

The HIGHLANDS Current

DECEMBER 31, 2021

issue
500

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Drama Behind
the Scenes

Page 17



Mark Snyder, the co-owner of Drug World in Cold Spring, prepares a swab on Tuesday (Dec. 28) for a customer getting tested for COVID-19.

Photo by L. Sparks

Being Tested

Residents scramble for appointments, home kits

By Leonard Sparks

With hours to go before a Christmas Eve get-together with friends, Gregg Zuman parked himself in a long line of other people anxious to get rapid COVID-19 tests at a clinic near Penn Station in Manhattan.

It was the Beacon resident's third attempt that day to get the negative test result he needed to attend that evening's gathering and one with relatives in Massachusetts on Christmas Day. It was also his last hope after two days of searching for an appointment for a rapid test or a take-home kit.

While he waited in line after arriving at 3:30 p.m., a woman in a lab coat announced that the site would shut down at 4:15 p.m., said Zuman. "I'm looking in front of me and I'm like, 'I'm not going to make this,'" he said.

"Then, at 4:13 p.m., I actually got to the front of the line."

Zuman's under-the-wire experience is now the norm. A surge in demand for testing that began months ago, and accelerated with the rise of the Omicron variant of the virus, is outstripping the availability of home kits and putting pressure on the pharmacies and clinics that provide rapid tests and the more-rigorous polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests.

As of Dec. 25, an average of 2,600 people in Dutchess County were getting tested daily this month, nearly three times higher than in July, which began with COVID-19 having cratered and the state scaling back on testing in favor of promoting vaccinations. The daily average in Putnam County, 852, is more than double from July.

Hours before getting in line at Penn Station, Zuman had tried a clinic near Grand Central Station but gave up after the line he estimates was 50 feet long moved only a few feet in 90 minutes. That morning a clinic in Poughkeepsie showed an appointment at noon, but Zuman says he got a text message after registering online that said the clinic was booked.

The day before Christmas Eve, he stopped at Rite-Aid in Beacon and was told the store had sold its 150 home kits in an hour. On Dec. 22, he saw a social media post about home kits being distributed at the

Beacon police department; Chris White, the city administrator, said the allotment of 250 kits was gone in three hours.

Drug World in Cold Spring used to
(Continued on Page 7)

Test-to-Stay is Here to Stay, For Now

Protocol allows students to avoid quarantine

By Jeff Simms

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and New York State have both endorsed a "test-to-stay" program that will be put into place when public schools reopen in January, after winter break.

The protocol allows students who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to take daily rapid-result tests. Students who test negative can stay in school and avoid the 10-day quarantine that had been the standard after exposure.

New York State has purchased millions of rapid tests that it said will be distributed to county health officials. A handful of counties, however, including Dutchess, began implementing test-to-stay in their schools earlier this fall.

Putnam County also announced on Dec. 23 that its school districts will have the opportunity to implement test-to-stay in the new year. Details are still being developed, the county said.

(Continued on Page 6)



Ranate and Joe Rao of Putnam Valley visited Antarctica earlier this month in pursuit of a total eclipse of the sun. See Page 13.

Photo provided

5Q FIVE QUESTIONS: IRENE O'GARDEN

By Alison Rooney

Poet and essayist Irene O'Garden, of Garrison, is the author of *Glad to Be Human: Adventures in Optimism*.

You refer to a time when “kindness was not yet popular.” Has the pandemic changed that?

Kindness *is* more popular, as is gratitude. We're much more sensitive to kindness because when we see a great deal of unkindness it prompts, within us, kinder behavior. In my experience, the pandemic has made people a lot kinder, especially having been without connection for all those months. We can get by without a whole lot of stuff, but not without each other. Most human beings have been brought into this world with kindness and try to respond with kindness.

You advocate spontaneity. Why is that?

The variety of life, of emotional exploration, being attentive to opportunities, being in a place and time when you can give — that's where spontaneity comes in. Spontaneity is about trust. It's about saying, “What is coming through me is good and positive and an energy that is welcomed and needed in the world.”

Caring is a profound energy. We are gifted with days — we don't know how many; the number is not important. If our mind is wandering all over the place, it's difficult to be in the present moment. The more we take a deep breath, get into the beauty of this physical world we live in and get back to the body, that is a beautiful place to nurture that spontaneity. Language is incredibly spontaneous. If we rely on screens, our brain waves aren't connecting with our bodies. Pay attention to what's around us that needs our attention. I'm looking right now at evergreens waving in the wind. They were once tiny things.

How do you define optimism?

It's not about everything being perfect



all the time. It's about choosing to see something beautiful when something is broken. We don't gloss over loss, but, for example, the pandemic, this grief-soaked time: Rather than looking around asking nervously, “Is this going to be another Great Depression?” we should be doing what is necessary to show compassion for people on this earth — globally, not just frontline. We should be acknowledging that what is abundant is the caring we have for each other. That's how to look for the light in things.

If people feel like they are stagnating, how can they change that?

So often we have rutted thoughts; we think we have only one option. Instead, it's good to understand that at any time we can change direction — jump the rails — if we're finding it's not helping us. Optimism is practical and in harmony with nature. Things grow anticipating that good will come of it. Whether we think this is a true direction, it's better to want to live.

Reflections for 2022

By Irene O'Garden

Glad to be human, glad to be provided for, glad to provide for myself in faith and effort. Fun to find shoes, fun to buy them, too.

Glad to know about some stars, glad the mystery is infinite, glad for the burst and silence.

Glad to be living in the heart, the human heart, time for whole days spent on relationships, for soothing, for expressing pain, for pleasure, contemplation. And time and ways and means for distant friends, living in differing places, to visit, to speak and the beauty of a letter sent received.

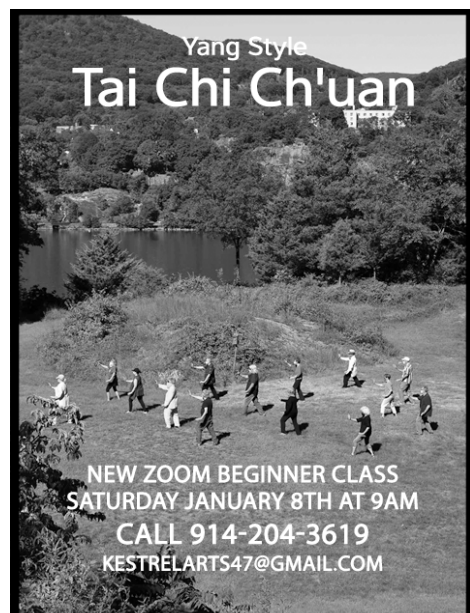
Glad for interiors and colors and pattern and balance and shape and movement and adornment. Glad of myriads of little helps, of zippers, paperclips, and cleverness.

Glad to choose, to help to nourish, to bless.

You use physical tokens to manifest a wish or goal. Can you explain?

I love symbols that make hope physical, such as charms. Everyone has the power to visualize and create the world we want to live in; we do this in every moment. We can see that we are creating the experience we have. Putting our desires out in a physical way sets the flow of energy and helps us appreciate what we receive in response, even though it might not be shaped exactly the way we thought it would be.

“Spontaneity is about trust. It's about saying, “What is coming through me is good and positive and an energy that is welcomed and needed in the world.”



ON THE SPOT

By Michael Turton

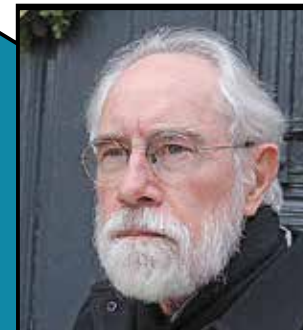
Where would you love to be on New Year's Eve?

“Somewhere I've never been. A warm tropical island.”



Sidney Kirk, Beacon

“Edinburgh, Scotland, for Hogmanay.”



Alan Vardy, Cold Spring

“Not Times Square. Hawaii or anywhere warm.”



Lori Lamando, Garrison

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Liam Hackett-Zorzi, Eleonora Zorzi. Sean Hackett and Isabella Hackett-Zorzi (l to r), Cold Spring



"A free press is essential to democracy - and it's important for our town's residents to know and understand news that will affect their lives."

Wendy DeGiglio, Cold Spring

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The *Current* welcomes letters to the editor on its coverage and local issues. Submissions are selected by the editor (including from comments posted to our social media pages) to provide a variety of opinions and voices, and all are subject to editing for accuracy, clarity and length, and to remove personal attacks. Letters may be emailed to editor@highlandscurrent.org or mailed to *The Highlands Current*, 142 Main St., Cold Spring, NY 10516. The writer's full name, village or city, and email or phone number must be included, but only the name and village or city will be published. For our complete editorial policies, see highlandscurrent.org/editorial-standards.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Vaccine mandate

People should have the right to determine whether they or their children are vaccinated ("Putnam Legislators: Mandates 'Totalitarian' and 'Travesty,'" Dec. 17). However, there should be consequences.

If you decide not to get vaccinated, your insurance rates should rise significantly because your choice, if you get infected, will likely land you in the hospital, thus taxing the health care system.

Another consequence should be that your child cannot attend school. The measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is required to attend school. This is no different. The argument that this came about too quickly is inaccurate; [the technology behind] this vaccine has been around for well over 20 years. Even a pet must be vaccinated before it is allowed to associate with other pets.

Another consequence is that you cannot enter a workplace. Why should you be allowed to infect others who chose to get the vaccine? We do not allow people to smoke in public because of the dangers of secondhand smoke. The same applies.

The only way to be released from this cycle is for the majority of the people in our country to get vaccinated — to achieve herd immunity — so the virus has no more hosts

in which to grow and spread and change. Turn away from all of the disinformation, fear and lies so that one day soon we can all take off our masks and smile at one another again.

Jim Semmelman, *Garrison*

One in 500 Americans lost to COVID-19. The detailed impact of one of the first big recorded pandemics is terrifying to consider. It slashed through the country, killing rich and poor alike. No one knew why it was happening or how to fight it.

Who rules, who plows? Who inherits? What of abandoned children? Who buries the dead? Where is God? Is there politics in death? Terrifying — no other word for it.

One is led to wonder at the resistance of anyone who passes on the opportunity for protection: the arrogance of ignorance.

Bill Harris, *Cold Spring*

As a public health professional and volunteer with the Putnam County Medical Reserve Corps who spent dozens of hours last year helping to vaccinate our county's residents, this resolution from the Putnam Legislature opposing mandatory vaccinations is extremely disappointing.

Resolutions like this one undermine the

hard work of the county Health Department, countless MRC volunteers and all of the health care providers in our county who have been working selflessly and tirelessly to prevent the spread of COVID-19, treat the sick and minimize deaths.

People are burdening our health care system and dying needlessly because they are not vaccinated. The Putnam County executive and Legislature have the power to prevent some of these deaths by encouraging vaccination and depoliticizing it. Sadly, they have chosen to do the opposite.

Marianne Sullivan, *Garrison*

In September, Haldane Superintendent Phil Benante said the school district was in the process of implementing a testing process for unvaccinated faculty and staff. Why are there still faculty and staff who are unvaccinated? Shouldn't there be a mandate for small schools such as Haldane?

Joanne Kenna, *Cold Spring*

Mask mandate

The Putnam and Dutchess county executives represent an ignorant and tribalistic minority of the populations of these counties ("Dutchess, Putnam Will Not Enforce Mask Mandate," Dec. 17). Their refusal to implement critical state-mandated public health measures in the midst of a health crisis is disgraceful, and will lead to far more illness and death. It is grounds for their removal from office.

Steve Laifer, *Cold Spring*

As a career Carmel educator, I was buoyed by the wonderful Carmel High School varsity football team state championship. It was the result of a group of young people dedicating themselves to mutual respect, sacrifice, courtesy, caring and a number of other emotional declarations that build a foundation for much of our society.

At the same time, I am dismayed by the societal disregard displayed by Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell in her dismissal of Gov. Kathy Hochul's issue of a mask mandate in the face of the exploding COVID-19 variants. The governor is the coach and Ms. Odell does not want to follow the coach's edict. Do you think the CHS football team would have had such success with this type of attitude?

