



Albany's bail laws under fire

Local officials demand accountability for perpetrators of recent crimes

A4



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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,
that the Board of Fire
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htown Fire District, in the
Town of Smithtown, Suffolk
County, New York, at a
meeting thereof, held on the
4th day of March, 2024,
duly adopted, subject to

permissive referendum, a
Resolution, an abstract of
which is as follows:

The Resolution authorizes a
transfer in an amount not to
exceed \$350,000.00 from
the Equipment Reserve
account to the General Fund
account for the purchase of
one (1) 2023 Light Rescue
Fire Police Vehicle with all
necessary equipment.

Dated:

Smithtown, New York
March 6, 2024

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SMITHTOWN, SUFFOLK
COUNTY, NEW YORK

THOMAS A. BUFFA
DISTRICT SECRETARY

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Remembering Valerie ‘Val’ Rose Kratochvil

Valerie Rose Kratochvil, age 16, suddenly passed away on March 4. Valerie is survived in heartfelt memories by her parents Margaret and Kenneth and her twin sister Laurie. Valerie is also survived by her Aunt Susan, Uncle Scott Sedacca and cousins David and Kristen Sedacca; Uncle Ken Fee and cousin Kerry Fee; Uncle Peter Fee; Aunt Anne and Ray Redeman and cousins Jessica and Kaitlyn Redeman; Uncle Anthony and Aunt Donna Termini and cousins Bella, Joey and Lucy Termini; Aunt Mildred and Uncle Phil Musco. She was predeceased by her grandparents Marilyn and Kenneth Kratochvil, Ann and Matthew Fee, and her great-grandfather Vincent Petrolino.

OBITUARY Valerie was born Nov. 8, 2007, and she brought light into the world instantly. She was 2 minutes older than her twin sister Laurie — and she never let her forget it!

Valerie was a junior at Smithtown High School East. She was warm, loving, compassionate and the best friend a person could want. Valerie was a brilliant girl; she kept herself to a standard of straight As that she worked incredibly hard to keep in order to pursue her goal of becoming a pharmacist one day.

She was a member of the Music, French and Social Studies honor societies. She was also on track to be a part of the National Honor Society.

Valerie had a love for singing that was unmatched. She was also involved in the choir program at her school. She participated in NYSSMA for three years and was in the All-County Choir for two years.

The high school junior was not only an incredible student and singer but she was an



Valerie Kratochvil. Photos courtesy St. James Funeral Home

athlete as well. She was on varsity winter and spring track teams, varsity field hockey, Long Island field hockey and other Long Island field hockey club teams. She participated in the Athletes Helping Athletes Club at her school that showcased her dedication to sharing her love of sports with others.

Many friends and family members called her Val. Outside of school Val was an avid reader who adored going to the store to get



her next book to read. She had a passion for cooking and baking as well. Val was fashionable and loved to shop for clothes, curl her hair and do makeup. Val was an avid skier and went on many vacations with her family, skiing in Vermont and Lake Tahoe, traveled to the Caribbean and several times to Disney World.

Valerie brought happiness every single day to those she encountered. She touched the hearts of everyone. Valerie loved life and had the brightest future. Our family is heartbroken and we know Valerie will be with us always. Heaven has gained a beautiful angel. Valerie, we will miss you forever and will remember

all of the wonderful memories that you have given us every day for the rest of our lives. We love you, Valerie!

Since Valerie’s passing, loved ones, friends, teammates and community members have offered support to the Kratochvil family. Teammate and friend, Hannah Honor, started a Meal Train for the family, asking for donations and contributions to a meal calendar — providing meals for the family — extending through April.

Offering additional support Mallory Guerin, director of Long Island Field Hockey, created a GoFundMe page asking for support for Valerie’s family. All donations will go directly to the Kratochvil family to help pay for funeral expenses, meals and any other expenses while they are out of work. To donate visit GoFundMe and search for the Kratochvil family.

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Local officials demand bail reform

BY SAMANTHA RUTT
EDITOR1@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

A chilling crime has shaken communities across Suffolk County as police discovered scattered human remains in Babylon and Bethpage, leaving residents horrified and demanding justice.

COUNTY The shock has escalated into outrage as local officials and law enforcement point fingers at Albany's bail laws, which they claim have allowed suspects to walk free without posting bail.

County Executive Ed Romaine (R) minced no words in expressing his frustration, stating, "The failure of Albany's bail laws has resulted in those charged with dismembering and placing body parts in our communities to walk free without posting any bail." Romaine's sentiments echoed the feelings of many Suffolk County residents who consider the current bail system is failing to protect the community.

