Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB).

Protect yourself

Since many people affected by this scam never receive any catheters at all, reviewing Medicare Summary Notices (MSN) or Explanations of Benefits (EOB) is the only way to know Medicare identities have been misused.

Don't assume a charge is legitimate just because a familiar doctor's name appears.

Report unauthorized charges to the NYS Senior Medicare Patrol for items not received or needed.

Never share personal Medicare information with unsolicited callers.

If there are charges for catheter kits on Medicare statements that were never received or were not ordered by your doctor, contact the NYS Senior Medicare Patrol (NYS SMP) for help.



Photo by Vitaly Gariev on Unsplash

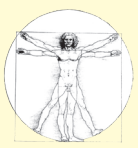
Are you a senior whose Medicare was billed for a catheter you never had? Guess what! You could be a victim of the Fraud of the Month in New York State.

StateWide also provides information and educational presentations, assistance regarding any Medicare questions, plan comparisons, appeals, billing issues and patients' rights to all seniors throughout New York State.

It is estimated that Medicare fraud costs taxpayers over $60 billion dollars nationally per year. To help combat this illicit industry, StateWide announced its Fraud of the Month program in 2022 to highlight these scams being perpetrated on the state's seniors.

"If you suspect your Medicare number has been compromised or medical equipment such as catheter kits have been ordered without permission, contact the New York State Senior Medicare Patrol at 800/333-4374, or visit www.nysenior.org. We have trained counselors to help Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against fraud," Alvarez said.

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Nominate your favorite older New Yorker

MONTICELLO, NY — The New York State Office for the Aging will celebrate Older New Yorkers' Day on May 26, and Sullivan County has an opportunity to nominate two local residents. Nominations are due March 2.

At the ceremony in Albany, all honorees will receive a package that includes:

- A commemorative pin
- A hard copy of the book of biographies
- A certificate

Additionally, they will be featured on social media and rightfully celebrated in local media.

The Sullivan County Office for the Aging is seeking nominations, which can come from civic leaders, elected officials and community organizations.

The nominee should be a volunteer aged 55 or older who has made a difference in the community through civic engagement.



Photo contributed by Sullivan County Office for the Aging

Celebrating Older New Yorkers Day with close to 100 others in Albany in 2025 were Sullivan County Office for the Aging Director Lise-Anne Deoul, left; Debbie Bradley; 2025 awardee Sabina Toomey; NYS Office for the Aging Director Greg Olsen; 2025 awardee Gayle Irving; Karin Pantel; and Sullivan Volunteers Coordinator Monika Roosa.

Nomination forms are available at www.sullivanny.gov/departments/aging (click on "Nominate a 2026 Older New Yorker!") or can be obtained by contacting the Office for the Aging at 845/807-0243 or emailing sullivanofa@sullivanny.gov.

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NY expands rural support program

GOWANDA, NY — The New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH) announced a $500,000 grant renewal from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation to continue and expand the Older Adult Rural Support (OARS) Program for a second year.

OARS supports rural older adult mental health and wellness by enhancing community awareness, reducing mental health stigma and providing mental health training and professional development opportunities.

Now entering its second year, OARS will focus on older adult mental health advocacy and community education, and mental and behavioral health workforce development, as well as expanding its previous work.

Activities will include community outreach and engagement efforts; Mental Health First Aid and QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) training; educational programming for high school and college students to learn about careers in behavioral health and other health professions; continuing education opportunities for health professionals; and new virtual training modules for the OARS online learning platform.

This year OARS is implemented in coordination with a network of organizations, including Catskill Hudson Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Central New York AHEC, the Center for Health Impact, Health WorkForce New York, Hudson Mohawk AHEC, Northern AHEC, NY FarmNet, Primeau Fahey & Associates and Western New York Rural AHEC.

PHCA launches care for the aging

HARRISBURG, PA — The Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) has launched Care for the Aging, a workforce development initiative dedicated to promoting awareness, education and recruitment within the long-term care profession across the commonwealth.

In an era where the demand for dedicated, compassionate caregivers is higher than ever, "Care for the Aging steps in to bridge the gap between enthusiastic potential employees and the rewarding career opportunities available in long-term care settings, including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living residences and personal care homes," PHCA said.

"The future of quality care for Pennsylvania's seniors hinges on our ability to attract and retain a passionate and skilled workforce," said Tara Ober, director of communications at PHCA. "Care for the Aging is a comprehensive effort to reintroduce the public to the stability, career growth potential, and profound personal reward inherent in working with older adults. It's about empowering the next generation of caregivers."

Care for the Aging serves as a comprehensive public resource, shining a light on the diverse and fulfilling career pathways available.

Key components of the educational effort include:

Career education: Providing detailed information on various long-term care roles, such as certified nursing assistants (CNAs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs), administrators, therapists and support staff;

Success stories: Featuring testimonials and profiles of individuals thriving in the long-term care sector to offer real-world perspectives on the impact of these careers; and

Training pathways: Offering guidance on required education, training programs and certification processes needed to enter the field.

Learn more at carefortheagingpa.org.



Contributed photo by Bob Sanchuk

"We know that receiving a diagnosis of dementia can be overwhelming," said Nicole Flynn, the director of the Wright Center's geriatrics service line. "These sessions are a great way to learn more and become more familiar with how to help your loved ones with dementia."

Learn about dementia

SCRANTON, PA — The Wright Center for Community Health, in collaboration with Age Friendly Lackawanna, is offering free sessions to help people better understand and support loved ones with dementia.

Led by a specially trained Dementia Champion, these one-hour sessions focus on increasing knowledge about dementia and small, practical, everyday ways to support people who have it. Participants can attend a session in person or virtually.

The next Dementia Champion session takes place on Friday, March 13 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Wright Center for Community Health Mid Valley, 5 S. Washington Ave.

For more information, including how to join a session virtually, contact Flynn at flynnn@TheWrightCenter.org.

Learn more at www.TheWrightCenter.org or call 570/230-0019.

Wayne County aging agency offers support groups

HONESDALE, PA — Wayne County Area Agency on Aging welcomes all to join its monthly support groups. The meetings will be held at the Earl J. Simons Senior Center on the third Wednesday of the month for the Caregiver's Support Group and the second and fourth Wednesdays for the Grief Support Group. Each meeting will be held from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The Caregiver's Support meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 18 and the Grief Support meetings will be held on March 11 and on March 25.

RSVP if attending either group. "The group meetings are informal but informational," the agency said. "The volunteer facilitators are experienced and understanding. Our hope is that you find comfort, share ideas and form connections with others in a similar situation."

For more information, call 570/253-4262.



Cinema for seniors at HPAC

HURLEYVILLE, NY — The Hurleyville Performing Arts Centre (HPAC) has unveiled its 2026 Senior Cinema lineup, featuring a selection of films and a new showtime of 1 p.m.

Held on the second Thursday of each month, the program continues to provide seniors in the community with an opportunity to connect, engage and enjoy a space for entertainment and socialization.

The Senior Cinema program "has been a lifeline for many seniors in the area, offering more than just a movie screening," HPAC said. Each event includes a social hour, complete with coffee, board games "and a chance to share stories and skills with fellow participants."

The cost is $10 for the afternoon.

This year's films include:

- March 12: "Annie Hall" (1977)
- April 9: "Musical Chairs" (2012)
- May 14: "You've Got Mail" (1998)
- June 11: "Thelma" (2024)
- July 9: "Julie & Julia" (2009)
- August 13: "Nonnas" (2025)
- September 10: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (1993)
- October 8: "Driving Miss Daisy" (1989)
- November 12: "Notting Hill" (1999)
- December 10: "The Holdovers" (2023)

HPAC is actively seeking sponsors and partners to help lower admission costs and expand the program's reach to serve even more seniors. "Senior Cinema is more than just a movie—it's a chance for our seniors to come together, build relationships, and feel a sense of belonging," said Lourdesa Hunt, director of development at HPAC. "We're committed to making this program as accessible as possible, and with the support of our community, we can continue to grow and enrich the lives of our seniors."

Tickets for Senior Cinema are available for purchase at hpacny.org. All events will take place at the Hurleyville Performing Arts Centre, located at 219 Main St.

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Record this one in the 'Win' column

Highland Ambulance Service celebrates a remarkable comeback

By SUSAN WALIGUNDA WADE

TOWN OF HIGHLAND, NY — During Super Bowl and Winter Olympics season, everyone loves to cheer for a winner.

What many may not realize is that right in the Town of Highland, there's a victory worth celebrating every single day.

Just a few seasons ago, the town faced an unsettling reality: the ambulance service it had depended on for years was dissolving. Rather than accept the loss, a determined group of stalwarts from the original ambulance corps sprang into action. Led by residents Chris Tambini, Tony LaRuffa and Linda Anderson, negotiations began with the legacy sponsor, resulting in $50,000 in seed money and essential equipment to help launch a new beginning.

With guidance from legal counsel, the organization—now known as the Highland Ambulance Service—was reconstituted through the creation of an ambulance taxation district. The result? A dependable, community-based ambulance service reborn at a cost of just pennies on the tax dollar. In fact, most residents are scarcely aware of the small surcharge on their property tax bills. It is, quite simply, money well spent.

Rebuilding the service was no small task. Lingering tensions from the dissolution of the former organization meant that EMTs and drivers—along with new recruits—had to be re-recruited and re-engaged. The commitment required is significant. Each crew must include at least one driver and one EMT, with additional personnel always welcome. A single call can take up to three hours, from patient evaluation through transport—most often to Bon Secours in Port Jervis, Garnet Health Medical Center - Catskills in Harris or Garnet Health Medical Center in Middletown. Upon return, equipment must be disinfected, ambulances restocked, and documentation meticulously completed.

Recognizing that this level of commitment is especially demanding for working people, single parents, and volunteers, the service transitioned to a blended model that includes both paid and volunteer personnel.

Another longstanding challenge—billing for transport—was addressed by engaging a new billing company to ensure proper reimbursement through Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance. Together, these efforts have produced a cohesive, mission-driven organization whose members not only serve their community with dedication, but genuinely enjoy working together.

That camaraderie was on full display at a recent year-end celebration and installation ceremony held at Back to Bakers in Barryville. Members and guests enjoyed a delicious buffet while reflecting on a year filled with accomplishments.



RR photo by Susan Waligunda Wade

The Highland Ambulance Service recently recognized the outstanding contributions of several of its members. Tony LaRuffa was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his decades of dedicated service to the Ambulance Service and his many other contributions to the community. The Madej family—Ela, Victoria, and Nicole—received the Esprit de Corps Award, which honors an individual or family whose spirit, positivity, and commitment foster unity within the organization. The awards were presented by President Chris Tambini.

In 2025 alone, the Highland Ambulance Service responded to 414 calls, serving town residents and providing mutual aid to neighboring Lumberland and Tusten. Honors included being named EMS Agency of the Year by the Sullivan County Office of Emergency Management and earning second place in the Monticello EMS Parade—no small feat for a 13-year-old rig. Operational achievements included completion of the I-GEL airway management pilot program and upgrades to cardiac monitoring systems.

