Port Jefferson BOE features discussions on student accomplishments and budgetary concerns — A8

Promoting kindness and academic excellence

Winners Showcase exhibition opens at Mills Pond Gallery
Also: 2024 Academy Awards Roundup, Calendar of Events, Farewell to Flaco the Owl — B1

Understanding the tax cap
Officials discuss the possibility of exceeding the 2% tax cap, inviting community feedback — A3

Photos courtesy Port Jefferson School District

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During the Feb. 28 Village of Port Jefferson Board of Trustees meeting, officials sought public input while deliberating the implementation of a tax cap override law allowing the village, if necessary, to increase property taxes above the New York State 2% tax cap.

The 4-1 vote grants trustees the option to levy additional property taxes past the 2% limit during the fiscal year 2024-25.

Village Treasurer Stephen Gaffga explained that based on the state 2% tax cap law, allowable tax growth for the village can be up to, but not beyond, approximately $7.4 million this budget cycle. The tax cap override option would allow the board to levy taxes above the $7.4 million for unexpected village costs.

“Based on my analysis of current village funds, I do not foresee the village needing to exceed the tax cap,” he said.

“The village has exceeded the 2% tax cap in eight of the last nine years,” Gaffga told TBR News Media. “The approximate range of the piercing is between $8,000 and $380,000, depending upon the year.”

New York State property tax cap New Yorkers pay among the highest property taxes nationwide. In 2011, the state Legislature enacted the tax levy limit to check spiraling property taxes. The law was made permanent in 2019 and limits the increase in the property taxes for a given budget cycle to 2% or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. This law impacts all local governments and school districts outside New York City.

However, state law allows local governments to circumvent the tax levy limit by enacting a local law granting them the option to pierce the cap and increase property taxes above the 2% limit. A 60% majority, or three out of five votes from the village Board of Trustees, is needed to put in place an override option of the tax cap.

Public comment

Village resident Barbara Sabatino sought reassurances from the board. “We’ve had this type of public hearing for multiple years, and it was always with the assurance that the village have to exceed 2% the increase would be small,” she said.

“We don’t have those figures yet,” Gaffga said. “But that’s certainly something that we can come up with during the tentative budget hearing for everybody.”

Vote breakdown

Trustees Biondo, Juliano, Kassay and Loucks voted to adopt the resolution establishing a tax cap override option for this fiscal year.

Mayor Lauren Sheprow opposed the measure. “I feel strongly committed that my fiduciary responsibility as mayor, and working with the treasurer, that I’m strongly committed to not piercing the tax gap,” she said.

The next Board of Trustees work session will be held March 13 at Village Hall.
New York State must close the drugged driving loopholes

New York’s roads are deadlier than ever. With the legalization of personal use of marijuana and New York’s antiquated impaired driving laws, which have not kept up with new synthetic designer drugs, the problem is getting worse by the day. The Drugged Driving Loopholes in our laws enable dangerous drivers to escape responsibility far too often while endangering innocent people simply trying to drive on our roads or walk on our sidewalks in safety.

The Drugged Driving Loopholes exist because New York is one of only four states that still uses an archaic list to allow for arrest and prosecution of drugged driving. In New York, to prosecute a drugged driver, it is not enough that the drug has impaired the driver. The substance must be listed in the Public Health Law passed by the state Legislature and signed by the governor before a dangerous, obviously impaired driver can be arrested. Right now, a driver can be as “high as a kite,” but if they are high on a drug, or other substance that is not listed, they go free. For instance, drugs such as xylazine (“tranq”), analogues of fentanyl and nitazene (“ISO”) are not on New York’s list. With modern chemistry, our lawmakers cannot keep up with new designer synthetic drugs coming out regularly. The constant influx of new impairing substances has turned the drug list into a barrier against stopping dangerously impaired drivers. It is at the root of the National Transportation Safety Board’s recommendation to New York and three other states to abandon the limitation of an ineffective drug list that will never be able to keep up.

Additionally, even drivers high on a drug that is on New York’s list can avoid responsibility by simply refusing to take an identifying test because it prevents the drug from being named. Twenty percent of drivers in New York evaluated by police Drug Recognition Experts in 2021 refused to take a chemical test, up from 13 percent in 2019. We are not protected when drugged drivers can escape arrest simply by refusing a test.

