SUMMERTIME

Shoreham-Wading River students participate in the district’s summer Roundout program, which just ended. Photo courtesy SWRCSO

SWR’s Roundout program offered arts, crafts and team bonding

With daily themes to take part in and a schedule that included arts and crafts, indoor and outdoor recreational activities and pure fun, dozens of Shoreham-Wading River students have been enjoying their summer vacation during the district’s annual Roundout program.

The camp, this year taking place at Prodell Middle School, has been filled with smiles, laughter and new friendships. The sessions were offered for three morning hours from mid-July through mid-August and students entered the building ready to embrace that day’s activities.

Students participated in activities designed to build fine and gross motor skills and learned the importance of working together with others as part of a team. The program also allowed students to socialize, play with and get to know students they will attend school with in September.

According to Bob Szymanski, who oversaw the program and its counselors, much of the organized play was provided by the student volunteers, who attended the summer program as campers and enjoyed it so much that they came back to share the fun with the younger students.

Monitoring hate
Suffolk County announces new hotline to report antisemitic incidents

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Anker launches Mount Sinai historical project

BY SAMANTHA RUTT
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Suffolk County Legislator Sarah Anker (D-Mount Sinai) recently organized a local history initiative to help tell the story of historic Mount Sinai.

Initially, “I want to try to bring together the local community and the historians to document the history of the Chandler Estate, Mount Sinai Congregational Church, Sea View Cemetery and Mount Sinai Harbor,” Anker said. “There’s a lot of fascinating history. I’ve spoken to a number of folks that are in their 80s and 90s, and they have really amazing stories.”

Through this undertaking, Anker said she hopes to enhance the existing historical archives by adding documentation, stories, photos and maps collected from the surrounding area.

The event will feature a round-table discussion of about 25 participants, including key members of the Miller Place-Mount Sinai Historical Society, Brookhaven Town historians and other local advocates who will contribute to the documentation process.

“We’re meeting to talk about what information can be identified, and move forward hoping to open it up to anyone who has additional information,” the county legislator explained. “The meeting on Friday will be mainly focusing on the historians and how the process works and what information they have.”

For nearly 30 years, Anker has lived in the Mount Sinai community. Shortly after settling in, she came across the Mount Sinai Civic Association in a local newspaper. There on the cover stood a group of people from the civic association standing in front of bulldozers fighting to preserve the Chandler Estate as it was set to be a site for new development.

As a result Anker decided to get involved, becoming a member of the organization.

“When I saw that article, that picture sparked my interest because it’s near where I live,” she said. “I like that they’re getting involved with their community and doing good things. … And that’s when I became a member.”

The local history project will touch upon the Chandler Estate, originally an upscale resort that overlooked Mount Sinai Harbor. Years after closing, the resort caught fire, leaving minimal remains that have since been taken over by a great deal of brush.

Residents now use the land for leisure. “I grew up right by there,” said Noreen Guilfoyle, a Mount Sinai resident of the once-luxurious estate. “The land used to be a big fancy mansion. … It burnt down though. There’s a trail there now, it’s a really pretty trail. But there are a lot of old foundations from buildings that are no longer there.”

Anker has plans to open up the forum, pending the initial meeting’s success.

“Following that [initial meeting], in another month or two we could open it up … and see if folks want to come to sign up or send us [something in] writing,” she said. “Then we can add it to the information that we have.”

To help on the complex history project, Anker is partnering with Ann Becker, a local historian and librarian. Becker is an established author with her book, “Mount Sinai,” centered around the hamlet’s fabled history.

The project is set to include input from the Suffolk County Historical Society, Mount Sinai-Miller Place Historical Society and Stony Brook University Library Archives’ special collection.

“There are so many of our local folks that have the stories, but we’re going to lose their stories and information about their experiences if we don’t document them now,” Anker said.

Suffolk County Leg. Kara Hahn takes post with NYS Parks, reflects on public service record

BY RAYMOND JANIS
EDITOR@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn (D-Setauket) resigned Monday, Aug. 14, vacating her seat in the county Legislature to become New York State Parks deputy regional director for the Long Island region.