Looking ahead to 2026, leadership will include Captain Tony LaRuffa, 1st Lieutenant John Garley, 2nd Lieutenant Jessica Frey and Equipment Officers Allan Shadt and John Brannen. The organization's administrative framework is led by President Chris Tambini, Vice President Tim Schadt, Secretary Christine Camper and Treasurer Liz Sherwood.

At the ceremony, Tony LaRuffa was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his decades of dedicated service to the Town of Highland, surrounding communities and the next generation of EMTs.

The Esprit de Corps Award, recognizing an individual or family who brings positivity and unity to the organization, was presented to the Madej family. In announcing the award, Tambini highlighted Victoria and Nicole Madej—college pre-med students who joined as EMTs and "came in full bore, motivated to learn, advance themselves and above all, serve the community." Their enthusiasm soon inspired their mother, Ela, to join as well, bringing the same values and spirit to the team.

And so, once again, the Town of Highland wins.

Commission opens historical marker nominations

HARRISBURG, PA — As Pennsylvania prepares to take center stage for America's 250th anniversary this year, the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) opened the 2026 nomination cycle for the Pennsylvania Historical Marker Program, inviting communities across the commonwealth to help identify and elevate the stories that shaped local history and the nation.

With more than 2,500 blue-and-gold markers already installed in all 67 counties, Pennsylvania's Historical Marker Program is one of the commonwealth's most visible and enduring ways to connect residents and visitors to the people, places and events that define Pennsylvania's role as the "Keystone of American History." "As we celebrate 'Pennsylvania 250: The Keystone of American History,' we are reminded that the American experiment was shaped by stories in every corner of our commonwealth," said PHMC executive director Andrea Lowery. "We are looking to the public to share the history they value—the hidden figures, local innovations, and pivotal moments that have helped build the Pennsylvania of today."

Key dates and process improvements include:

April 1: Required pre-application is due. Applicants must first submit a pre-application, allowing PHMC staff to provide early guidance on historical significance, documentation and eligibility before a full nomination is prepared.

June 1: Final application deadline. Those applicants invited to proceed after pre-application review must submit final materials by this date.

Nominations may be submitted by individuals, historical societies, local governments, nonprofit organizations and community groups. All proposals are evaluated by a panel of independent historians and scholars from across Pennsylvania and approved by the agency's commissioners.

More information on the Pennsylvania Historical Marker Program, including application guidelines, is available online at www.PAHistoricalMarkers.com.



Photo contributed by Bold Gold Media

Bold Gold NY staff from top and left to right: Therese Quinn, Helena Manzione, Eddie Wilson, Jamie Lazarus, Dawn Ciorciari, Paul Ciliberto, Jacob Cohen, Jenn Clarke and Joanne Alesi

Wear red for the Heart-A-Thon

MONTICELLO, NY — In recognition of National Wear Red Day, the 98.3 WSUL Heart-A-Thon Committee and Bold Gold Media staff are wearing red to raise awareness about heart disease and highlight the upcoming 48th annual 98.3 WSUL Heart-A-Thon. The event takes place Friday, February 20, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Resorts World Catskills.

Bold Gold Media, in partnership with New Hope Community, continues a program that benefits work that supports the prevention, education and treatment of heart disease throughout Sullivan County.

Presented by Fallsburg Lumber and Narrowsburg Union, the Heart-A-Thon will broadcast live on 98.3 WSUL from Resorts World Catskills, which has generously donated its entire conference area for the event. Community members are invited to stop by to make a pledge to add to the Unity Ambulette Tally Board, donate blood at the Beth Bernit Century 21 Geba Realty and CHB Inspections Blood Drive (noon to 6 p.m.), and visit the Jeff Bank Health Fair (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.), organized by the Rotary Clubs of Sullivan County.

Those unable to attend can pledge by phone via the Merrell Benco Insurance Agency and Lawrence Miller Insurance Agency Heart Line or donate online at www.WSUL.com.

SUNY Sullivan Hearts are also available for purchase at businesses and organizations throughout the county.

Funds raised support equipment and programs provided by organizations such as Garnet Health Medical Center - Catskills, Sullivan 180, A Single Bite, STEAM Fund, NAMI Sullivan County and SUNY Sullivan.

"Wearing red on National Wear Red Day is a visible reminder of why this event matters and how powerful our community can be when we come together," said Dawn Ciorciari, general manager of Bold Gold Media NY Region.

"Resorts World Catskills is deeply honored to play host to such an amazing event to raise awareness around heart disease here in Sullivan County," said Meghan Taylor, senior vice president for government affairs and public relations, Resorts World Catskills. "We're thankful to our partners for leading this effort to keep our neighbors educated and healthy. Our commitment is to work for them today, tomorrow, and in the years to come."

For more information, visit www.boldgoldnewyork.com/heartathon.

Auditions announced for 'Magic Flute,' 'Mikado'

LAKE HUNTINGTON and NEW YORK CITY, NY — The Delaware Valley Opera Center (DVO) will hold auditions for two upcoming musicals. The local audition takes place on Saturday, February 28 from noon to 2 p.m. at the Arts Nest, 6692 Rte. 52.

On the previous Saturday, February 21, auditions will also be held at Ripley Grier Studios, 520 8th Ave., Studio 17T in New York City from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

DVO is seeking singers to cast multiple roles in both productions. Performers of all voice types are encouraged to audition.

If interested, submit the following materials to Carol Castel at ccastel3749@gmail.com:

A brief bio,

Headshot or recent photo,

Audio clip (if available), and

Resume.

"Delaware Valley Opera is committed to fostering high-quality operatic performances and welcomes both emerging and experienced performers to audition," the center said.

To learn more, visit delawarevalleyopera.org/.



Contributed image

'Torn. Cut. Scraped.'

NEWTOWN, PA — Artist Paul Plumadore's work is on view now at ARTWRKD.

"I'm honored to be part of this three-person show, along with artists Berly Ort and Kev Von Holt, representing "Cut" and premiering my new extinction series titled "Species," Plumadore wrote.

The show runs until February 28.

ARTWRKD is located at 126 South State St. Learn more at artwrkd.com.

Embracing 'The Spirit of Philadelphia' at TATV

GRAHAMSVILLE, NY and ONLINE — An in-person and virtual program titled "The Spirit of Philadelphia" by former Congressman Chris Gibson will be held on Sunday, February 22 at 2 p.m. at the Time and the Valleys Museum (TATV) and online.

Gibson will speak about his proposal to restore communication and collaboration in the nation and to recover the founding principles; the topics are discussed in his book, "The Spirit of Philadelphia." He will review the guiding principles of the founders as we begin to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Admission to this program is free for museum members and costs $5 for non-members. Admission to the program also includes light refreshments and museum admission. The Museum Shop will also be open. In case of inclement weather, visit www.timeandthevalleysmuseum.org.

The museum is located at 332 Main St.

To join the program virtually, register by email at info@timeandthevalleysmuseum.org and put Spirit of Philadelphia in the subject line, or call 845/985-7700. A link will be sent to you. Non-members are asked to first make a donation on the museum's website at www.timeandthevalleysmuseum.org/support/donate.

Chris Gibson is a retired Army colonel, a three-term congressman, a college professor and president, a scholar and author.

About the Time and the Valleys Museum

Connecting water, people and the Catskills, the museum is open Memorial Day through September, Saturday and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m., and other times by appointment. Located at 332 Main St. in Grahamsville, admission for adults costs $10, children under 16 cost $2, and children under six enter for free.



Forestburgh Playhouse announces auditions

FORESTBURGH, NY — The Forestburgh Playhouse (FPH) will hold its 2026 local auditions for the upcoming summer season, offering young performers from Sullivan County and the surrounding region the opportunity to participate in a professional theatre environment. The initiative is designed to cultivate emerging talent and provide meaningful, hands-on performance experience alongside professional artists on the playhouse's mainstage, the FPH said.

Local auditions will be held on Sunday, March 22 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Sullivan West High School Auditorium, 6604 Rte. 52 in Lake Huntington.

Audition opportunities

Ages 5 to 12: "The Wizard of Oz"—Young performers are invited to audition for ensemble and featured ensemble roles in the playhouse's production of "The Wizard of Oz." Selected participants can perform as Munchkins, Flying Monkeys, Winkies and other ensemble characters, "gaining valuable experience in singing, movement and stage performance," the FPH said.

Audition requirements

- Prepare a 16-bar vocal selection (approximately 30-45 seconds)
- Bring piano or sheet music if available; an accompanist will be provided
- If sheet music is unavailable, performers can sing a song of their choice

If cast:

- Rehearsals begin mid-June, primarily on weekends, with some weekday mornings and evenings closer to opening.
- Performances run July 9 through August 1, Thursdays and Saturdays at 11 a.m.
- Cast members are expected to perform in a minimum of four performances.

Ages 13 to 18: 2026 Junior Resident Company (Jr. ResCo)—The Forestburgh Playhouse is also accepting auditions for its Junior Resident Company, an advanced training and performance program modeled after the professional Resident Company. "This selective program offers dedicated young artists an immersive and comprehensive theatrical experience," the FPH said.

Jr. ResCo members will:

- Perform in the ensemble of "Dear Evan Hansen."
- Perform in "The Wizard of Oz" and understudy principal roles.
- Appear in a featured summer cabaret or concert performance.
- Participate in master classes with professional theatre artists.
- Perform at community events supporting playhouse productions.
- Attend all seven mainstage producer runs.
- Present a special "Yellow Brick Road" concert during the season.

Audition requirements:

- Prepare two contrasting 16-bar vocal selections
- Bring sheet music for the accompanist
- Participate in a brief group movement call

Registration information

To schedule an audition, email kimi@fbplayhouse.org. For the program for ages 5 to 12, put in the subject line: "Local Casting Signup," and indicate whether auditioning for "The Wizard of Oz" or Jr. ResCo.

For the Jr. ResCo, ages 13 to 18, put in the subject line: "Jr ResCo."

Audition

Applicants will receive additional information regarding audition times and preparation details.

"The Forestburgh Playhouse remains dedicated to fostering the next generation of performers by providing professional training, mentorship and performance opportunities in a supportive environment. The organization looks forward to welcoming local young artists to participate in the 2026 season," the playhouse said.

For additional information, visit www.fbplayhouse.org.



Contributed photo

The Grey Towers Heritage Association (GTHA) will hold a Lunch & Learn session at Forest Hall in Milford, PA on Saturday, February 21, covering the topic "Grey Towers Gardens: Past and Projecting Forward."

Learn about the gardens at Grey Towers

MILFORD, PA — The Grey Towers Heritage Association (GTHA) will hold a Lunch & Learn session at Forest Hall on Saturday, February 21, covering the topic "Grey Towers Gardens: Past and Projecting Forward." Guests are welcome at 11 a.m. and programs start promptly at 11:30 a.m., with a hot lunch and conversation to be held after the presentation.

The session delves into the history and landscape of the Grey Towers National Historic Site. It's a chance to discover the lasting legacy of two generations of the Pinchot family and learn about the ongoing preservation work led by the U.S. Forest Service.