The type of alcohol ingested by a driver does not have to be named for someone to be charged with Driving While Intoxicated and if impairment is observed, no test is needed to establish a blood alcohol level or whether it was whiskey, vodka or wine, that has caused a driver to be impaired. The same should be true for drugs.

Just like with alcohol impairment, driver appearance, behavior and common sense ought to apply to drug-impaired drivers too. Blood alcohol tests are valuable evidence in DWI cases, but if drivers refuse the test for alcohol, they can still be prosecuted and lose their licenses based on the other impairment factors.

This is a public safety and public health emergency. If we have learned anything during the current opioid crisis, it is that public safety is enhanced when law enforcement and addiction treatment providers work together. Laws that hold people accountable for their actions, paired with evidence-based substance use prevention messages and readily accessible drug and alcohol treatment for those who need it, will save lives.

It is time to plug the loopholes. New York’s outdated approach to impaired driving handcuffs law enforcement, leaves those struggling with a drug problem untreated and puts innocent people at risk. A commonsense bipartisan bill (S3135/A174), backed by both law enforcement and addiction treatment providers, has been introduced in Albany this session to plug these Drugged Driving Loopholes. We need to be responsible and keep everyone safe. It is time to reverse the increase in highway deaths and save lives by passing the Deadly Driving Bill.

Raymond A. Tierney (R) is the Suffolk County district attorney and Dr. Jeffrey L. Reynolds is the president/CEO of Family and Children’s Association, based in Garden City. Both are members of the Coalition to Protect New Yorkers from Drugged Driving.
NOTICIA PÚBLICA

AVISO DE UNA REUNIÓN ESPECIAL DE LOS VOTANTES DEL DISTRITO ESCOLAR LIBRE DE LA UNIÓN NÚM. 6, PUEBLO DE BROOKHAVEN, CONDADO DE SUFFOLK, NUEVA YORK, EN NOMBRE DE LA BIBLIOTECA GRATUITA DE PORT JEFFERSON:

POR LA PRESENTE SE NOTIFICA que se llevará a cabo una reunión especial de votantes calificados del Distrito Escolar Unión Free Núm. 6, Ciudad de Brookhaven, Condado de Suffolk, Nueva York, en la Biblioteca gratuita de Port Jefferson ubicada en 100 Thompson Street, Port Jefferson, Nueva York. el martes 9 de abril de 2024 a las 1:00 p.m. y la 5:00 p.m. hora prevaleciente con el propósito de votar con papeleta sobre los siguientes puntos:

- Adoptar el presupuesto anual de la biblioteca gratuita de Port Jefferson para el año fiscal 2024-2025 y que la Junta de Educación del Distrito Escolar Núm. 6 sea autorizada y dirigida a recaudar mediante impuestos los fondos necesarios en la propiedad sujeta a impuestos del distrito.

Y POR LA PRESENTE SE NOTIFICA ADICIONALMENETE que con el fin de votar en dicha reunión el martes 9 de abril de 2024, las urnas se abrirán entre las 10:00 a.m. y las 9:00 p.m. hora prevaleciente, y la votación se llevará a cabo en el edificio de la biblioteca gratuita de Port Jefferson.

Y POR LA PRESENTE SE DA AVISO ADICIONAL que cualquiera contribuyente del Distrito Escolar puede ver una copia de la declaración de la cantidad de dinero que se requerirá para el año siguiente para los propósitos de la Biblioteca gratuita de Port Jefferson, sin incluir dinero público. los siete días inmediatamente anteriores a dicha reunión, excepto los días festivos. en la biblioteca: 100 Thompson Street, Port Jefferson, Nueva York durante el horario regular de servicio de la Biblioteca de la siguiente manera: lunes, martes, miércoles y jueves de 9:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.; viernes y sábado de 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; y el domingo de 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., horario vigente.

Y POR EL PRESENTE SE NOTIFICA ADemás, que las boletas de voto en ausencia se podrán obtener en la Biblioteca: 100 Thompson Street, Port Jefferson, Nueva York a partir del 8 de marzo de 2024 durante el horario regular de servicio de la biblioteca de la siguiente manera: lunes, martes, miércoles y jueves de 9:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.; Viernes y sábado de 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. y domingo de 13:00 a 17:00 horas, horario vigente.

Se llevará a cabo una reunión de información sobre el presupuesto lunes 25 de marzo a las 4:30 p.m. en la biblioteca Sala de conferencias.

