

# The PORT TIMES RECORD

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### Rethinking recycling

Smithtown company turns plastic waste into functional assets

**A5**

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A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO TIMES BEACON RECORD NEWS MEDIA® - APRIL 25, 2024

**Inside**

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Photo courtesy the Brown Family

# A journey to the majors

**From East Setauket to the big leagues, Ben Brown's path to the Chicago Cubs — A8**



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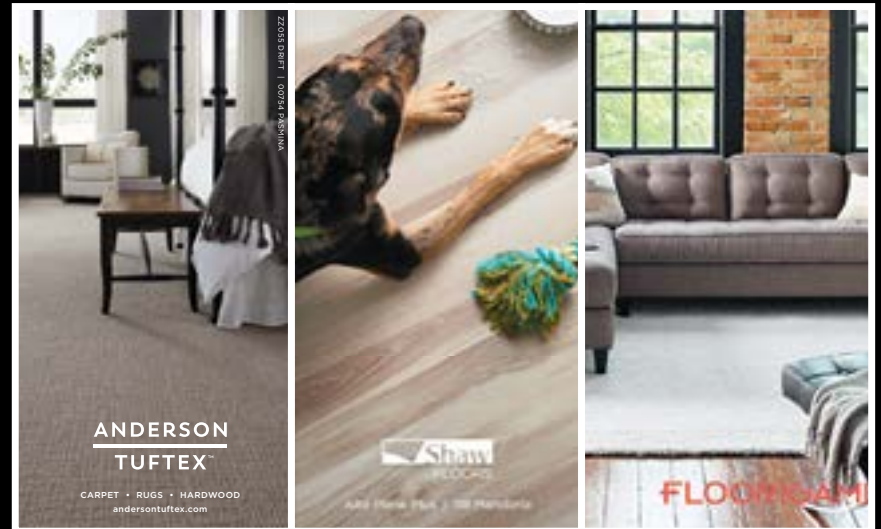
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File photo by Raymond Janis

# Federal funding strives to keep Long Island's water safe

BY ARAMIS KHOSRONEJAD  
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

In March, nearly 50 Long Island projects, totaling \$87 million, were approved in both the first and second tranche of appropriations bills that the U.S. Congress approved.

U.S. Rep. Nick LaLota (R-NY1) was able to secure monies to carry through these projects with other local congressmen,

## FUNDING

Andrew Garbarino (R-NY2) and Anthony D'Esposito (R-NY4), and Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY).

According to LaLota, after “months of relentless advocacy, including the crafting of detailed proposals and concerted efforts directed at members of the House Appropriations Committee,” they were finally able to integrate various initiatives and final appropriations bills.

For some time now, the water infrastructure on Long Island has been brought into question and, by extension, the quality of water available for citizens. Suffolk County has seen protests over the past year concerning the basic right each citizen has to clean water [See story, “Suffolk County Legislature recesses, blocks referendum on wastewater fund,” July 27, 2023, TBR News Media]. The conflict has evolved into a political issue.

The FY2024 Consolidated Appropriations Act passed with “overwhelming” bipartisan support in the House. LaLota described the local funding as “a significant milestone in our commitment to serving the people of Suffolk County.”

Included are the Town of Brookhaven's Port Jefferson Harbor dredging and wave

wall construction projects, for which \$1.5 million has been secured. “This funding will cover the costs of much-needed structural improvements to maintain the harbor,” LaLota said.

The town will benefit from another sum of \$1.5 million for sewer treatment facility expansion secured by Garbarino. The congressman also secured \$2 million for a Suffolk County sewer expansion project.

A further \$1.25 million has been secured by LaLota for the Suffolk County Water Authority's Westhampton Water Main Extension project. Old Country Road in Westhampton, which serves as an area housing 64 homes and families, has long been identified by the Suffolk County Department of Health Services for polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, contamination. An allocation of the federal monies will be used to ensure access to clean, regularly tested drinking water for affected households.

Charlie Lefkowitz, chairman of Suffolk County Water Authority, emphasized that “clean drinking water is the right of every New Yorker but making these projects affordable is critical to giving access to that resource.”

“Thanks to this funding we will soon be able to extend high-quality public water to these families, giving them peace of mind every time they turn on the tap,” he added.

LaLota and Lefkowitz, along with their teams, continue to “maintain our unwavering commitment to addressing water quality issues and prioritizing the well-being of every Long Island family,” LaLota explained in an email. With the passing of the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the considerable federal funding that comes with it, the future of the water infrastructure on Long Island looks brighter.



