



Northville meeting rescheduled

Details on the relocation of the community meeting

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Arrowhead Elementary School walks for autism awareness



Arrowhead Elementary School fundraises \$1,095 to benefit various organizations that support autism awareness. Photo courtesy the TVCSO

The Arrowhead Elementary School community celebrated Autism Acceptance Month throughout April.

The building held a kickoff assembly on April 8 to explain the many events the building would be holding to promote inclusion and raise awareness about autism. Teachers and students led several fundraisers, as well as a spirit week centered around autism acceptance and awareness.

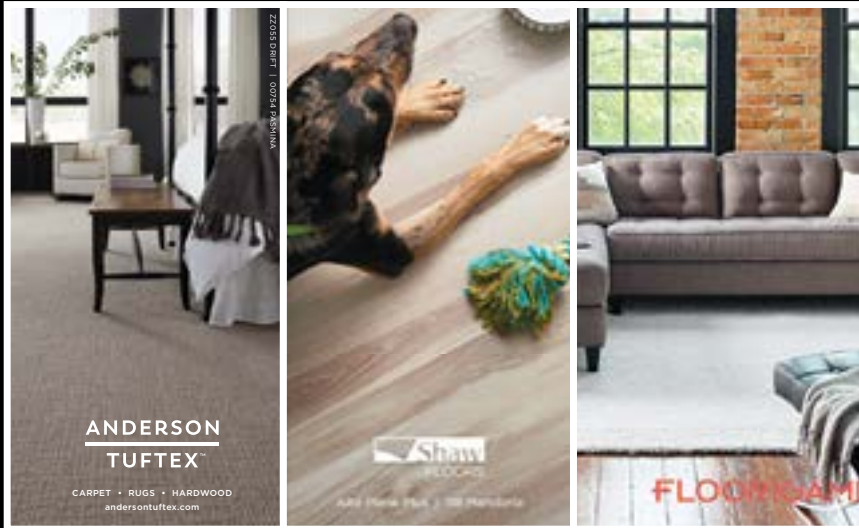
SCHOOL

The celebrations culminated with a schoolwide

Autism Awareness Walk on April 19. At the walk, teachers presented a \$1,095 check from the building's fundraising efforts. The funds will benefit various organizations supporting autism awareness.

Additionally, the building's Autism Ambassadors were introduced. One student was selected from each grade level after being nominated by their classroom teacher to share what they've learned about autism during April. The afternoon ended with a schoolwide walk for students and staff to come together for the cause.

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The Three Village Dads Foundation organize efforts to restore the Merritt-Hawkins House in Setauket. Photo courtesy David Tracy

Three Village Dads Foundation restore Setauket property

BY SERENA CARPINO
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Three Village Dads Foundation recently finished refurbishing the outside area of the Merritt-Hawkins House in East Setauket. The renovations of the 9-acre property cost about \$40,000.

The house, located on Pond Path, was leased to the Three Village Dads in 2021, after Brookhaven Town Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook) approached the organization about a partnership. In July 2022, Three Village Dads began fixing up the house and after two years of work, the outdoor renovations were complete.

After Kornreich was first elected, he began to identify properties owned by the town that needed to be fixed up and looked for stewards to repair these areas. Kornreich said that he chose the Three Village Dads organization for this project because he “figured these guys are going to put on their New Balance sneakers, go out there, and cut vines and be dads in the backyard of this place and clean it up.” Kornreich continued, “It was a good match because there’s a lot of volunteers who like to do this kind of hands-on project.”

The first step of the restoration was to clean up the trails that led to the vernal pond at the back of the property. Volunteers cleared brushes, put down wood chips and built a parking lot increasing the accessibility for members of the community. In addition, they placed signs around the property that identify different plants and other unique factors of the house.

Although much of the work was done by volunteers, Three Village Dads also enlisted the help of outside companies. David Tracy, president of the organization explained that they “used [about 30] volunteers from the group for the first year. However, there was a lot of heavy

lifting and work to be done, so we hired a few companies to help with the remaining work.”