Por orden del Junta de Educación Distrito Escolar Sin Unión Núm. 6 Sharlene Quratararo, District Clerk

| 2/22/24, 3/7/24, 3/21/24, 4/4/24 |

190910 2/22 4x ptr

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE VOTERS OF UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 6, TOWN OF BROOKHAVEN, SUFFOLK COUNTY, NEW YORK, ON BEHALF OF THE PORT JEFFERSON FREE LIBRARY:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that a special meeting of qualified voters of Union Free School District No. 6, Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County, New York, will be held in the Port Jefferson Free Library located at 100 Thompson Street, Port Jefferson, New York, on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., prevailing time, for the purpose of voting by paper ballot upon the following item:

To adopt the annual Port Jefferson Free Library budget for the fiscal year 2024-2025 and that the Board of Education of School District No. 6 be authorized and directed to raise by taxation the necessary moneys up to the taxable property of the district.

AND FURTHER NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that for the purpose of voting at such meeting on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, the polls will be opened between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. prevailing time, and the voting will be held in the Port Jefferson Free Library Building.

AND FURTHER NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that a copy of the amount of money which will be required for the ensuing year for the Port Jefferson Free Library’s purposes, exclusive of public moneys, may be seen by any taxpayer in the School District during the seven days immediately preceding said meeting, except holidays, at the Library: 100 Thompson Street, Port Jefferson, New York during regular library hours of service as follows: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., prevailing time.

AND FURTHER NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that absentee ballots will be obtainable at the Library: 100 Thompson Street, Port Jefferson, New York beginning Monday 2024 during regular library hours of service as follows: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., prevailing time.

A Budget Information Meeting will be held on Monday, March 25 at 4:30 p.m. in the Library Conference Room.

By order of the Board of Education Union Free School District No. 6 Sharlene Quratararo, District Clerk

2/22/24, 3/7/24, 3/21/24, 4/4/24

190920 2/22 4x ptr

NOTICE OF SALE SUPREME COURT COUNTY OF SUFFOLK Deutsche Bank National Trust Company, As Trustee For Long Beach Mortgage Loan must 2006, Plaintiff AGAINST Fumuso A/K/A Joel G. Fumuso, Michelle Fumuso A/K/A Michelle M. Wenzl, Mark A/K/A Michael Ward, et al., Defendant(s) Pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale duly entered July 13, 2010, the undersigned Referee will sell at public auction at the Brookhaven Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill, Farmingville, NY 11738 on March 28, 2024 at 10:30AM, premises known as 5 Hemlock Road, Mount Sinai, NY 11766. All that certain plot piece or parcel of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon, situate, lying and being in the Town of Brookhaven, County of Suffolk, and State of New York, DISTRICT: 0200 SEC.: 54 LOTS: 018.00. Approximate ARTICLE: 211.00 BLOCK: 01.00 LOT: 048.00. Approximate amount of judgment $598,156.25 plus interest and costs. Premises will be sold subject to provisions of Village Codes.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS TOWN OF BROOKHAVEN


PORT TIMES RECORD

12. Robert & Elizabeth Schroeder, 54 Hooper St., Port Jefferson Station, NY. Location: South side Hooper St., 265 West of West Broadway, Port Jefferson Station. Applicant requests rear yard and minimum & total side yard variances for proposed attached garage. (0200 30900 0400 00500)

CASES WILL BE HEARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE BOARD.

HOWARD M. BERGSON

CHAIRMAN

194670 3/7 1x ptr
Two men indicted for three arsons and nine commercial burglaries in area

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced on Feb. 27 that Frank Costa, 54, of Port Jefferson Station, and Jon Pucci, 29 of Middle Island were indicted for allegedly committing a series of three arsons and nine commercial burglaries at businesses throughout Suffolk County.

According to the investigation, between August 20, 2023, and Feb. 9, 2024, Costa and Pucci allegedly burglarized nine businesses and set fires at three PSEG Long Island substations in Suffolk County. The defendants apparently believed the fires would cause power outages in the local community, which would distract law enforcement while Costa and Pucci committed the burglaries. On Feb. 10, Suffolk County Police Department detectives followed Costa and Pucci and placed them under arrest.

While police searched the location, they discovered an ATM that was allegedly stolen from a Shell Gas Station in Ridge the day before. Money from the ATM was allegedly found in the defendants’ pockets after their arrest.

The alleged arsons occurred at the PSEGLI Terryville Substation on Aug. 20, PSEGLI Centerreach Substation on Sept. 16, and PSEGLI Medford/West Yaphank Substation on Feb. 5.