Hahn entered the county Legislature in 2012 and could not pursue reelection because of 12-year term limits for legislators. Hahn’s 5th Legislative District spans Three Village, Port Jefferson, Port Jefferson Station/Teryville, Belle Terre and parts of Mount Sinai and Coram.

In an exclusive interview with TBR News Media, she reflected on her time in county government, summarizing legislative victories and offering an optimistic outlook.

The tones

A lifelong resident of the county’s 5th Legislative District, Hahn said she grew up watching her parents, both of whom she characterized as energetic and active within the community.

“My dad, a proud Army man and veteran, was a volunteer firefighter in the Stony Brook Fire Department,” she remembered. “Growing up, you’d hear that alarm go off almost every night — They called it ‘the tones’ on the radio. It didn’t matter if there was a family birthday party, a weekend or late at night, he would answer that call.”

Hahn’s mother was a civic leader, working within the community to resist the development of a property across the street from their house. The daughter remembered her mother picking up trash on the street, noting “she cared so much” about the look and feel of the local area.

These two examples formed the basis on which Hahn had modeled her public service career. She described her parents as “a real inspiration to me.”

Road to the county Legislature

Before entering elective office, Hahn received her degree and pursued a career in social work policy. She served as president of the Civic Association of the Setaukets and Stony Brook, the precursor of today’s Three Village Civic Association.

Hahn spent years in various staff positions within the county Legislature, first as press secretary for the late Presiding Officer Maxine Postal and later as chief of staff for former Legislator Vivian Viloria-Fisher. She worked for nearly six years as director of communications for the late Presiding Officer Bill Lindsay.

Facing term limits, Viloria-Fisher approached Hahn in 2012, asking her to make a run for her seat. Hahn was elected that year and reelected in five successive county elections. The legislator was elected to serve as the Legislature’s majority leader from 2016 through 2019 and was chosen as deputy presiding officer for 2020-21.

She made a bid to run for the Democratic nomination for New York’s 1st Congressional District in 2022, but withdrew.

Opioids

Given her background in social work, Hahn considered her efforts combating the opioid epidemic in Suffolk County as “my most impactful.”

“One of the first things I worked on in 2012 was to put Narcan into our police sector cars,” she noted. “Now, Narcan is a household name,” but “back then, nobody knew” the benefits.

“It was such a simple tweak,” she added. “It didn’t take a huge policy vision and an immense plan. It was a simple step to put a lifesaving drug in the hands of those who arrive on the scene first.”

Hahn said the Narcan initiative saw immediate success, saving “thousands of lives through the years” and catalyzing her later addiction prevention work.

Following this initial policy win, Hahn worked with the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence to create a training program for athletic coaches to recognize the signs and symptoms of addiction. Her office also recommended new protocols for emergency rooms, among other outreach and prevention initiatives.

Environment, parks access

Hahn said environmental conservation was another area of focus during her time in the county Legislature. She suggested open space preservation, water quality protection and single-use plastic reduction as core tenets of her environmental policy agenda.

She added that expanding access to county parks had been among her proudest efforts within the county government, notably at McAllister County Park in Belle Terre.

“There was no parking lot” at McAllister, she said. “So the only people who could use the county park were folks who had a boat or anyone who could walk from Belle Terre.”

The former legislator added, “It’s really the thing I got thanked for the most — adding that parking lot.”

She said the modernization of Forsythe Meadow County Park in Stony Brook, including constructing a parking lot and walking trail, had expanded the use of that county complex.

“Nobody could use it before,” she said. “But now there’s a big beautiful field with a bench under the tree,” adding, “I hope one day, we’ll be able to connect that with Stony Brook Village.”

Hahn said restoration of Old Field Farm had similarly brought more residents to the county park there.

Tough choices

The departing county legislator expressed gratitude to the many people who she had worked closely with during her tenure.