In response to the recent crime, New York State Sen. Anthony Palumbo (R-New Suffolk) and Assemblyman Michael Durso (R-Massapequa Park) swiftly introduced new legislation (S.8751) to address the shortcomings of the bail system. The proposed bill aims to make body dismemberment and concealment of a human corpse a bail-eligible offense, highlighting the urgency of the situation.

Palumbo condemned the current bail laws, stating, "Nobody with an ounce of sensibility would say it's a good idea to let someone charged with the sickening act of human dismemberment leave jail and roam the streets." Durso agreed, vowing to fight for change to ensure the safety of Suffolk County residents.

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond Tierney (R) also weighed in on the issue, responding to Gov. Kathy Hochul's (D) statements on bail reform in relation to the recent tragic discoveries. Tierney accused the governor of being "completely clueless or deceitful" about the criminal justice system and defended the efforts of law enforcement in the face of what he called "a broken bail system."

Assemblyman Ed Flood (R-Port Jefferson) added his voice to the chorus of criticism, expressing dismay over the release of suspects involved in the recent case where human remains were found. Flood denounced the lack of "humanity and morals" in the criminal justice system, attributing the problems to the flaws in bail reform laws.

The collective outcry from local officials emphasizes the need for action to address the failures of New York State's bail laws.

As communities continue to grapple with the consequences of these shortcomings, residents are looking to Albany for solutions that prioritize public safety and accountability in the criminal justice system.

Gov. Hochul responds

In a recent interview with PIX11, Hochul addressed concerns about bail reform, acknowledging the frustrations of law enforcement. She emphasized the importance of allowing judges to consider the whole body of evidence when making bail decisions and expressed her commitment to keeping people safe.

Hochul responded to additional comments made by Tierney, who suggested the need to reinstate the dangerousness clause and emphasized the law needs to be looked over.

"The standard changed just a few months ago — less than a year ago — and instead of the



Suffolk County Executive Ed Romaine speaks at a press conference to call on bail reform. Photo courtesy Ed Romaine flickr page

standard of dangerousness, we ask the judges now to look at a whole body of evidence," she stressed.

Meanwhile, the community remains on edge as law enforcement continues to investigate the disturbing crime that has left a deep impact on the residents of the respective areas. As the investigation unfolds, residents are hopeful that meaningful change will come.

"Now, this is a very unique circumstance in Suffolk County," Hochul said. "I know the Suffolk County Police Department is working hard to get to the bottom of this as is the DA. ... They're doing their job and I respect that. But the bail laws I thought went too far in the wrong direction. I'm bringing them back, and we're going to continue to make sure that we keep people safe."

Obituaries

Elisabeth 'Betsy' Palmedo

Elisabeth Palmedo led a long, adventurous and charmed life, and experienced a very peaceful death on Feb. 20.

Her mother, Maria Williams Sheerin, was from a Richmond family which preceded the Founding Fathers of Virginia. Betsy was proud to be a "direct descendent of George Washington's sister." Betsy's father, the Rev. Charles Sheerin, was an Episcopal minister born in Pittsburgh to an Irish family that had recently immigrated from Scotland. Her father was loved by everyone and known for joyously playing Irish songs on the piano's black keys.

Betsy was the youngest child of three, born Feb. 25, 1935. Her brother Charles came first, then her sister Maria. Betsy arrived six years later. When Betsy was only 13 years old, her father's life was cut short by a heart attack at age 50.

She began cultivating her talent in singing, especially classical operatic music. She graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston in 1960 and met her future husband, Phil Palmedo, during her time there. They married in 1961 and would live in Paris, then on Long Island with sons Chris and Lawrence, in Shoreham, later Setauket and finally Head of the Harbor.

In 1976 Elisabeth dazzled a Carnegie Recital Hall audience with her New York debut. She performed a challenging program by Purcell, Schubert, Duparc and others. The New York Times called out the "clear, pure top" of her voice and noted that "the more a song asked of her the more she brought to it."

Thanks to her husband, Betsy was able to travel the world, which she embraced with enthusiasm. This included adventures in Indonesia, Peru, South Africa and Kenya, where the family found itself in the middle of a military coup in Nairobi. Her harrowing account was later published in an interview with the Three Village Herald.

In the early 1980s, she and a group of classically trained musicians launched the North Shore Pro Musica. As her close friend and collaborator Olga Zilboorg commented in a newspaper profile: "People used to think that just because artists were local they had to be something less than first-class professionals." But the Pro Musica dispelled that misconception by putting on world-class concerts throughout its 40-year run. Along with being the co-founder,

Betsy served as president, treasurer and whatever else needed done.