The session will explore the original Victorian-era park-like landscape designs crafted by James Pinchot and the innovative gardens of Cornelia Bryce Pinchot. Cornelia collaborated with renowned landscape architects, including William Bottomley and Rose Standish Nichols. "We'll highlight how Cornelia Pinchot's garden designs became an integral part of the family's life and continue to inspire visitors today," said Don Allen, GTHA board member and event host.

The featured speaker is Elizabeth Hawke, former landscape curator for the U.S. Forest Service at Grey Towers National Historic Site and the current facilities manager at Grey Towers.

The Lunch & Learn takes place at Forest Hall, 214 Broad St. Tickets for the program cost $15 for members, $20 for the general public and $10 for students.

Purchase tickets at www.greytowers.org/events or at the event. Note that the lecture space at Forest Hall is only accessible via a one-flight staircase; there is no elevator or ramp access available at this time.





Traditional Irish at Arts Nest

Contributed by the ARTS NEST

LAKE HUNTINGTON, NY — Irish folk singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist AILÍSE will perform at the Arts Nest on Sunday, February 22 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Born in Ireland and now residing in the Catskill mountains of upstate New York, AILÍSE carries the stories of those who came before her. Her music bridges past and present with a sound that is rooted in ancestral spirit. In her songs, AILÍSE pulls on themes of change, personal evolution and re-igniting the fires within.

AILÍSE has completed grades in ABRSM on classical violin and holds a bachelor's degree of Performing Arts in Voice from the Irish World Academy of Music & Dance at the University of Limerick, Ireland.

She has performed at venues such as the National Concert Hall and Liberty Hall Theatre (Dublin, Ireland) as well as University Concert Hall and Lime Tree Theatre (Limerick, Ireland). Other notable performances include Bethel Woods in Bethel, NY and Cafe Wha? in Greenwhich Village.

Tickets are available on www.MyRiverTickets.com for $20 plus fees or $25 at the door.



Contributed photo

Repairers can fix a lot of things.

Repair Café Tusten is ready for you

NARROWSBURG, NY — "As this very cold winter digs deep into our souls, let us join together in community with our beloved items as our team of fixers do the best they can to repair your items, free of charge," the team at Repair Café Tusten wrote. The next event takes place on Saturday, February 21 at the Tusten Town Hall.

The team starts at 10 a.m, and fixes until 1 p.m., and various volunteer repair experts will be available to help make all possible repairs. Toasters, lamps, hair dryers, clothes, vacuums, your holey hat or gloves, toys, crockery—anything that is broken is welcome and can more than likely be repaired, the fixers said. "The Repair Café specialists almost always have the know-how."

Limit two items per person, and bring clean items. Nothing gas powered, nothing labeled "smart" and no microwaves unless it's a mechanical problem such as the door not closing. Note that Repair Café Tusten is short three of its mechanical/electrical repair coaches, and they are the busiest fixers, so your item may not get fixed this time.

At the repair café they will offer repair coaches for things wooden, mechanical and electrical; for picture frame repair, electrical repairs, and help for costume jewelry, sewing, knitting, crocheting and screening (bring replacement screen and the proper cord—spline—that holds the screen in).

Repair Café Tusten cannot guarantee that the item you bring will get fixed. The coaches will have the basics for repairs, but should your item need something specific, that item may become a consultation, so you can bring it back next time with the parts you need.

"We can guarantee is that you'll have an interesting time and we are sure you will enjoy your interactions with our team," Repair Café Tusten said

Donations are always welcome, and bring a dry or canned donation for the Ecumenical Food Pantry.

The town hall is located at 210 Bridge St. in Narrowsburg. The team thanks the Town of Tusten, the Narrowsburg Chamber of Commerce and Two Queens for their support.

For more information, contact Jill Rue at repaircafetusten@gmail.com. You can also go to Repair Café Tusten on Facebook or www.Repaircafehv.org or even www.Repaircafe.org/en.

Historical society welcomes 'Lynched by the Mob' author

Contributed by the PIKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MILFORD, PA — All are invited to the Foundation Room at the Columns Museum for a lecture and book signing on Sunday, February 22 at 3 p.m.

On the evening of June 2, 1892, a frenzied mob dragged Robert Lewis nearly half a mile through the streets of Port Jervis, NY, before hanging him from the limb of a tree. Lewis, an African American man who had lived and worked in the village his entire life, was accused of brutally raping a young white woman, Lena McMahon. By night's end, mob violence had replaced the rule of law. Local authorities and civic leaders proved powerless—or unwilling—to intervene, and despite the presence of numerous witnesses, no one was ever held accountable for Lewis's murder.

Now, more than 130 years later, the full story of this tragic event is brought to light. Drawing on years of meticulous research, author Michael J. Worden reconstructs the circumstances surrounding the only documented lynching in New York State during the post-Reconstruction era. Through the examination of long-forgotten court records and an extraordinary 635 historical sources, Worden confronts enduring questions: Was Robert Lewis set up? Who incited the mob? And why did justice never come?

The program explores history, memory and accountability through the lens of a two-time award–winning book that delivers the most complete and historically accurate account of the Port Jervis lynching ever published—challenging audiences to reckon with a past that continues to shape the present.

Worden is an award-winning true crime author, retired decorated law enforcement officer, researcher and author. He is the author of two historical true crime books: the award-winning "Lynched by the Mob! The 1892 Lynching of Robert Lewis in Port Jervis, NY," published in May 2022, and the 2013 book, "The Murder of Richard Jennings: the True Story of New York's First Murder for Hire."

Never-before-published photos and court documents are among the many details Worden used to tell the story of the only lynching in New York State after the end of Reconstruction in 1877.

The lecture and book signing are open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. A $5 donation suggested.

Equation, expression and STEAM at WSPL

JEFFERSONVILLE, NY — The Western Sullivan Public Library (WSPL) recently announced upcoming programs.

Equation & Expression Program

The Equation & Expression Program starts Wednesday, February 25 at the Jeffersonville Branch. The program is a high school student-led educational enrichment program for young learners.

Session One is open to grades 2 and 3, will run from February 25 to March 25, and will meet on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.

Session Two is open to grades 4 and 5, and will run from April 8 to May 6.

STEAM Space

Curious and creative kids are invited to join the library for STEAM Space, a monthly program exploring science, math and technology. On Friday, February 27 at 5 p.m., children ages six and up can scan the skies over the Narrowsburg Branch, become Star Detectives, and learn all about the constellations we see in the night sky.

Registration is required for all programs, but drop-ins will be accommodated whenever possible.

For more details and to sign up for any of these programs, visit the calendar at www.WSPLonline.org. Reach out to Callison at WSPL.chil drens@gmail.com with questions.

Prepare for emergencies

NARROWSBURG, NY — The Upper Delaware Council (UDC) and New York National Guard invite river valley residents in NY and PA to attend a free Citizen Preparedness Training course on Wednesday, March 11, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Tusten Town Hall Community Room at 210 Bridge St. in Narrowsburg. All are welcome.

Register in advance at www.prepare.ny.gov. Participants will receive one complimentary "go-kit" stocked full of emergency supplies per household.

A minimum of 50 people must sign up for the class to proceed. When registering online for the March 11 Narrowsburg date, provide contact information to receive updates and choose Sullivan County, NY as the host site location.

The course will teach how to prepare and develop plans for disaster or emergency situations. It includes information about the types of risks and hazards people face.

Members of the New York National Guard teach the classes for this New York State Homeland Security and Emergency Services program, which began in 2014.

Visit www.upperdelawarecouncil.org for a registration link, or contact UDC Administrative Support Stephanie Driscoll at stephanie@upperdelawarecouncil.org or 845/252-3022 with a request to register on your behalf, and follow the UDC on Facebook and Instagram for updates.





IN MY HUMBLE OPINION
BY JONATHAN CHARLES FOX

Cabin fever

While I'm happy to acknowledge that we're presently experiencing a bit of "false spring," with temps soaring into the double digits, the past few weeks have been a bit trying, to say the least. Expressions like "cabin fever," "stir crazy" and "oh-my-gosh-it's too darn cold" have been heard 'round these parts, so I was happy that there were zero weather-related cancellations last week, and that Gidget and I were able to get out and head out, determined to soak up some culture.

That said, I wasn't looking to shlep around more than a little, and thought myself fortunate to find a twofer at the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance (DVAA) in Narrowsburg.

Each year the DVAA presents an oh-so-welcome mid-winter program called the "Salon Series." It premiered last Saturday with actor/singer Richard Hoehler's "Songs of Love and Outrage" presented in the Krauss Recital Hall.

Simultaneously, photographer Michael Salomon's exhibition, titled "Familiar Terrain," beckoned in the main gallery on the first floor, while a group show intriguingly called "Let It All Out" filled the gallery upstairs. While Salomon's artist talk and the reception for both exhibits are now scheduled for February 21, I had the advantage to preview Salomon's collection of photographs a week early. I took a look prior to heading upstairs for Hoehler's program.

While I was heretofore unfamiliar with Salomon's work, the artist statement I read while perusing his framed pieces spoke to me, since photography is a personal passion at Camp Fox.

"It's common for a photographer to seek out the majestic landscape, or the monuments that hold our collective attention" he wrote. "I think there is great value in those images, but after a lengthy absence from photography, and years spent trying to capture those grand views, I found there is equal value in the commonplace."

His comments further explained that the photos in the exhibit "were all taken within no more than forty-five minutes from my front door" and that he "did not set out with a narrative or specific story to tell." That said, the images selected certainly tell a story, but perhaps it's one that illustrates Salomon's prowess behind the lens.

While the artist may have described some of his work as "simple," it is anything but. Whether he is capturing "handprints on the wall of an empty ball field dugout" or a "row of cardboard crucifixes," Salomon displays a deft hand at selecting subject matter, which he elevates with rich color, informed framing and an innate ability (IMHO) to capture time and place in its striking simplicity.

Honestly, I found the photos draw the observer into the scenes, each a moment in time, the sort that might otherwise be missed while driving through a rural landscape. Titles like "Shuttered Church" "Fredericks Fill Station," and "Dawn" exemplify the uncomplicated subject matter, while Salomon's keen eye for subtle detail elevates the images to that of creative expression. At the risk of appearing artsy-fartsy, I'll stop waxing rhapsodic over this exhibit and invite you to check it out yourself through March 15. You can thank me later.

Later that same day, I walked upstairs to catch Richard Hoehler and his program, which promised not only love but outrage as well. The latter was more intriguing to me—that guy with the dog who eschews romantic love out of hand.

I was already familiar with Hoehler, having reviewed a one-man tour de force simply titled "E" at the DVAA a few years back. Although I remembered having seen the last show, it took scanning my review to recall that I found him to be entertaining, thought-provoking, funny and even "riveting" at times. As a result, I felt confident taking my seat for his "songs" program, although completely unfamiliar with his original music.

A program note that describes his songwriting as "in the spirit of Guthrie, Phil Ochs and Seeger" momentarily threw me, since none of those performers are on my top-10 list, but it only took a moment for me to understand why they're all referenced, and how Hoehler might have been influenced by the genre defined by their style.