The foundation hired Clovis Outdoor Services, a Stony Brook tree company to remove old or rotted trees. In addition, JM Troffa Hardscape, a masonry and building supply company from East Setauket, provided Three Village Dads with the materials for the parking lot. Furthermore, Sheep Pasture Landscaping of Port Jefferson Station helped finish remodeling the trails. Tracy added that they “had a Boy Scout complete his Eagle Scout project on the property by installing our educational signs and building benches.”

The house is near to Nassakeag Elementary School, and Tracy and Kornreich hope that students and teachers will be able to take advantage of the trails through nature walks. There are over 15 educational signs meant for student use.

“The house is connected to Nassakeag and we’re going to put a gate in between the two, so students from other parts of the district can take a bus and go on guided nature walks and educational walks. So, it’s good for students and it’s good for people that want to just get out into nature,” Kornreich said.

Tracy confirmed there will be public access to the property.

Having completed the outdoor renovations, Three Village Dads hope to finish work on the inside of the house within the next two to three years. Tracy said that their goal is “to transform it into something similar to the historical society building, with a small museum.”

Kornreich will spearhead a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the house May 1 to commemorate the finished work around the outside. “The reality is that these guys do so many things to support the community and they never really do it for the publicity or the recognition, so I think it’s a really good opportunity to highlight the good work they did and thank them for all their hard work,” the councilmember said.



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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



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

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.

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

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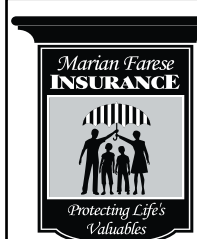
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Man found guilty of possessing loaded gun and drugs at Mt. Sinai gas station

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 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.

Ahead in removing forever chemicals, NYS preps for higher drinking water standards

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Forever is wonderful when it comes to love, but not so much when it comes to chemicals that don't break down and stay in the human body, accumulating over time and threatening people's health.

In a move applauded by environmental advocates and health officials, the Environmental Protection Agency last week set a limit on the amount of so-called forever chemicals, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, called PFAS, of four parts per trillion in drinking water.

HEALTH

Water companies have until 2027 to complete initial monitoring to reduce chemicals that have been linked to damage to the kidney, testes, liver, thyroid, reproductive and immune system, according to the new regulations. Found in a host of products including fireman's foam, carpets, clothing, food packaging and nonstick cookware, PFAS are resistant to oil and water.

New York State already had one of the toughest regulations in the country, as the Empire State set maximum contaminant levels of 10 parts per trillion for these chemicals in 2020.

Charles Lefkowitz, chairman of the Suffolk County Water Authority applauded the EPA for this new national standard.

The SCWA has been "preparing for this and we are well on our way to meeting all regulatory requirements within the time frame laid out by EPA," Lefkowitz said in a statement. "Since 2020, when New York enacted its own PFAS rules, SCWA has been meeting or surpassing all standards. It has given us a great head start on the new rules, but there is still work to be done."

Suffolk County Health Commissioner Dr. Gregson Pigott noted that the state's water standards for emerging contaminants are among the most protective in the country.

"The new federal measures will have the greatest impact nationwide and will also further protect our drinking water on Long Island," Dr. Pigott explained in an email.

Environmental groups recognized the ongoing work at the SCWA to meet these standards and appreciated the authority's public disclosure of its testing results.

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, described the SCWA as "ready" for this rule change and "poised for action."

Since 2016, the SCWA installed 27 new Granular Activated Carbon treatment systems that remove PFAS from drinking water. The authority expects to install as many as 80 new GAC systems to meet the new regulations.

"We are well within our way to achieving that



Left, firefighting foam erupts from fire hose. Right, nonstick pan atop stove. Both products are regular hosts of PFAS chemicals, resistant to oil and water.

Pixabay photos

within the timeframe set by the EPA," Jeff Szabo, Chief Executive Officer of SCWA, explained in an email.

Each new system costs about \$1.5 million to install. SCWA had already instituted a \$20 per quarter water quality treatment charge to customers in 2020, when New York State established its PFAS limits.

SCWA has also secured \$9 million from New York State for GAC treatment, which, Szabo explained, would help reduce the cost to customers.