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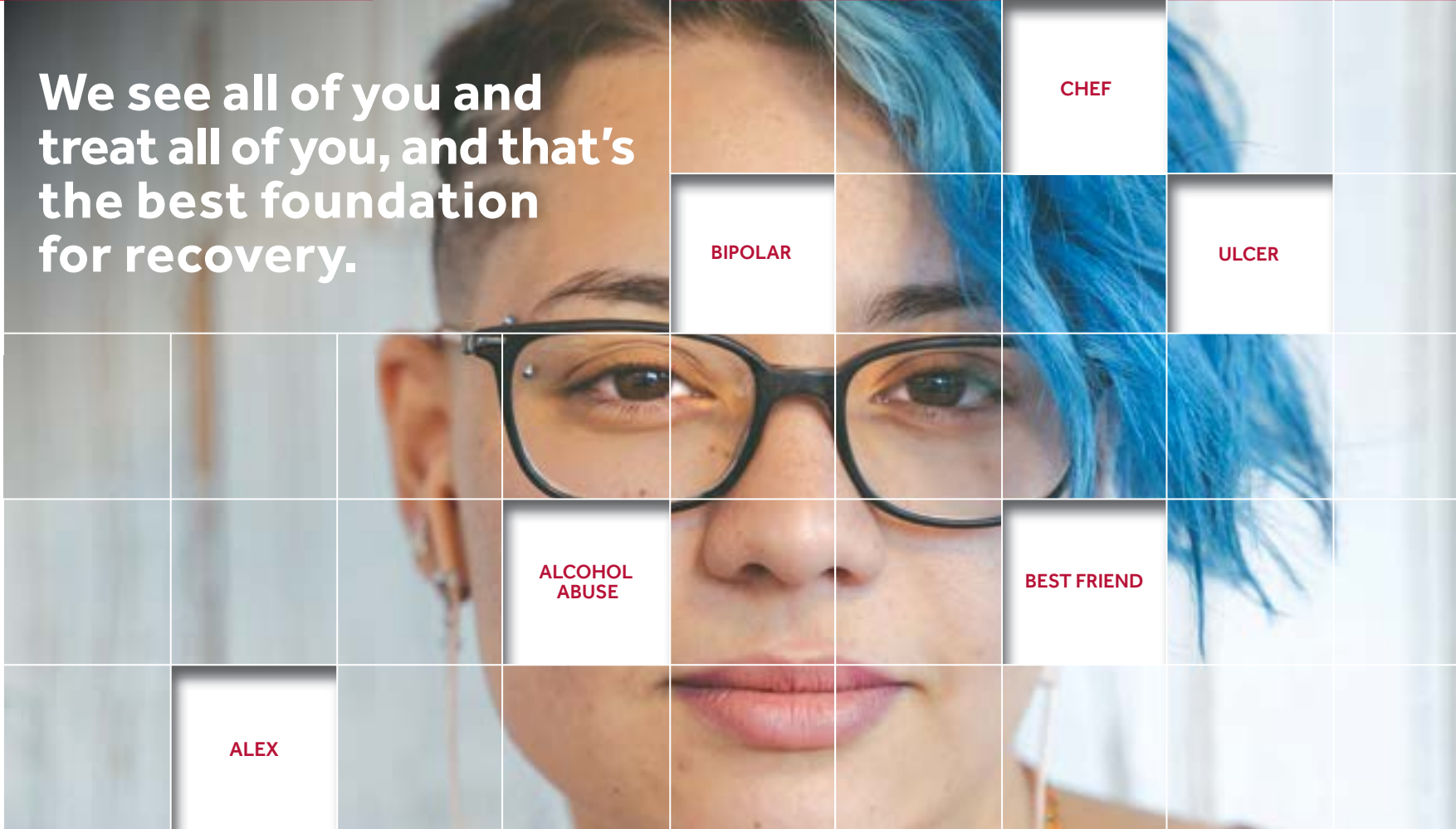
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# Northville to hold rescheduled meeting on developing its property

## The company wants to hear whether neighbors prefer warehouses or rental housing

BY MALLIE JANE KIM  
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Northville Industries is ready to try again to discuss with community members the planned development of its East Setauket property, this time at Ward Melville High School's auditorium, which can seat about 900 people — significantly more than the hotel meeting room rented for the attempted March 25 meeting, which had to be canceled when so many residents showed up they surpassed capacity, forming a fire hazard.

In a letter to residents about the new meeting, which will be Monday, April 29, at 7 p.m., Northville is clear in its determination toward development — whether warehouses, which would be within current zoning designations, or residential rental units, which would require rezoning.

“It is the intention of Northville to move forward with the development of the property,” Northville president, Peter St. Germaine, wrote in the letter. “Prior to pressing ahead for the approval of the industrial development, Northville is seeking community feedback to determine whether the residential option would be preferred by those who

would be most impacted by the future development of the site.”

Any site plan for the East Setauket property, bordered by Belle Mead and Upper Sheep Pasture roads, will have to go through a planning approval process with Brookhaven Town Board.

The current Northville plan includes addition of 220,000 square feet of industrial warehouses, 77 loading docks for tractor trailers and trucks, also 593 employee parking spaces. The alternative plan includes 140 residential rental units with a club house and pool, plus 335 parking spaces for residents and guests.

Town Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook) has been clear in his opposition to rezoning the property to allow town house-style rentals, due to the proximity of the proposed residences to large fuel storage tanks, and the lack of proximity to the kinds of infrastructure that

makes higher-density housing appealing: public transportation, retail and major roadways.

“I don't think that wrapping a rental community around the gas tanks is appropriate land use,” he said, adding that though the Three Village area needs more housing, any extra units need to go in

something that is going to be a less intensive use,” he said. “I am hoping they'll find their way to a third option.”

St. Germaine's letter also gave residents the option of emailing written comments to: [feedback@northville.com](mailto:feedback@northville.com).



Northville Industries posters offers two visions for development of their South Setauket property on March 28. Photo by Mallie Jane Kim

places that make more sense logistically. “I don't think that area over there — that intersection especially — is looking for that kind of intensification of traffic.”

Kornreich said he also does not think the kind of mega-warehouses proposed are appropriate for the area either, pointing to nearby properties on Belle Mead Road that have integrated lighter industrial uses into the community successfully.

“I would encourage Northville to explore

# Town of Smithtown partners in program to redefine sustainability

BY SABRINA ARTUSA  
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Earth Day, April 22, is a great day to renew an appreciation for the environment, from the waterfronts of Northport and Port Jefferson to lush parks like Avalon Nature Preserve and Blydenburgh. Let us all reexamine obligations to the natural world.