The alleged burglaries occurred at USA Gas in Middle Island on Dec. 11 and 26; BP Gas in Ridge on Dec. 26; Gulf Gas in Smithtown on Dec. 29; BP Gas in Bohemia on Dec. 31; Ideal Food Basket, Port Jefferson and DJM Laundromat in Coram on Jan. 12; Back Country Deli in Yaphank on Jan. 24; Kings Park Car Care in Kings Park on Jan. 30; and Shell Gas Station in Ridge on Feb. 9.

Costa and Pucci were each indicted for Criminal Possession of a Weapon, Burglary, Criminal Mischief, Attempted Burglary, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property and Arson.

“These alleged criminal acts have not only caused extensive damage, but have also put the lives of Suffolk County residents and first responders at risk,” said District Attorney Tierney. “I thank the Suffolk County Police Department for their thorough investigation of this case. Now, my office will ensure that these defendants are held accountable for their alleged extremely dangerous crimes.”

— Suffolk County DA’s Office

Police seek food delivery driver for damaging property in Miller Place

Just released! Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public’s help to identify and locate the food delivery driver who allegedly damaged a mailbox in Miller Place last year. An Uber Eats driver struck a mailbox and fled the scene at a residence on Dogwood Lane on Nov. 25 at approximately 6:10 p.m.

Massage parlor raided in Coram

Suffolk County Police arrested a woman on Feb. 28 for alleged prostitution and unauthorized practice of a profession during a massage parlor raid in Coram.

In response to numerous community complaints, Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers, in conjunction with the Town of Brookhaven Building Inspector, Town Fire Marshal and Town Investigator, conducted an investigation into an unnamed business, located at 625 Middle Country Road, and arrested Jessica Mesa Ortiz at approximately 3:25 p.m.

Mesa Ortiz, 37, of East Elmhurst, was charged with alleged Unauthorized Practice of a Profession, a felony, and Prostitution, a misdemeanor. She was released on a Desk Appearance Ticket and is scheduled to appear at First District Court in Central Islip at a later date.

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.
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Port Jefferson BOE discusses achievements and challenges

BY NASRIN ZAHED
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

The Port Jefferson Board of Education convened on Tuesday, Feb. 27, for a meeting where topics ranging from academic achievements to budgetary concerns took center stage. The meeting saw praise for student achievements and philanthropic endeavors, and discussions about the district’s fiscal landscape.

SCHOOL

A moment of pride swept through the meeting as it was announced that two Earl L. Vandermeulen High School students, Eric Chen and Aoife Hogan, had achieved a perfect score of 1600 on the SAT. This accomplishment places these students among the top 0.07% of the roughly 1.7 million test takers nationwide.

Student representatives also discussed the success surrounding P.S. I Love You Day, held on Feb. 9, an annual observance promoting kindness and advocating suicide prevention. The students were encouraged to share positive messages and actions, fostering empathy and support within the halls.

Port Jefferson’s commitment to philanthropy was also prominently featured, with kudos given to the Varsity Club for their participation in the Long Island annual Polar Plunge. Twenty-five students braved the icy waters, raising an impressive $4,000 through their sponsors that will be donated to the Special Olympics. These funds will sponsor 16 special Olympians this year, adding to the district’s long-standing tradition of supporting the event.

Over the past seven years, Port Jefferson students have raised an impressive $39,000, sponsoring 156 special Olympians, exemplifying the district’s ethos of compassion and community engagement.

However, amid these celebratory moments, the board addressed current challenges facing the district.

Gov. Kathy Hochul’s (D) executive budget proposed a daunting almost $1.2 million reduction in state aid to the Port Jefferson School District, prompting concerns about the financial strain it would impose on the district. The board discussed the potential repercussions, emphasizing the need for a more equitable budgetary solution while expressing intent to formulate an alternative budget plan if the proposed cuts are finalized.

The specter of declining enrollment loomed large in discussions as not only does this topic pose financial challenges, but it also can affect surrounding property values and the attractiveness of the area to prospective residents.

Possibly disassembling the school district would incur substantial costs. The individual cost to reabsorb students to neighboring districts is estimated to be an average of $25,000 per student. Those fees are respective to the tuition owed to other districts, transportation costs and what would be owed to employees both current and past through unemployment, pensions and insurance, totaling about $13.5 million.