She performed in many other ensembles, such as the Galatia Trio, which staged a landmark concert at the Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park in New Hampshire. More recently, Elisabeth enjoyed working with the Lark Trio, with her dear friends Bonnie Thivierge and Ann Jupp.

Elisabeth was dedicated to promoting modern and contemporary composers, especially her friends Jack Lessard and Willard Roosevelt. These works were challenging, but she successfully dedicated herself to interpreting and performing serious classical music with eagerness and enthusiasm.

Her multitude of students have included young talents on their way to conservatory, gray-haired professionals seeking to master show tunes and all personalities in between. Her recitals featured a range of artistic expression and were always joyous occasions.

Betsy spent great effort ensuring that the musicians she worked with were well paid. She also would not hesitate to offer visiting artists dinner and a room to sleep overnight. She certainly enjoyed planning and hosting parties, including summer jazz soirees that featured her grandson Tree on trumpet.

She was blessed with bountiful friends, some of her closest being her niece Maria and "sister cousins" Penelope and Mary Page. Also, her Liberal Ladies Luncheon group, the Nissequogue Beach Club community, friends from the North Suffolk Garden Club, her chums from Boston and over the decades a steady stream of wild and crazy musicians who helped underscore the undeniable fact that Elisabeth was an artist at her heart and soul.

Her final days were spent in the company of Phil, her beloved husband of 63 years, her infinitely loyal hound dog Brogan and her invaluable caretaker Sol Starcic.

A memorial service and celebration of life will be held on Sunday, April 7, at 4 p.m. at St. James Episcopal Church, 490 N. Country Road, St. James. Reception to follow.

Family members request nothing more than to reflect on her enthusiasm for life and the arts, but she would most certainly have approved a donation in her memory to the Hudson Peconic chapter of Planned Parenthood Inc. at www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-hudson-peconic.

Remembering Michael H. Burner

PREPARED BY THE BURNER FAMILY
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Michael Burner, 80, of Westhampton Beach, passed away on March 6.

Michael was born on Sept. 15, 1943, to Kurt and Anna Burner in the Bronx. At 16 years old, his first job was in a button factory also in the Bronx. He was a rising star in the retail world and as only Michael could do, he went into an entirely new field: construction. Later in life he became a builder/developer, as the founder and president of Elderco Inc., a creator of fine homes in the Hamptons.

In 1980 with three kids in tow, Brian, Robin and Gabriele, he married Nancy J. Marchesini who already had daughter Tara. Soon Britt, Kyra and Taylor made it an uneven seven.

To say Michael was a family man is an understatement.

From starting the Safe Homes Program and Friday Night Recreation to coaching sports teams and serving as president

community service, Michael was a leader and active member of the Port Jefferson Lions Club and, later, the Moriches Bay Project, Kiwanis of Greater Westhampton and was a charter member of the Westhampton Yacht Squadron.

Michael will be missed by his friends, family, clients, business associates, the Elderco team and all of the other various lives he touched with his sarcasm and quick wit.

Michael is survived by his wife Nancy; son Brian; daughters Robin, Gabriele, Tara, Britt, Kyra and Taylor; 18 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to The Michael H. Burner Community Service Trust at everloved.com/life-of/michael-burner. All donations will be used to support various community groups and projects in which Michael was involved.



of the Port Jefferson School Board of Education, Michael was an impactful part of the local community. Ever dedicated to



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Farmingville woman indicted for allegedly stealing \$440k from parents

Used money to gamble at Jake’s 58 Casino in Islandia

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney today announced on March 13 the indictment of Elizabeth M. Motti, 55, of Farmingville, for allegedly stealing approximately \$440,000 from her vulnerable elderly parents over a one-and-a-half-year period that she used to gamble at Jake’s 58 Casino in Islandia.

“Our elder community is at increased risk for fraud and theft,” said District Attorney Tierney. “We want to place those who choose to exploit our vulnerable populations on notice that if you are caught, you will be held accountable.”

According to the investigation, between April 2017 and November 2018, Motti allegedly stole a total of \$440,063 from her parents’ bank accounts by using debit cards to make withdrawals in the amount of \$355,046 at ATM machines located at Jake’s 58 Casino and by making cash withdrawals from their accounts in the amount of \$85,017. Motti’s parents had moved in with her after her mother had surgery so Motti could be her caretaker.