Taking advantage of the eco-friendly practices and resources offered by our towns is an important way to get involved in sustainability.

Recycling is a well-known strategy to reduce our environmental impact. However, due to lack of resources, inconvenience or distrust in programs, many people pass up the opportunity to decrease the 5 pounds of waste, on average, each of us produces every day.

According to 2019 statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, only 4% of plastics are recycled in the United States while 73% are sent to landfills.

Mistrust in recycling systems is not wholly unfounded, as plastics are difficult to recycle



The NexTrex project flyer. Photo courtesy Town of Smithtown

given the many different types. However, the Town of Smithtown's recent partnership with Trex Company, a manufacturing corporation that upcycles household plastics for railings and deck construction, offers an outlet for our unwanted plastics.

Trex accepts polyethylene plastic film, such as bubble wrap, produce bags, bread bags, Ziplocs, newspaper sleeves and any other stretchable

plastics. The plastic will be classified as either low- or high-density polyethylene, distinctions indicated by the recycling symbols 2 and 4. A 4 indicates low-density PE and a 2 indicates high-density PE.

Trex also accepts plastic bags and shipping wrap — plastics that aren't accepted in curbside recycling.

Residents can recycle their plastic films at

a drop-off container at the Municipal Services Facility in Kings Park.

“With the NexTrex program, you know exactly where your recycled plastics are going and how they will be used,” said Mike Engelmann, Smithtown solid waste coordinator.

Paying more attention to our consumption habits can also help decrease the amount of waste we produce. For instance, avoiding single-use plastics, paying attention to your municipalities recycling protocol, signing up for a beach cleanup and carpooling.

There are several local organizations that support sustainability. For example, Coastal Steward Long Island, located in Port Jefferson Station, holds programs to educate the community on how to preserve our shoreline and the organisms that live on our coasts. This environmental organization is hosting a beach cleanup April 26 at Smith Point Beach.

In addition, Avalon Nature Preserve offers a plethora of programs aimed at increasing youth involvement in nature.

Earth Day reminds us of what actions we can take to preserve the beautiful landscape around us. Smithtown's NexTrex program can only help the cause.

## Man found guilty of possessing loaded gun and drugs at Mt. Sinai gas station

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced on April 18 that Clyves Laurent, 30, of Elmont, was found guilty after a jury trial of weapons and drug charges, for possessing a defaced loaded handgun and methamphetamine outside of a Mount Sinai gas station convenience store.

The evidence at trial established that on Feb. 11, 2023, at approximately 1:20

a.m., an off-duty Suffolk County Police Department detective observed a male matching the description of a person wanted for a robbery of a Smoke Shop that occurred a week earlier at a Sunoco gas station in Mount Sinai. The detective observed that Laurent entered the gas station's convenience store wearing a ski mask, did not purchase anything, and then quickly exited.

When the detective approached Laurent, he observed a bulge in the defendant's pants which appeared to be a firearm. Laurent became combative and refused to keep his hands away from his waistband. The detective



Clyves Laurent

called for assistance, and when officers arrived, they attempted to conduct a frisk of Laurent for weapons, at which point he unsuccessfully attempted to flee.

After Laurent was placed in custody, the detective removed a defaced Glock handgun from the defendant's groin area. Laurent was transported to the Suffolk County Police Department's Sixth Precinct, where upon being processed for the arrest, was found to be in possession of methamphetamine.

Laurent was convicted of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree, a Class C felony, Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Third Degree, a Class D felony, and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Seventh Degree, a Class A misdemeanor. Additionally, in 2010, Laurent was previously convicted of Attempted Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree, a Class D felony. He is due back in court for sentencing on May 21 and faces up to 15 years in prison.

—SUFFOLK COUNTY D.A.'S OFFICE

# POLICE BLOTTER

The following incidents have been reported by Suffolk County Police:

### Bullet strikes man in wallet in Coram

Suffolk County Police Sixth Squad detectives are investigating an incident in which a man was shot in his wallet at an apartment complex in Coram on April 17.

An unknown person fired multiple shots into a vehicle located at the intersection of Homestead Drive and Grant Court inside the Homestead Village Apartment Complex at approximately 10:50 a.m. A bullet became lodged in the wallet of a man who was inside the vehicle. The man was not injured.

Anyone with information on the incident is asked to contact the Sixth Squad at 631-854-8652 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-220-TIPS.

### Two Shirley women charged in odometer rollback scheme

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced on April 23 that Ashley Duff, 27, and Ginger Sipes, 58, both of Shirley, were charged with allegedly selling motor vehicles that had their odometer's mileage turned back, falsely increasing the vehicles' value so that customers paid higher prices than what the vehicles were actually worth.

According to the investigation, between July 27, 2020, to May 6, 2022, more than a dozen victims of the alleged odometer rollback scheme filed complaints with the Suffolk County Police Department, prompting them to contact the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office and the District Attorney Squad, who initiated this investigation with the specialized assistance from the NICB.

An extensive investigation revealed that ABB Auto World Inc., which was located on Montauk Highway in Brookhaven, allegedly purchased high mileage vehicles from car auctions, some with over 200,000 miles documented on their odometers, and then had the odometers rolled back to show lower mileages. The vehicles would then allegedly be advertised for sale by the defendants on Facebook Marketplace. Sales paperwork was allegedly fraudulently created with false mileage and presented to the victims as authentic. This resulted in ABB Auto World Inc. charging thousands of dollars more for each vehicle than what the vehicles were worth.