In light of Hochul’s proposed budget cuts, the board is working to map out an alternative budget plan. This plan will be discussed in detail at the upcoming public budget presentation on Tuesday, March 12, at 7:30 p.m.

Remembering Arthur Grollman

PREPARED BY THE GROLLMAN FAMILY
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of Dr. Arthur Grollman, a man whose life was a testament to the pursuit of knowledge and the betterment of humanity. A Renaissance man in every sense, Dr. Grollman’s dedication to justice, science, medical care, and his family was evident in every facet of his remarkable journey.

Dr. Grollman’s academic odyssey commenced with a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry from the University of California at Berkeley in 1955, followed by a Doctor of Medicine degree from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1959. His postgraduate years were marked by an internship and residency in Internal Medicine at Hopkins and significant research contributions at the National Institutes of Health.

His illustrious career saw him join the Albert Einstein College of Medicine as Professor of Medicine, Pharmacology, and Molecular Biology, where he also served as Associate Dean for Scientific Affairs. In 1974, he became the Founding Chair of the Department of Pharmacological Sciences at Stony Brook University’s School of Medicine, leading the department to new heights and shaping the future of medical research and education.

Dr. Grollman’s scholarly output was prolific, with over 200 papers that advanced our understanding of molecular biology and cancer research. His work on the biological consequences of DNA damage and the antitumor agent bleomycin was groundbreaking, as were his studies on the three-dimensional structures of DNA enzymes.

A recognized authority on the clinical pharmacology of herbal medicines, Dr. Grollman’s expertise was sought by the White House Commission on Alternative and Complementary Health Policy and Governor George Pataki’s Task Force on Life and Law. His academic influence extended globally, with visiting professorships at prestigious institutions around the world.

In 2003, his contributions were honored with the title of Distinguished Professor of Pharmacological Sciences at Stony Brook. His pioneering work earned him numerous accolades, including an American Cancer Society Scholarship Award and a MERIT award from the National Cancer Institute. The Environmental Mutagen Society recognized his vital research on environmental mutagenesis and his insights into DNA repair mechanisms.

As the world grappled with COVID-19, Dr. Grollman rose to the challenge, dedicating himself to the fight against the pandemic with unwavering commitment.

In 2011, the Environmental Mutagen Society bestowed upon him a prestigious recognition award for his research in environmental mutagenesis, which brought to light the public health crisis of aristolochic acid-induced kidney failure and urothelial cancer. This award also honored his seminal work in elucidating the molecular mechanisms by which DNA repair proteins process oxidative DNA damage.

During the tumultuous times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Grollman’s indefatigable spirit shone brightly as he led a consortium of top medical and scientific minds from an off-university chemistry lab. Together, they revisited a drug he had worked on in the 1960s—emetine—and studied its effectiveness and toxicity. His dedication persisted until his final days, culminating in the shipment of newly manufactured pills for the first clinical trial against Covid. His team’s research also demonstrated emetine’s efficacy as an antiviral agent against Zika, Ebola, and herpesviruses.

Dr. Grollman’s investigative prowess was pivotal in discovering the cause of Balkan Endemic Nephropathy, a previously fatal kidney disease. His relentless research and collaboration across nations revealed that the herb Aristolochia, intermingled with wheat crops in the Balkans, was the culprit. His findings led to changes in farming and milling methods that halted the disease’s spread.

Moreover, he identified the use of this herb in Traditional Chinese Medicine as the cause of Taiwan’s high rate of urothelial cancer, leading to a cessation in its use and a subsequent decline in kidney failure and cancer cases in the region.

An adventurer at heart, Dr. Grollman’s curiosity extended beyond the realms of science and medicine. He traversed all continents except Antarctica, scaling peaks such as Mt. Whitney and Mt. Kilimanjaro, as well as the Alps, the Andes, and Mt. Kellas. His journeys took him to Base Camp 3 on Everest and through the Karakoram Mountains, where he and his guide charted a new route. His profound connection with the Himalayas led to a friendship with the Dalai Lama, whom he invited to Stony Brook to receive an honorary degree. Dr. Grollman also established a program at Stony Brook University to support a Tibetan student annually, typically in pursuit of a degree in Public Health.