On March 13, 2024, Motti was arraigned on the indictment before Supreme Court Justice Richard Ambro, for Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a Class C felony.

Justice Ambro ordered Motti to be released on her own recognizance.

Under current New York State law, the offense for which Motti was indicted is considered non-bail eligible meaning prosecutors cannot ask for bail. Motti is being represented by the Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County. Her next court date is April 18, 2024.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Donna M. Planty of the Financial Crimes Bureau, and the investigation was conducted by Detective Anthony Mezzapelle from the Suffolk County Police Department currently assigned to the Financial Crimes Bureau of the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office.

—SUFFOLK COUNTY D.A.’S OFFICE

POLICE BLOTTER

The following incidents have been reported by Suffolk County Police:

Driver killed in fiery crash in Smithtown

Suffolk County Police Fourth Squad Detectives are investigating a single-vehicle crash that killed a man in Smithtown on March 10. A man was driving a 2006 Honda Civic westbound on East Main Street when he lost control of the vehicle, which overturned and caught fire, in front of 280 East Main St. at approximately 3:45 a.m. The driver was pronounced dead at the scene by a physician assistant from the Office of the Suffolk County Medical Examiner. An autopsy will be performed to confirm the driver’s identity. The Honda was impounded for a safety check.

Anyone with information on this crash is asked to contact the Fourth Squad at 631-854-8451.

Ronkonkoma woman killed in car crash

New York State Police are investigating a single-vehicle crash that killed a Ronkonkoma woman on the Southern State Parkway on March 4.

Stephanie T. Malone, 28, was operating a 2013 Nissan Altima on the eastbound Southern State Parkway near exit 40S in Islip when the accident occurred. No other injuries were reported. It was not immediately clear how many vehicles were involved in the crash.

The investigation is ongoing. New York State Police are asking for any witnesses or anyone with information to call 631-756-3300.

Commack massage parlor raided

Suffolk County Police arrested a Flushing woman during a raid at a Commack massage parlor on March 7.

In response to numerous community complaints, Fourth Precinct Crime Section officers, in conjunction with the Community Support Unit, Fourth Squad detectives, Property Section officers, and Huntington Public Safety, conducted an investigation into Nature Therapy, located at 160 Commack Road, and arrested Zhuo Wang at 3:16 p.m.

Wang, 55, of Flushing, was charged with alleged Unauthorized Practice of a Profession and Sexual Abuse 3rd Degree. The Town of Huntington issued multiple violations to the business. Wang was issued a Desk Appearance Ticket and is scheduled to be arraigned at First District Court in Central Islip on a later date.

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

CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Do you recognize this man? Photo from SCPD

Wanted for Grand Larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Second Squad detectives are seeking the public’s help to identify and locate the man who allegedly stole credit cards from two lockers at 24 Hour Fitness, located at 4000 Jericho Turnpike in East Northport on Feb. 24 at approximately 11:50 a.m. The same man later attempted to use the credit cards at Target, located at 98 Veterans Memorial Highway in Commack.



Do you recognize this woman? Photo from SCPD

Wanted for Theft of Services

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Second Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public’s help to identify and locate the woman who received hair and nail services, valued at \$168, from Bocu Salon, located at 6401 Jericho Turnpike in Commack, on Feb. 9 at 1:30 p.m. and allegedly left without paying.

— COMPILED BY HEIDI SUTTON

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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**EXCELLENCE. WE MAKE AN ISSUE
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SBU couple scores \$1.2M to study ways to provide anti-pathogen coating

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Hoping to take a page out of nature's playbook, a married couple in the Department of Materials Science and Chemical Engineering is studying a structure that could prevent the spread of pathogens on the surface.

Before the pandemic started, Research Professor Maya Endoh and Associate Professor Tadanori Koga were exploring how anti microbial coatings controlled pathogens on the molecular scale. With the pandemic, they became more focused on ways to prevent pathogens from causing infections after people came into contact with contaminated surfaces.