“I’m just so grateful,” she said. “So many great people worked with me, helped me and gave me great ideas.”

Hahn reflected fondly upon the frequent collaborations she shared along the way: “I think that’s when it feels the best — when the community comes to you, says ‘We have a problem,’ and then you work together to come up with a solution.”

She admitted that there were several trials along the way, namely the dissensions and bitterness fomented during political campaigns.

“The politics was hard,” she stated. “I don’t like having to make it about me come campaign time … so campaigning is hard, but it’s part of the process.”

She noted that budgets have represented a perennial challenge for the county government, and raising tax revenue can be difficult.

“We had to make some tough choices.

STORY CONTINUED ON A6
Wow! You guys really knocked our socks off yesterday!
The food was a huge hit at my mom’s “Celebration of Life” gathering. Everyone raved about the food and especially the presentation. The Gemelli Pasta salad was a party favorite. My favorite was the Shrimptini, deviled eggs and fruit cups. We used all of my mom’s china, silver, crystal, punch bowl and serving trays. My mother would have approved:) – Bellport, NY, 8 April 2023

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J. Robert Oppenheimer was born in 1904 in New York City. During childhood, he studied minerals, physics, chemistry, Greek, Latin, French and German.

After graduating high school as valedictorian, Oppenheimer fell seriously ill with dysentery. His family sent him westward to treat this medical condition in New Mexico, where he loved riding horses in the open terrain.

After graduating from Harvard University in three years with a degree in chemistry, he studied physics at Cambridge University in England. Earning his doctorate and studying with other specialists and Nobel Peace Prize recipients, Oppenheimer built relationships with some of the foremost physicists of the time.

While in Germany, he observed widespread anti-Semitism fostered by Adolph Hitler’s Nazi regime. Many scientists in Germany were Jewish and later fled the Holocaust by Nazi regime. Many scientists in Germany were Jewish and later fled the Holocaust.

Oppenheimer conducted extensive scientific research on possible military theories that piqued the government’s interest. Gen. Leslie Groves, an abrasive army officer who led the construction of the Pentagon, was touted for building complex government structures. The son of a Presbyterian Army chaplain, his superiors saw him as a motivated figure who succeeded at resolving challenging problems.

By 1942, the United States mobilized its citizens to fight, and its scientists to keep pace with the Germans to construct a nuclear bomb. Groves understood that Oppenheimer knew the rival German scientists, as he had worked alongside many of them during the 1930s.

Groves chose Oppenheimer to lead a group of America’s leading scientists, concentrating most of them at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in what was known as the Manhattan Project. Groves relied heavily upon Oppenheimer to mold these contrasting personalities, further pressured by an impending timetable, and create the most destructive weapon known to man — all before the Germans could do so themselves.

Under a cloud of secrecy, over the next two-and-a-half years, Groves prioritized resources, money and manpower for this endeavor. He spent some $2 billion to create this weapon, the atomic bomb. These were dangerous times for the United States.

After the Nazi surrender, Groves put pressure on Oppenheimer to ensure that America could use the weapon against the Japanese. During the Potsdam Conference, where the three leading Allies — the Soviets, the British and the Americans — met to plan the postwar peace, Truman learned of the successful Trinity Test on July 16, 1945.

American military leadership suspected the Japanese would fight to the last soldier. And so, 78 years ago this month, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At first, Oppenheimer was pleased with his creation, though he later feared a future arms race would precipitate and that nuclear Armageddon could lead to the annihilation of humanity.

And as the Cold War began, Americans at home were concerned about the spread of communism. Oppenheimer led the effort to create the atomic bomb, but his communist sympathies were again scrutinized during the Red Scare.

The Soviet Union quickly attained the atomic bomb. These were dangerous times for the United States.

In 1954, the Department of Energy revoked Oppenheimer’s security clearance due to fears that he could not be trusted with classified information.

Oppenheimer, a complex historical figure harboring beliefs that often ran contrary to those held by the government and most Americans, helped the Allies win World War II. He symbolized American scientific superiority, though he was a casualty of domestic Cold War stigma.