Odell is playing politics, taking her cues from the distorted Republican playbook. She cites business concerns, so profits-over-county fits in nicely with party-over-county, which has been the guiding light for the county's governmental leadership.

We exist in a distorted reality where politics takes over from common decency for

(Continued on Page 5)



LETTERS AND COMMENTS

(Continued from Page 4)

each other. If we follow the lead of the partisan Putnam leadership, we will be dealing with the COVID crisis for a long time.

Phil Bayer, *Carmel*

With COVID-19 infections rising in every state, the county executive chooses to announce that Putnam will not enforce a mask mandate — not that it matters that much. Everywhere I go people are masked up. They don't want to take a chance.

At the same time, Odell announced that the Health Department is creating a testing site in Carmel that will be open six days a week. Public health officials understand the gravity of the situation. Why, then, pass a resolution that opposes their own state government, does not help county residents deal with this deadly crisis, and will obviously be ignored? The Legislature argues that the government does not have the right to order people to wear masks. This is empty political grandstanding — this does not save lives!

Phyllis Hoenig, *Mahopac*

Oh great, so now we have to enforce the state law as small-business owners? ("No Vax, No Mask, No Service," Dec. 24). That's just peachy.

We have a large sign on the door that tells people to put a mask on before they enter. People do comply mostly, but it is nice to not have to argue with people or constantly explain our reasoning and lean

on a mandate instead. It's exhausting when people start asking, "But why?"

Rebeca Ramirez-Haskell, *Cold Spring*
Ramirez-Haskell is the co-owner of Cold Spring Cheese.

Frank Bugg

I want to thank Jeff Simms for a well-written appreciation of Frank Bugg, who was iconic in our community. He knew the importance of education for people of color and being able to see diversity in the education system in his community. Frank was my wife's uncle and we were truly touched by this column.

John Rembert, *Beacon*

Frank was a good friend when we worked at Focus:HOPE in Detroit. He encouraged me to become re-involved in social justice and that's how I ended up at Focus:HOPE. I still continue to support its values. Thanks, man — you will not be forgotten.

Mark Sayers, *Birmingham, Michigan*

White Christmas

In the Dec. 24 issue, you printed my response in *On the Spot* in which I said that my favorite past Christmas present was snow on Christmas Eve. And then, on Christmas Eve 2021, we had snow! I didn't realize that the power of print really existed until now. Thank you, *Highlands Current*.

Kay Corkrum, *Garrison*

TO OUR NEWSROOM THANK YOU

for reaching a milestone

500 ISSUES

of top-quality journalism!

From its first publication on June 1, 2012, to today's issue, *The Highlands Current* has worked diligently to bring our readers the news and views of our communities of Philipstown and Beacon. We applaud our *Current* journalists for all they do to keep our readers informed, inspired and involved:

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A special thanks to former editor Kevin Foley, who oversaw publication of the paper from 2012 to 2016.

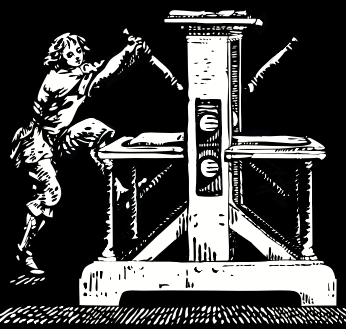
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Sat/Sun thu Feb 26 / Closed Jan 9, 23 and Feb 7

"Celebrating Animals"



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PUTNAM COUNTY

Number of cases:

15,124 (+591)Active Cases in
Philipstown: 51-75

Tests administered:

352,789

(+4,456)

Percent positive:

4.3 (+0.1)

Percent vaccinated:

79.1Percent in 10516: 92.0
Percent in 10524: 85.7

Number of deaths:

106 (+2)

DUTCHESS COUNTY

Number of cases:

43,436 (+2,061)

Active Cases in Beacon: 133

Tests administered:

1,126,019

(+17,274)

Percent positive:

3.9 (+0.2)

Percent vaccinated:

73.7

Percent in 12508: 68.8

Number of deaths:

531 (+4)

Source: State and county health departments, as of Dec. 27, with change over the previous week in parentheses. Percent vaccinated reflects those ages 5 and older who have received at least one dose.

Test-to-Stay (from Page 1)

At Haldane, Superintendent Philip Benante said that even with the district's relatively few positive cases, he anticipates initiating the protocol once the county begins distributing tests. "Our goal is to afford students every opportunity to attend school in-person," Benante said.

In a letter to Gov. Kathy Hochul on Dec. 17, Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro said that hundreds of students had already benefited from test-to-stay, which "provides increased information about the health status of exposed students — effectively creating a targeted surveillance testing program with parental consent."

A Dutchess County representative said this week that it had received around 11,000 test kits from the state in December. The kits, which are similar to the rapid tests available over the counter at drugstores, were distributed to schools and municipalities based on population. Another delivery of rapid tests was expected by the end of this week, she said.

Earlier this month, the CDC released the results of studies that suggest the number of COVID-19 infections had remained stable, or decreased, in pilot test-to-stay districts. It called the protocol "another valuable tool in a layered prevention strategy" that includes vaccination, masks in schools and better ventilation.

Hochul voiced her support for the strategy in a Christmas Eve address, saying that students must be given a chance to stay in school.

Naysayers

The Beacon school board continues to hear from two teachers who vehemently oppose the COVID-19 vaccine. Joy Bonneau, a special education teacher at Glenham Elementary, has appeared at nearly every board meeting in the last four months.

Laurie Malin, a science teacher at Rombout Middle School, has also appeared at meetings to denounce the vaccines.

On Dec. 13, Bonneau accused board members of ignoring her. "Do I make you feel uncomfortable with the information that I share?" she asked. Bonneau asked the district to stop holding vaccine clinics, saying that people in other communities have committed suicide after being "injured" by vaccines. "I am very, very saddened by this district rushing into using this

vaccine that is new, different" and was approved using data from clinical trials that "have just been blown through."

Bonneau said she had verified her claims through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, or VAERS, a website that compiles unverified self-reports of side effects. Numerous health experts have debunked the site as a source of misinformation, but Jasmine Johnson, a board member, said she agreed with Bonneau.

"Working in a pharmacy, I do know about statistics and numbers, and there are side effects to everything," Johnson said. Vaccines "might work for some people and they might not work for other people. That is a real thing. I don't disagree with anything that she's saying."

Board President Meredith Heuer said she didn't "necessarily agree with the sources that [Bonneau] is using or her opinion," but respected her right to voice it.

"We all saw the negative impact [remote learning had] on the growth of children in terms of their educational development, but also emotionally what this did to everybody from kindergartners up to high school kids," she said.

When students return next month

"there'll be tests waiting for them, that they can take them home in their backpack," the governor said.

The Beacon school district began test-to-stay during the second week of December using kits provided by Dutchess County. It has partnered with Village Apothecary, a Woodstock pharmacy that has also facilitated its vaccine clinics, to run the program from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. each day at Beacon High School.

Superintendent Matt Landahl told the Beacon school board during its Dec. 13 meeting that 10 to 15 students were being tested each morning. On Tuesday (Dec. 28) he said that number had risen to 30 to 40 every day.

"It's a common-sense way of keeping kids in school," Landahl said. With the highly transmissible Omicron variant circulating, "we imagine that we're going to have this need for quite some time."

The Beacon program differs from what Hochul described in that a school nurse notifies the parents or guardians of students who have been exposed to an infected person. With permission, the

SCHOOL POSITIVES
2021-22

BEACON HIGH SCHOOL

Students **52**Teachers **3**Staff **10**

ROMBOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL

Students **22**Teachers **2**Staff **3**

GLENHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students **13**Teachers **2**Staff **1**

JV FORRESTAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students **11**Teachers **0**Staff **3**

SARGENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students **7**Teachers **1**Staff **1**

SOUTH AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students **5**Teachers **0**Staff **2**

HALDANE HIGH SCHOOL

Students **9**Teachers **0**Staff **3**

HALDANE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Students **6**Teachers **0**Staff **2**

HALDANE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students **16**Teachers **0**Staff **2**

GARRISON SCHOOL

Students **6**Teachers **0**Staff **0**Source: New York State COVID-19
Report Card, as of Dec. 23

students can test at school in the morning.

A negative result allows the student to stay in school but does not apply to sports or other extracurricular activities. According to state guidelines, exposed students must still sit out after-school activities for 10 days.

Landahl said he hopes to expand the program in January so that students who are exposed outside of school can make an appointment for a rapid test. The district believes it will receive enough test kits to provide the service for the school year, he said.

Beacon parent Elizabeth Greenblatt, whose daughter attends South Avenue Elementary, said her family had a COVID exposure over the weekend after Thanksgiving, before the test-to-stay program had been implemented, that forced her daughter to quarantine at home. But after a second exposure this month, "it made a huge difference to be able to test and go to school," she said in an interview. "We're very grateful for the program."

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Coronavirus Update

■ Dutchess County’s 799 cases on Dec. 28 set a pandemic-high for a single day in the county. The second-worst day was Dec. 23, with 392. Putnam County’s 630 cases on Dec. 28 was its highest single-day total since the pandemic shutdown began in March 2020.

■ The federal Food and Drug Administration on Dec. 9 authorized booster shots of the Pfizer vaccine for 16- and 17-year-olds.

■ In Dutchess County, nearly everyone aged 65 to 74 and 98.4 percent of those ages 75 and older had received at least one vaccine dose as of Dec. 28. In Putnam nearly everyone in both categories had received a first dose.

■ In Dutchess, 24.9 percent of children ages 5 to 11 and 65.5 percent of those 12 to 17 had received at least one vaccine dose as of Dec. 28, and in Putnam, 24.7 percent of 5 to 11 and 66.4 percent between 12 and 17.

■ The number of people with COVID-19 who were hospitalized in New York state as of Dec. 28 stood at 6,767 (+594 from the day before); the number in intensive care was 962 (+17); and the number of intubations was 499 (-20). In Dutchess, 82 people were hospitalized and in Putnam, 17 as of Dec. 27.

■ Hospitalizations of children have been rising steeply since the first week of December, according to the state Health Department. Between Dec. 5 and 11, hospitals in New York state admitted 70 people who were 18 years old or younger; another 104 were admitted from Dec. 12 to Dec. 18, and 184 from Dec. 19 to 23. “Many people continue to think that children don’t become infected with COVID; this is not

% Fully Vaccinated

PUTNAM COUNTY

Cold Spring	79.6
Garrison	74.2
Putnam Valley	73.9
Brewster	73.2
Carmel	71.2
Patterson	70.5
Mahopac	66.8
Lake Peekskill	64.1

DUTCHESS COUNTY

Rhinebeck	82.8
Wappingers Falls	72.7
Pawling	71.5
Hopewell Junction	68.9
Fishkill	67.0
Hyde Park	64.3
Beacon	62.5
Lagrangeville	60.7
Stormville	46.8

Source: New York State, as of Dec. 27

true,” said Mary Bassett, the state’s acting health commissioner.

■ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a recommendation on Dec. 27 shortening to 5 days from 10 days the amount of time people who test positive for COVID-19 need to isolate, as long as they are asymptomatic. After isolating, people should still wear a mask for 5 days when around others, according to the CDC.

■ Low- and moderate-income homeowners who fell behind on payments during the pandemic shutdown can begin applying on Jan. 3 for repayment assistance and funding

for up to six months from a \$539 million state Homeowner Assistance Fund. It will assist homeowners who are behind on mortgage payments, property taxes or water or sewer bills; co-op or condo owners behind on maintenance fees; and manufactured homeowners behind on chattel loans or retail installment contracts. See nyhomeownerfund.org.

■ The January Regents examinations for high school students have been canceled, the state Department of Education announced Dec. 21. The agency also said it would ask the Board of Regents to modify the assessment requirements students must meet to earn a diploma. It said it has not made a decision about the exams scheduled for June and August.