Rates won't be increasing in the next fiscal year. The rates, which are based on the budget, may change in future years, depending on the operating budget, a spokesman said.

SCWA tests all of its wells at least semi-annually for PFAS. If the authority finds a well with these chemicals, it retests the well at least quarterly and, in some cases will test it every month or every two weeks.

Private wells

Esposito urged people with private wells to test their water regularly.

"People think when they have a private well, it comes from a mysteriously clean spring,"

said Esposito. "They must get their wells tested. Ignorance is not bliss. If there are PFAS, they must call and report it and see if they're eligible to get federal funds for filtration."

Esposito estimates the cost of testing for private well water could be \$200 to \$250.

Carbon filtration, using a process called reverse osmosis, can remove PFAS.

The cost of installing filters depends on the home and the type of filter. Several online providers estimate a cost between \$800 and \$3,000, although specific costs from different providers may vary.

Residents can call the Department of Health Services Office of Water Resources at (631) 852-5810 for information on testing by either the health department or a local contract laboratory. Health department staff are also available to provide treatment recommendations.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has provided alternate water supplies to a limited number of private well owners on a case-by-case basis over the last several years.

The New York State legislature is considering

proposed legislation to provide grant funding to private well owners with impacted wells to connect to public water or install treatment.

The county health department coordinates with the DEC and the state Department of Health when they receive information regarding water that exceeds PFAS containment levels.

People interested in further information about the health effects of the PFAS are urged to reach out to the New York State Department of Health.

Jaymie Meliker, Professor in the Department of Family, Population and Preventive Medicine in the Program in Public Health at Stony Brook University, added that private wells have numerous potential contaminants in part because Long Island has so many septic systems.

These wastewater systems are a source of nitrogen for waterways, leading to fish kills and can also add contaminants to drinking water.

Wastewater treatment is "vastly under resourced," said Meliker. The county and the state need infrastructure investments.

As for PFAS, they can vary from one neighborhood to the next.

On the manufacturing side, companies are working to lower the toxins of PFAS, creating shorter chains that provide the same benefits without the negative effect on health.

Meliker was pleased that the EPA had established low level limits for these chemicals that accumulate in the human body.

The studies and concerns have been "going on for a couple of decades," he said. "There's enough evidence to suggest it's prudent to do something."



Suffolk County Water Authority Chairman Charles Lefkowitz and Suffolk County Health Commissioner Dr. Gregson Pigott. File photos



History close at hand

A community coming together to honor Rev. Gregory Leonard

BY BEVERLY C. TYLER
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

On Sunday, April 14, members of Bethel AME Church in Setauket and the Three Village community came together to celebrate the ministry of Rev. Gregory Leonard who retired in 2020, after twenty-six years as pastor of Bethel AME Church.

I first met Rev. Leonard at the funeral for the Mother of Bethel AME Church, Lucy Agnes Keyes, who died on Friday, September 16, 1994. This was his first funeral at Bethel AME and he said something about getting his feet wet at Bethel or starting here by jumping into the fire. Interesting choice of words, as he soon became the chaplain for the Setauket Fire Department. Mrs. Keyes' Going Home Celebration was on September 20, 1994.

Rev. Leonard's extensive community service included serving as chaplain of the Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook University, and the development of Hobbs Farm in Centereach. My wife Barbara noted at the celebration, "My association with Bethel Church and Pastor Leonard began through the Order of St. Luke—a Christian healing ministry. He became one of our two chaplains. Services



Rev. Gregory Leonard speaking at the 2016 Order of St. Luke Conference. — Photo courtesy Beverly C. Tyler

rotated monthly among Caroline Church, St. Cuthbert's in Selden and Bethel." For us it was a chance to add Christian friends and worship in different ways.

"One of our cherished times was when Pastor Leonard was the spiritual leader for our regional retreat called A Quiet Walk with Jesus. The format was four short talks by the leader who

then gave us points for meditation in the quiet times that followed each talk. Pastor Leonard was perfect for this. He had previously attended several of these retreats very quietly. We knew that he would be a wonderful leader, but others were very pleasantly surprised by the leadership of this quiet but dynamic man."