A scientist who created the worst weapon ever used in warfare, he also sought peaceful solutions. Oppenheimer died on Feb. 18, 1967, at age 62.

Rich Acritelli is a social studies teacher at Rocky Point High School and an adjunct history professor at Suffolk County Community College.

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**BY RICH ACRIETTIL**

**DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM**

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**Obersheimer, the enigmatic father of nuclear warfare**
Kara Hahn
Continued from A3

along the way,” she said, citing the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility closure in Yaphank, raising taxes on the police district line and increasing some fees. “Those are hard choices,” she added.

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a major governmental, budgetary and public health challenge. However, three years after the height of the COVID lockdowns, Hahn suggested the county and greater community had largely recovered.

“The world turned upside down, but we are in a much better place than you would ever have imagined,” she said. “Those challenges were real, the decisions were hard, and I was honored to have the trust of our community to make them.”

Now leaving office, she maintained that there is still work to be done in countering the opioid epidemic, environmental degradation, mental health and other issues.

Transition

Hahn expressed optimism for her personal transition from county to state government, highlighting the prominent role parks have played during her time in public service.

“Facing the term limits, I was offered this job,” she said. “I feel like it’s the perfect next step for me to continue to serve our community, the Long Island region and the environment.”

During her nearly 12 years as a county legislator, Hahn spent five chairing the county’s parks and recreation committee. She referred to parks as “the heart and soul of every community,” their vital role underscored by the pandemic.

Parks are “a place of respite, peace and tranquility, often a place of recreation and escape from daily life,” she observed. “The pandemic made it clear how important they are to families and communities to have those spaces.”

She added, “I look forward to stewarding, protecting, managing, expanding access and caring for all the gems of the state parks we have on Long Island.”

Legacy

Speaking to her constituents directly, she shared her appreciation for their trust and confidence in her.

“It’s been the absolute honor of a lifetime to serve and be able to make a difference in this community that I love so much,” she said. “It’s hard to say goodbye, and that means it was an incredible experience.”

Like the examples set forth by her parents, Hahn said she viewed her service in the county government as answering the call.

“I hope people think of me as someone who truly cared and someone who truly made a difference,” she said. “I hope people found me accessible, approachable and responsive.”

She concluded by saying, “I really feel like I was able to make a difference and help people, and that is good for the soul.”

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CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Do you recognize this man? Photo from SCPD

Tools stolen from Lowe’s

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public’s help to identify and locate a man who allegedly stole assorted power tools from Lowe’s, located at 2796 Route 112 in Medford, at 10:58 a.m. on August 8. The merchandise was valued at $718.

Pokémon Cards Swiped from Target

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public’s help to identify and locate a woman who allegedly stole approximately $220 worth of Pokémon cards from Target, located at 2975 Horseblock Road in Medford, on June 26 at 1:11 p.m. She fled in a gray SUV.

Visit www.tbrnewsmedia.com/police for more press releases from the Suffolk County Police.

Wanted for S. Setauket petit larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public’s help to identify and locate a man who allegedly stole approximately $610 worth of merchandise from Target, located at 265 Pond Path in South Setauket, at 7:11 p.m. on August 4.

Wanted for Selden petit larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers offers a cash reward for information that leads to an arrest. Anyone with information about these incidents can contact Suffolk County Crime Stoppers to submit an anonymous tip by calling 1-800-220-TIPS.
Suffolk County unveils new hotline targeting antisemitism

BY RAYMOND JANIS
EDITOR1@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Suffolk County is making antisemitism an area of focus, creating a new hotline to facilitate the reporting of antisemitic incidents. County officials say the program will enable them to monitor developments within Suffolk communities, attaining a clearer picture of what is happening on the ground. Using the county’s existing 311 call center, Suffolk residents can call the hotline to report acts of antisemitism.