■ Gov. Kathy Hochul on Dec. 22 enacted legislation that made it a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail to falsify vaccination cards or digital vaccine passports, such as the state’s Excelsior Pass (epass.ny.gov). A doctor who falsifies vaccination records can be charged with a Class E felony, which carries a potential sentence of four years in prison. The bill passed the Senate, 48-15 (Sue Serino, a Republican whose district includes the Highlands, voted against it) and the Assembly, 105-43 (Democrats Sandy Galef, whose district includes Philipstown, and Jonathan Jacobson, whose district includes Beacon, voted for it).

■ In anticipation of more students receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, the governor also on Dec. 22 signed legislation to allow school districts to download data from the New York State Immunization Information System. Before the law was enacted, school nurses had only “read-only” access, meaning they had to search for each record individually and re-enter it into their own databases. The legislation passed 60-3 in the Senate and 145-0 in the Assembly; all three local legislators supported it.

Where to Get Tested

PUTNAM COUNTY

Philipstown Recreation Center

Route 9D, Garrison
10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily
6 a.m. to 9 a.m. weekdays, children only
Beginning Monday (Jan. 3)
No appointment required.

Drug World

55 Chestnut St., Cold Spring
Schedule at myrx.io.

Paladin Center

39 Seminary Hill Road, Carmel
10 a.m. – 6 p.m. daily
6 a.m. – 9 a.m. weekdays, children only
No appointment required.

DUTCHESS COUNTY

Sun River Health

6 Henry St., Beacon
845-831-0400
8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Monday and Tuesday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Saturday

Excel Urgent Care

992 Main St. Fishkill
845-765-2240
8 a.m. – 8 p.m. weekdays
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. weekends

CareMount

60 Merritt Blvd., Fishkill
845-765-4990
8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. weekdays

Pulse-MD

900 Route 376, Suite H, Wappingers Falls
845-204-9260

Dutchess County Health Department

Poughkeepsie Galleria
2001 South Road, Poughkeepsie
Former JCPenney store on 2nd floor
Schedule at bit.ly/dutchess-testing.

CareMount

30 Columbia St., Poughkeepsie
845-231-5600
9 a.m. – 6:45 p.m. weekdays
8 a.m. – 4:45 p.m. weekends

CareMount

2507 South Road, Poughkeepsie
845-471-3111
8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. weekdays

Pulse-MD

696 Dutchess Turnpike, Poughkeepsie
845-243-7100

For information about tests, visit bit.ly/fda-test-basics.

Covid Tests (from Page 1)

have one appointment every 13 minutes for its rapid tests, which show results in 30 minutes to an hour. Now the pharmacy has four in the same time period, co-owner Heidi Snyder said on Tuesday (Dec. 28).

“Never, ever have we been booked like this,” she said.

On Dec. 20, Drug World sold its 200 at-home tests within 45 minutes and the phones are “ringing nonstop” with people looking for more, said Snyder. The federal government has been buying up available at-home kits to fulfill President Joe Biden’s vow to distribute 500 million of the tests for free, starting in January, making the kits “almost impossible to get” for Drug World, she said.

“It makes me very sad because we should have what we need in our community,” said Snyder.

Faced with the overwhelming demand for tests, New York State has been expanding its number of testing sites. Gov. Kathy Hochul’s administration also said on Monday that it was distributing 3 million at-home kits this week to school districts, with 2 million to New York City.

Jackie Bray, commissioner for the state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, said there will be “rolling deliveries every week, every other week, to all of our counties, both to our school districts, but also to communities.”

AVERAGE COVID-19 TESTS PER DAY

	DUTCHESS	PUTNAM	STATE
JULY	901	335	78,770
AUG.	1,632	541	132,082
SEPT.	1,929	655	168,564
OCT.	2,134	707	178,283
NOV.	1,955	614	161,655
DEC.	2,613	852	243,291

Source: New York State Department of Health, as of Dec. 27

Eric Vathke of Cold Spring is hoping he can get a PCR test in time for a family trip on Thursday (Jan. 6) to St. Thomas. He needs a negative test within five days of leaving, but is concerned about a delay in processing tests because of the overwhelming demand.

While COVID-19 tests are typically free, Vathke is considering using one of the companies that promises quick results for a fee.

“It’s starting to look like paying for the test might be the better option,” he said.

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A HAHNEMÜHLE CERTIFIED STUDIO



The Philipstown Food Pantry would like to thank all those listed below for their unwavering support through this past challenging year. You have helped us continue to serve all those in need – We wish you all a Happy New Year.

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Maloney

Peter Mell

South Highlands Chapel

Abbie Carrie

Karen Tangen

Fire Bread Co.

Glynwood Farms

Hazel Berkley

Andrea

Laura Kissack

Marilyn Schlosser

James Hustis

American Legion

Thomas & Erica Kivel

Daniel & Sheila Donnelly

Clare Staples

Second Chance Farms

Dr. Susan Stewart

Pat Angerami

Mark Menting

George Casey Post# 275

James Harver Hustis Post #2362 V.F.W

Maryann Robinson

Tom Goodrich

Linda Hoffman

Matthew and his daughter

Derrick & Heather Hopkins

David May

Friedrike Merck

Adam Kravetz

Chia-Jung Dion

Michael Cavanaugh

Rosemary Boyle Lasher

David Long

Nadine Topalian

Heidi Shira Bender

Judith Farrell

Susan Wallach

Mary Wyatt

Lisa Quartin

Black Dash Studio

Understory Market

Laura Wilson

Garrison Yacht Club

Barbara Macedo

Sandra Scott

Barry Rosen

Kathy Smelter

Manitou School

Desmond Fish Library

Joan Crouch

Zshawnn Sullivan

Marie Early

Theresa Desario-Monck

Daniel & Catherine Dillon

Lisa O'Rourke

John & Penny Seekircher

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Ralph & Robin Arditi

Karen Kapoor

Girl Scouts of the Highlands,

Garrison & Cold Spring

Garrison Union Free School

Lisa Brown

Santa Warren

St. Phillips Episcopal Church

Peter Miesler

Nancy Martinez-Cirelli

Wendy DeGiglio

Nancy Vitkavage

Phil & Donna Cotennec

Stacy Farley & Peter Davoren

Michelle D. Smith Fund of Community

Foundations in the Hudson Valley

Cold Spring Chamber of Commerce

AROUND TOWN



▲ **REMEMBERING KOREA** — On Dec. 6, members of Project Soldier KVV interviewed Hank Barker (shown at left) and Willie Reed, both veterans of the Korean War, at the Memorial Building in Beacon. A documentary filmmaker, Rami Huyn, has visited 37 U.S. cities and photographed more than 1,200 veterans of the war, fought from 1950 to 1953.

▲ **A LOT OF FIXES** — Anthony Stronconi, a maintenance worker for the Haldane school district, retired after 51½ years (he was hired in June 1970). He is shown with Superintendent Philip Benante.



▲ **NEW FACES AT TILLY FOSTER** — Nancy Ollick and Giorgio Spanu of Garrison, who own Magazzino Italian Art, recently donated two Sardinian donkeys, Darius and Dante, to the Tilly Foster Farm and Educational Institute, which is operated in Brewster by Putnam County. (The rest of the herd resides at the Philipstown museum on Route 9.) The farm also has two Percheron draft horses on loan from a Brewster family and three pygmy goats donated by Muscott Farm in Somers as part of an animal-care program for high school students. The donkeys are “vocal animals” that are “known to protect other animals,” said Chris Ruthven of the county parks department, in a statement. “I suspect they will be looking out for the pygmy goats.” The farm, located on Route 312, is open daily.

Photos provided

The Calendar



Roy Smith sets up lighting cues for different scenes.



Rose LaBarbera (left) curls Elaine Llewelyn's hair.

FROM THE SHADOWS TO THE SPOTLIGHT

Offstage roles underpin success of Haldane Drama

By Violeta Edwards Salas

Damian McDonald's introduction to the backstage started in the sixth grade, when he volunteered to work behind the scenes on a production of *The Sound of Music*.



A decade later, McDonald is the technical director for Haldane High School's theater program. Along with a corps of students and adult volunteers, he worked diligently for two months on the troupe's most recent production, *Sense and Sensibility*, which was performed at the school on Dec. 3 to Dec. 5.

The students and volunteers are Haldane Drama's offstage performers, whose roles — managing sound and lighting, building sets, composing music, sewing costumes — can be overlooked. It is not unusual for McDonald's crew to stay past midnight during the lead-up to opening night.

"To put on a play requires a community effort," said McDonald. "There is a saying among the people in the tech crew: If you don't get any comments, it's good. You did well."

Haldane's tech crew began in 2010 with a folding table and a lighting board. Since that bare-bones beginning, the crew has been strengthened with the addition of a professional-grade audio system, upgraded lighting and the installation of a tech booth, said McDonald.

Aside from the tech crew, there are many community members who helped out behind the scenes.

Jeffery Sniffen and Matt Koch, both parents of students with roles in *Sense and Sensibility*, worked on sets — building the background, laying the floor and helping create props. For a month, Sniffen — who is also a teacher at Haldane Middle School — worked from 3 to 6 p.m. on weekdays, and then he and Koch alternated shifts from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends.

"All we can do is try to provide the actors an environment that helps the show come to life," said Sniffen.

Shawna Chandler, a board member for the Haldane School Foundation, and I oversaw the costumes. We rented outfits from the Theater Development Fund, a Queens organization whose collection of 85,000 donated costumes is available for theater, film and television productions. Chandler and I spent hours hemming, repairing rips and helping the actors fit into their outfits.

Students Ivy Heydt-Benjamin and Robert



Matt Koch adds wheels to a bed being used as a prop.

Photos by Damian McDonald

Freimark served as stage managers. During every rehearsal, they furiously wrote notes and made sure everything ran smoothly. Jim Mechalakos, a physicist and musician from Cold Spring, creates music for many of Haldane's plays and photographs the actors.

Christine Bokhour volunteered as the choreographer, and longtime Haldane Drama director Martha Mechalakos, high school teacher Andrea McCue and cast member Rose LaBarbera arrived hours before each rehearsal and the four shows to volunteer as hair and makeup artists.

"Anyone who helps in any way contributes," said Martha Mechalakos. "And we need that; we need a little more than that."

Edwards Salas is a freshman at Haldane High School and a member of The Current's Student Journalists Program.



Creating Costumes

Shawna Chandler, who lives in Cold Spring, creates costumes for Haldane Drama.

How did you get involved with Haldane Drama?

I was teaching an after-school sewing class, and I think someone whispered my name to [director] Martha [Mechalakos]. I've been helping ever since.

What shows have you worked on?

The first was *Les Misérables*. It was a crazy show with so many costumes. Then I did *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cabaret*. Whenever you do a period show, it's always a beast.

What do you like most about costumes?

Seeing the kids and all their hard work, and the problem-solving aspect to it. You look around and you get paper plates, a little fabric and you have to make it all come together to make whatever. That's fun for me. I also loved working with all the costumes from TDF [the Theater Development Fund, an organization that rents costumes to drama productions].

How do you think costumes benefit plays?

It helps transport people into that time or that world. It makes it more believable. And you can see it when the kids put the costumes on and have their first rehearsal; it helps them put on the character as well.

What do you think of the Haldane Drama community?

There is so much that happens in the months leading up to the show. For *Sense and Sensibility*, there were three weeks when we were in that gym. All the kids work so hard, and you can see they love it.

How does the behind-the-scenes work build the play?

There is so much going on that people can't see. For example, Ivy [Heydt-Benjamin] and Robert [Freimark], the prop people, were huge. They have to be so organized and have everything exactly where it is supposed to be. If everything behind the scenes works perfectly, then everything onstage can work perfectly. As long as we are all supporting each other, it can go really well.



Matt McCoy adjusts the volume of the microphones.



Julia Sniffen, Haldane High School's principal, sews a coat.