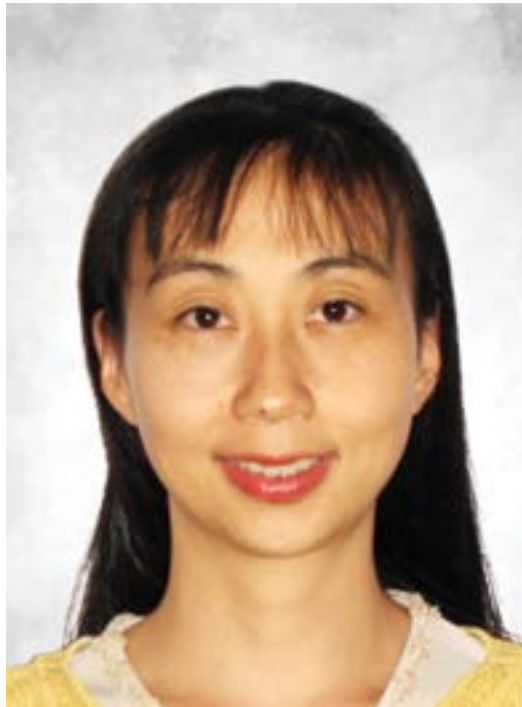
Working with researchers from Oak Ridge National Laboratory, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, the team received \$12 million over three years as a part of the Department of Energy's Biopreparedness Research Virtual Experiment initiative, which supports multidisciplinary research efforts designed to strengthen precautionary measures against infectious disease outbreaks. Koga and Endoh received a subcontract of \$1.2 million from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory which runs until December 2026.

This kind of study, along with other funded research on the spread of pathogens, could be "important to prevent the next pandemic," said Endoh. She added that this kind of work could not only help reduce the danger from another potential pandemic, but could also help cut down infections from other common health threats.

The research plans to explore the physical and chemical interactions that occur when bacteria come in contact with a material surface.

To develop surface coatings that might resist the spread of disease-carrying pathogens, Koga and Endoh are turning to an insect that will be even more abundant than usual this year. For the first time since 1803, the 13-year and 17-year cicadas will emerge at the same time.

Koga and Endoh, however, are less focused on their prevalence or their loud noises than they are on their wings, which resist bacteria and may also provide protection against viruses and fungi, as something about their nanostructure disables these pathogens.



Maya Endoh and Tadanori Koga. Photo courtesy Stony Brook University



"We want to learn from nature," said Endoh. "As material scientists, we want to mimic this structure."

Their method of killing bacteria is to facilitate bacterial attachment to nanopattern surfaces. They are targeting surfaces that are constantly and directly exposed to pathogens, such as medical devices, tools and sensors.

Their computational results suggest that a nanopatterned surface can puncture a bacterial outer membrane. These scientists can not specify the time range clearly, which is something they are pursuing with the awarded project.

"We are targeting the surfaces which are constantly and directly exposed to pathogens, such as medical devices, tools and sensors," Koga and Endoh explained in an email.

Structural defense

The structure of the cicada wings have nanopillars that are about 100 nanometers tall and that are separated by about 100 nanometers from each other. The nanopillars they plan to use have a height of 10 nanometers, a diameter of 50 nanometers and a space between adjacent cylinders of 70 nanometers.

By creating a similar structure with polymers, the Stony Brook scientists will attempt to manufacture materials that

provide the same resistance.

They will optimize the geometric parameters of the nanostructure, especially its height and interpillar spacing, to create different nano topographies, including nanopillars, nanowalls, nanospikes and nanodomains.

They are starting their work with the bacteria *E. coli* and will use computational approaches to optimize surface geometric parameters, bacteria-substrate interactions and bacterial wall stiffness to create a robust structure-guided antimicrobial surface.

They will use polystyrene block polymers and are planning to use different ingredients such as biopolymers. They believe the ingredients can be varied.

According to their recent molecular dynamics simulations mimicking experimental conditions, attractive interactions promote additional membrane attachment, pulling the membrane taut against the pillars and creating tension that ruptures the cell wall. The rupture occurs at the high curvature regions near the edge of the pillars.

Surfaces coated by polymers would likely require periodic coating applications. The scientists treat those polymers with a three-dimensional link to improve the mechanical property. They also apply atomic-thin scale metal layers to make the surface more durable.

In collaboration with Brookhaven National Laboratory, they are trying to determine how to make this kind of pattern with different substances.

"We don't know what shape is the best [for various pathogens], what size is the best and what spacing is the best," said Koga.

Benefits of collaboration

Koga and Endoh appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with a range of talented scientists at other institutions.

"Luckily, we have a lot of collaborators," Endoh said.

Koga and Endoh became a part of a bigger collaboration when they worked with Jan-Michael Carrillo and Bobby Sumpter at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, who started this project.

"This is a nice step, but it's not the end," said Koga. The next step is to "create a real material."

Lifelong collaboration

Koga and Endoh met in their native Japan. Koga is from Kyushu, while Endoh grew up in Sendai, which was the epicenter of the Tōhoku earthquake in 2011, which created the tsunami at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

They came to the United States when Koga wanted to become a postdoctoral researcher for a two year assignment at Stony Brook. Over 27 years, and four children later, they are still at Stony Brook.