“Unfortunately, antisemitism is something that we continue to see in our region, our country and throughout the world,” Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone (D) said during a press event Tuesday, Aug. 15, announcing the program. “That’s why we have to remain vigilant in identifying what antisemitism is, what it looks like and how it impacts so many.”

The county executive encouraged residents to use the hotline, regardless of whether they believe an act meets the criteria of antisemitism. Bellone acknowledged that while coming forward may be difficult for some, Suffolk 311 “can provide complete confidentiality.” But, he added, residents should nonetheless report these instances whenever possible.

“The biggest concern is the lack of reporting, the underreporting that’s occurring out there,” he noted. “We want to make sure we have as much robust reporting as possible, so we have a full picture of what’s happening” within the community.

“Through 311, we can better document and track these occurrences, allowing us to work proactively toward eliminating antisemitism in our community,” he added.

Mindy Perlmutter, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Long Island, suggested the hotline could help provide authorities with a realistic understanding of potential antisemitic trends within the county.

“Now we’re going to be able to see the numbers … to see where we are seeing issues, what kind of issues we’re seeing, and then we’re going to be able to figure out the best way to combat those issues,” she said.

Allan Richter, chair of the Suffolk County Jewish American Advisory Board, said the hotline represents a vital measure against several dangerous currents taking place more broadly, referring to antisemitism as “a relentless problem.”

“Just about daily, we hear about or see reports in the media of antisemitism somewhere in the world,” he said. “The 311 initiative is part of a multilayered approach driven by forward thinking.”

Suffolk County Legislator Jason Richberg (D-West Babylon), the minority leader in the county Legislature, emphasized the role of residents in collecting accurate data. He maintained that “nothing is too small” to report.

“Small actions have led to larger actions throughout our history that have been destructive to many different communities,” he said. “To stand against that, we need to make sure that we know what those are, report it and make sure that information is given to the [county] police department.”

The minority leader added that this effort is part of an ongoing education campaign within Suffolk County that aims “to tell people this is not right, it’s not fun and this isn’t a joke.”

Officials maintained that the 311 antisemitism hotline is not a substitute for traditional emergency response services. In the event of an emergency, please call 911. For other types of hate crimes, the county hotline is 631-852-HATE (4283).
**IN FORECLOSURE**

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In pursuance of a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the Office of the County Clerk of Suffolk County on June 23, 2023, I, Thomas A. Abbate, Esq. the Referee named in said Judgment, will sell in one parcel at public auction on September 20, 2023 at Brookhaven Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill, County of Suffolk, State of New York, at 11:00 AM the premises described as follows:

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Editorial

LLC transparency is a critical step toward informed citizens

By Judy Patrick, vice president for editorial development of the New York Press Association, of which TBR News Media is a member.

Citizens have a right to know who they’re dealing with, whether it be in government or private enterprise. But that’s not the case when it comes to limited liability companies, or LLCs, which for example can own property, apply for grants, operate as landlords and donate to political campaigns. Holding government accountable for its actions demands a well-informed public. We need to know who, not what, is benefiting in order to do our jobs as citizens.

Discovering who’s behind the curtain isn’t easy. Cruise through your local property tax rolls or the state’s campaign finance disclosure database. You’ll see plenty of LLCs but you won’t see many names.

Anonymous shell companies have been a popular vehicle for money laundering, tax evasion, organized crime, terrorism and other forms of corruption for decades. Yet, as the proposed New York State bill notes, establishing an LLC requires less personal information than getting a library card.

That’s why it’s imperative for Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) to sign the LLC Transparency Act, passed in both the state Assembly and Senate, which would require these special kinds of business organizations to publicly identify the owners to the state and to the public registry run by the Department of State.

At the federal level, the Corporate Transparency Act, taking effect next year, seeks similar disclosures from businesses, including LLCs, but stops short of making the information publicly available. A wide variety of businesses, from pizza shops to mall developers and property buyers, use the LLCs as an organizing business structure.

The approach, sanctioned by state law, provides the owners some limits on liabilities the company could face. As a practical matter, LLCs also offer the people who actually own the company the ability to remain anonymous.