MILESTONES

A few of our issues from over the years, on the table where each of the first 500 has been copy-edited and proofread: (1) Rare prototype; (2) Issue 1 (6/1/12); (3) Issue 50; (4) Issue 100; (5) Issue 150; (6) Issue 200; (7) Issue 250; (8) Issue 300; (9) Issue 350; (10) Issue 400; (11) Issue 450; (12) Fighting Back: The Opioid Crisis (9/22/17); (13) Living on the Edge (7/19/19); (14) Climate Change in the Highlands (5/4/18); (15) COVID 2021 (10/30/20); (16) Sundown at Indian Point (4/30/21). Browse back issues at highlandscurrent.org/archives.

THE 10 MOST POPULAR PHOTOS ON OUR



More than two decades after meeting as second-graders at South Avenue Elementary in Beacon, Corey Ellis and Tiana Wilkins celebrated their wedding at the school with their daughter, who is now a student there. (Jan. 23)



Actor Woody Harrelson stopped by local vegan eateries in Beacon while in town filming an HBO miniseries about the Watergate “plumbers.” (May 23)



Marijuana sales were officially approved in Cold Spring after 80 absentee ballots were counted following the Nov. 2 election. (Nov. 18)



Matcha Thomas, a teahouse about more than tea, opened its doors on Main Street. The Beacon shop is a distillation of 20-year-old Haile Thomas’ activism and the recipes from her cookbook, *Living Lively*. (June 26)



Beacon resident Mark Trecka is the co-founder of the Prison Books Project, which funds and sends books to local inmates who request them. (Aug. 17)



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

500 LOOKS LIKE WE MADE IT

By Chip Rowe

You're holding an issue of a fully baked idea.

It wasn't completely half-baked when Gordon Stewart decided nearly 10 years ago to turn his online publication, *Philipstown.info*, into a printed one, but the idea of starting a print publication in 2012 was a little soft in the center. Newspapers were not being created; they were collapsing like once-bright stars, and at a rapid pace. (Since 2005, some 2,200 local newspapers in the U.S. — a quarter of the total — have disappeared.)

Like many of his Philipstown neighbors, Gordon, a corporate executive and theater producer, thought his adopted hometown needed a quality news source. This was in large part because Roger Ailes, then the chair of Fox News, had moved to town and upset the apple cart by purchasing its 142-year-old mainstay, the *Putnam County News & Recorder*. This origin story has since been recounted in *The New Yorker*, books, documentaries and TV dramas, but people reading *The Current* these many years later probably had no idea. It seems like a long time ago.

Philipstown.info was not even two years old when Gordon became convinced that digital needed to expand to print, a notion that many might view as a step back in time. What's next — papyrus scrolls? But the staff launched *The Paper*, so named to be a sly dig by Gordon at the PCNR (which everyone called "the paper") but which led to many Abbott and Costello-like routines: "Where did you see it?" "In the paper." "In *The Paper*?" "That's what I said. The paper." ("First base!")

The premiere issue appeared on June 1, 2012. Gordon decided that, like the website,



it would be free, a service to the community, with advertising revenue finally offsetting the hundreds of thousands of dollars he was paying out of pocket to keep the enterprise going. Perhaps surprisingly, given the rigors of four-seasons Main Street retailing and an extended pandemic shutdown, only three advertisers from that first issue are no longer here — Art to Wear Too, Frozenberry Cafe and Go-Go Pops. The other advertisers in that issue included Hudson Hil's, the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Angelina's, Antipodean Books, the Manitou School, Foundry Cafe, Grey Printing and Houlihan Lawrence.

Gordon, of course, would be pleased to see this issue. He died in November 2014 at age 75, just before we published Issue 131. We changed the name to *The Highlands Current* in 2015 — as it happens, at Issue 200 — to better reflect our expanding coverage of Beacon.

You can browse Issues 1 to 499 at highlandscurrent.org/archives. A few issues are photographed at left. Five names on the first print masthead are still there, on Page 4: Joe Dizney, Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong, Michael Turton, Alison Rooney and Michele Rubin (now Gedney). The print issues are collected in bound volumes at the office, as well, and despite rather embarrassing pleadings from the Smithsonian, we are not ready to part with them.

The question at hand, of course, besides what the headlines will be in Issue 1,000 on Aug. 1, 2031 ("Mask Up for Mu"), is "What has *The Current* done for me lately?" A fair inquiry. We are always striving to improve our coverage, our questions, the variety of stories and subjects and people you see in our pages. And next month, we are excited to say, we will venture into a new medium with *The Highlands Current* podcast, with the goal of two episodes per month.

The podcasts, created with assistance from Zach Rodgers, who hosts *Beaconites*,

will include conversations with newsmakers, artists and other local people of interest. We're working on theme music and I'm practicing my radio voice. The idea came in part from overhearing reporters interviewing people in the office for stories and thinking readers might be interested in hearing these conversations, too.

In the meantime, and going forward, you can listen to our stories online as streaming audio, read by a synthesized voice (he goes by Matthew) that isn't half bad. He even puts inflections in the right spots. To that feed we will add podcast episodes. See highlandscurrent.org for buttons to subscribe.

What else? Well, as you may know, the paper is a nonprofit that relies on its members for support, and we are always looking for innovative ways for you to give us money. The latest is this: If you happen to be a Bitcoin millionaire and are not sure how to spend your digital earnings, search for "Highlands Current" at cryptocharity.io. Let's be pioneers — together.

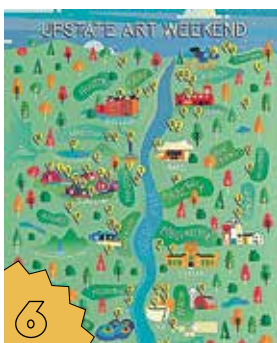
Your contributions fund not only coverage of civics, sports and the arts but "deep-dive" reports such as those we've published on the opioid overdose epidemic, climate change, the future of farming, people who are employed but living on the edge, microplastics pollution, the closing of Indian Point, local infrastructure priorities and, most recently, hunger in the Highlands.

In 2022 we hope to tackle the challenges churches face to get people in the pews; the overlooked history of Black people in Beacon and Philipstown; the overcrowding of our natural resources; and what would appear to be the uncertain future of high school football, given widespread concern about concussions.

Many local papers have died, many watchdogs have been sidelined — but not all. We have reached Issue 500, and we are grateful to everyone who helped make it happen.

R INSTAGRAM, 2021

Follow us @highlandscurrent



Sixty-one art spaces, museums, galleries, barns and other facilities opened to the public for Upstate Art Weekend. (Aug. 24)



Kamel Jamal, owner of Ziatun in Beacon, donated proceeds to help Palestinian refugees. "My way of showing resistance is through food," he said. (June 22)



The Current's Halloween Costume Contest was an impressive show of creativity. The Spencer family took home the Best Costume award with their ode to the Cold Spring Farmers' Market. (Nov. 6)



These Hudson River sunsets never get old ... (July 10)

Photos by Meredith Heuer (1); Brian PJ Cronin (4); Eva Deitch (5); Michael Turton (7) and Teresa Lagerman (9, 10)



A storm that dumped nearly 2 feet of snow on the region prompted the governor to declare a state of emergency in the Hudson Valley. (Feb. 1)

THE WEEK AHEAD

Edited by Pamela Doan (calendar@highlandscurrent.org)

For a complete listing of events, see
highlandscurrent.org/calendar.

COMMUNITY

SAT 1

Cold Spring Farmers' Market

GARRISON

10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Boscobel
1601 Route 9D | csfarmmarket.org

Check the website for a list of weekly vendors.

SAT 1

First Day Hike

YORKTOWN HEIGHTS

10:30 a.m. Franklin D. Roosevelt Park
2957 Crompond Road

Ramble through the park with your guides Walt and Jane Daniels. Easy 2-mile hike. No pets. Meet at the north end of the pool parking lot.

SAT 1

First Day Hike

COLD SPRING

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Little Stony Point
3011 Route 9D | littlestonypoint.org

There will be free hot cocoa, coffee, snacks, music and short naturalist-led hikes around Little Stony Point (1 mile), or to nearby historic Cornish Estate (3 miles) that begin at 11:30 a.m.

SAT 1

First Day Hike

POUGHKEEPSIE

2 p.m. Walkway Over the Hudson
61 Parker Ave. | walkway.org

Both entrances will be open for 1- to 3-mile hikes across the bridge.

SUN 2

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

PUTNAM COUNTY

Various locations

Starting in 1955, birders have tallied all the species they could see in this annual count. To participate, email Charlie Roberto at chasrob26@gmail.com.

SUN 2

Farmers' Market

BEACON

10 a.m. – 2 p.m. DMV Lot | 223 Main St.
beaconfarmersmarket.org

Check the website for participating weekly vendors.

TUES 4

COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

GARRISON

1 – 3:30 p.m. Philipstown Rec
107 Glenclyffe
putnamcountyny.com/health/covid19/#vaxinfo

Register online; no walk-ins. Moderna boosters for age 18 and older; Pfizer boosters for 16 and older; first and second Pfizer doses for ages 5 to 11. Bring your vaccine card.



Audubon Christmas Bird Count, Jan. 2

STAGE AND SCREEN

FRI 7

Lit Lit

BEACON

7 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
477 Main St. | 845-831-4988
howlandculturalcenter.org

This monthly series brings together writers of all genres to share their work in 5-minute readings.

SAT 8

The Artichoke

BEACON

8 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
477 Main St. | 845-831-4988
artichokeshow.com

This month's episode of the storytelling series features Adam Linn, Sandi Marx, Jim O'Grady, Joe Charnitski, Tracy Rowland and Sean O'Brien. *Cost: \$20 (\$15 online recording)*

TALKS AND TOURS

WED 5

Unstung Heroes

BREWSTER

7 p.m. Via Zoom
putnam.cce.cornell.edu/events

Timothy Stanley, founder of Native Beeology, will discuss the 400 species of bees that are native to New York in this presentation sponsored by the Cornell Cooperative Extension. *Cost: Free to \$25*



WED 5

So You Want to Be a Beekeeper

BREWSTER

7 p.m. Tilly Foster Farm | 100 Route 312
putnam.cce.cornell.edu/events

Find out what is needed to take care of bees. Register online. *Free*

MUSIC

FRI 31

The B-Street Band

PEEKSKILL

8 p.m. Paramount Hudson Valley
1008 Brown St. | 914-739-0039
paramounthudsonvalley.com

This Bruce Springsteen tribute band has opened for and played with "the Boss." *Cost: \$20, \$25, \$35*

FRI 31

The Amazing Sensationals

BEACON

9:30 p.m. Dogwood | 47 E. Main St.
845-202-7500 | dogwoodbeacon.com

Says the band: "We want people to dance sometimes, head bang other times, but all around have a good time."

FRI 31

Back to the Garden 1969

BEACON

9:30 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com

This tribute band will play the best music from the Woodstock era to ring in the New Year. Robert Tellefsen, who is known for his Ritchie Havens tribute, will open. Proof of vaccination required. *Cost: \$55 (\$135 with dinner and champagne)*

SAT 1

Buffalo Stack

BEACON

8 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com

Andy Stack will lead this American roots-style band in its annual New Year's Day show. Proof of vaccination required. *Cost: \$20 (\$25 door)*

MON 3

Two Sisters Inc

BEACON

8:30 p.m. Quinn's | 330 Main St.
facebook.com/quinnbeacon

Dave Sewelson, Claire Daly, Dave Hofstra and Michael Sarin will play with the jazz band.

FRI 7

The Suitcase Junket

BEACON

8 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com

Matt Lorenz will perform

songs from his latest release, *The End is New*, in a one-man show using handmade instruments he constructs. *Cost: \$20 (\$25 door)*

SAT 8

Professor Louie & The Crowmatix

BEACON

8 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com

The Woodstock Horns will join the band to perform music by Rick Danko from The Band. *Cost: \$30 (\$35 door)*

SAT 8

Corcel Mágico

BEACON

8 p.m. Reserva Wine Bar
173 Main St. | reservabeacon.com

The trio of Brazilian musicians will perform.

SAT 8

Neckscars

BEACON

9 p.m. Quinn's | 330 Main St.
facebook.com/quinnbeacon

The punk rock band will follow opener Hudson.