A champion of justice, Dr. Grollman’s actions consistently reflected his commitment to protecting and supporting those treated unfairly. His leadership and mentorship touched countless lives, leaving an indelible mark on those who had the privilege of knowing him and benefiting from his work. Dr. Grollman’s passing leaves a void in the hearts of many, but his enduring impact on science, medicine, and humanity will forever be cherished and remembered.
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Editorial

Uniqueness of where we live

Upon the recent receipt of a letter from a Virginia-native third-grade student (see Letters to the Editor), TBR has begun to think retrospectively about what it is that makes our coverage area so unique.

As residents and representatives of Long Island’s North Shore, we often forget to share the natural beauty and cultural heritage that defines where we live. The allure of the picturesque beaches, lush woodlands and historic villages capture our hearts, making it an ideal place to call home.

In terms of making a living, our areas offer a diverse range of opportunities. From bustling commercial centers like those off Nesconset Highway to locally owned shops, residents here engage in various professions spanning industries such as health care, education, finance, hospitality and more. Here at TBR, we work to keep the community informed and up to date on all local news and events.

Our area is also home to excellent academic influence provided enormous contributions made by our research institutions, like Cold Spring Harbor Lab and Brookhaven National Lab, and, of course, like Stony Brook University and Medical Center, the flagship campus of the State University System.

To paint a picture, our coverage area displays picture-perfect beaches stretching along the coastline, fringed by towering bluffs and pebble-riddled sands. You can find quaint village scenery all throughout our coverage area in Port Jefferson, Stony Brook and St. James, exhibiting charming Colonial architecture and a pleasant way to tour the towns.

For fun, residents and visitors alike indulge in a plethora of activities. From relaxing beach days and scenic walks through Avalon or Frank Melville parks to cultural events and culinary delights, there’s something for everyone. Whether it’s exploring historic landmarks on Washington’s Spy Trail or the Stony Brook Carriage Museum, or attending art festivals or catching a show at Northport’s John W. Engeman Theater or Port Jefferson’s Theatre Three, our coverage area offers endless opportunities for leisure and recreation.

As for wildlife, our coverage area is home to a diverse array of creatures. Along the coast, you may spot ospreys soaring overhead or even the endangered piping plover. Our rocky shoreline creates a unique habitat for horseshoe crabs, hermit crabs and fish galore. While inland, deer, fox and various bird species inhabit the woodlands and marshes, adding to our area’s natural charm.

When it comes to food, there is no shortage of options for whatever culinary palette you crave. Famous for our bacon-egg-and-cheese bagel sandwiches, gourmet delis, New-York-style pizza or fresh seafood caught off the shores to hearty Italian and Irish fare, there’s no shortage of delicious dishes to savor.

For your ears, you’ll find a vibrant music scene with a diverse range of genres. From iconic rock bands like Billy Joel and Blue Öyster Cult to emerging indie artists and classical ensembles, the music of our area reflects the eclectic tastes and talents of its residents. Local tributes to music and entertainment are always ready with the Long Island Music and Entertainment Hall of Fame and The Jazz Loft, both located in Stony Brook, hosting various events catered to music enthusiasts.

For the athletes and sports fans, our local high schools represent some of the most competitive athletes across the state in all disciplines. Rocky Point High School Cheerleading earned another national title this year, while the Lady Patriots of Ward Melville High School were crowned soccer state champions. If that isn’t enough, our very own Stony Brook University is yet another destination for local sports viewing, representing some of the finest student-athletes in the NCAA.

Tourism is a driver of our local economy as well as we are fortunate to have the greatest city in the world, New York City, within reach. Our area is a treasure trove of natural beauty, cultural heritage and community spirit. A place where small-town charm meets cosmopolitan sophistication, where history whispers secrets from its streets and where a vibrant community thrives, hand in hand with the beauty of the natural world. This unique confluence is what continues to make our area a coveted haven in the heart of New York state.

Letters to the Editor

Letter from a third grader

Hello! I am a third-grade student in northern Virginia. Our class is learning about the United States, and I will be teaching our school about the state of New York. In May, I will create a display for our State Fair that I hope will make you proud.

Although I have gathered facts about your state from books and websites, I think that I can receive the best information from the people who live there. This is why I am writing to you. I am hoping that you would be willing to send me some items to help me learn more about the best things in your state. You might consider sending items such as postcards, pictures, souvenirs, newspaper articles or any other unique items that would be useful to show your state’s pride.

Here are a few questions:
• Why do you live in your state? What first brought your family there?
• How do you make money? What is your job?
• What does your state look like?
• What do people do for fun?
• What animals live there?
• What traditional food/recipes does your state have?
• What type of music is native to your state?
• Do you have a state athletics team?
• What geographical features are unique to your state?