Duff, president of ABB Auto World, Inc. and Sipes, a saleswoman at ABB Auto World, Inc. were indicted for Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, a Class E felony, and Conspiracy

### CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Do you recognize this man? Photo from SCPD

### Wanted for grand larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Fourth Squad detectives are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the man who allegedly stole sunglasses, valued at \$3,115, from Sunglass Hut, located in the Smith Haven Mall in Lake Grove, on April 11 at approximately 8 p.m.

in the Fifth Degree, a Class A misdemeanor and are due back in court on May 30. Both charges are considered non-bail eligible under current New York State law, meaning prosecutors cannot ask for, and judges cannot set bail.

Visit [www.tbrnewsmedia.com/police](http://www.tbrnewsmedia.com/police) for more press releases from the Suffolk County Police.

— COMPILED BY HEIDI SUTTON

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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.



# Remembering Matt LoNigro with honorary Selden street name

BY RICH ACRITELLI  
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

“Matt would give you the shirt off his back and you always had his support.”

These were the words of Paul LoNigro on the positive qualities of his older brother Matt, who passed away May 10, 2023, at 51 years old. Paul and Matt LoNigro, only two years apart, were inseparable.

Through the support of former neighbor Jeanine Ross and the Daleo, Peck, McFarland, Bach and Kortbus families, the neighbors asked the Town of Brookhaven to add Matt’s name to Biscayne Drive and Comet Road in Selden to honor Matt and the legacy of the neighborhood kids.

Paul recalled his father Richie bringing home from their family business, Port Jefferson Sporting Goods, a priceless gift for the LoNigro kids and the local children — they were given defective sports jerseys with “Bombers” imprinted on them.

From that moment, these active kids were known as the Biscayne Bombers as they played numerous hours of kickball and football on this street. This community represented the simpler times of small-town America through the constant activity of these kids on the street.

Decades ago, Richie LoNigro often drove to work from Boyle Road in Selden, over Old Town

Road, and onto Terryville Road, when these areas still had farm fields and woods. As Long Island’s housing population grew, Port Jefferson Sporting Goods increased in size to meet the sporting needs of children from Montauk to Manhattan.

Matt spent 22 years working at this store and in the sporting industry along with many of the 11 children of the LoNigro family. He was proud of his Selden roots, was loyal to his friends and at Newfield High School he played soccer, basketball, lacrosse and was the class president. Matt later attended college and played lacrosse at Salisbury University in Maryland, where he met his wife, Julie.

For years, Matt presented unyielding support toward the needs of Hope House Ministries in Port Jefferson and was a president for the Miller Place lacrosse and booster clubs. At his family’s sporting goods business and later at BSN Sports, Matt thoroughly loved all aspects of lacrosse. He handled the retail and sales of lacrosse items for local, travel, high school and college teams.

Retired St. Anthony’s High School athletic director, Donal F. Buckley, recalled “Matt was an incredibly warm person, who created smiles when working with the staff of this school. He was a master salesman who fully understood all sporting equipment and was an approachable figure who loved talking about all aspects of sports with our staff.”

Over the years, Matt continually learned about

lacrosse equipment, uniforms, coaching and the promotion of this sport that he truly loved. Matt advocated for lacrosse through the Police Athletic League and coached numerous Miller Place teams over the last several years to help further this sport.

## Town of Brookhaven honor

On April 4, Town of Brookhaven Councilman Neil Manzella (R-Selden) sponsored the request with the support of Councilwoman Jane Bonner (R-Rocky Point) for the authorization for the addition of “Matthew G. LoNigro” as an honorary street name between Biscayne Drive and Comet Road in Selden. Bonner believed that “Matt’s impact transcended the playing field, as he instilled invaluable life lessons through sports, cheered on every child with boundless enthusiasm and exemplified the epitome of goodness for our children to emulate. His legacy is etched in the hearts of those he inspired.” The resolution was unanimously adopted.

Matt learned two important lessons from his father: hard work and supporting his community. As a driving force at Hope House, this local organization helped troubled children and it recently named one of its buildings Matt’s House. This special person quietly supported others through the vital programs of Christmas Magic, that provided gifts for underprivileged children during the holidays in different areas of Long Island. In the near future, Matt

would eventually take over this large Christmas initiative. When students returned to school, the Backpack Pirates initiative provided supplies to children to donate much-needed items toward their education.

The LoNigro family has a long and proud history of giving back to the community. While Matt passed away far too early, he cemented his legacy of giving back through a myriad of humanitarian efforts to make Long Island a better place.

The Biscayne Bombers will always remember their youthful moments decades ago. As a former member, Matt’s older brother Craig marveled at “all the street sports, break dancing and shoveling driveways of older neighbors.” He added, “Matt brought out the best in all of us in making this into a special place to grow up. Matt was the heartbeat of Biscayne Drive and now his name will forever be linked to a place where so much love and happiness cultivated a unique generation of kids.”



Matt LoNigro.  
— Photo courtesy Rich Acritelli

## MEMORIAL

## Obituaries

### Liane Thureau

PREPARED BY THE THURAU FAMILY

Liane Thureau (née Lowenheck) was born in Vienna July 17, 1929, and died Jan. 17 in East Setauket.

She was the third child of Polish immigrants from Lemberg and Kraków who opened and ran a successful hat shop. In January, 1939, after the Anschluss and Kristallnacht, her parents placed her on a Rothschild Kindertransport to England. On the way to England, an aunt and uncle living in Strasbourg took her off the train and cared for her as they lived in hiding in France. There, Liane quickly mastered French as her second language.