SUN 9

Dominic Cheli

BEACON

4 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
477 Main St. | howlandmusic.org

The Howland Chamber Music Circle will present its annual piano festival with a program by Cheli that includes Schulhoff, Liszt, Schumann, Brahms, Adams and Mussorgsky. *Cost: \$40 (\$10 student)*

SUN 9

Sharkey and the Sparks

BEACON

7 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com

Sharkey McEwen of the Slambovian Circus of Dreams will perform covers of songs from the 1960s and '70s and some originals with his son, Ben. *Cost: \$15 (\$20 door)*

CIVIC

MON 3

City Council

BEACON

7 p.m. City Hall | 1 Municipal Plaza
845-838-5011 | cityofbeacon.org

TUES 4

School Board

COLD SPRING

7 p.m. Haldane | 15 Craigside Drive
845-265-9254 | haldaneschool.org

TUES 4

Putnam Legislature

CARMEL

7 p.m. Historic Courthouse
44 Gleneida Ave. | 845-208-7800
putnamcountyny.com

WED 5

Board of Trustees

COLD SPRING

7 p.m. Village Hall | 85 Main St.
845-265-3611 | coldspringny.gov

WED 5

School Board

GARRISON

7 p.m. Garrison School | 1100 Route 9D
845-424-3689 | gufs.org

THURS 6

Town Board

COLD SPRING

7:30 p.m. Town Hall | 238 Main St.
845-265-5200 | philipstown.com

VISUAL ART

SAT 8

Celebrating Animals

BEACON

1 – 5 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
477 Main St. | 845-831-4988
howlandculturalcenter.org

Tom Conroy, Jan Dolan, Cindy Gould and Jean Noack curated this multimedia show of works by 30 artists. Through Feb. 26.

SAT 8

200 Exhibitions

BEACON

6 – 8 p.m. BAU Gallery | 506 Main St.
845-440-7584 | baugallery.org

The galleries will be filled with work by current and former Beacon Artist Union members to celebrate its 200th exhibition. Through Feb. 5.



Fran Palaia



Kathy Feighery

COVID-19

Check the event websites or **highlandscurrent.org/calendar** for any last-minute changes because of pandemic restrictions.



Inflatable boats provided a closer look at the environment.



At left, French science writer and photographer Serge Brunier, Capt. Etienne Garcia and Joe Rao on the ship's bridge

Photos provided

Journey to Bottom of the Earth

Local meteorologist visits Antarctica in pursuit of total eclipse

By Michael Turton

Antarctica may be the most remote and inhospitable environment on earth. But on Dec. 4, it was also the best place to view a total eclipse.

The eclipse coincided with a journey to the Antarctic offered by the French cruise line Compagnie du Ponant. When Putnam Valley resident Joe Rao was asked to be part of it, he quickly responded, "I'm in!"

Rao was the chief meteorologist and science reporter for News12 Westchester for 21 years. Since 1986 he also has served as an associate and guest lecturer at the American Museum of Natural History and its Rose Center for Earth and Space and Hayden Planetarium.

He was recruited for the Antarctic trip by the American Astronomical Society because of his knowledge of astronomy and eclipses and his ability to help the captain determine the best location for observing the rare solar event.

Le Commandant Charcot, Ponant's 492-foot icebreaking cruise ship, left Punta Arenas, Chile, at the southern tip of South America, on Nov. 30. With 200 passengers, it sailed 1,800 miles east through the Southern Ocean, headed for a rendezvous with the darkened sun.

But even Rao's impeccable meteorological credentials could not produce the clear skies everyone hoped for. Heavy cloud cover marred the view as the sun was eclipsed by the moon's shadow.

"Many passengers were outside on the ship's bow" to watch, Rao recalled. "But the only effect was that the overcast sky darkened, much like turning down a dimmer switch."

The eclipse lasted just 97 seconds. Then the sky brightened again.

"It was interesting," Rao said. "Not awe-inspiring, but interesting."

Rao said of 17 cruise ships aligned along

the path of the eclipse, "only one found itself under a fortuitous rift in the clouds and saw the eclipsed sun and solar corona."

After seven days at sea, Le Commandant Charcot made Antarctic landfall at Paulet Island in the Weddell Sea. It was the first of four days that passengers would spend on the world's southernmost continent.

"When we first set foot on Paulet Island, we saw thousands upon thousands of Adélie penguins," Rao said.

At other times, the captain pointed out orca whales as they breached the surface of the ocean, spouting water through their blowholes. "We also were treated to views of sea lions and seals," Rao said.

Antarctica was approaching its summer, and while April through October had produced record-cold temperatures averaging minus 77.6 degrees, by early December the weather had moderated by more than 100 degrees.

"The days were generally sunny and breezy," Rao reported. "Temperatures at midday were 40 to 45 degrees, and one day reached the lower 50s."

The end of fall also meant a lot of

daylight.

"On many days the sun rose around 2:30 a.m. and didn't set until well past 11 p.m.," he said. "While we didn't have a midnight sun effect, twilight was still very bright at midnight."

Because of the increased daylight, no stars were visible during the two-week voyage.

Rao said adjusting to the longer daylight hours was not difficult; double curtains kept state rooms dark for sleeping at night. A few times when he awoke, though, he said it was a shock to peak through the curtains to see the sun shining brightly at 3 a.m.

Climate change was a common topic of conversation. A naturalist onboard who has visited Antarctica for years commented that early December three decades ago saw far fewer openings in the ice, an increasingly noticeable change since the 1990s.

"My thoughts on climate change were reinforced," Rao said. "I was prepared for frigid conditions, but most every day, temperatures were well above freezing."

The trip didn't include visiting any of the abandoned or active research stations located inland. However, the group did experience what is considered "hallowed ground."

In 1903, the ship Antarctic was crushed by ice and sank off Paulet Island during

a Swedish Antarctic expedition. Twenty crew members were rescued 11 months later after enduring the winter. They survived in part by killing more than 1,000 penguins.

Le Commandant Charcot's passengers visited the remnants of a stone hut built by the survivors, which, along with the grave of an expedition member and a cairn built to alert rescuers, was declared a historic site and monument in 1972.

"I came away with great admiration and respect for all those explorers who traveled to that strange, icy wasteland during the 19th and early 20th centuries," Rao said. "I can't even imagine what they must have done simply to stay alive."

Asked what impressed him most about the 16,000-mile Antarctic journey he and his wife Renate had experienced, Rao said "being in such a strange and wondrous environment, and cavorting with creatures we don't see in our everyday life."

On Paulet Island, he said, "penguins walk up to you in much the same manner as pigeons in Central Park!"

You can follow Rao on Facebook at JoeRaoWeather and on Twitter at @JoeRaoWeather. He also has a YouTube channel, JoeRaoWeather.

POSITION AVAILABLE

The Town of Philipstown is seeking candidates interested in a **position on the Conservation Board**. If interested please send resume to:

Tara Percacciolo, Town Clerk
P.O. Box 155
238 Main Street
Cold Spring, New York 10516

or email
townclerk@philipstown.com



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Out There

Season of Mists

By Brian PJ Cronin

He may only be 10 years old, but my son knows a historical anomaly when he sees one.



"It's almost *January* and there should be *snow*," he says, angrily pointing outside to the green grass covered in encroaching waves of warm fog.

He's right. The Mid-Hudson Valley usually gets between 5 and 6½ inches in December. But aside from a dusting on Christmas Eve morning (aesthetically pleasing) and a few nighttime blasts of freezing rain (pleasing to no one), December has been another month of warmer-than-usual weather. As it demonstrated with our wet, hot American October, climate change has subverted our natural and cultural transitions.

The popular Christmas songs of the 20th century are starting to seem like myths, with their magical kingdoms of sleigh rides and marshmallow worlds — although Bing Crosby sounds eerily prescient, singing about the white Christmases he *used* to know. There's a joke from a 25-year-old episode of *The Simpsons* in which Homer mentions loving a cold beer on a hot Christmas morning. It was 63 degrees in the Highlands on Christmas Day in 2020. The joke isn't funny anymore.

A few weeks ago, right before the latest COVID-19 wave, friends from down south came to visit. I had hoped there would be snow for them. Instead, as we walked along the marshes of the Hudson, there was only fog obscuring most of the river, and a cold rain. It felt more like March, but with Christmas decorations.

I have no language for this, so I turn to



A foggy December on the Hudson

Photos by B. Cronin

the denizens of the other Highlands, the Scots, who know a thing or two about this type of weather. They had a word for cold, dull, misty days: *dreich*. There's also the Celtic term *mì-chàilear*, which the writer

Robert MacFarlane defines as "more dreich than dreich."

We have now reached the holidays between Winter Solstice and New Year's, the darkest time of the year. Traditionally, this is a time to fight the darkness with lights and festivities and gatherings around the hearth. But I'm not sure that's appropriate in Dreichember. For one thing, it's too warm to stand next to a roaring fire. Also, I would imagine that many of us are feeling less like the fire and more like the ashes. It can be exhausting to be expected to shine all the time.

I would also imagine that many of you found your holidays turning into something completely different at the last minute. My original plans involved cooking a massive meal at home for family and loved ones, followed by a trip south to see my parents. One case of COVID later in a relative, the holidays instead consisted of my son and I holed up by ourselves for a week with a 6-pound pork shoulder and 22 hours of movies starring hobbits. I know of at least a few local people who spent Christmas quarantined in the basement after a positive COVID test, with their family upstairs — not a scene ever captured by Currier & Ives.

Instead of a season of lights and clarity, we may need to get comfortable with the dark and the mist, fewer jingle bells and more silent nights. Mist and fog usually have sinister connotations, but there are exceptions. The Irish have *féth fiada*, a magical mist that enshrouds the Tuatha Dé Danann, the ancient magical folk of the emerald isle, rendering them invisible to mortals.

Legends tell of this power passing to the mystical druids, and then to Saint Patrick, who used it to hide himself and his traveling companion from those who wished to harm them. When the high king's troops came upon the two men in the woods, they saw only a deer and a fawn, peering back at them from behind a veil of mist.

This may be the greatest gift of our strange new season, the ability to vanish into darkness and fog, in order to protect ourselves.

Start Reading

January book club selections

Butterfield Book Club

MON 3, 7:00 P.M.

The Henna Artist, by Alka Joshi
Butterfield Library, Cold Spring
Email janedemic@butterfieldlibrary.org.

Magic Tree House Book Club (Grades 1-3)

TUES 11, 3:30 P.M.

Earthquake in the Early Morning,
by Mary Pope Osborne
Butterfield Library, Cold Spring
Register at
butterfieldlibrary.org/calendar.

Reading with Writers

WED 12, 7:00 P.M.

The Poetry Home Repair Manual,
by Ted Kooser
Split Rock Books, Cold Spring (via Zoom)
Register at splitrockbks.com.

Elementary Book Club (Grades 2-4)

THURS 13, 3:15 P.M.

Ghost Squad, by Claribel Ortega
Butterfield Library, Cold Spring
Register at
butterfieldlibrary.org/calendar.

Middle School Book Club

TUES 18, 4 P.M.

Drizzle, by Kathleen Van Cleve
Butterfield Library, Cold Spring
Register at
butterfieldlibrary.org/calendar.

Fiction Book Club

THURS 20, 7 P.M.

The Plague of Doves, by Louise Erdrich
Split Rock Books, Cold Spring (via Zoom)
Register at splitrockbks.com.

Middle School Book Club

WED 26, 4:30 P.M.

A Mango-Shaped Space, by Wendy Mass
Howland Public Library, Beacon
Email community@beaconlibrary.org.

History Book Club

THURS 27, 7 P.M.

Blood in the Water,
by Heather Ann Thompson
Split Rock Books, Cold Spring (via Zoom)
Register at splitrockbks.com.

Beacon Book Club

THURS 27, 7:30 P.M.

The Snow Child, by Eowyn Ivey
Register at
meetup.com/Beacon-BookClub.