Under current reporting requirements, LLCs need only supply a company name, county of operation and a basic address where legal documents should be sent. Sometimes, the address is a P.O. Box, sometimes it’s an attorney’s office, sometimes it’s a registered agent.

For anyone interested in knowing more, the information provided is often frustratingly nondescript and consequently useless. We all have a well-established interest in this information, and the state Legislature should be commended for recognizing this by including solid public disclosure requirements.

The lack of transparency with campaign donations is just one of the reasons the LLC Transparency Act has the support of good government groups, such as Common Cause and the League of Women Voters. While a 2019 law change required LLCs making political donations to disclose their owners, many are ignoring the requirement, the groups say.

The Business Council of New York State opposes the law, saying it would violate the privacy of law-abiding businesses — including thousands of small businesses organized as LLCs — and put their security at risk. There are some provisions in the legislation for public disclosure to be waived when “a significant privacy interest exists.” The law’s efficacy will be determined in part in how waiver requests are handled.

Given the benefits state law confers upon LLCs, it’s not too much to ask that they at least let us know who they are. This is a good step toward much-needed transparency.

Letters to the Editor

Recognizing Kara Hahn’s efforts for the 5th District

I’d like to express my gratitude to outgoing Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn [D-Setauket] for her unwavering dedication to the residents of the 5th Legislative District. While we may have differing viewpoints on some issues, I truly appreciate her commitment to serve our district with utmost integrity.

Kara’s background as a social worker gave her unique insights into the harrowing reality of drug addiction — especially in Suffolk’s fentanyl crisis. She was instrumental in championing a law to provide our police with Narcan, a crucial measure that has saved numerous lives from drug overdoses. Moreover, her efforts in stewarding the allocation of funds from the opioid settlement to aid those battling addiction in Suffolk are commendable.

Kara understood the significance of preserving our county’s natural splendors. Her advocacy for funds to enhance parks and conserve open spaces in our district has left an indelible mark.

As a father with three young children, I resonate with the principle of prioritizing families over politics. Kara’s commitment to constituent service is a mantle I will carry close as we move to this next and exciting chapter in our community.

On a personal note, I’d like to wish Kara great success in her new endeavor as the Long Island deputy regional director for the New York State Parks Department. It’s a role that undoubtedly befits her expertise and passion.

Anthony M. Figliola
East Setauket
Constituent and Republican candidate for Suffolk County Legislature, District 5

DMV closure an unnecessary hardship for Northern Brookhaven

I was disappointed to read about the recently announced plans to close the local DMV Office in the Three Roads Plaza in Port Jefferson Station.

This facility not only provides important services to motorists around our region, it has served as an important anchor to the small businesses which surround the office that benefited from the additional “traffic” the DMV office created. Beyond that, the present location offered a reasonable and convenient alternative to the longer drive to Medford or Hauppauge where one would be met with mass confusion and interminable wait times when seeking out the many services one needs from the DMV.

Though a smaller facility, the PJS staff were always pleasant and professional and even when needing to be patient in waiting your turn, you knew when you were done you were close to home and even closer to a great slice of Colosseo’s pizza. These benefits have been important to many in the Northern Brookhaven area, and this announced change presents an unnecessary hardship to those of our hamlet and beyond.

There were attempts in the past to make this move which thankfully were quashed by our previous state Assemblyman [Steve Englebright (D-Setauket)]. I call upon our current state officials in the Assembly and Senate to show the same grit and intercede on our behalf and halt this diversion which will “drive” this hub of local activity from our midst.

Ira Paul Costell
Port Jefferson Station

Editor’s note: The writer is president of the Port Jefferson Station/Terryville Civic Association.

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Opinion
Scenes from my recent comings and goings

A ll the world is a stage, and, yes, all the men and women are merely players, as Shakespeare wrote in “As You Like it.” Recently, my life has been filled with scenes and moments in which I have observed pieces of people’s lives. I’ll start with something small.