The same note also informed me that "Hoehler takes an unflinching look at his life and the world around him with original songs of protest, love, and community," and sure enough, he did, entertaining the room with an affable charm that I've come to expect from the man who has made a name for himself at international theatre festivals and right here at home in venues like HB Studios, the Brooklyn Commons and Pangea.

As for love, I needn't have worried, since it was familial, and not the mushy, romantic kind that Hoehler addressed through song last weekend. As for his ability to tell a story, I learned about his skill doing that through the written word last time he appeared at the DVAA, but having the chops to do so through music, interjected with thoughtful commentary, was unfamiliar territory for me.

That said, his set list was a journey, weaving a highly personal narrative that shared intimate details of often-times complex relationships with his father, mother and siblings that evoked memories not everyone would feel at home with sharing publicly. As he strummed his guitar with a deft hand and smooth vocals, Hoehler drew us into his world with titles like "Mama," "Daddy Don't," "Too Old to Sing Love Songs" and "I Wanna Believe."

As is often the case, I made copious notes in my program, indicating my admiration for Hoehler's soft-spoken approach to storytelling and his possession of a way with words that allow him to express "outrage" in a more palatable way than I am used to through my own brand of self-expression.

Addressing a myriad of complex subjects like cruelty, revenge, big business, women's rights, the LGBT community, civil rights and supporting the arts, Richard Hoehler had the audience in the palm of his hand throughout, while declaring that "diversity is what makes us strong. I wanna do some thing," he declared, "so I just keep writing songs."

Fortunately for us, Hoehler is doing just that, and I'll look forward to his next performance. Clearly he is a man of many talents, so it'll be interesting to see what he brings to the table when he comes out this way again. As for the DVAA's Salon Series and what's on tap at the in the coming weeks, you'll find more information at www.delawarevalleyartsalliance.org.

Have I mentioned that all of these offerings are free to the public? No? Well, guess what—they are, although an organization like the DVAA relies on the "generous support of the New York State Council on the Arts, the Nancy Stevenson Memorial Fund, cherished members, valued business sponsors, and individuals like you."



RR photos by Jonathan Charles Fox
Richard Hoehler's "Songs of Love and Outrage" kicked off the Delaware Valley Arts Alliane's 2026 Salon Series last weekend in Narrowsburg, NY.



Michael Salomon's "Shuttered Church" is among the many "commonplace" scenes captured in his exhibit "Familiar Terrain," now showing at the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance.

Love Thy Neighbor Drag Brunch returns

WEST PARK, NY — The New Paltz Pride Coalition announced the return of the Love Thy Neighbor Drag Brunch, now in its second year. Brunch will be held at RMV Cellars in West Park on Sunday, February 22 at noon.

The stated mission of the brunch is to "celebrate inclusivity while supporting nonprofit organizations serving New Paltz and the greater Hudson Valley." The fundraiser has expanded to recognize and support an additional local nonprofit organization. A portion of this year's proceeds will benefit the Margaret Wade-Lewis Center, a New Paltz-based nonprofit dedicated to preserving and sharing the Black experience in the Hudson Valley through education, history and community programming.

Additional nonprofit organizations will also be present at the event to share information about their services with attendees.

"Love Thy Neighbor is a celebration, but it's also an invitation," said Eve Papp, president of the New Paltz Pride Coalition. "In its second year, the event is becoming a broader shared experience—one that uplifts the community and local organizations and helps build a lasting annual gathering grounded in belonging and mutual connection."

The event features a brunch buffet and is hosted by Katarina Mirage and Veela Peculiar, with drag performances by King Nilus and Scarlet Rose, and music by DJ Xeon.

RMV Cellars is located at 112 Burroughs Dr. Tickets include brunch, desserts and unlimited sangria, mimosas, wine and seasonal craft drafts (must be age 21 and older with valid ID).

Individual tickets and Patron Tables are available at givebutter.com/Ea6nlw.



Collective Soul at the F.M. Kirby Center

WILKES-BARRE, PA — Collective Soul's rock 'n' roll radio hits take center stage at the F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts on Tuesday, March 31 at 8 p.m.

Collective Soul is presented by the F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts and SLP Concerts.

Hailing from Atlanta, GA, Collective Soul celebrated their 30th anniversary in 2024 with their 12th studio album, "Here To Eternity."

Ticket prices start at $44.50 plus fees.

Visit www.kirbycenter.org and www.ticketmaster.com; or purchase tickets in person by visiting the F.M. Kirby Center Box Office; or by calling the box office at 570/826-1100.

Where & When

FOR MORE EVENTS VISIT RIVERREPORTER.COM/CALENDAR

Thursday, February 19

Blood Drive
HAWLEY, PA — 1-6pm, First Presbyterian, 815 Church St. Schedule redcrossblood.org or 800/733-2767.

Blood Drive
MONTICELLO, NY — 1-6pm, Monticello Firehouse, 23 Richardson Ave. Schedule redcrossblood.org or 800/733-2767.

Board of Education
MILFORD, PA — 6pm, Delaware Valley School District, 236 US 6 & 209, dvsd.org/Page/90.

Board of Education
ONLINE/MONTICELLO, NY — 7:30pm, Monticello School District, 22 St. John St. & YouTube, monticelloschools.net.

Indoor Sidewalk Sales
HONESDALE, PA — 10am-5pm, at participating merchants, Greater Honesdale Partnership, Main St. facebook.com/ghphonesdale.

Medicare Webinar
LIVINGSTON MANOR, NY — With Jim Farnham, 6-8pm, Livingston Manor Library, 92 Main St. Register 845/439-5440.

Oliver King presents
MONTICELLO, NY — The works of Paul Laurance Dunbar, 6pm, Ethelbert B. Crawford Public Library, 479 Broadway. Register ebcpl.libcal.com/calendar.

Sage Sessions
NARROWSBURG, NY — Tusten Social & Growing Old Together, 1:30-3:30pm, 37 Main St. tustensocial.org.

Friday, February 20

Blood Drive Challenge
MONTICELLO, NY — For Heart-a-thon, noon-6pm, Sullivan County Rotary Clubs, 888 Resorts World Dr. Register nybc.org/sponsor, use code 71409.

'Hamlets Are Not Little Pigs'
ROSCOE, NY — With Dr. Joyce Conroy, 4pm, Livingston Manor-Roscoe Library, 85 Highland Ave. Register 607/498-5574.

'Love is in the Air'
MILFORD, PA — Featuring Elvis love ballads, 1:30-3pm, Belle Reve Senior Living, 404 East Harford St. 570/409-9191.

WSUL Heart-A-Thon
MONTICELLO, NY — WSUL, 6am-6pm, Resorts World Catskills Epicenter & live on WSUL. Donate boldgoldnewyork.com/heartathon.

Saturday, February 21

Aglow Meeting
YOUNGSVILLE, NY — 10am, United Reformed Church, 3990 NY-52. RSVP Pat 845/482-4872.

Camo Bingo
LACKAWAXEN, PA — 5pm, calling 6pm, Lackawaxen Township Fire Department, 774 Route 590. lackawaxentownshippa.gov.

Coffee & Conversation
NARROWSBURG, NY — Michael Salomon, 2pm, Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, 37 Main St. delawarevalleyartsalliance.org.

Game Day @ WPC
BEACH LAKE, PA — 2pm, Whispering Pines Center, 7 Milanville Rd. whisperingpines.info.

Hike Through History
LAKE ARIEL, PA — 2-3:30pm, Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation, 94 Sanctuary Rd. Register lacawac.org.

Kids Dance Party
CALLICOON, NY — PreK-2nd grade noon-2pm, 3rd-6th grade 2-4pm, Delaware Youth Center, 8 Creamery Rd. facebook.com/DelawareYouthCenter.

Love Song Cabaret
MILFORD, PA — 4-6pm, Milford United Methodist Church, 206 E. Ann St, facebook.com/MilfordUMC.

Lunch & Learn
MILFORD, PA —The gardens of Grey Towers: past & future, 11am, Grey Towers, 214 Broad St. Register greytowers.org/events.

Opening Reception
NARROWSBURG, NY — "Familiar Terrain" & "Let It All Out," 5pm, Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, 37 Main St. delawarevalleyartsalliance.org.

Richard Francese
MILFORD, PA — Italian American comedy all-stars, 8pm, Milford Theater & Performing Arts Center, 114 E. Catherine St. themilfordtheater.com.

Senior Hot Cocoa Social
HONESDALE, PA — 11am, Wayne County YMCA, 105 Park St. BYO topping or treat, facebook.com/ymcawayne.

Tracks & Wildlife
WURTSBORO, NY — 1-2:30pm, Mamakating Environmental Education Center, 762 South Rd. 845/644-5014.

Tusten Repair Café
NARROWSBURG, NY — 10am-1pm, 210 Bridge St. repaircafetusten@gmail.com.

Wilderness Skills
DINGMANS FERRY, PA — 1:30-3:30pm, Pocono Environmental Education Center, 538 Emery Rd. 570/828-2319.

Winter Fun Day
MONTICELLO, NY — 10am-1pm, Town of Thompson, 181 Town Park Rd. facebook.com/TownofThompson.

Winter Medicinal Teas
DINGMANS FERRY, PA — 9am-noon, Pocono Environmental Education Center, 538 Emery Rd. peec.org.

Sunday, February 22

AILÍSE Concert
LAKE HUNTINGTON, NY — 2-4pm, Delaware Valley Opera Arts Nest, 6692 Rte. 52. myrivertickets.com.

Book Signing
MILFORD, PA — Lecture, "The Lynching of Robert Lewis," 3pm, Pike County Historical Society, 608 Broad St. milfordpa.us.

'Butch Cassidy'
MILFORD, PA — 4-6pm, Milford Theater & Performing Arts Center, 114 E. Catherine St. themilfordtheater.com.

Lia & Bizzy Talk Toons
NARROWSBURG, NY — noon, The 108, 108 Main St. instagram.com/the108main.

'The Spirit of Philadelphia'
ONLINE/GRAHAMSVILLE, NY — Congressman Chris Gibson, 2pm, Time & the Valleys Museum, 332 Main St. & virtually. 845/985-7700.

Walk it Off
LAKE ARIEL, PA — At Ease veterans' program: February hike, 10am, Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation, 94 Sanctuary Rd. Register facebook.com/Lacawac/events.

Winter Adaptations
DINGMANS FERRY, PA — 1:30pm, Pocono Environmental Education Center, 538 Emery Rd. peec.org/programs.

Yarnslingers
CALLICOON, NY — 11:30am, Seminary Hill Cidery, 43 Wagner Ln. May contain adult content and language. seminaryhill.co.

Monday, February 23

Pysanky Egg Workshop
HONESDALE, PA — 6:30-8:30pm, Mon.-Wed., teens & adults, Bodhi Tree Studio, 214 6th St. Register bodhitreeart.squarespace.com.

Tuesday, February 24

Board of Education
LIBERTY, NY — 6pm, Media room, Liberty Central School District, 125 Buckley St. 845/292-6990.

Grant Workshop
MONTICELLO, NY — The Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, 9-11am or 6:30-8:30pm, Legislative Hearing Room, 100 North St. Snow date Feb. 25, Register sullivanny.gov.