Current Classifieds

HELP WANTED

FOOD PANTRY COORDINATOR — The First Presbyterian Church of Philipstown is hiring a part-time food pantry coordinator for the Philipstown Food Pantry. Duties include administrative tasks, coordination of volunteers, and communication with volunteers, clients, and the local community. Seeking an organized, reliable person with good interpersonal and computer skills. Approximately 20-25 hours per month with an hourly salary based on experience. If interested, please call 845-265-3220 or email 1presbyterian@gmail.com.

RELEASES

WORLD CARD EP — Out 12/21 wherever you listen to music. linktr.ee/catherineberdie

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FOR SALE

GENERAC Standby Generators provide backup power during utility power outages, so your home and family stay safe and comfortable. Prepare now. Free 7-year extended warranty (\$695 value). Request a free quote today. Call for additional terms and conditions. 631-498-7851.

TAG SALE? Car for sale? Space for rent? Help wanted? Place your ad here for \$4.95.

See highlandscurrent.org/classifieds.

Albano Files to Run for County Executive

Will face state legislator for Republican line

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

Nearly a year before the 2022 general election, the race for Putnam County executive heated up this month when County Legislator Carl Albano filed for the job, setting up a clash with another Republican, state Assembly Member Kevin Byrne.

Albano registered his candidacy with the New York State Board of Elections on Dec. 8, three weeks after Byrne, who represents parts of eastern Putnam and northern Westchester in Albany.



Albano

Along with serving in the county Legislature, Albano operates the Albano Agency Insurance & Real Estate firm, based in Mahopac. He has represented District 5, which includes much of the Carmel area, on the Legislature since 2011.

Incumbent County Executive MaryEllen Odell, who has worked closely with Albano and other Republican legislators, cannot run in November because of county term limits.

As of Tuesday (Dec. 28), no Democrat had filed to run.

In a phone interview on Tuesday, Albano said he plans to launch his campaign in January. He described Byrne as “a good guy,” and that in competing against each other for Republican support “we’ll just have to go where we go” on the issues. He cited his deep involvement in Putnam, with 11 years as a legislator and decades in business. “I have a good handle on what’s going on and where to go,” he said.

Albano elaborated in an email on Wednesday (Dec. 29), explaining that he wants to keep “moving Putnam forward on the path that the [Odell] administration and Legislature created over the last few years.” During his time in office, he said, “we eliminated short-term debt and the county total debt has been drastically reduced. My goal is to continue in this direction with the intention of lowering taxes and possibly providing more services.” Because sales tax “is essential to offset residential property taxes” he said he will “continue to support controlled quality commercial growth in Putnam and look for every opportunity to attract the right mix.”

Albano suggested that “what sets me apart from Kevin is that I have been a self-employed business owner for over 44 years” and that “my life experience, being a self-employed business owner, raising a family with five children and working for Putnam County gives me a clear understanding of what direction we should take in the future.”

Putnam Passes Resolution Against Mandatory Vaccines

County continues push for Ambulnz Service

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

Putnam legislators last week dealt with two issues with potentially deep implications for their constituents, passing a resolution opposing mandatory COVID-19 vaccines and moving ahead on a fund transfer required to switch county-wide ambulance coverage.

In consecutive meetings on Dec. 22 in Carmel, the Legislature’s Audit Committee voted 2-1 to approve transferring \$40,467 from a contingency account to help fund a contract with Ambulnz, an ambulance service hired to provide advanced life support services as of Jan. 1. It will replace EmStar/Empress.

Later, the full Legislature, in its year-end meeting, adopted a resolution opposing any government demands for COVID-19 vaccinations or regular testing of employees at major businesses or students returning to schools.

The latter resolution, which had earlier been endorsed by the Health Committee, declares “that medical treatment and preventative measures are an individual choice” and that “no COVID-19 vaccine should be mandated by law.”

It further “expresses opposition to COVID-19 vaccine mandates” at any level “that affect parents’ rights to make health care decisions in the best interests of their children.” It encourages citizens to get vaccines, or, if choosing non-vaccination, to heed federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advice to avoid infection.

As evidence of public support for the resolution, Legislator Toni Addonizio of Kent, who chairs the Legislature, referred to petitions with more than 300 signatures, plus about 100 emails, denouncing mandatory vaccines.

“The people have spoken,” she said. “They’re very concerned and scared for their children,” she said, adding, “I am not anti-vaccine” or opposed to the vaccines required before children can enter school, “I am anti-mandate.”

The Legislature’s resolution, “a statement of public policy, which is the proper role of this Legislature,” likewise “is not in any way anti-vaccine,” she asserted.

Seven of the Legislature’s eight Republicans supported her. The eighth, Amy Sayegh of Mahopac, missed the meeting. The single “no” vote came from Nancy Montgomery, the lone Democrat, who represents Philipstown and part of Putnam Valley.

“I believe it’s people’s free will to do whatever they want,” said Legislator Neal Sullivan of Carmel-Mahopac. “It’s not that we don’t want you to get a vaccine or wear a mask. But it’s your choice to do what you want. It’s not government’s role.”

Legislator Paul Jonke of Southeast

added that “we shut the country down and the [COVID-19] rates are still increasing. Government has got nothing right. I don’t need medical advice to tell me this vaccine mandate is wrong.”

Legislator Carl Albano of Carmel, a candidate for county executive, agreed. “There’s really no clear evidence of what government says,” he said, describing COVID-19 as “a normal thing that’s going to happen, apparently, over the years,” until the U.S. population builds up sufficient immunity to deter it. For now, he said, “especially when it applies to my children, I don’t want anyone telling me what do.”

“It’s not that we don’t want you to get a vaccine or wear a mask. But it’s your choice to do what you want. It’s not government’s role.”

~ Legislator Neal Sullivan

Montgomery disagreed. When she asked whether Putnam residents wanted unvaccinated people caring for their elderly parents or young children, a round of “yes” rose from audience members opposed to vaccine mandates. She also pointed out that the federal initiatives are not in fact mandates because they allow frequent testing, in place of vaccines, and that the emails she saw from anti-mandate residents were form letters, as in an orchestrated campaign.

“This is just grandstanding,” she said of the resolution, “purely political grandstanding.”

Ambulance services

In the Audit Committee session, which preceded the year-end meeting, further debate ensued over County Executive MaryEllen Odell’s decision to switch

the provider of county-wide ambulance services. Protests over the change also arose Dec. 15 at a Protective Services Committee session.

Michael Witkowski, chief of operations for Ambulnz, refuted suspicions voiced by local ambulance corps members and residents that the company kept its winning bid artificially low to lure Putnam officials, while in turn being able to charge local ambulance corps and towns high fees and that its ranks might be too thin for adequate coverage.

“We did not underbid this,” he maintained. “We are not looking to fleece anybody.” He added: “We are always open to working with the towns, the ambulance corps and whomever is the end-payer, getting to something reasonable and affordable.” Moreover, he said, Ambulnz informed Odell in writing “that we would honor the things [fee arrangements] already in place, provided that they are legal.”

But Nicholas Falcone, captain of the Philipstown Volunteer Ambulance Corps, again expressed concern. Even if Ambulnz holds the line on its charges for 2022, he said, “what’s to say these rates will not come back up” in the future? He also observed that as of Dec. 22, Ambulnz had not reached any agreements with town governments that financially support local volunteer ambulance corps. “Towns are still left to fend for ourselves.”

Falcone also questioned Ambulnz personnel levels. Witkowski replied that of the 176 staff members in the service region, which includes Beacon, 54 would cover Putnam.

Montgomery repeated her objection that legislators never received a copy of the Ambulnz contract. “I just think it’s really odd to ask us for funding for a contract we don’t see,” she said.

Legislator Ginny Nacerino of Patterson responded that the legislators’ sole function is approving the \$40,467 fund transfer because “the contract is executed by the county executive.”

Two of the three Audit Committee members voted to OK the transfer, sending it to the full Legislature for action on Tuesday (Jan. 4). Legislator Bill Gouldman of Putnam Valley voted “no,” saying that local ambulance corps and elected officials had advised him that “the new contract will not be the best move” for Putnam’s towns.

NOTICE

TOWN OF PHILIPSTOWN TAX COLLECTION LEGAL NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT I, Tara K. Percacciolo, the undersigned Collector of Taxes of the Town of Philipstown, County of Putnam and State of New York, have duly received the tax roll and warrant for the collection of taxes within the Town of Philipstown for the year 2022 and that I will receive the same at the 238 Main Street, Cold Spring, New York from January 1, 2022 through July 31, 2022 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday. Taxes will be collected without penalty if paid on or before January 31, 2022. On all taxes paid after January 31, 2022 an additional 1% penalty will be assessed for each month or fraction thereof thereafter until such taxes are paid or until the return of unpaid taxes to the County Treasurer pursuant to law. Partial tax payment (50% of total tax) will ONLY be accepted during the month of January 2022. The second partial payment will be assessed a 1% penalty charge each month until July 31, 2022 when all unpaid second partial payments will be turned over to the County Treasurer. Full payment of taxes will be accepted without penalty during the month of January 2022. After the month of January, a 1% interest penalty will be assessed each month until May 1, 2022 when all “fully unpaid” taxes will be turned over to the County Treasurer for collection.

DATED: December 29, 2022

Tara K. Percacciolo, Tax Collector, Town of Philipstown

Brewster Officer Accused of Protecting Sex Traffickers

Prosecutors allege he was bribed with sex

By Leonard Sparks

Federal prosecutors have charged a Brewster police officer with demanding sex in exchange for protecting two organizations accused of luring women and girls from Mexico to New York for prostitution.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York alleges that Officer Wayne Peiffer provided protection from arrest and advanced warning of police operations to Queens-based sex traffickers for more than eight years.

Since May 2002, prosecutors said one ring promised girls and women in Mexico work and "a better life," and then used force, threats of force, fraud and coercion to traffic them for sex, according to a 14-count indictment unsealed on Dec. 14.

Another ring drove girls and women from Queens to assigned routes in Brewster and other places to meet clients, according to court documents.

In exchange for protection, prosecutors allege that members of the rings brought women to Peiffer for sex, including at the Brewster police station. In text messages filed with court documents, Peiffer appeared to discuss the physical appearances of the women.

Peiffer, 48, was charged with extortion, promoting prostitution and bribery. He pleaded not guilty on Dec. 14 in federal court in Brooklyn and was released after posting \$300,000 bond.

In a statement on Dec. 15, Brewster Mayor James Schoenig said Peiffer has been suspended without pay and that the village "is cooperating fully with the investigation."

The Putnam County Sheriff's Department and other agencies assisted the FBI in the case. In addition to Peiffer, five Queens residents were charged: Luz Elvira Cardona, Roberto Cesar Cid Dominguez, Cristian Noe Godinez, Blanca Hernandez Morales and Jose Facundo Zarate Morales.



Peiffer



A lake at camp Nooteeming in Salt Point

BSA photo

Boy Scouts to Sell Dutchess Camp

Hudson Valley council must pay into victim trust fund

By Chip Rowe

The board of the Greater Hudson Valley Council of the Boy Scouts of America announced on Dec. 4 that it will sell the 90-year-old Camp Nooteeming in Dutchess County to pay its share of claims made against the national organization by former scouts who say they were sexually abused.

The council had placed three of its four camps on the market, including the 1,385-acre Durland Scout Reservation in Putnam Valley and the 313-acre Camp Bullova in Stony Point. Only Camp Read, in the Adirondacks, was not listed.

In a letter posted on its website, four council executives said that while the decision to sell the 272-acre Salt Point campground was "heart-wrenching," it was necessary to ensure that scouting survives in the Hudson Valley. The council said earlier this month it is negotiating with a potential buyer.

Facing a barrage of federal lawsuits, the national Boy Scouts of America declared bankruptcy in February 2020. By a November 2020 deadline, more than 82,000 claims had been filed to participate in a potential settlement.

In July, the Boy Scouts offered a settlement of \$850 million, including \$600 million collected from regional councils across the country.

The Greater Hudson Valley Council said in August its share had been calculated at \$6.37 million, based on about 550 claims from the region beginning in the 1950s. "The majority of the cases took place prior to the 1990s," the council said in a statement at the time. "We take our obligation to the victims seriously as even a single case of abuse is one too many."