After the war, she attended the Sorbonne and pursued her interest in Russian at L’École des Langues Orientales, making lifelong friends and learning how to read her favorite 19th-century Russian novels in the original Russian. Upon graduation, she became a translator working for various political causes.

On a vacation in Germany in 1955, she met her American husband, Norman, who was also fluent in German. They married and came to New York in 1957.

After teaching in Long Island junior high schools, she spent most of her career teaching French, German and Russian at Suffolk County Community College. When interest

in those foreign languages diminished, she obtained a master’s degree in English literature from SUNY Stony Brook.

In the 1990s Liane joined the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Stony Brook University where she was an avid participant and workshop leader. She is likely remembered by all students for her strict discipline, strong accent and scent of lavender.

She and her husband loved to travel. They explored France, Germany, Holland, Poland, the former Czechoslovakia and England, the USSR, including its central republics before they were opened, as well as India and China. In addition to being steeped and conversant in politics, she enjoyed reading literature from all over the world, excelled at French and German cooking and had a green thumb.

Liane loved her family passionately. She is survived by two children, Lisa H. and Thoma E. Thureau, and four grandchildren, Emma, Daniel, Sophia and Gabe. Liane’s home was decorated with dozens of framed pictures of her grandchildren whom she loved very much and worried about constantly.

A memorial in her honor will be held on Saturday, April 27, at 2 p.m. in The Gillespie Room in the Carriage Museum at The Long Island Museum, 1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook.

Those seeking to honor Liane, can send gifts to the Frank Melville Memorial

Foundation (at 1 Old Field Road, Setauket, NY 11733), which maintains the ponds in Setauket, a place where Liane loved to walk and find peace.

### John Robert Kleppe

PREPARED BY BRIAN KLEPPE

John Robert Kleppe, 82, a Long Island resident for 75 years — residing in Port Jefferson, Centereach and Calverton, peacefully passed away on Feb. 17, in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, surrounded by his loved ones. He entered this world on Jan. 23, 1942, in Queens, bringing joy and warmth to those around him.

John was a cherished individual who left an indelible mark on all who crossed his path. His endearing sense of humor and contagious laughter brightened countless lives.

Throughout his journey, he exemplified selflessness through his dedicated military service, volunteer endeavors and unwavering devotion to his family. The time he spent with his two sons was a source of boundless happiness, and his family held an irreplaceable space in his heart.

He is lovingly remembered by his sons, Brian and John; daughter-in-law, Tracy; grandchild, Braden; sister, Cookie Carafitis; and brother, Theodore. John was preceded



in death by his mother, Daisy Moraitis; brother, Nicholas; and father, John.

A celebration of life honoring John will be conducted on Thursday, April 25, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Bryant Funeral Home, at 411 Old Town Road, East Setauket.

Military services paying tribute to his service will be held on Friday, April 26, at 11 a.m. at Calverton National Cemetery, at 210 Princeton Blvd., Calverton.

In lieu of floral tributes, contributions can be directed to [www.combatwarriorsinc.org](http://www.combatwarriorsinc.org) (Wyoming Chapter) serving as a poignant gesture to honor John’s memory and perpetuate his spirit of giving.



# East Setauket pitcher comes on strong with the Chicago Cubs

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF  
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

JoAnne Wilson-Brown was driving on Belle Mead Road, returning to her house in East Setauket with Easter Dinner and candy when Christmas came early.

Her 24-year old Ben, who tracks his parents on their cell phones and regularly checks up on them, was calling.

“Mom,” Ben said, “you need to be in Texas tomorrow.”

Ben, who left home seven years ago after graduating from Ward Melville High School when the Philadelphia Phillies chose him in the 33rd round of the major league baseball draft, was going to pitch for the Chicago Cubs in his first major league game against the defending World Series Champion Texas Rangers.

Ben also called his father Jody Brown, who had been working in the backyard on windows that he immediately put back in place so they could travel to The Ballpark in Arlington.

In his debut, Ben entered in the seventh inning. Perhaps fittingly, David Robertson, the pitcher the Cubs traded to the Phillies to acquire the hard throwing rookie Brown, pitched the top half of that same inning for the Rangers, allowing a hit without giving up a run.

Ben matched Robertson that first inning, giving up a lead off walk before inducing a groundout, strike out and line out to left field.

In his second inning of work, however, after getting three hours of sleep the night before, Brown allowed six runs on six hits in two third of an inning, leaving him with a tough introduction to “The Show” and an unsightly 32.40 earned run average.

Ben’s debut is a microcosm of the journey he took to the pinnacle of baseball. An impressive and imposing high school player, the now six-foot, six-inch pitcher had such a stellar sophomore season that he attracted considerable attention from college scouts, receiving five offers.

In his junior year, however, Ben developed appendicitis, which forced him to spend time in the hospital.

After an appendectomy, Ben, who wanted to be a baseball player from the time he was two, had to return to the hospital.

“When they took him away in the gurney, he looked up at me and said, ‘Mom, is this going to



Left, Ben with his mother, JoAnne, wife Maggie and father Jody in Arlington, Texas. Photo courtesy the Brown family

be it [for his baseball career]? Do you think it’s all over?” Wilson-Brown recalled.

Recognizing her son’s fierce determination, she instantly told him “absolutely not!”

Brown rebuilt his body and boosted his fastball sufficiently that the Phillies chose him at the age of 17 at the tail end of the draft.