Mobile DMV
LIBERTY, NY — License & registration appointments, 15 Sullivan Ave, schedule sullivanny.gov/Departments/Clerk/DMV.

Online Author Talk
ONLINE — Tom Crouch, Smithsonian curator, 2pm, Ethelbert B. Crawford Public Library, on zoom. 845/794-4660.

Wednesday, February 25

Chamber Meeting
CALLICOON, NY — 6:30pm, Callicoon Business Association, location TBA, visitcallicoon.com.

Medicare Seminar
HONESDALE, PA — 4-5:30pm, Wayne County Public Library, 1406 Main St. Register 570/253-1220.

Thursday, February 26

Board of Education
GRAHAMSVILLE, NY — 7pm, Tri-Valley School District, 34 Moore Hill Rd. 845/985-2296 x5302.

Cover Crops
FERNDALE, NY — 6pm, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 64 Ferndale-Loomis Rd.. Register sullivancce.org/events.

Friday, February 27

Black Legacy Project
HURLEYVILLE, NY — Where Music Meets History, 7pm, Hurleyville Performing Arts Centre, 219 Main St. ci.ovationtix.com/34881.

'Cabaret Roulette'
WOODBOURNE, NY — Fri.-Sat. 7-9pm, Sun. 2-4pm, Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop, firehouse, 355 NY-52. scdw.net.

Saturday, February 28

Auditions
LAKE HUNTINGTON, NY — For "The Magic Flute" & "The Mikado," noon-2pm, Delaware Valley Opera, 6692 NY-52. Submissions to ccastel3749@gmail.com.

Chamber Orchestra
NARROWSBURG, NY — Salon Series: Sullivan County Chamber Orchestra, 2pm, Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, 37 Main St. 845/252-7576.

Ecozone Discovery Room
DINGMANS FERRY, PA — 1:30pm, Pocono Environmental Education Center, 538 Emery Rd. peec.org/programs.

Fly Fest
ROSCOE, NY — Catskill Fly Fishing Center & Museum & Trout Unlimited, 10am-3pm, Rockland House, 159 Rockland Road. Register cffcm.com.

Gentle Yoga
LAKE ARIEL, PA — 10am, Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation, 94 Sanctuary Rd. Register facebook.com/Lacawac.

Sugar Shack Scramble
DINGMANS FERRY, PA — Sat.& Sun. 9am-noon, Pocono Environmental Education Center, 538 Emery Rd. Register peec@peec.org.

Sunday, March 1

Bridal Show
ELDRED, NY — 1pm, The Eldred Preserve, 1040 St. Rte. 55. facebook.com/TheEldredPreserve.

Oxford Station Concert
HURLEYVILLE, NY — 2-4pm, featuring Little Sparrow & David Dann, Sullivan County Historical Society, 265 Main St. 845/434-8044.

Spring Breakfast
LOCH SHELDRAKE, NY — 7am-noon, Loch Sheldrake Fire Co. #1, 1280 NY-52, facebook.com/LochSheldrakeFC1.

St. Patrick's Parade
PORT JERVIS, NY — Blarney Blast, 3pm, uptown Pike St. to Front St. Port Jervis Tourism, portjervisny.gov.

'The Godfather Part II'
MILFORD, PA — 2-4pm, Milford Theater & Performing Arts Center, 114 E. Catherine St. themilfordtheater.com.

ONGOING

Barlow, Crafts & Driscoll
LIVINGSTON MANOR, NY — Art exhibition, Fri.-Sun. 11am-5pm through Feb. 28, Catskill Art Space, 48 Main St. catskillartspace.org.

'Familiar Terrain'
NARROWSBURG, NY — Featuring Michael Salomon, Thurs.-Sun. 11am-4pm, Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, 37 Main St. delawarevalleyartsalliance.org.

'Fine Art Landscapes'
LORDS VALLEY, PA — Featuring Joseph Shiel, Sun.- Sat. 9am-5pm, Chant Realtors, 631 Rte. 739, 570/775-6896.

'Horsebook' Exhibition
LAKE HUNTINGTON, NY — Featuring Lila King, through Feb. 28, Arts Nest Gallery, 6692 St. Rte. 52. facebook.com/dvoperany.

'It's Time'
LIBERTY, NY — Photography show by Liberty High School students, Liberty Public Library, 189 North Main St. libertypubliclibrary.libcal.com.

'Let It All Out'
NARROWSBURG, NY — "Let It All Out," members exhibition, Thurs.-Sun. 11am-4pm, Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, 37 Main St. delawarevalleyartsalliance.org.

'Perceptible to Conceivable'
MONTICELLO, NY — "My Long and Winding Road," featuring Richard Arnold, Ethelbert. B. Crawford Public Library 479 Broadway, call for hours, 845/794-4660.

'River Valley Painters'
NARROWSBURG, NY — Art exhibition, Sat.-Sun. 11am-4pm, Ruffed Grouse Gallery, 144 Main St. ruffedgrousegallery.com.

Tiny Art Show
WURTSBORO, NY — On display until Feb. 28, Mamakating Library, 128 Sullivan St. mamprograms@rcls.org.

Winter 2025 Art Show
HAWLEY, PA — Featuring Nancy Campbell & Chris Magadini, The Lodge at Woodloch, 109 Birch Ln. kiesendahlcalhounart.com.

WEEKLY EVENTS

Agri-Culture Webinar Series
ONLINE — 6-7:30pm, Wednesdays, Cornell Cooperative Extension, virtually. Register sullivancce.org/events.

Big Melt Countdown
NARROWSBURG, NY — Growing Older Together fundraiser, make guess got.setmore.com, watch riverreporter.com/stories/the-big-melt-countdown,243195.

Bingo
CALLICOON, NY — 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month, 1-4pm, Delaware Youth Center, 8 Creamery Rd. facebook.com/DelawareYouthCenter.

Bingo
LIBERTY, NY — Sundays 1:30pm, calling 2:50pm, Liberty Elks Lodge #1545, 21 John St. facebook.com/libertyelks1545.

Caffeine & Camaraderie
MONTICELLO, NY — Veterans coffee hour, Mondays 10-11am, Action Toward Independence, 309 East Broadway, info@atitoday.org.

Chair Yoga 2
HONESDALE, PA — Sundays 11am, Wayne County YMCA chair yoga 2, 105 Park St. facebook.com/ymcawayne.

Feeder Count
SULLIVAN COUNTY, NY — Feeder count Mar. 1-7. Sullivan County Audubon Society, report results to reneedavis@hvc.rr.com.

Free Tax Prep
MONTICELLO, NY — Tues. & Thurs. 10-11:30am, Ethelbert B. Crawford Public Library, 479 Broadway. Reserve slot 845/794-4660 x2.

Friday Fitness
LIBERTY, NY — 10-11am through Mar. 13, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 64 Ferndale-Loomis Rd. Register 845/292-6180 x101.

Life Skills Group
MONTICELLO, NY — Fridays 5-6pm, Action Toward Independence, 309 East Broadway, for age 13-31. info@atitoday.org.

Monticello Rotary Club
MONTICELLO, NY — Meeting Tuesdays 6:30pm, 50 Jefferson St. monticellonyrotary.org.

Open Level Yoga
HONESDALE, PA — Wednesdays, 6:45am, Wayne County YMCA, 105 Park St. facebook.com/ymcawayne.

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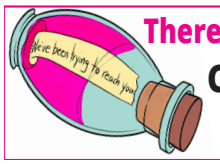
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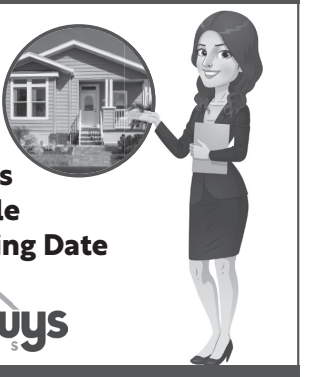


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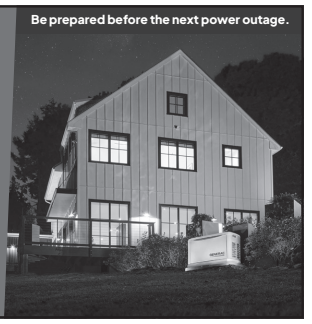
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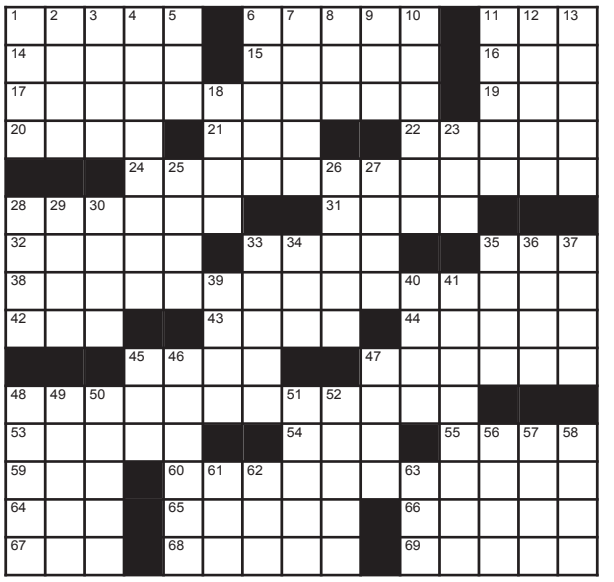
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ACROSS
1. Trudges
6. Actors Epps and Sharif
11. Ave. crossers
14. Peter of "Casablanca"
15. Garbage
16. Browser address
17. C
19. ____ Paolo
20. Wally's little bro
21. From _____ Z
22. TV monitor?
24. E
28. "Permit me ..."
31. Cocky Aesop character
32. Acknowledge tacitly
33. _____ belt
35. Morning run, perhaps
38. H
42. "Do Ya" rock grp.
43. Mountaineer's grip
44. Kind of question
45. Hullabaloos
47. More than pleases
48. S
53. MTV show hosted by Ashton Kutcher
54. Web address ending
55. Model who attended Nairobi University
59. Agent Gold of "Entourage"
60. D
64. Turn bad
65. China's Zhou ____
66. Got a good look
67. Fed. agency that's ass backwards?
68. Union demand
69. Netizens

DOWN
1. Commoner
2. Leisurely gait
3. Killer whale
4. Didn't just irk
5. Unwavering
6. Have a loan from
7. "____ La Mancha"
8. Nova Scotia hrs.
9. 66 on a map, e.g.: Abbr.
10. Person who takes orders
11. Fish dish
12. Get in shape
13. Inclination
18. Suffragist Elizabeth _____ Stanton
23. Cavs, on a scoreboard
25. Part of NASA: Abbr.
26. Minimal beachwear
27. Something about Mary?
28. "By the power vested _____ ..."
29. Sabotage
30. "____ Anything" ("Oliver!" song)
33. Trunk
34. All _____ sudden
35. Kid
36. River in the D-Day invasion
37. Prizms, e.g.
39. Ben Bernanke's field: Abbr.
40. Noah of "ER"
41. Capitol Hill doings
45. Call upon
46. Sandy Koufax, his whole career
47. Sufficient, informally
48. Gets ready for a fight
49. French or Italian bread
50. Hill of law
51. Baseball's Tony and Carlos
52. Clothing retailer Bauer
56. _____ bonding
57. Yank or Tiger
58. Beatty and others
61. Genetic letters
62. 1996 Olympic Torch lighter
63. Cash substitute