For most councils, campgrounds are their most valuable assets. Together, the 15 councils in New York state operate 28 camps covering more than 30,000 acres.

"Three council properties were placed on the market earlier this year to assess each property's values," the Greater Hudson Valley executives said in their Dec. 4 letter. "The market information gathered, along with analyzing past budgets, endowment reports and future expenses, led the bankruptcy task force to recommend the plan that was approved" to sell Camp Nooteeming and "put the bankruptcy behind us without incurring burdensome debt."

The executives said the council staff and board "are committed to helping the traditional scouting programs that were hosted at Camp Nooteeming find a new location."

NOTICE

The Philipstown Conservation Board will hold their regular monthly meeting on **Tuesday, January 11th, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. virtually via Zoom.**

If you would like to attend, please visit the following link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5tMrYNt5RpmozXEPSZVIlw
Webinar ID: 868 9843 8660 Passcode: 6265035

One tap mobile: 1-646-558-8656,,86898438660#,,,6265035# US

Register in advance for this webinar: After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

OR email crockett@philipstown.com to request login information before 7 pm on January 11th, 2022.

If you are unable to join in person, the meeting will be viewable on youtube.com, search for Philipstown Conservation Board January.

POSITION AVAILABLE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PHILIPSTOWN FOOD PANTRY COORDINATOR

The First Presbyterian Church of Philipstown is looking to hire a part-time food pantry coordinator for the Philipstown Food Pantry.

The duties primarily involve administrative tasks, coordination of volunteers, and communication with volunteers, clients, and the local community. Seeking an organized, reliable person with good interpersonal and computer skills. Approximately 20-25 hours per month with an hourly salary based on experience.

If interested please contact the church office administrator at **845 265 3220** (feel free to leave a message) or by e-mail at **1presbyterian@gmail.com**.

NOTICE

The Philipstown Zoning Board will hold their regular monthly meeting on **Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. virtually via Zoom.**

Register in advance for this webinar:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8lEwy26KTzOCrPNovzWYzw
Webinar ID: 871 3152 6136 Passcode: 458933

One tap mobile: 1-646-558-8656,,87131526136#,,,458933# US

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

OR email crockett@philipstown.com to request login information before 7 pm on January 10th, 2022.

If you are unable to join in person, the meeting will be viewable on youtube.com, search for Philipstown Zoning Board January.

ELECTION

CERTIFIED

Results

Residents of Putnam and Dutchess counties voted early, on Election Day, by absentee and by affidavit, and each county's board of elections certified their results on Dec. 6.			PUTNAM COUNTY ☆☆☆☆				
			Sheriff		PUTNAM		PHILIPSTOWN
			Kevin McConville (REP/CON)		12,686	1,444	
			Robert Langley Jr. (DEM/KPS)		9,801	2,367	
			Legislator, District 1*				
			Nancy Montgomery (DEM/UNP)		2,625		
			Barbara Scuccimarra (REP/CON)		1,599		
			Philipstown Town Board				
			Jason Angell (DEM/TPH)		2,396		
			Megan Cotter (DEM/TPH)		2,351		
			Neal Tomann (REP/CON)		1,374		
			Sarina Tamagna (REP/CON)		1,275		
			Cold Spring Mayor				
			Vincent Tamagna		320		
Kathleen Foley		632					
DUTCHESS COUNTY ☆☆☆			Trustee (2 years)				
			Cathryn Fadde		387		
			Jeffrey Phillips		327		
			Eliza Starbuck		629		
			Trustee (1 year)				
			Yaslyn Daniels		303		
			Tweeps Woods		592		
			Proposal No. 1 (Cannabis retail)				
			Yes		495		
			No		458		
			No vote cast		82		
			Proposal No. 2 (Cannabis on-site)				
			Yes		439		
			No		481		
No vote cast		115					
STATEWIDE ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆							
Proposal No. 1 (Voting Reforms)			DUTCHESS	BEACON	PUTNAM	PHILIPSTOWN	TOTAL
Yes			27,246	2,032	8,603	2,027	1,361,043
No			34,115	1,048	12,496	1,405	1,622,195
Proposal No. 2 (Clean Air and Water)							
Yes			41,541	2,713	13,472	2,832	2,129,051
No			20,493	511	8048	798	907,159
Proposal No. 3 (Same-Day Voter Registration)							
Yes			26,769	2,225	8,095	2,150	1,336,327
No			36,417	1,030	13,821	1,504	1,721,811
Proposal No. 4 (No-excuse absentee)							
Yes			27,357	2,199	8,688	2,235	1,370,897
No			35,694	1,050	13,166	1,411	1,677,580
Proposal No. 5 (NYC civil court limits)							
Yes			38,371	2,488	12,128	2,602	1,874,515
No			21,366	598	8,559	791	1,051,803
STATE SUPREME COURT							
Thomas Davis (DEM/REP)			51,053	2,525	17,054	3,070	293,291
Robert Berliner (DEM/REP/CON)			53,276	2,702	18,756	3,233	305,522
James Hyer (DEM/CON)			31,174	2,292	10,319	2,455	184,030
Christie D'Alessio (DEM/CON)			33,310	2,246	10,837	2,531	198,107
Thomas Quinoines (DEM/CON)			31,667	2,195	10,519	2,474	190,135
James Hendry (REP)			23,651	685	9,162	888	127,584
Mark Starkman (REP)			23,593	598	8,991	864	124,702
Richard Guertin (REP/CON)			27,813	592	11,100	1,110	143,486
% Turnout			34	37	33	52	26

UPDATE

Campaign Finance

The numbers below include money raised and spent by candidates and committees from Jan. 1 to Nov. 29, when the most recent disclosures were due at the state Board of Elections.

☆ Campaign Spending 2021 ☆					
PUTNAM COUNTY		RAISED	SPENT	ON HAND	DATE
Democrats		\$5,787	\$8,717	\$8,477	Nov. 29
Republicans		\$9,400	\$9,305	\$19,698	July 28
PUTNAM SHERIFF					
Robert Langley Jr. (D)		\$53,075	\$50,979	\$25,098	Nov. 29
Kevin McConville (R)		\$82,962	\$86,595	\$11,298	Dec. 5
PUTNAM COUNTY					
Nancy Montgomery (D)		\$23,000	\$9,415	\$15,305	Nov. 29
Barbara Scuccimarra (R)		\$4,975	\$6,117	- \$186	Dec. 10
PHILIPSTOWN					
Democrats		\$21,946	\$23,631	\$11,924	Nov. 29
Republicans	No filings since January 2019				
Jason Angell (D)		\$14,615	\$11,314	\$3,403	Nov. 29
Megan Cotter (D)	Filed under Philipstown Democrats				
John Van Tassel (D)		Filed “in-lieu-of-statement”(1)			Dec. 16
Sarina Tamagna (R)	No filings				
Neal Tomann (R)	No filings				
COLD SPRING					
Forge Ahead		\$25,151	\$24,435	\$791	Dec. 10
Vinny Tamagna	Filed waiver (2)				Sept. 24
Yaslyn Daniels	Filed waiver (2)				Sept. 27
Cathryn Fadde	Filed waiver (2)				Sept. 27
Jeff Phillips	Filed waiver (2)				Sept. 27
DUTCHESS COUNTY					
Democratic Committee		\$130,189	\$10,347	\$20,894	Nov. 28
Republican Committee		\$99,525	\$9,176 (3)	\$5,461	Nov. 30
DUTCHESS LEGISLATURE					
Ron Davis (R)	No filings				
Yvette Valdes Smith (D)		\$15,548	\$12,450	\$3,008	Nov. 29
BEACON					
Democratic Committee		\$15,547	\$10,347	\$11,167	Nov. 28
Republican Committee		\$0	\$9,176 (3)	\$28,162	Nov. 30
BEACON JUDGE					
Greg Johnston (D)		\$15,107	\$11,715	\$3,392	Dec. 2
Timothy Pagones (R)		\$23,692	\$17,946	\$5,778	Nov. 30

Source: New York State Board of Elections

(1) Candidate certifies he or she has not spent or raised more than \$1,000, including personal contributions

(2) Candidate certifies he or she will not spend or raise more than \$1,000, including personal contributions

(3) Contributed \$500 to the county judge candidate Denise Watson and \$8,000 to city judge candidate Timothy Pagones

Note: Candidates may have had a balance on Jan. 1. In some cases, the filing dates are for amended returns.

NEWS BRIEFS

Ban On Foam Containers To Begin Jan. 1

Law also covers trays, lids, cups

Local restaurants, delis, grocery stores, and other establishments selling prepared foods and drinks will be prohibited from using foam containers made from "expanded" polystyrene under a state law that takes effect on Saturday (Jan. 1).

The law, adopted in 2020, also prohibits retailers and manufacturers from selling disposable polystyrene food containers, including cups, lids and trays, and loose-fill packaging commonly known as packing peanuts.

Exemptions include packaging for raw meats and fish and containers made from polystyrene resin that has not been "expanded, extruded or foamed." Food programs operated by nonprofits or government agencies may apply for hardship waivers.

Putnam Lawsuit Upgraded to Wrongful Death

Family alleges man died from injuries caused by deputies

The family of a Brewster man who died two years after an encounter with Putnam County Sheriff's Department deputies outside his home has added wrongful

death to their list of claims in a \$50 million federal lawsuit against the county.

In an amended complaint filed Dec. 24, the family of George Taranto alleges that his death on Aug. 25 of this year resulted from a brain injury suffered when he was tackled by deputies on July 8, 2019.

Taranto, then 75, was carrying a licensed and loaded Colt Mustang .380 pistol when he came outside after hearing noises and seeing flashlights. According to the lawsuit, he encountered deputies investigating a report of a stolen car at a neighboring property.

The family said Taranto complied when deputies, with their weapons drawn, began screaming at him to drop the gun, raise his hands and walk toward them. Along with the county, the lawsuit names as defendants outgoing Sheriff Robert Langley Jr., three deputies, a sergeant and an investigator.

Metro-North Extends Lower Fares

Will also add discounts in March

Metro-North has extended its discounted fares through at least February.

To encourage ridership during the pandemic shutdown, the commuter railroad has been charging off-peak fares on all trains. It said the lower fares would continue until at least Feb. 28.

Metro-North said it plans in March to

offer 20-trip tickets at 20 percent off one-way peak fares when purchased through eTix. In addition, it will lower the price of monthly tickets — currently discounted 48 percent to 61 percent below one-way fares — by another 10 percent. Both discounts will be in effect for at least four months, it said.

The number of passengers across Metro-North lines remains 30 to 60 percent below the same days in 2019.

Dutchess Awards \$1.5 Million in Grants

Beacon-area programs among recipients

Dutchess County on Tuesday (Dec. 28) announced that it would distribute \$1.5 million to 34 nonprofits as part of its Agency Partner Grant program.

The recipients include \$23,650 to the Dutchess County Pride Center in Hopewell Junction for a teen drop-in program; \$31,827 to Friends of Seniors of Dutchess County Corp. for its medical transportation program; and \$50,000 to Land to Learn for SproutEd, a nutrition program for Beacon elementary school students.

The grants also included \$44,801 to Hudson River Housing for financial workshops; \$52,501 for its housing navigator program; and \$58,080 for its homeless outreach programs in Beacon and Poughkeepsie.

Answers for Dec. 24 Puzzles

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

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

1. STREAMING, 2. TEETH, 3. ASTERISK, 4. EASTERN, 5. GRAMMAR, 6. PODIATRY, 7. GEYSER

Answers will be published next week. See highlandscurrent.org/puzzle for interactive sudoku.