Over the years, Endoh juggled motherhood and a postponed PhD, which she eventually received from Kyoto University.

Koga enjoys watching Japanese players in Major League Baseball and is a fan of Dodgers superstar Shohei Ohtani. A "soccer mom," Endoh enjoys cooking and playing the violin. The couple hikes in the summer and skis in the winter.

As for their own protective measures during the pandemic, Koga and Endoh regularly washed their hands, although they didn't use Purell or other special wipes to clean any surfaces.

Former water czar leads St. James parade

BY RITA J. EGAN
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

The cold weather on Saturday, March 9, couldn't keep St. James residents from the hamlet's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade.

COMMUNITY Former Suffolk County Deputy Executive Peter Scully, nicknamed the water czar for his work in improving the county's water quality, headed up

the parade as grand marshal. Scully, who lives in neighboring Stony Brook, grew up in St. James. Former County Executive Steve Bellone was on hand to cheer on Scully, holding a sign that read, "Suffolk is lucky to have Scully."

Hundreds of attendees lined up along Lake Avenue to cheer on the elected officials, volunteer firefighters, Scouts and representatives from local organizations and businesses who marched along the street from Woodlawn Avenue to the Long Island Rail Road train station.



Photos By Rita J. Egan

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Editorial

Importance of civic associations and resident-run conversations

In the heart of every thriving community lies a network of voices, opinions and ideas that form the very essence of its identity. These voices, when united through platforms such as civic associations and other civic groups, become a powerful force for positive change and progress. As we navigate the complexities of modern life, it is essential to recognize and emphasize the invaluable role that community forums play in representing the unified voice of residents.

Civic associations and similar groups serve as the lifeblood of local democracy, providing a platform where residents can come together to discuss issues that matter most to them. These forums offer a space for open dialogue, collaboration and problem-solving, allowing community members to actively engage in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and cities.

One of the primary benefits of community forums is their ability to amplify the collective voice of residents. In a world where individual voices can often feel drowned out by larger forces, these forums empower individuals to come together and advocate for common goals and interests.

It is necessary for these groups to facilitate ongoing and productive dialogue rather than drown one another out with differences of opinions. The goal of such associations is to gather together and advocate together. Whether it's for improved public services, addressing community concerns or promoting initiatives for positive change, the unified voice of residents carries significant weight in decision-making processes.

Community forums foster a sense of belonging and solidarity among residents. By bringing people together from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, these forums bridge gaps and foster understanding, strengthening the social fabric of our communities. They provide opportunities for residents to connect, build relationships and work toward common objectives, creating a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the well-being of their community.

Civic groups can serve as a vital link between residents and local government authorities. By acting as a platform for dialogue and collaboration, these forums enable residents to communicate their needs and priorities to decision-makers. This direct engagement not only ensures that the voices of residents are heard but also facilitates more informed and inclusive decision-making processes that reflect the genuine needs and aspirations of the community.

In today's rapidly changing world, the importance of community forums cannot be overstated. As we face various challenges, ranging from urban development and environmental sustainability to affordability and changing public school landscapes, it is crucial to harness the collective wisdom and energy of our communities.

By actively participating in civic associations and other civic groups, residents can contribute to the creation of vibrant, resilient and inclusive communities that reflect their values and aspirations.

Letters to the Editor

In celebration of Long Island

Thank you for your wonderful editorial celebrating Long Island and highlighting the benefits of Long Island's history, culture, institutions and natural beauty ["Uniqueness of where we live," TBR News Media, March 7].

We should all be very proud of being Long Islanders — one of the most beautiful places in the world.

My wife reminds me that since we met 16 years ago, we have traveled to more than 39 countries, but I still love Long Island, NY, USA, the best!

Yes, it's expensive, traffic is bad, mass transit is substandard, taxes are excessive, regulations burdensome, many rules are prudish and Victorian. But Long Island has some of the best beaches, fishing, parks, wildlife and water sports in the world.

Our spring and fall seasons are beautiful and most of our people are diverse, friendly and caring. But most of all we have the NY Islanders, the NY Yankees, the NY Mets, NY Knicks, NY Nets, NY Giants and NY Jets and some of the best sports fans in the universe.

I have been a Smithtown Rotarian for over 40 years and we are dedicated to local and international charities. Long Islanders are extremely generous to Rotary helping our veterans, children, seniors, handicapped and those less fortunate. Celebrate Long Island and let's work to make it the paradise it can be.