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Answer to Last Week's Crossword Puzzle

K	E	I	T	H	■	H	E	R	B	■	K	N	O	W
I	R	M	A	S	■	A	M	E	R	■	F	E	T	A
W	E	B	U	I	L	T	T	H	I	S	C	I	T	Y
I	C	U	S	■	E	A	S	E	O	N	■	L	O	S
S	T	E	■	A	F	R	■	A	C	E	S	■	■	■
■	■	■	H	O	T	I	N	T	H	E	C	I	T	Y
L	A	T	E	N	S	■	E	E	E	■	O	L	I	O
I	S	E	R	E	■	A	L	D	■	P	O	S	E	S
S	T	A	B	■	D	S	L	■	W	E	B	A	R	T
P	A	R	A	D	I	S	E	C	I	T	Y	■	■	■
■	■	■	L	I	E	U	■	H	E	S	■	S	I	D
A	H	A	■	O	H	A	R	A	S	■	I	T	N	O
S	U	F	F	R	A	G	E	T	T	E	C	I	T	Y
A	L	A	I	■	R	E	N	T	■	D	E	E	R	E
P	A	R	T	■	D	D	A	Y	■	U	R	B	A	N

Legal Notice

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of 131 Champlin LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 2/03/2025. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to Pinchus Kryman: 94 Wheeler Ave, Staten Island, NY 10314. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

CULTURAL CURRENCY LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 01/29/2026. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC upon whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to 333 pearl street, apt 8k, new york, NY 10038. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

COUNTY OF SULLIVAN LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF THE LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY French Clearing Woods 1 LLC. Articles of Org were filed with NYS Dept of State on Nov 3, 2025. LLC's office located in Sullivan County, NY. Secretary of State is designated as agent to whom process to be served. Secretary shall mail copy of processes served to French Clearing Woods 1 LLC, PO Box 392, Monticello, NY 12701. LLC is for any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of Neversink River Power, LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 1/13/2026. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to Delaware River Solar, LLC: PO Box 384 Callicoon, NY 12723. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Legal Notice

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Notice of formation of 119 Liberty LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 01/23/2026. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to 119 Liberty LLC: 317 N Shore Dr., Wurtsboro, NY 12790. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

CHILDCARE PORTAL, LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 1/27/26. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to 809 Creamery Rd., Mongaup Valley, NY 12762, which is also the principal business location. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

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Notice of formation of Liberty MHC, LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 8/08/2025. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to Liberty MHC, LLC: 94 Wheeler Ave, Staten Island, NY 10314. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

MODERN SOLUTIONS REALTY LLC Arts. of Org. filed with SSNY on 1/6/2026. Off. Loc.: SULLIVAN Co. SSNY desig. As agt. upon whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to: The LLC, P.O. BOX 488, Smallwood, NY 12778. General Purposes.

Legal Notice

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of 20-13 35th Street LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 01/23/2026. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to 20-13 35th Street LLC: 317 N Shore Dr., Wurtsboro, NY 12790. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

COUNTY OF SULLIVAN LEGAL NOTICE

Sealed bids for the following will be received by the Director of the Department of Purchasing and Central Services at the Sullivan County Government Center, 100 North Street, Monticello, New York 12701, (845) 807-0515, until 1:00 P.M. on Friday, March 13, 2026 at which time the bids will be publicly opened and read.

1. 2026 Highway Job Order Contract (B-26-11)

Bid Forms, including specifications, may be obtained from the Director at the above address, and all bids are subject to the terms and conditions therein set forth.

Dated: February 20, 2026

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

63 Rimon Lane LLC. Filed 1/5/26. Office: Sullivan Co. SSNY designated as agent for process & shall mail to: 221 Lee Ave Bklyn, NY 11206. Purpose: General.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

VALLEY ECE, LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 1/27/26. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to 809 Creamery Rd., Mongaup Valley, NY 12762, which is also the principal business location. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Legal Notice

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

23 WASHINGTON LAKE ROAD LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 11/5/25. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to 23 Washington Lake Rd., Yulan, NY 12792, which is also the principal business location. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

ASHER SCOT MOBILE HOMES LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 1/28/26. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to 20 Thomas Ave., Liberty, NY 12754, which is also the principal business location. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Ditmas Applied Behavior Analysis, PLLC, filed 12/30/25. Office: Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent for process & shall mail to: 70 Patricia Pl, Clifton, NJ 07012. Purpose: LBA.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

76 Rimon Lane LLC. Filed 1/6/26. Office: Sullivan Co. SSNY designated as agent for process & shall mail to: 221 Lee Ave, Bklyn, NY 11206. Purpose: General.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Haller Applied Behavior Analysis, PLLC, filed 1/5/26. Office: Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent for process & shall mail to 70 Patricia Pl, Clifton, NJ 07012. Purpose: LBA.

Legal Notice

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

429 KENT AVENUE UNIT 905 LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 11/4/25. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to 23 Washington Lake Rd., Yulan, NY 12792. Purpose: Any lawful purpose. Principal business loc: 428 Kent Ave., Unit 905, Brooklyn, NY 11249.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of 85 Foster Rd LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 12/05/2025. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to The LLC: 94 Wheeler Ave, Staten Island, NY 10314 . Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of R' YOEL CONSULTING LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 12/05/2025. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to R' YOEL CONSULTING LLC: 167 MOUNTAIN WOODS CIR, UNIT 3, FALLSBURG, NY, 12779. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Fosse Applied Behavior Analysis, PLLC, filed 12/29/25. Office: Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent for process & shall mail to: 70 Patricia Pl, Clifton, NJ 07012. Purpose: LBA.

Legal Notice

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

78 SOUTH 2ND STREET LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 11/4/25. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to 23 Washington Lake Rd., Yulan, NY 12792. Purpose: Any lawful purpose. Principal business loc: 78 South 2 nd St., Brooklyn, NY 11249.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of Flax Fiber Farm LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 01/15/2026. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to Adrienne Carlile: 81 Shortcut Road. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

PANEGA PET PLATE LLC filed Arts. of Org. with the Sect'y of State of NY (SSNY) on 11/12/2025. Office: Sullivan County. SSNY has been designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served and shall mail process to: The LLC, 80 Brooks Rd, Ferndale, NY 12734. Purpose: any lawful act.

COUNTY OF SULLIVAN LEGAL NOTICE

Formation Galli Family Farm L.L.C. Articles of organization were filed with the New York Secretary of State (NYSS) on January 20,2026 The office of the LLC is located in Sullivan County, New York. The NYSS has been designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. The address to which the NY Secretary of State shall mail a copy of any process against the LLC is: Galli Family Farm, LLC, 1076 Claryville Rd. Claryville, NY 12725.The purpose of the LLC is to engage in any lawful act or activity.

Legal Notice

COUNTY OF SULLIVAN PUBLIC NOTICE

Proposals for the following will be received by the Director of the Department of Purchasing and Central Services at the Sullivan County Government Center, 100 North Street, Monticello, New York 12701, (845) 807-0515, until 1:00 P.M. on Friday, March 6, 2026:
1. Psychiatric Services for Community Services (R-26-06)
Specifications may be obtained from the Director at the above address.
Dated: February 20, 2026

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

THREE CORDS LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 1/20/26. Office in Sullivan Co. SSNY desig. agent of LLC whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to 15 Schumacher Pond Rd., Barryville, NY 12719, which is also the principal business location. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Legal Notice

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Formation of SULLIVAN REAL PROPERTY LLC filed with the Secy. of State of NY (SSNY) on 2/2/2026. Office loc.: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. The address SSNY shall mail process to c/o Sullivan Real Property LLC, PO Box 1030, Brick, NJ 08723. Purpose: Any lawful activity.

SULLIVAN COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of Formation of NARROWSBURG PUB LLC. Arts. of Org. filed with Secy. of State of NY (SSNY) on 01/28/2026. Office location: Sullivan County. SSNY designated as agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail process to: THE LLC, 3 OAK ST., NARROWSBURG, NY 12764. Purpose: any lawful activities.

WHERE & WHEN

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WEEKLY EVENTS

Pickleball Games
MONTICELLO, NY — Town of Thompson kids' sports, Sundays 5-7pm, Monticello High School, 39 Breakey Ave. facebook.com/TownofThompson.

Sage Socials
NARROWSBURG, NY — 1-4pm, 2nd & 4th Mondays, The Commons, 90 Main St. tustensocial.org.

Tai Chi Stage 2
LIBERTY, NY — Cornell Cooperative Extension Tai Chi stage 2, Tues, & Fri. 11am-noon, 64 Ferndale-Loomis Rd. sullivancce.org.

Warming Station Open
PORT JERVIS, NY — St. Peter's Lutheran Church open through Mar. 31, 2026, 60 Sussex St., warmingstationpj@gmail.com, 845/649-8720.

Warming Stations Open
LIBERTY, NY — Sullivan County Health & Human Services, open 8pm-8am through Apr. 15. United Methodist Church, 170 N. Main St. Liberty, and St. John's Episcopal Church, 15 St. Johns St. Monticello.

WISE Program
LIBERTY, NY — Cornell Cooperative Extension, Wellness Initiative for Senior Education, Mondays 11am-1pm, 46 Golden Park Ln. Register tinyurl.com/5n6mtpy4.

Youth Basketball Game
GRAHAMSVILLE, NY — Liberty Parks & Recreation youth basketball games, Sundays 9-11am, Tri-Valley High School, 34 Moore Hill Rd. 845/292-7690.

Youth Basketball Practice
LIBERTY, NY — Liberty Parks & Recreation, Saturdays noon-2pm, Liberty High School, 125 Buckley St. Grades 2-6, 845/292-7690.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Family Support Group
ONLINE/MONTICELLO, NY — 3rd & 4th Tuesdays of the month 6:30-8pm, National Alliance on Mental Illness, 20 Crystal St. namisullivan.org.

Grief Support Group
HONESDALE, PA — 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month, 2-3pm, Wayne County Area Agency on Aging, 323 10th St. 570/253-4262.

Momma Bear Group
HONESDALE, PA — 2nd & 4th Thurs., National Alliance on Mental Illness, 809 Main St. register info@naminepa.org.

Parents for Parents
ONLINE, MONTICELLO, NY — 5-7pm, Action Toward Independence, 309 East Broadway & Zoom. atitoday.org.

Parent Support Group
MILFORD, PA — 4th Wed. of the month, 7pm, Pike Autism Support Services, 201 Broad St. passnepa.org/support.

Spectrum Support Group
MILFORD, PA — For teens & adults on the spectrum, 7pm, Pike Autism Support Services, 201 Broad St. Register 570educationalconcultant@gmail.com.

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EverGreen Meadow exec visits Monticello Kiwanis

MONTICELLO, NY — Adrienne Jensen, executive director of EverGreen Meadow Services & Academy, was a guest speaker at the recent Monticello Kiwanis Club Meeting. She gave a presentation describing EverGreen's support programs and services for adolescent girls who are struggling with emotional and behavioral impacts of trauma, anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges in the community as well as across the entire New York State.