In the seven years that followed, Brown endured Tommy John surgery, an oblique injury that robbed him of time on the field, and Covid, which shut down the minor league system.

Undeterred and with considerable support from his family including his mother, father Jody, brother James and sister Abbey, Ben remained focused amid those interruptions and put hours into himself and his craft, cutting out sugar from his diet, listening to anyone who could offer advice and dedicating himself to improving.

Brown also found love, marrying Maggie Seibert, a woman he met in church in Florida.

Ben “has put in so much work and made so many sacrifices,” said Ward Melville High School baseball coach Lou Petrucci, who speaks to his former student and pitcher at least once a week and whom Ben refers to as “another parent.”

After Ben was drafted, he arrived at the training camp in Clearwater, Florida, and talked to anyone and everyone about ways to improve.

Petrucci believes that Ben’s unquenchable thirst for baseball knowledge reflects an extension of the dedicated teachers in the Three Village school district who encouraged learning.

When graduates like Brown, former Met and current St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Steve Matz and current Yokohoma BayStars pitcher Anthony Kay advance in life, “it’s because of the K through 12 education” they received at the schools.

When Brown called Petrucci, whom he has known since he was a sixth grader in his class at Minnesauke Elementary School, to share the news about his promotion to the majors, Petrucci said, “Congratulations!

And, now, your next step is to make sure you stay there.”

## Bouncing back

After that rough inning in his first game, Ben received considerable public and private support from his teammates and from baseball people he

admires and respects.

Fellow Cub players publicly supported him, telling him that they couldn’t throw strikes in their first outing.

“It’s so encouraging when you’re a young guy,” said Ben. “You feel like you’re not alone when you get all this love from your teammates. It makes such a difference.”

Matz, who predicted Ben would be in the major leagues within five years of being drafted after he saw Ben as a late teenager, also offered him immediate support and encouragement. Matz “let me know I’m going to be okay,” said Brown. Matz told him he has “good stuff and I’m in a good spot.”

A soccer player at Clemson years ago, Ben’s father Jody Brown suggested that circumstances in baseball change quickly and “you have to have a very short memory.”

Ben made his debut at Wrigley Field, the Cubs historic home park, on April 3rd against the Colorado Rockies.

His parents trekked to Chicago for that outing as well.

“When we got to Chicago that first night, it was just after midnight,” Wilson-Brown said. “We turned that corner and saw Wrigley Field and it just took my breath away.”

She felt the same way her son did when they traveled to Cooperstown for the 12U tournament when he saw the immaculate fields.

At Wrigley, Ben came on in relief and pitched well, using the combination of his fastball and curveball to pitch four innings, allowing three hits and one run.

Ben’s first start came in San Diego, where he threw 4 2/3 innings without allowing the Padres to score.

A Red Sox fan growing up who had an enormous blanket of David Ortiz that filled most of one wall, Ben spoke after the game with Red Sox star-turned-analyst Pedro Martinez, who said on the show that Brown looked “sharp” and “clean.”

In his second start, Ben continued to impress, as he allowed one run on one hit in six innings against the Arizona Diamondbacks, the team that made it to last year’s World Series and that scored a record 14 runs in one inning in its home opener this year.

“It’s been a little bit of a roller coaster,” said Ben. He was pleased that he “threw the ball well” and left a “solid impression.”

With an earned run average down to 4.41 after his fourth game, Ben made a case for staying in the majors.

## Getting there

The journey from East Setauket to the major league ballparks not only involved considerable work from Ben, but support from family, friends and coaches.

Indeed, Ben’s older brother James was instrumental in sharing his love for the game.

James “showed me how to be a ballplayer, how

to wear my jersey right,” said Ben. “He toughened me up on the baseball field.”

Ben believes he “wouldn’t be in the big leagues” if his brother and father didn’t work with him every day, from hitting grounders and fly balls to him so he could practice his fielding to throwing a ball.

The Brown family appreciates the tireless support of numerous coaches, friends and family, who sometimes helped drive Ben to baseball events and encouraged him throughout his baseball growth.

Petrucci has watched many of Ben’s games over the years, reveling in the progress he’s made and wishing him well with each new opportunity.

When Ben was on the Phillies, he gave Petrucci a tee shirt with the words “Train to Reign.” Every time Ben pitched, Petrucci wore the shirt.

Playing for the Cubs has particular meaning for Maggie’s family, who, thanks to her stepfather Matt Pippin, are lifelong Cub fans.

Indeed, one of Ben and Maggie’s dog’s names is Wrigley.

When they were dating and Ben was still on the Phillies, Maggie gave him a Cubs shirt.

“I thought it was such a weird thing,” Ben recalls. “She gave me a shirt for a team I’m not playing for.”

When he was traded, it came “full circle. It’s all too good to be true,” Ben said.

Pippin learned that Ben was joining the Mets and recalled almost running off the road with excitement.

So, if a local restaurant decided to make a meal they named after him, the way the Se-Port Deli did for Matz, what should it be?

A large steak that comes from grass-fed beef with butter works for Ben, he said.

As for advice, Ben urged people who enter a field like baseball, with numerous competitors and obstacles, to work “harder than everybody else in the world,” especially when such a small percentage of people realize their baseball dreams. “When you want to do something that’s really difficult, lock in on the best path.”

Early on, Ben saw that path and pictured the future he is now living.

When he was 12, Ben joined one of his teams for a field trip to Shea Stadium. His mother asked him to pose for one more picture on the field before they left.

“Don’t worry” about the photo, Ben reassured her. “I’m going to be back here.”