*Alan H. Cohn
Nesconset*

Women are not cattle

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote, "The ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives."

Ironically, anti-choice Assemblyman Ed Flood [R-Port Jefferson] sponsors program CWA332 at our local Comsewogue Public Library titled, "Financial Literacy for

Women," which includes the descriptor, "Learn the basics to make informed financial decisions, regarding goals."

We know how to make informed decisions because we are not cattle. Unfortunately we must constantly organize against anti-choice legislators who consider us as such. How big to grow our families is key to our informed financial decisions, goals, investments and budgets. Is lesson No. 1, "Try not to be born with a uterus"?

*Joan Nickeson
Terryville parent*

Electric buses save money in the long run

Your article on the necessary and state-mandated transition to electric school buses makes a number of valid points, but then pivots to a recitation by state Assemblyman Ed Flood [R-Port Jefferson] of the supposed disadvantages of electric buses [TBR News Media, Feb. 29].

Before echoing the disinformation of the fossil fuel industry perhaps Flood should visit Chile, which has the world's second largest fleet of electric buses after China. Santiago alone has several thousand electric buses used for public transit in a city known for its hills. This is a far tougher job than carrying perhaps 60 students on a limited route on the flat island we live on.

Cost is another phony issue Flood raises. At the moment, the upfront cost to purchase an electric bus is higher than that of a diesel bus — that will come down in a few years as production ramps up. But even now, the electric "fuel" and maintenance required by an electric bus cost far less than those of their diesel counterparts.

And we are all paying the hidden health and medical cost of the asthma and other respiratory ailments caused or worsened by the toxic diesel bus fumes breathed by our children who ride those buses every school day.

Those few school districts that own their buses should start by buying some

electric buses as soon as possible to gain experience with them. Gov. Hochul's [D] administration needs to give them the tools they need to navigate the acquisition and installation of charging stations.

The districts that bid out their transportation contracts should modify their bid packages to reduce risk to the companies bidding by offering longer contracts for bus companies that provide an increasing portion of electric buses in their fleet during the contract.

Mass charging of school bus fleets will require upgrades to our electric grid, but these upgrades can be implemented gradually as the number of buses increases over the years. The buses can be charged at night, when off-peak rates are lower. And during the summer, when bus usage is low, their batteries can be used for grid backup and to support electric demand at peak times in the late afternoon, just as PSEGLI uses our home batteries whose cost has been subsidized by government rebates.

Finally, eliminating diesel from New York state's school bus fleet is one of many steps to fulfilling the state's climate law. Investments we make now are going toward a livable future for our kids — on and off the school bus.

*Peter Gollon
Huntington*

On the road again

March 12 was the 102nd anniversary of Northport resident Jack Kerouac. It made me reread one of his best writings, "On The Road." His works reminded me of the more adventurous spirit of youth. Sadly, as we get older, with more responsibilities and less free time, there are fewer journeys to take, but Kerouac's ideals continue to live in all of us.

*Larry Penner
Great Neck*

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Opinion

Peaking through the window into the lives of other families

When we are born, the experience is passive, as we don't suddenly decide, despite what our families might tell us later about how we couldn't wait to see the world, that it's time to leave the womb.

Similarly, once we're outside, we don't make many choices. We can't say, "Milk? Again? You don't have orange juice or maybe a chocolate milkshake?"

The people around us, the customs that define our days and years, the languages we speak and many other factors that shape who we are remain outside our control.

Definitions of normal vary by our circumstances. People who share a single room and one bathroom with four siblings and those with four dogs, three cats, and two parakeets typically accept the conditions around them.



D. None of the above

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF

"Everyone has a crazy Uncle Allen and a chatty Aunt Dorothy," they think. Or, perhaps, "everyone shops for a new wardrobe each year before the start of a school year" or "doesn't everyone run three miles before breakfast every morning?"

And then, in the journey through life, we get a window into the lives of other people.

When our daughter was about four years old, she visited a friend, who, our daughter reported, drank soda with breakfast and ate candy as a post breakfast snack. "I like soda," our daughter declared after the playdate. "Why can't I have it with breakfast, too?"

It's not just visits to other homes that become eye-opening experiences: we read about people, watch dramas about their lives, and get a sense of what we think we might strive for or reject in our expanding world.

We and our children see our families in a completely different light when we have the opportunity to compare them to the world outside. Sometimes, we not only measure up, but we exceed the limitations of other people's lives. Our children might, for example, spend

time with parents who pay little to no attention to their sons and daughters, barely aware of their comings and goings.