I will need to gather all of my information by the second week of May. You can mail items to this address: The Langley School, 1411 Balls Hill Road, McLean, Virginia 22101. I really appreciate your help!

Connor McLean, Virginia

Response to concern for electric school buses

Assemblyman Ed Flood (R-Port Jefferson) stated what he thought were the downsides of Gov. Kathy Hochul’s [D] proposed all-electric school bus mandate. Unlike Flood’s ideas, the Hochul proposal is based on facts, not hearsay or fiction. As such, here is my countergargument to Flood’s points:

Cost: While transitioning to electric buses does involve initial investment, studies suggest that the long-term operational and maintenance costs of electric buses are lower than those of traditional diesel buses. Additionally, with advancements in technology and potential government subsidies, the cost barrier is gradually decreasing.

Tax increase: While there might be initial costs associated with implementing electric buses, the long-term benefits, such as reduced health care costs due to decreased air pollution and job creation in the clean energy sector, can offset these expenses. Moreover, targeted funding sources, such as federal grants or revenue from carbon pricing mechanisms, can be explored to mitigate the impact on taxpayers.

Reliability: Modern electric buses are becoming increasingly reliable as technology advances. Manufacturers are continuously improving battery technology and bus design to enhance performance and durability. Moreover, many cities worldwide have successfully integrated electric buses into their fleets, demonstrating their reliability in real-world scenarios.

Battery safety: While any energy storage system carries inherent risks, stringent safety standards and protocols are in place to mitigate these risks. Advances in battery technology, such as thermal management systems and robust battery enclosures, have significantly reduced the likelihood of battery-related incidents. Additionally, proper training for maintenance personnel and emergency responders further enhances safety.

Temperature fluctuations: Extreme temperatures can indeed affect battery performance, but modern electric buses are equipped with sophisticated thermal management systems to regulate battery temperature and optimize performance in varied climates.

Moreover, ongoing research and development aim to improve battery resilience to temperature extremes, ensuring reliable operation in diverse environments.

To summarize: While transitioning to electric buses involves challenges, dismissing them outright based on outdated or exaggerated concerns undermines the potential benefits of sustainable transportation. Decision-makers should prioritize evidence-based policymaking and consider the long-term environmental, economic and public health advantages of electrifying the transportation sector. Additionally, engaging stakeholders — including industry experts and community members — can facilitate informed decision-making and address legitimate concerns through collaboration and innovation.

Harvey Miller
East Meadow

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From early struggles with ‘pooping in the woods’ to appreciating bathroom lighting

A long time ago, I joined a Freshman Outdoor Program trip before the start of college. The venture provided us with a chance to meet other incoming college students, to enjoy hiking, and to ask upper class students who were leading the effort questions about classes, places to eat on campus, and anything else that crossed our minds.

I was excited and anxious about my trek along the trail, in part because I was unaccustomed to relieving myself anywhere other than on a porcelain throne. Recognizing my trepidation, my father, who sensed an opportunity to tease me, asked in the weeks before my trip how I was going to “poop in the woods.” My fear of taking care of business out in nature was even greater than my concern in the woods. “My fear of taking care of business chance to meet other incoming college students, of the above trade school degrees, associate degrees or bootcamp coding, in short jobs that come with offer professional certificates in technology, require a college degree but do pay well. These evaluating buying a house compared to renting

In the days leading up to the trip, which lasted about a week, I tried to cut back on my food intake and I planned to use a bathroom with indoor plumbing as often as possible before climbing aboard the Appalachian-trail bound bus. For more than a day, I successfully shut my system down, avoiding the normal routine. Somehow, for close to two days, I managed to eat, carry about 60 pounds on my back, hike up and down mountains, and avoid pooping in the woods.

Then, as if my body refused to obey my stubborn will, I couldn’t take another step. Seeing me freeze on the trail, one of our upper class guides asked me what was wrong. Did my feet hurt? No. Did I need some water or food? No and no. Was I in pain? Yes, but not in the way I wanted to discuss.

I indicated that I had to “use the bathroom.” The guide told the group to stop, at which point I removed my backpack, took the small shovel we used to create our own buried fertilizer, and raced off to the left. How far, I wondered, would I have to go to avoid being seen by my fellow students, but be close enough that I didn’t seem like I was reading the New York Times while awaiting the arrival of the number two train?