EverGreen is in the process of opening a residential treatment and middle school campus in Rock Hill to serve these young girls. They are also partnering with local schools and community-based organizations to help deliver empowerment and preventive programs, a Kiwanis member said.



Contributed photo
EverGreen Meadow's Adrienne Jensen left, stands with Monticello Kiwanis Program's Linda Barriger.

The mission of EverGreen Meadow is to serve lives and open pathways to brighten futures one girl at a time. The mission is similar to that of Kiwanis, which is to improve the world one child and one community at a time, the Kiwanis member said.

The Monticello Kiwanis Club meets on the first Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at Albella's Restaurant in Monticello. For further information regarding club activities, visit the Monticello NY Kiwanis Club Facebook page.

Rockland students to participate in All-County Music Festival

ROCKLAND CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT — More than four dozen Rockland Central School District students have been selected to participate in the annual All-County Music Festival in March.

Each year, the Sullivan County Music Educators Association hosts the event, in which top musicians from each district in the county unite to form elite-level choirs and bands. Participating students usually earn their spot via their performance in the New York State School Music Association Solo Festival.

In preparation for the festival, 55 Rockland students will rehearse and prepare with Kelly Bullis for Elementary Chorus; Jordana Maraj for Middle School Band, Junior High Mixed Chorus and Junior High Treble Chorus; and Dan Smith for Middle School Band, Junior High School Jazz Band and Senior High Band.

"We are incredibly proud to have our district represented at the All-County level and congratulate these students on this outstanding accomplishment," Maraj said.

"Being chosen for an All-County honors ensemble is a significant achievement and reflects the dedication, talent and hard work of these students," Smith said.

The students will rehearse on March 6, with performances taking place on March 7, starting at 1 p.m. at Liberty High School. The 1:30 p.m. concert will feature the Elementary Chorus and Middle School Band. The Junior High Treble Chorus and Junior High Jazz Ensemble will perform at 3:30 p.m. The concert series will conclude with the 5:30 p.m. concert featuring the Junior High Mixed Chorus and Senior High Band.

Tickets will be available at the door and online. A link will be shared when available.

The following is a list of participants.

Elementary Chorus (Grades 5 and 6)

Josephine Anderes, Leela Bailey, Krystal Bautista-Pineda, Isabella Genovese, Sage Gorr, Thea Green, Sydney Kehrer, Charlotte Lindholm, Kierah Mattingley, Khloe Mershon, Raelee Misner, Whitney Misner, Gabriella Murphy, Olivia Piatek, Savannah Ryder, Savannah Sanderson, Emily Sherman, Emma Smith, Rachel Sprouse, Jenessa Wells and Cheyenne Wolcott.

Middle School Band (Grades 5-7)

Mara Gorr, Rhema Plenty and Mia Rodriguez on flute; Julie-Maye MacManus on clarinet; Noah DeFreitas and Bryce Edwards on alto saxophone; Cora Freidenstine on tenor saxophone and Anthony Heusel on bassoon.

Junior High Mixed Choir (Grade 7-9)

Sopranos Fiona Heusel, Mckenzie Lundeen, Mila Park, Hannah Ryan and Elena Wells; and Altos Alivia Brady, Isabella Deans, Taylor Mitchell, Hailey Rogers and Hannah Wilson.

Junior High Treble Choir (Grades 7-9)

Amelia Acosta, Anabella Barrotti, Alyson Sherman and Tera Ward as Soprano 1, Amelia Almquist, Ava McAdams and Jamie Zayas as Soprano 2; and Janine Augustine, Azrael Didrich, Avianna King and Abigail Olivo as Alto.

Junior High Jazz Band (Grades 7-9)

Mason Roberts on drum set, vibraphone and auxiliary percussion.

Senior High Band (Grades 10-12)

Aliya Anderson on flute; Grace Ward on bass clarinet; Victor Peyton on trumpet and Sara Hollenbeck on French horn.

Historic Pocono camp awarded outdoor learning grant

DINGMANS FERRY, PA — Camp Speers YMCA has been awarded a $10,000 grant by the Robert H. Spitz Foundation, administered by Scranton Area Community Foundation. The grant will fund outdoor environmental education for local elementary schoolchildren onsite at the historic sleepaway camp.

The foundation supports programs that break the cycle of poverty by providing access to housing, transportation and education. Environmental education is one of the foundation's 2025 priority areas. Camp Speers has incorporated environmental preservation into its curriculum since 1989, when a rare, endangered plant was discovered on its grounds.

Gallery at 530 Main hosts annual student art exhibit

STROUDSBURG, PA — The Gallery at 530 Main will hold the opening reception for its annual student art exhibition on Saturday, February 21. The event showcases the talent of Monroe County high school students.

The exhibition is open to all students in grades 9 through 12 residing in Monroe County or attending a Monroe County school. Visitors will have the opportunity to view a diverse collection of paintings, sculptures, photography and mixed media works, celebrating the artistic voices of the local youth in the Pocono community.

Following the reception, the student art exhibition will remain open to the public from February 21 to March 7, with gallery hours on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m.

For more information, visit the gallery at 530 Main on Facebook or email gallery@shermantheater.com.

The event is sponsored by the Gallery at 530 Main and the Sherman Theater, both part of the Fine Arts Discovery Series. "The ongoing support from these organizations makes it possible to foster artistic growth and provide valuable opportunities for young artists in the Pocono region," organizers said.



RR photo by Evan Padua

Cross-country skiing is a nice way to get exercise during the cold of winter; it's important to prioritize movement throughout the season.

STEP OUTSIDE
BY EVAN PADUA

A great ski

A wise man once said, "It's a great day for a great ski." Today, it's cross-country or Nordic skiing, the less intense and less expensive version of skiing, with similar rewards.

Cross-country skiing has easier accessibility than typical downhill skiing. There are two methods—classic and skate skiing—and both are dynamic and fun.

Classic is more common in our area. Once the ground is covered in snow, all you need is a pair of Nordic skis, boots and poles, and you are ready to go. Even just a few inches of snow on a grass lawn is enough to get the Nordic skis out for a quick glide. Gaiters for your ankles, a nice pair of gloves and sunglasses make the experience better, but they are not necessary pieces of equipment.

Once the snowcover stacks up a bit after some good storms, then a nice glide through undulating fields and meandering forests can be very enjoyable.

Groomed cross-country ski trails are hard to find around our immediate area in the Upper Delaware Valley. Some state parks in PA and New York do offer these commodities.

It is best to get your skis out as soon as fresh snow of three or more inches has fallen. Set in a nice, easy track around your house or on a flat grassy lawn or field. Once the track is packed down, it will get easier and more enjoyable for gliding further and longer with each step.

The actual movement of cross-country skiing takes a bit of balance and coordination, but overall, it is a pretty natural body movement, similar to speed walking. Using ski poles as a third and fourth point of contact helps stabilize the body throughout the skiing motion. However, it is important to remember that ski poles are not meant to be used as a braking mechanism—that would likely lead to a wipeout and a face full of snow.

Fortunately, gaining too much speed while cross-country skiing is not often a problem. Everything is under your own force and inertia while cross-country skiing, because what you choose to go up is what you will likely have to come down. So choose wisely and use caution until you are comfortable on your skis.

Cross-country skiing is a nice way to get the heart rate up and get the body moving during the cold of winter. During a long docile winter, our muscles can enter a period of fatigue and atrophy, and then it is much more difficult to build the muscle back. So it is important to prioritize exercise and movement throughout the winter and year.

Online marketplaces and local thrift stores are good places to find used cross-country ski equipment. Go check in at a local ski shop or dig out that old pair of cross-country skis and boots from the back of the shed. I encourage everyone to take advantage of this cold and snowy winter and try cross-country skiing.

Map out 900 new acres of the Sundown Wild Forest

NY DEC is soliciting input for future management of a recent 900-acre addition to the Catskill Forest Preserve

ULSTER COUNTY, NY — The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recently announced a community availability session on Tuesday, February 24, to solicit public input on the development of an amendment to the Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the Sundown Wild Forest in Ulster County. The meeting will include a short presentation by Region 3 Division of Lands and Forests about a recent 900-acre acquisition in the Town of Olive proposed to be added to the Sundown Wild Forest through a UMP amendment. The presentation will be followed by opportunities to meet directly with DEC staff and gather input.

The 900-acre addition to Sundown Wild Forest, part of the Catskill Forest Preserve, will provide expanded public access to state lands, opportunities for public recreation and enhanced natural resource protection. Notable landmarks on the property include Wagon Wheel Gap, Low Point, Little High Point and one of the best views of the Ashokan Reservoir in the Catskills.

Sundown Wild Forest currently contains 30,100 acres of protected land, including 10 mountains more than 2,000 feet high, numerous waterfalls, valleys and streams, as well as access to the Long Path, Vernooy Kill Falls and the Peekamoose Valley Blue Hole.

The meeting will be held on February 24 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., in the Town of Olive Meeting Hall, 50 Bostock Road in Shokan. DEC will solicit input from the public on the types of public use and supporting facilities they may want to have developed on the new parcel and how the land will be managed.

Following the public information session, DEC will accept written and emailed comments until April 1. After the comment period, DEC will develop a draft amendment to the 2019 Sundown Wild Forest UMP that will include:

Formal classification and addition of the 900-acre acquisition to Sundown Wild Forest,

Improving public awareness of current and future recreational opportunities on these lands, and

Identifying opportunities for improvements to recreational facilities and natural resource protection goals for all lands contained within the unit.

Comments can be mailed to Environmental Program Specialist Pine Roehrs, NYSDEC, 21 South Putt Corners Road, New Paltz, NY 12561 or emailed to Catskill.Park@dec.ny.gov.

The amendment planning process will include an additional public meeting and comment period on the draft amendment to provide the public with the opportunity to review and provide input before it is finalized.

Kettle Creek EEC offers summer day camps

STROUSDBURG, PA — Looking for a different kind of summer camp for your child? We've got you covered. In a time when children are spending less time outside, our camps are designed to provide a multitude of learning opportunities under the guidance of trained professionals with years of experience. Hands-on activities combined with the resources of the Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center (EEC) offer a safe environment for your child to learn and explore their natural environment.

· Get in Touch with Nature—Ages 7 to 10—June 22-26, July 6-10 or August 3-7. Choose one week. Children will learn new skills with new friends as they enjoy a different adventure each day. The cost is $180 per camper.

· Adventure Camp—Ages 11-13— June 22-26, July 6-10, August 3-7 or August 17-21. Choose one week. Children can grab their gear and head out with us as we explore interesting places in the Poconos. This camp will include lots of field trips. The cost is $220 per camper. Space is limited.

Camps take place Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with early care and late pickup available for an additional fee. See the application or call the EEC for details. Applications can be found online at www.mcconservation.org/educational-services

Call 570-629-3061 or email dflint@monroecountypa.gov for a fillable application or to pay by credit card over the phone.

For more information, call the EEC at 570/629-3061, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and some Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or visit www.mcconservation.org/educational-services.