At that point, our helicopter parenting, which made them gnash their teeth every time we asked for more details about the events of their day, upcoming tests, school dances, or tryouts for school plays, might seem considerably less unbearable or even, dare I say it, charming.

Other times, we fall short in ways that even our children recognize is well outside the experience of most people. Some of their friends' parents might own private jets, have a spare house on the lake, or have season tickets near the front row to watch one of their favorite teams.

Despite the id-driven desire to have similar life amenities, our children, sooner or later, recognize that they shouldn't expect such lavish luxuries, even if they secretly, or, perhaps, not so secretly, hope to attain them.

And then there are the times when the world outside the family seems like the kind of easy-going, light-hearted, jovial tv show in which they'd like to star as the plucky but successful child.

During those moments, we can ask some questions about what they want or wish for that they don't have, or that, perhaps, they find too cumbersome. Yes, we tell them, we really are related to that wacky Uncle Allen, but that doesn't mean our children are going to become like him or that he has no redeeming qualities. Indeed, the search for redeeming qualities in everyone, starting with our own extended family, may help re-inflate our disappointed children.

If the head-to-head match up leaves them wanting something else, we have other options. We can suggest that no one will ever love or appreciate them as much as we do.

We can also suggest that they can use their desire for something more or different to inspire them to work hard for it and to find it for themselves and, if they choose to have one, for their own families.

Hopefully, our children can recognize that, on balance, the things that they considered givens — material, cultural, ethical and otherwise — didn't drop from the sky, but came from hard work and the best of intentions.

The Ides of March tell a tale of violence, betrayal and murder

This week brings us the Ides of March on the 15th. The designation comes from the Romans, who marked several religious services on that 74th day of the Roman calendar. It was also the deadline for settling debts in Rome. But most notable,

it's the day Julius Caesar was assassinated in the Senate by conspirators who may have numbered between 60-80.

Caesar was stabbed 23 times that day, but only one knife thrust was fatal, delivered through his ribs. He probably bled to death, and his body was left unmoved for a long time after the assailants fled. Caesar was 55 years old.



Between you and me

BY LEAH S. DUNAIEF

Caesar is not just a remote figure in history for me. In high school, I suffered with him and because of him through his account of the Gallic Wars during my four years of Latin. Reading of military battles in his own words has left me with some sense of him. In addition to being a warrior, he was also a historian, a statesman and an author who thought highly of himself, and not without merit.

History regards Caesar as one of the most brilliant military commanders. He and his legions conquered Gaul, essentially what is France today, among other major victories and reached as far as Britain.

But it was on his return

from those eight years of warfare that he was told by the Senate to disband his army and return to civilian life. Refusing, he crossed the Rubicon (where the phrase indicating an irreversible decision originates) and marched with his soldiers to Rome.

Ruling as dictator from 49 BC, Caesar was declared head of the Roman Republic by the senate for life. It was shortly thereafter, in 44 BC, that those who opposed him were able to gather support for his murder, fearing his permanent stature and absolute power. The scene was carefully staged to happen in the senate so as to appear an act for the public good.

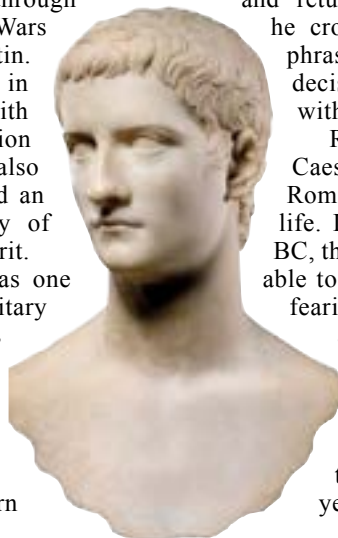
In fact, it was his death that ended the Republic. Four years of civil war ensued until

his adopted son and designated successor, Octavian, was victorious in 40 BC, and on the anniversary of Caesar's death, executed 300 senators and staff to avenge the murder. He came to rule Rome as Emperor Augustus in 27 BC. Thus began the Roman Empire.

Caesar's reforms were allowed to stand, most notably the Julian calendar, land distributions, offering citizenship to many in far off lands, unheard of until then, and a vast building program.

Caesar was warned of a plot to overthrow him, and he was urged by his wife not to go to the senate on March 15. Initially he sent word to its members that he was not coming. But then one of the conspirators went to his home and coaxed him into attending the fateful session.

Unlike Caesar, beware the Ides of March. Or at least, like Shakespeare, commemorate the event by telling one of history's better tales.



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