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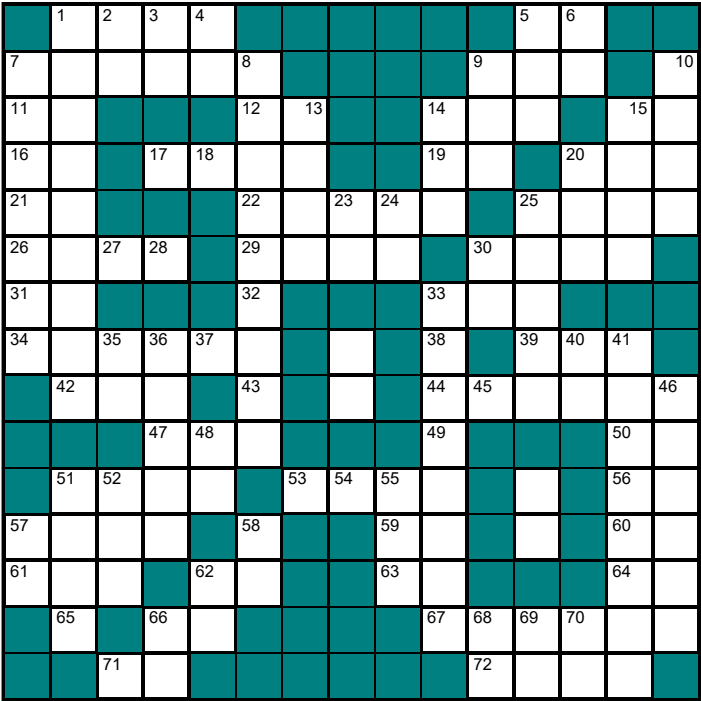
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Puzzles

CROSSCURRENT

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

- ACROSS**
- 1. Store
 - 5. Opposite of STOP
 - 7. Edifice like St.
Mary's or St. Luke's
 - 9. Twin to duh
 - 10. Lower than 1
 - 11. Ancient Mesopotamian city
 - 12. Basic singular verb
 - 14. Wallop
 - 15. NY neighbor
 - 16. In __ (memo term)
 - 17. Sound of relief
 - 19. Another form of 12-across
 - 20. Breakfast cereal component
 - 21. Highway abbreviation
 - 22. Parts of shoes
 - 25. Opposite of poor
 - 26. Paradise
 - 29. A lake in Italy
 - 30. 11th U.S. president
 - 31. Omaha state, Abbr.
 - 32. Alphabet kick-off
 - 33. Canine
 - 34. Stumble over (2 words)
 - 38. Element No. 92
 - 39. A very long time
 - 42. Knightly term
 - 43. Puzzle number, in ancient Rome
 - 44. Small tower
 - 47. Overhead trains
 - 49. 100, 2000 years ago
 - 50. First word in U.S. Constitution
 - 51. Southwestern plateau
 - 53. Smoosh
 - 56. Exist
 - 57. What a guy in Beacon had in his car in 1921
 - 58. Element No. 15
 - 59. For example, Abbr.
 - 60. State next to CO
 - 61. Not new
 - 62. Like like
 - 63. Poet Eliot
 - 64. Blood factor
 - 65. 1/10 of D in ancient



- Rome
 - 66. Britain + N. Ire.
 - 67. Colloquial, perhaps
 - 71. International news org.
 - 72. Fancy
- DOWN**
- 1. Rippers
 - 2. Et __ Brute?
 - 3. Neither-nor; either- __
 - 4. Loo, Abbr.
 - 5. Stomach
 - 6. Common exclamation
 - 7. Surname of this newspaper
 - 8. First name of this newspaper
 - 9. Male pronoun
 - 10. What elected officials swear
 - 13. Supervisor before Van Tassel
 - 14. Holds
 - 15. Wolf group
 - 17. With 18-Down, elementally No. 14
 - 18. See preceding clue
 - 20. Slick fuel
 - 23. For instance, Abbr.
 - 24. " __ how a rose ere..." (Xmas carol word)
 - 25. "Got it," in military parlance
 - 27. Dynamic, symbolic letter
 - 28. To the __th degree...
 - 30. Long river in Italy
 - 33. County bordering Putnam
 - 35. 2, in Rome's forum
 - 36. News media
 - 37. Element No. 8
 - 40. State adjacent to WA
 - 41. City across Hudson from Beacon
 - 45. Abbr. for "you"
 - 46. Like a saw or comb
 - 48. City of Angels, in short
 - 51. Think something over
 - 52. Opposite of "begin"
 - 53. Letter for a thousand
 - 54. " __ is for __pple"
 - 55. Take a chair
 - 57. Opposite of "yes"
 - 58. Add-on to a letter
 - 62. State next to Canada, Abbr.
 - 66. Far from down
 - 68. Type of phono record
 - 69. Alpha and Omega, in brief
 - 70. Eastern Canadian province, Abbr.
 - 71. First vowel

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

- CLUES
- SOLUTIONS
- 1 trying to have it both ways (7)
 - 2 person who brings a suit (9)
 - 3 resided (7)
 - 4 obfuscating (8)
 - 5 selling off of assets (11)
 - 6 trash crushers (10)
 - 7 arithmetic skills (8)

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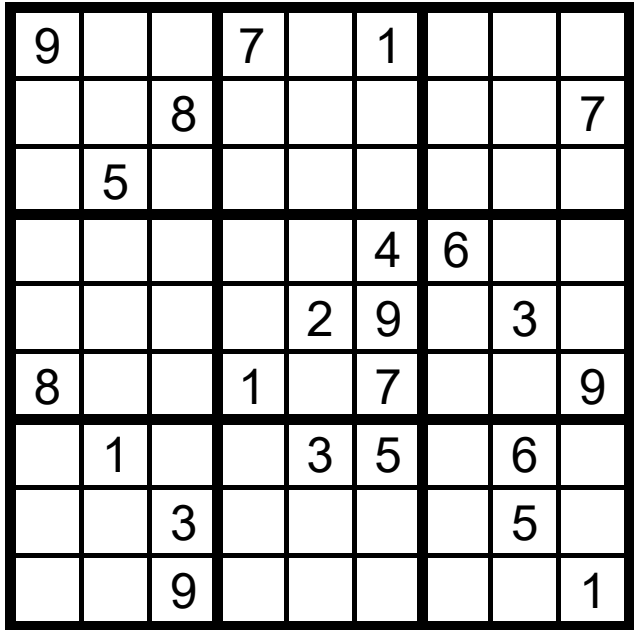
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VARSITY ROUNDUP

By Skip Pearlman

INDOOR TRACK

Beacon High School's indoor track and field team got strong performances from its sophomores at the 31-team Pearl River Holiday Invitational at Rockland Community College on Monday (Dec. 27).

For the boys, Damani DeLoatch won the long jump with an 18-10.25 effort, including a personal best on his final jump; Henry Reinke won the 1,600-meters in 4:48.24; and Rubio Castagna-Torres was second in the 800 meters in 2:17.30.

For the girls, Chelsea Derboghossian won the 55-meters in 7.70; Kyla Richardson took second in the high jump at 4-6 in her first competition in the event; Isabela Migliore was third in the 800 in 2:37.89; and the 4x200 relay team of Derboghossian, Migliore, Richardson and freshman Christine Robinson won in 1:41.80.

The senior boys also did well. Evan Labelle won the 1,600 meters in 4:46.52; Andre Stackhouse was second in the high jump at 5-3 after a tiebreaker; senior Edward Manente was second in the 300 in 38.78; and Sal Migliore was second in the 600 in 1:29.08.

"There is a fair amount of talent amongst the seniors, but it's exciting at a meet like this one to get a glimpse of your future stars," said Coach Jim Henry, who noted that about half the team was absent because of the holidays. "The kids who were available stepped up."

Haldane also competed at the invitational. Senior Luke Parella finished sixth in the boys' 1,000 meters in 3:00. For the girls, junior Andria Vasconcelos was ninth in the triple jump in 24-7 and junior Helen Nichols placed 20th in the 1,000 meters in 4:18.38.

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Beacon had its three-game winning streak snapped on Monday (Dec. 27) at a tournament hosted by Ketcham High School in Wappingers Falls, falling to the host, 61-31, in the first round.

The Bulldogs came back Tuesday with a strong effort and defeated Franklin D. Roosevelt, 73-59.

"We were down one at halftime, and we weren't playing bad," Coach Scott Timpano said of the FDR game. "But offensively we lost some shooters [on defense] and they were hanging around. In the third quarter, a player from FDR attempted a two-handed dunk and it rimmed out. That gave



Eddie Manente (right) led off in Beacon's win in the 4x200 relay at the Pearl River Invitational.

Photo provided



Jason Komisar led Beacon with 21 points on Tuesday (Dec. 28) in a win over Roosevelt High School.

Photos by S. Pearlman (2)

us a fast-break, and Jason Komisar hit a big dunk for us — that was a huge energy moment for us. We took off, and that was it."

Komisar led the Bulldogs with 21 points, followed by Darien Gillins (17), Chase Green (11), Adrian Beato (10) and Gavin Ladue (7).

In Monday's loss to Ketcham, Beacon trailed 25-16 at halftime. "Our defense was pretty good — we held them to nine points



Maddie Chiera scored 10 points and grabbed four rebounds in a Haldane loss at Peekskill on Dec. 22.

in the second quarter, but we only scored six," said Timpano.

Beacon (4-3) was scheduled to face John Jay of East Fishkill on Thursday (Dec. 30) in the final round of the nine-team Ketcham tournament. The team then travels to Cornwall on Wednesday (Jan. 5) and hosts Goshen on Jan. 7 at 6:30 p.m.

The Haldane boys (5-1) were scheduled to host Chester on Dec. 30 and will travel to Croton on Jan. 5.

WRESTLING

A contingent of Beacon wrestlers competed at the Mid-Hudson Tournament held Monday (Dec. 27) and Tuesday at Arlington High School.

Senior Lou Del Bianco took second place at 215 pounds after losing in the finals to a wrestler from Xavier, Long Island. Del Bianco went 4-0 on Monday, then won three more times to reach the Tuesday finals, where he fell by a 4-3 decision. Del Bianco improved his season mark to 14-1.

"Lou has been wrestling well," said Coach Ron Tompkins. "He pinned his way through most of his bouts and could have won the final if he'd just had a little more time. He was aggressive and good on his feet."

At 285 pounds, Beacon's two super heavyweights, Tyler Haydt and Sam Lundsford, each wrestled well on Monday, qualifying for Tuesday's action. But both lost their two matches and were eliminated.

"They each had a good day on Monday," Tompkins said. "On Tuesday they faced stiffer competition. But this is a good tournament, with good competition, and a good way to see where you are."

Alex Khalil, at 189 pounds, was 3-1 on Monday but lost both of his matches on Tuesday. "He was [competitive] in all of his matches on Tuesday; they just didn't go his way," said Tompkins.

The Bulldogs are scheduled to visit Cornwall on Jan. 7.

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

At Peekskill on Dec. 22, Haldane showed more of the consistent intensity their coach has been looking for but came up on the short, 47-39.

"Peekskill has some standout players," including freshman Bethany Overly, who finished with 19 points, said Haldane Coach Jessica Perrone. "She will be phenomenal, she's tall, can handle the ball and can shoot and drive."

Perrone said her team needs to tighten up its defense and avoid unforced turnovers. Nevertheless, she said, "I feel like this is the first game we've played hard all game, without a lull."

Maddie Chiera led the Blue Devils with 10 points, while Amanda Johanson and Marisa Scanga each had nine and Mairead O'Hara scored seven and had four steals.

"Johanson and Scanga have been giving us 3-pointers, and that's big because it drops the pressure on some of our other shooters," Perrone said.

Haldane (2-5) is scheduled to host Croton on Wednesday (Jan. 5) at 6:15 p.m.

The Beacon girls (3-2) were scheduled to play at Highland on Dec. 30 and will host Cornwall on Jan. 4 at 4:30 p.m., travel to Goshen on Jan. 6, and host Spackenkill on Jan. 7 in the Terrence Wright Scholarship game.



HOW TO WATCH

Most Haldane junior varsity and varsity home games are livestreamed at LocalLive (bit.ly/haldane-stream).

Many of Haldane's opponents also broadcast via the site when they host the Blue Devils.

Many Beacon home games are livestreamed via HUDL through links at beaconk12.org/athletics. Many of Beacon's opponents also broadcast via the NFHS Network (bit.ly/beacon-stream) when they host the Bulldogs.