Standing outside JFK Airport, waiting for a ride, I watched two people share their displeasure with each other. The burly man with the large shoulders and the technicolor tattoos down his arms turned to the woman with a colorful Jersey Shore outfit to give her a piece of his mind.

“You’re selfish and narcissistic and you only think about yourself all the time and I’m sick of it and of you!” he barked. “Everyone can see you and hear you,” the woman said, looking in my direction.

“I don’t care,” he spit out through clenched teeth, as his ride arrived and he shoved their large suitcases into a small trunk. “I’m not embarrassed. You should be.” The suitcases weren’t fitting the way he was jamming them in, but that didn’t stop him from trying, causing the car to rock back and forth. His angry actions had become a manifestation of his mood.

Once the luggage was packed in the back, he walked directly into the street, almost getting clipped by a passing car, pulled open the door and threw himself into the seat.

With her head cast down slightly, his companion opened her door, took off her backpack and entered the car.

On the other end of the spectrum, I sat next to a woman on a plane who exuded optimism. Recognizing her joy of hiking, her fiancee asked her to marry him at Acadia National Park. After their engagement, they stopped in Boston to attend a concert, which is her fiancee’s personal passion. Whenever they travel, they find time to hike and to hear live music.

Anti-American attack on a local newspaper

Y ou have probably heard about a police raid on a local newspaper in a small Kansas town. The act was so egregious that it prompted emails from friends around the country who were concerned about us, even though the event happened some 1500 miles away. We should all be concerned.

To fill you in, local police and county sheriff’s deputies seized computers, servers and cellphones belonging to the seven-member staff of the Marion County Record. They also searched the home of the publication’s owner and semiretired editor, along with the home of a city councilwoman.

This ostensibly had to do with how a document about a local resident got to the newspaper, and whether that person’s privacy had been violated. But according to the editor, the real issue may be tensions between the way officials in the town are covered by the paper. Newspapers, making up what has unofficially been termed the Fourth Estate, after the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of our government, have long enjoyed legal protections in their news coverage “to speak truth to power.” Newspapers historically are considered the watchdogs of government, informing readers about the actions of public servants, which creates what one press association director described as “healthy tensions” between the two.

While the Record has a circulation of about 4000, its owner has had a long career in journalism, both as a reporter on a daily and as a professor at the University of Illinois. His father worked at the Record for half a century before him, rising to be the top editor, and the family eventually bought the newspaper, along with two others nearby, according to the New York Times in an article this past Monday.


The issue in question had to do with the copy of an official letter sent to a Record reporter privately via Facebook that instructed a resident how to go about restoring her driver’s license after a drunken driving citation. That resident was now seeking approval from the City Council “to operate a liquor-serving establishment.” The letter had been given to a city councilwoman with the apparent intent of affecting the decision, but the newspaper owner denied sharing that letter with the councilwoman. Meanwhile the resident is in ongoing divorce proceedings, she pointed out.

So was the letter forwarded by the newspaper? Was the resident’s right to privacy violated by the newspaper? Apparently that was the nature of the search. And while news media are sometimes subpoenaed by government officials to supply interview notes and sources, “The search and seizure of the tools to produce journalism are rare,” according to the NYT. And while “federal law allowed the police to search journalists when the authorities have probable cause to believe the journalists had committed a crime unrelated to their journalism…[not when] the alleged crime is gathering the news,” according to the Freedom of the Press Foundation.

Needless to say, the newspaper is having great difficulty trying to publish its next edition without its computers and servers that contain other filed stories, pictures, layout templates, public notices and ads.

Newspapers have become fragile entities. Since the arrival of the internet, many of the advertisers that traditionally supported newspapers have moved away, forcing newsrooms to shrink in size and even to close entirely. Some 2200 local newspapers have disappeared in the last 20 years, creating what are called, “news deserts” across the nation. From 2008-2020, the number of journalists has fallen by more than half.

But communities are vulnerable to ill-conceived and rapacious actions without news sources to inform and defend them, as well as to educate, entertain and tie them together as a hometown.
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