It was in the spirit of William Sidney Mount

that the Bethel AME Church, Setauket and the Museums at Stony Brook held "A Community Coming Together" in the Art Museum on Sunday, February 25, 1996. The reception featured the exhibition, William Sidney Mount: Music is Contagious, plenty of good food — courtesy of Bethel AME — good company, and a few descriptive comments on Mount and on the Three

Village Community.

Rev. Leonard, pastor of Bethel AME, opened and closed the museum's event with an emphasis on the strengths of neighborhood and family, and how important it is to work at getting to know other people in the community—thus adding to the strength of community bonds.

This emphasis of family and community was on display during the Sunday service at Bethel AME on April 21 as well as at the luncheon and talks in honor of Rev. Leonard. Speaker after speaker spoke about his spiritual leadership and his humility.

As detailed in Bethel AME's celebration program, "Rev. Leonard built strong ties, bonds and personal relationships with co-workers, community and congregation members. He recalls that his proudest moments during his ministry at Bethel Setauket came in working with members of his leadership team, the congregation and community groups such as Building Bridges, Order of Saint Luke, the Setauket Fire Department and the Vets home."

Beverly Tyler is Three Village Historical Society historian and author of books available from the Three Village Historical Society, 93 North Country Rd., Setauket, NY 11733. Tel: 631-751-3730. <http://WWW.TVHS.org>

Three Village school board adopts \$236.1M budget

Trustees praise the budget but urge better advanced financial planning

BY MALLIE JANE KIM
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Three Village Central School District will ask voters to decide on a \$236.1 million school budget, a 2.27% increase, May 21. The 2024-25 budget, which was adopted at an April 17 school board meeting with five "yes" votes and one abstention, stays within the district's 2.84% tax levy cap and therefore would pass with a simple majority of the vote.

Support for the budget at the meeting came alongside calls for continued improvements in planning for years ahead.

SCHOOL According to Deputy Superintendent Jeffrey Carlson, the district was able to cut 15 positions through attrition, thanks to 67 staff retirements, and save \$250,000 by restructuring administrative positions.

The district planned the budget as though aid from the state would remain flat — a strategy that worked out well since New York State's budget, which passed over the weekend, walked back Gov. Kathy Hochul's (D) proposal to cut funding to certain districts, including Three Village, which would have lost about \$9 million in state aid. Under the finalized budget, state funding to Three Village remains essentially the same,



Three Village Academy, above, is tucked behind a quiet Stony Brook neighborhood. —Photo by Mallie Jane Kim

less some expected changes in building aid the district notified residents it had already accounted for.

District officials and board members have indicated they took the governor's initial proposal as a warning: Cuts to state aid are likely down the pike, so budget planning should take that likelihood into account.

Budget Advisory Committee representative Shari Fontana praised the administration for making strides toward fiscal stability and prioritizing the educational, social and emotional needs of students.

"We realize that no budget will ever be perfect," Fontana read, in a statement from the BAC, a committee of board-appointed community members and district stakeholders. "Our district is truly doing the very best they can under the circumstances."

Fontana added that the committee recommends the BAC convene earlier in the school year and receive an advance copy of the budget with time to ask questions. She also said the committee would prefer to have a multiyear outlook on budget planning rather than advise for a single year.

Trustee David McKinnon abstained from the budget adoption vote, voicing similar concerns. "I remain concerned that without a clear and strict financial plan to represent everybody's interest, we're just kicking the can down the road," McKinnon said. "We know our costs are increasing faster than our revenue. That's going to be a recipe for a problem, if it's not already here."

McKinnon also lamented the fact that the board has not yet committed to making secondary start times later in conjunction with

the plan to restructure schools in fall 2025. If a time change is not solidified, sixth and ninth graders that year would have to start school even earlier than they would have done if those grades had not moved up to the junior high and high school, respectively.

Yet he acknowledged the 2024-25 budget plan, which increases district spending just over \$5 million from the current year, is an improvement. "I agree that we're headed in the right direction," he said. "I know how hard everybody works here."