With each step, my system recognized that I was getting closer to relieving itself, which meant that I couldn’t go much further without risking soiling myself. I picked a spot that had what looked like poison ivy. Moving over, I found another place that looked nothing like the comfort of home, but would have to do. After I dug a small hole, I squatted. I immediately felt something brush against my right butt cheek.

I turned around quickly and realized, with relief, that it was just a branch.

Throughout the decades that followed, I have put considerable effort into finding a toilet and to avoiding unpleasant restrooms. The search for a relatively clean and manageable bathroom has involved walking into nice hotels in cities around the country and world.

To my great surprise, the McDonald’s at the Spanish Steps in Rome, which has a surprisingly appetizing-looking pasta bar that we couldn’t get ourselves to sample while in Italy, had remarkably clean bathrooms, which my wife and I used many times while trekking around the historic city.

Central Park, which is improbably spacious and beautiful amid the concrete jungle of Manhattan, has a web page with the locations of public restrooms around the park, although, despite living there for over a decade, I rarely ever used.

Throughout Manhattan, I have searched for restaurants, museums and bars, where the bathrooms don’t become stadium-level sullied until well after happy hour begins.

With the advent of social media, which took off well after I left New York City, I have found several pages dedicated to the process of finding a bathroom, including one called @poopersguide, which has pictures of the facilities.

Recently, I went to a fancier restaurant outside the city. To set the mood, the lighting was fairly dim. An accommodating waiter even came over, took out his iPhone and smoothly shined his flashlight over the menu.

When I excused myself to use the restroom, I came back with a small smirk on my face and was met with expectant looks.

“Well, that was the cleanest restaurant bathroom I’ve ever used,” I laughed. “It was a little concerned about using it. Oh, and I know where we can read the menu next time. The lighting in there was brighter than anywhere in my house.”

Is college worth it?

The debate over the value of a college education continues. If anything, it has intensified, with the answer usually given in relative earnings over a lifetime, as if we were evaluating buying a house compared to renting an apartment. While education has its economic side, there is so much more to consider on the subject.

First the obvious. A four year college degree has always been thought of as a ticket to a better life because of the financial advantages it is thought to offer. College grads, in the main, earn higher wages, suffer lower unemployment, and as a result of having more income, enjoy better health and easier access to home ownership, the traditional wealth builder.

However, today there are jobs that don’t require a college degree but do pay well. These might include those in construction, those that offer professional certificates in technology, bootcamp coding, in short jobs that come with trade school degrees, associate degrees or apprenticeships. This path works if the student already has such a goal and knows what he or she wants to do.

But what else do students get from a college experience besides, perhaps, a substantial amount of debt? Student debt is the highest category of debt in the United States, totaling $1.76 trillion according to recent data. That is the result of private colleges averaging $223,200 over the course of four years, and even public institutions costing $104,000.

So what could make college worth the price? For starters, how many 17-year-olds know what career they want for the rest of their lives? College gives students a chance to discover themselves, be exposed to different disciplines and see what appeals to them. So often, students enter college with vague ideas of a major only to switch dramatically by the third year.

College students often have opportunities for travel, for research and certainly for networking professionally and socially. Just meeting others from different regions, religions and cultures professionally and socially. Just meeting others for travel, for research and certainly to network.

Today we are facing the opposite. As a result of the pandemic, education has suffered a substantial setback for our students, a gap that we may never bridge. And further debate over the value of education in a college setting is further risk for progress. Other nations put so much importance on education that they make college free for all their members. We are going in the opposite direction at considerable risk to our national standing.

It would be nice if all youngsters experienced the tremendous satisfaction of learning. To attend college in order to get the diploma is one thing. For some of the reasons stated above, that can be a goal. But to learn for the sake of learning, and not just to do well on Jeopardy!, is another.

To make that clearer, I would liken the brain to a muscle. When we exercise the muscle systematically and regularly, it grows and becomes stronger. It also feels good to experience that exercise, especially after a visit to the gym. The more we stretch the brain with knowledge, the more it will grow. And with growth, life becomes more satisfying. No one wants to stagnate.

My mother, who passionately valued education, used to say, “Someone might take away your possessions, but no one can take away your education.” In our world, with so much uncertainty, how clever it would be to build on something so secure as education. And to graduate from college is to acquire more of that great asset, for ourselves and our country.

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