Ben with his niece Emma at Wrigley Field, Chicago. Photo courtesy the Brown family



Ben played short stop for the Three Village Little League at age 7. Photo courtesy the Brown family



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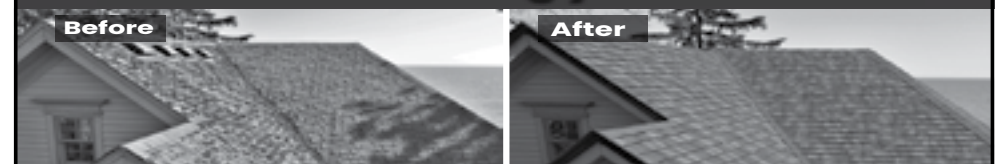


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## Editorial

### Participate in community cleanups



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April 22, 1970, marked the first Earth Day celebration. A day dedicated to Mother Earth, to appreciate, recognize and demonstrate support for the planet we inhabit. A time to reflect on the impact our actions have on the environment but, more importantly, it's a springboard for action.

Here in our own communities, the need for environmental stewardship is particularly relevant. From keeping our streets and parks clean to embracing sustainable practices, we can all play a vital role. The good news is there's a wave of positive momentum building.

Numerous opportunities exist for us to roll up our sleeves and make a real difference.

Friends of the Greenway is hosting a cleanup day, on Saturday, April 27. Beginning at 9 a.m. at the Port Jefferson Station trailhead, meet with members of the community to aid in the cleanup efforts along the beloved Greenway Trail.

If your artistic side thrives outdoors, join the Gallery North Cleanup on April 27 and 28. Day 1 will be held at Flax Pond Tidal Wetland Area on Saturday and day 2 at Smith Point Beach on Sunday. Each cleanup will be conducted in two shifts starting at 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. each day. The event is free and open to the public, and will be held rain or shine. All ages are welcome.

On Saturday, May 18, the Great Brookhaven Cleanup will offer a chance to tackle litter in our neighborhoods. Part of a national effort, the event draws over 5 million volunteers in more than 20,000 communities across America who come together to pick up litter and clean miles of roadway, rivers, lakes and more. Last year, the Great Brookhaven Cleanup drew more than 2,600 volunteers.

Stony Brook University also stepped up with Earth Day events — several student clubs joined together to organize a beach cleanup last Saturday, April 20, at West Meadow Beach.

But Earth Day isn't just about one-time cleanups. Sustainability is the key to long-term environmental health. The Town of Smithtown's recent upcycling program, NexTrex with the Trex Company, serves as a shining example. This initiative allows residents to transform used plastic into eco-friendly composite materials.

Let's take inspiration from these efforts. Consider reducing your single-use plastics, opting for reusable alternatives. Support local farmers markets and businesses committed to sustainable practices. Every little bit counts.

Earth Day is more than just a day on the calendar. It's a call to action, a reminder that the well-being of our environment is intrinsically linked to our own. Let's celebrate this Earth Day not just with words, but with dedicated action. Together, we can build a cleaner, more sustainable future for generations to come.

## Letter to the Editor



Top left, MTA call center. Photo by Nasrin Zahed. Bottom left, LIRR train arrives at the station. File photo by Joseph Cali. Right, a Long Island Rail Road train arrives at Stony Brook train station during rush hour. Photo by ComplexRational from Wikimedia Commons

### Happy 190th anniversary to Long Island Rail Road

Let us all wish a happy 190th anniversary to the Long Island Rail Road. On April 24, 1834, the Long Island Rail Road was officially chartered by the State of New York to run from the Brooklyn waterfront 95 miles east to Greenport. In 1900, the Pennsylvania Railroad bought a controlling interest as part of its plan for direct access to Manhattan which began on September 8, 1910. The Pennsylvania Railroad subsidized the LIRR into the late 1940s. This provided the financial basis for support of expansion and upgrades to service and infrastructure.

At the end of World War II, there began a decline of our LIRR with a corresponding loss of farebox revenues. The Pennsylvania Railroad began to reduce financial support as well. This played a part in the LIRR going into receivership in 1949. In recognition of the role the LIRR played in the economy of both Long Island and NYC, New York State began providing financial assistance to the LIRR in the 1950s and 1960s.

The "Line of the Dashing Dan" was officially chartered on April 24, 1965, by the State of New York. In 1966, NYS bought the railroad's controlling stock from the Pennsylvania Railroad and put it under the newly-formed Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority. The MCTA changed its name

to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 1968 when it took over operations of the NYC Transit Authority.

With MTA subsidies, the LIRR modernized further and grew into the busiest commuter railroad in the United States. Over the past 50 years, several billion dollars in combined county, city, state and federal taxpayer-generated dollars have subsidized both the capital and operating costs for the LIRR.

Riders must remember that fare hikes are periodically required if the MTA is to provide the services millions of New Yorkers use daily.

*Larry Penner  
Great Neck*

The opinions of columnists and letter writers are their own. They do not speak for the newspaper.

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## Opinion

## Finding peace and connection in a house of worship

Everywhere we go, we are surrounded by sights, sounds, and smells. More often than not, other people need something from us, want to talk with or at us, and expect us to provide feedback, learn from them, acknowledge them or validate their existence.



**D. None  
of the above**

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF

At the same time, our texts, emails, social media apps, and others require checking, replying, reacting and thought.

Throughout the day, we aren't just draining our cell phone's battery, we are also draining our own battery. We need time for our nervous system to catch up, to take a break and to experience the world around us in a calmer way.