Trustee Karen Roughley, who has also pushed for more advanced planning, praised the district for the budget effort, especially in light of increasing expenses that are outside of district control, such as staff contracts and vendor agreements. "To be able to present a balanced budget that takes all that into account while not exceeding any staff or cutting any programs is pretty impressive to me," she said. "Do I think things can be tweaked over the next couple years? Absolutely. But this is a great start."

Voting takes place at Ward Melville High School on May 21 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., and this is the first year voters can opt to vote early by mail. Information on early and absentee voting is located on the district's website by clicking on the Board of Education drop-down menu and selecting Budget Information.

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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



Patriots girls flag football struggles against unbeaten Half Hollow Hills

BY BILL LANDON
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

The Patriots of Ward Melville had their hands full when undefeated Half Hollow Hills came calling in a League I flag football matchup on a cold and windy day Thursday, April 18. Half Hollow capitalized on a Patriot miscue with an interception that would put them on the scoreboard first. Ward Melville struggled to gain traction, trailing 21-0 at the halftime break.

Addison Dellaporta broke the ice for the Patriots with an interception of her own and went the distance for the touchdown but the point-after attempt failed. It would be Ward Melville's only score on the day when Half Hollow found the end zone late in the game downing the Patriots 28-6.

The loss drops Ward Melville 2-4 as Half Hollow remains atop the League I leaderboard at 6-0.

Ward Melville retakes the field with a road game against Sachem North (1-5), Friday, April 26. Game time is scheduled for 4 p.m.



❶ Ward Melville senior Rebecca Greek finds an opening in a home game against Half Hollow Hills. ❷ Addison Dellaporta intercepts a pass. ❸ Logan Phillips with a shovel pass for the Patriots. ❹ Ward Melville sophomore Anja Rosenthal Vincente finds an opening.

—Photos by Bill Landon

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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 Caraftis; 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 (Wyoming Chapter) serving as a poignant gesture to honor John's memory and perpetuate his spirit of giving.

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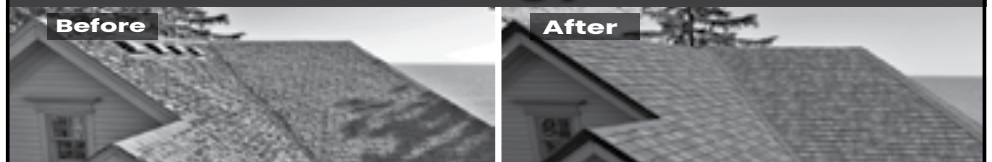
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Editorial

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.

Letters to the Editor

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



A Long Island Rail Road train arrives at Stony Brook train station during rush hour. Photo by ComplexRational from Wikimedia Commons

hikes are periodically required if the MTA is to provide the services millions of New Yorkers use daily.

*Larry Penner
Great Neck*

Tag and bake sale at historic Stony Brook Community Church

Deborah Davis invited two preachers 215 years ago to come to Stony Brook and establish a new church which would meet in her home. This was the start of the Stony Brook Community Church., and its first offering collected a then-impressive \$1.31. Unfortunately this rate of contributions did not continue as the collection for the entire first year was \$2.56.

In 1817, several denominations joined together to stop worshiping in Mrs. Davis' house — which still stands across the street from the church — and to build a simple church building.

This was replaced by the current structure in 1860, at 216 Christian Ave., that Stony Brook Community Church still occupies. The church steeple, held together with pegs instead of nails, became a landmark for sailors, helping to guide them into the harbor. When in 1908, the building was in serious need of repairs, the job was done with volunteer labor for \$800 for materials. Unfortunately, by the time the steeple was struck by lightning in 1982, repairs had become distinctly more expensive.

On Saturday, May 4, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. — rain date May 5, 12 to 4 p.m. — the church is hosting a tag and bake sale to help make up for the way prices have increased since that first offering in 1809. The historic church building and the equally historic cemetery — the oldest grave dating to 1813 — will be open to visitors during the sale.

*Tag and Bake Sale Committee
Stony Brook Community Church*

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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EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Leah S. Dunaief

GENERAL MANAGER

Johness Kuisel

MANAGING EDITOR

Samantha Rutt

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