Contributed by Kettle Creek EEC.

Oath of office:

The Hon. Jonathan Dunsinger, Magisterial District 22-3-04 Justice, Court of Common Pleas, officiated at the Upper Delaware Council's swearing-in ceremony for 2026 officers on February 5. Damascus Township Rep. Jeffrey Dexter, left, was sworn in as chairperson of the nonprofit organization's board. Fellow 2026 officers are vice-chairperson Aaron Robinson (Shohola Township) and secretary-treasurer Alan Henry (Berlin Township).



Photo contributed by the UDC

Forest health conference to be held by Penn State Extension

STATE COLLEGE, PA and ONLINE — Penn State Extension, in partnership with the Division of Forest Health in the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Forestry, will host a conference focused on forest health in March, with options to attend in person or virtually. Organizers note that space is limited, so preregistration is required by Tuesday, February 24.

The in-person version of the "Forest Health, Insect and Disease Briefing" will occur from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 3, at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College.

Participants wishing to attend an abbreviated virtual event can join a live webinar from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Tuesday, March 10.

Designed for forestry and other natural resource management professionals, the conference will review the latest in forest health, including current insect, disease and invasive plant issues affecting Pennsylvania's forests.

Participants will learn:

· Current forest health practices and emerging threats facing Pennsylvania's forests.

· How insects, diseases, invasive plants and other forest health issues affect forest ecosystems.

· Management practices and control methods used to maintain and improve forest health.

The in-person meeting is approved for Pennsylvania pesticide recertification credits, both category and core. Attendees can earn two core credits and five credits in each of the following categories: private, 05, 06, 10, 18 and 23.

Attendees of the virtual webinar can earn two core credits and three credits in each of the following categories: private, 05, 17, 18 and 23.

In addition, participants can earn Society of American Foresters continuing forestry education credits, International Society of Arboriculture continuing education units and Sustainable Forestry Initiative training units.

A fee will be incurred for those webinar registrants who are seeking continuing education credits. Registration is free for non-credit-seeking attendees.

More information about this workshop is available on the Penn State Extension website at extension.psu.edu/forest-health-workshop.

Registration is required to receive the link to access the webinar. Registrants also will receive access to the webinar recording. More information about the webinar is available at extension.psu.edu/forest-health-insect-and-disease-update.

RAMBLINGS OF A CATSKILL FLY FISHER
BY TONY BONAVIST



James St. John via Wikimedia Commons, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.
Large brook trout, like the one pictured here, are common in Labrador's Minipi Lakes.

Fishing for Labrador brook trout

I caught my first trout, which happened to be an Eastern brook trout, during my teenage years. At that time, New York's size limit for trout was seven inches in length, and I'm guessing that fish was barely legal.

That little trout came from a tiny stream that paralleled Route 100, just outside of Millwood, NY. It was unnamed and was one of the four or five small streams that fed the New Croton Reservoir in Westchester County. An amazing fact in that there were several wild brook trout populations within 25 miles of New York City.

Ever since that first brook trout, I've had a fascination with the species, because they are the most beautiful of all salmonid fishes, if a bit too gullible. Yet, even though I fished all over the Catskills and western Montana, I never caught a brook trout larger than 12 inches.

Later in life, I met Dave Brandt while working at the Wulff School of Fly Fishing on the upper Beaver Kill River, near Lew Beach, NY. Very soon, we became friends and fished the East Branch of the Delaware on Saturday nights after school. That's when I learned, once the schools were over, that Dave headed to Labrador, in eastern Canada, to fish for brook trout from Coopers' Minipi Lodges. Dave tried to go in July, because that's when the large *Hexagenia* (hex) mayflies hatched from the Minipi Lakes that served the camp.

Even back in the early '90s, when Dave was able to go, the cost was steep and I believe he served as guide and fly casting instructor to help cover food, lodging and transportation.

Brook trout in the Minipi region of Labrador are the largest in the world, with some specimens weighing in at a staggering 10 pounds. That's why Coopers' is so famous. Dave liked to fish late in the afternoon and until dusk because that's when hex mayflies hatched in large numbers, bringing these large brook trout to the surface.

Unlike river fishing where hatching flies are brought to the fish by river currents, Minipi brook trout cruise close to the surface looking for emerging mayfly duns. So casting to these fish is a lot like shooting skeet; anglers have to lead a rising trout ahead of where it last rose, which is difficult because these brook trout do not feed in a specific direction.

If I were fishing for these trout, after the last rise I would look for the closest mayfly on the lake surface, and cast my fly between that fly and the last rise. By fishing in this manner, I would hope to intercept that fish before it saw the next natural mayfly.

That being said, Dave told me that these brook trout, while always on the move looking for flies, were not all that hard to catch for anglers who were decent casters and could present a fly accurately. Dave also told me that when no flies were hatching, the guides would suggest that anglers switch from dry flies to streamers, which would be trolled behind a slow-moving, outboard-powered boat.

While I don't recall the exact weight, I believe Dave's largest brook trout was in the seven-pound range, which is a very large brook trout.

In addition to brook trout, the Minipi Lakes hold populations of very large northern pike and landlocked populations of Arctic char, which can also get quite large, with some individuals attaining a weight of over 10 pounds.

From what I was told by Dave and what I've read, Arctic char are the hardest-fighting salmonids in the Canadian Maritimes, and that includes Atlantic salmon, which are also found in Labrador rivers to which they return from the sea to spawn.

I've had the good fortune to do a great deal of fishing during my life, not only for trout, but also for bass, pickerel, walleyes and assorted panfish.

Over the years, my adventures have taken me from the small brook trout streams of Westchester and Putnam counties to the famous rivers of the Catskills and to the Clark Fork, Bitterroot, Rock Creek and Madison rivers of Montana. If I have a regret, it would be that even though Dave invited me to fish the Minipi Lakes with him, I was not able to go, because I did not have a passport or other identification that would have allowed me to enter Canada. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, missed!

Getting to the Coopers' camp is not easy: there are no roads in and all travel is done by float plane. For those who have the time and resources to book a trip to Minipi, anglers will first fly into Montreal, then on to Goose Bay, Labrador, where a float plane will deliver them to Big Minipi Lake and Coopers' Lodge.

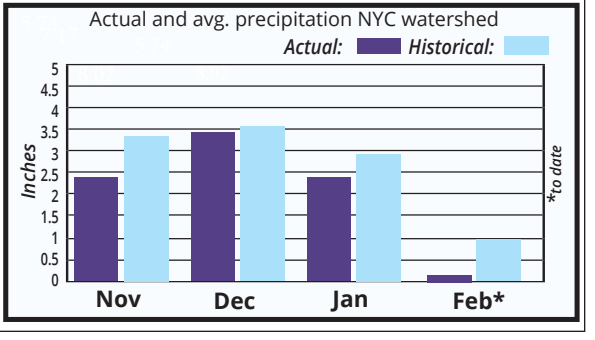
Fishing for the large brook trout of the Minipi is a rare, one-of-a-kind experience. An experience that should not be missed by anglers who seek out large brook trout, along with a unique Canadian wilderness experience.

SOUNDINGS: TAKING THE PULSE OF THE UPPER DELAWARE WATERSHED

For river gage, height and more information, visit bit.ly/TRR-soundings.

Reservoir levels

February 12, 2026
Cannonsville: 67.2%
Pepacton: 74.5%
Neversink: 72.2%
Total: 78.9%
Normal Total: 89.8%
Total in 2025: 83.5%

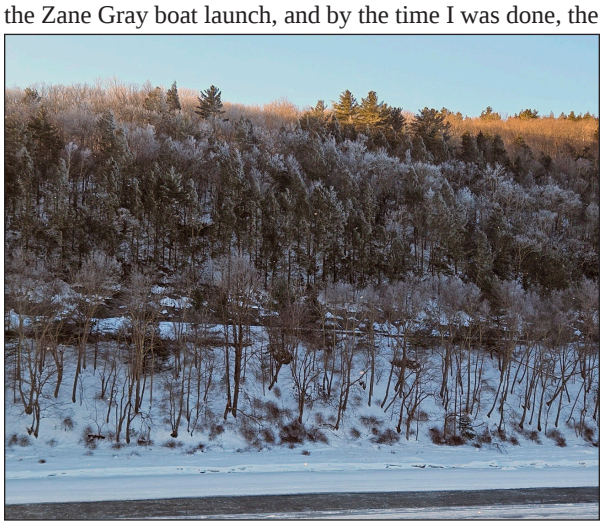


RIVER TALK
BY SCOTT RANDO

Snow, hoarfrost and diamond dust

The first week of February saw some cold weather with a teaser two-day warm spell where the highs approached 30 degrees Fahrenheit—just before the 7th, when a frigid air mass and high winds moved in. It was early in the month, the first Monday, and when I took a trip up to Lackawaxen, I noted that the air was still and the temperature was -7 degrees. Steam was coming off the water where open water was still present on the ice-laden Delaware River.

I had a cup of coffee at the Two Rivers Anglers Café near the Zane Gray boat launch, and by the time I was done, the morning sun had cleared the ridges and was shining on my face. As I squinted towards the sun, I saw multiple sparkling reflections that you might see when snow blows off a tree while looking sunward. The wind was calm and there were no precipitation-producing clouds nearby; there wasn't a cloud in the sky.



RR photos by Scott Rando

Hoarfrost is visible on the trees on the New York ridge across the river from the Zane Gray boat launch. Hoarfrost is usually seen where there is water nearby, such as a river or stream. It is enhanced when visible vapor is visible from advection fog from the water. Ice crystals are formed on objects and grow to long tendrils, making objects covered in hoarfrost take up a "hairy"

This phenomenon is known as "diamond dust." It typically forms during clear, still days, when the temperature is at least a few degrees below zero. Like snowflakes associated with storms, diamond dust needs a tiny nucleus of dust to form via deposition. Unlike a typical snowflake that forms inside a cloud, however, the ice crystal that forms diamond dust does so with the aid of very cold temperatures and some invisible moisture in the air. Gentle air currents cause these floating crystals to rise and move about, and they grow bigger and finally fall gently when they get too heavy. They are tiny and almost impossible to track, but I got lucky and spotted a couple on my car windshield.



This is a close-up of a couple of diamond dust ice crystals. In the free air environment provided by calm and frigid air conditions, these crystals grow just like conventional snowflakes. The six-sided patterns of these ice crystals are caused by the molecular structure of water; the hydrogen bond angle of this molecule enables six-sided crystal growth.

Being close to the river probably helped put a bit more moisture in the clear air to enhance the formation of diamond dust. Meteorologists call them ice crystals; in aviation shorthand, they are called "IC" and are seen mostly at Arctic airport reports. There was more to see at the river this morning. Hoarfrost covered nearby bushes and distant trees on ridgelines alike. It is much more common along the Delaware and is formed when water vapor comes in contact with branches or other objects and forms long tendrils of ice.

I have seen diamond dust only a few times, and it seems hard to appreciate glittering ice particles coming from a seemingly clear sky after having to shovel a lot more frozen precipitation from a storm a few days back, but there are gifts that nature brings, even in these cold times. This is one of her gifts.

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