For me, that happened recently when I went to a religious service. I don't go all that often even though I often walk away feeling refreshed.

These services offer an opportunity not only to disconnect from my phone for several hours, but also a chance to be present, centered, and focused.

The words and the songs are familiar, which other members of the congregation say or sing, helping me feel like I'm a part of a connected group.

During the service, I am focused on where I am, reading the same text as everyone else and reacting, as if by reflex, to some of the interactive speaking parts.

This occurs even when I travel, as I did recently to attend a service. I didn't know most of the people in the room and yet we reacted and interacted for several hours as if we had grown up next to each other, played on the street with our neighbors, attended the same schools and shared the same hopes for ourselves and our children.

Some of the songs had slightly different melodies, but they were more of a variation on a theme than a journey into another religious, spiritual or musical genre.

During these times in a house of worship, I appreciate and enjoy the quieter voice of some

of the speakers, who encourage me to think of myself and my world in different ways and who share a wonderful combination of thought, insight, perspective, and spiritual ideas.

While I listen to them, some thoughts I have that might otherwise not bubble up to the turbulent surface of my life, where a combination of bright sun, wind, and cross currents of thoughts, ideas, actions and deadlines create a potentially exciting but murkier picture, can receive attention.

Through these thoughts, I can make connections to earlier versions of myself, track where I am and where I'm heading, and think about people who helped shape who I am but are no longer in my life.

I can also delve more deeply into the kinds of questions and thoughts that don't tend to help with an assignment or a deadline, pondering the nature of existence and the meaning of life.

I can reflect on the amazing and inspirational people I am fortunate to know, and the exhausting but miraculous gift of our children, who inherit the world we helped shape or alter during the course of our lives.

One image often appears in my mind as I breathe, think and listen during the service: that is of a tree with the words "I was here." When I was younger, I didn't understand why anyone would cut into a tree to let the world know they were here.

Over time, I've thought about the cave drawings primitive man made, the graffiti that adds color and chaos to our world and those words in a tree in the same way. In those moments, people are declaring, the way Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin did when they planted an American flag on the moon, that their journey through life brought them to this place and time. They are announcing and reaffirming themselves.

I'm not advocating for carving anything into a tree or for painting graffiti. Instead, by sitting, standing and singing together, we are announcing to the other people in the room and to ourselves not just that "I am here," but that "We are here." While we might take that for granted much of the time, a religious service gives us the chance to marvel at the wonder of the connections we've made and at our existence and all it does and could mean.

## Are you stuck in your house? Here is a modest proposal

Elsewhere in this week's newspaper, there is a section on financial matters. Continuing that theme, let's look at the value of our homes and what that means for our lives. Taking out a mortgage and buying a house was always considered a popular path to security. A house was a piggy bank into which payments were deposited each month until the debt was repaid to the bank, or whomever the lender, and ultimately was totally owned by the buyer. A house, after all, is a home, a shelter and foundation for raising a family. One cannot live in one's stocks or CDs. Besides, as an asset, it might increase in value over the ensuing years.



**Between  
you and me**

BY LEAH S. DUNAIEF

Best of all, the equity in a home guaranteed wealth for retirement.

While some owners might continue to live in their original houses rent free (but not property tax free), others intended to sell the home, buy a smaller, two bedroom house or condo at a cheaper price, and live off the surplus cash or the entire proceeds if they wanted a smaller mortgage.

Sounds like a fairly risk-free plan, right?

In fact, something strange has happened. For the last couple of decades, interest rates on mortgages have been unexpectedly low. I know when my husband and I bought our house 50 years ago, for example, the interest on the mortgage was seven and five-eighths percent. For those who bought in the 90s and sooner, the rates went down to two and three percent, which was even less with interest deductions.

What has happened?

Interest rates have zoomed in the last couple of years, as the Federal Reserve has tried to put the brakes on an overheated economy, the result in part of Covid. Many people rushed from the cities to what they hoped would be smaller, safer locations, creating a marketplace in which

there are now fewer homes for sale—and incidentally raising prices. And builders, who were busy building large homes, then switched to apartment buildings. The smaller, one-story homes, ideal for downsizing, are scarce and pricey as they have disappeared from the market or become unaffordable.

Further, longtime home owners with lower mortgages, though they may wish to follow the time-honored formula and downsize, are not about to give those up in order to buy overheated smaller houses at higher mortgage rates, if they choose to take a loan.

For the moment, retirees are stuck in their large, mortgage-free homes, with their faulty furnaces, unmowed lawns and unwelcome stairs. There might be buyers but where, then, to go?

For the moment, as The New York Times has observed in this past Tuesday's paper, they are stuck.

I have a modest proposal for those folks. There are many young people looking to move out of their parent's homes but can't yet afford

to buy a house with their partner or significant other. Some aren't so young but don't have the down payments or pay the high rents in new apartments. Older residents, who might be waiting for the real estate market to cool down, have empty bedrooms that could fill some of the gap. They could rent out those empty rooms.

Now I know that some people think they would never want to live with strangers and share their kitchens, washers and dryers, and so forth. Besides, how do they know how trustworthy these prospective tenants are?

Certainly any possible tenants would have to be checked out. There might be a business that does just that, even as they investigate caretakers, cleaning services and babysitters. After all, we welcome those people into our homes.

If we are thinking of renting, we could also envision a way to separate a section of the house, with its own entrance, for the tenants, and just share the common rooms.

The extra rent money is nice. The additional housing choices can be helpful. The situation can be a win-win.



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