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Vol. 40, No. 39

April 17, 2025

\$2.00



Wildcats play Hurricanes

Westhampton proved tough competition for the SWR girls lacrosse team

A23

Sewage spill in Port Jeff Harbor

The release of the partially treated sewage could impact pathogen levels in the water

A9



Earth Day events on the North Shore

B1



Photo by Bill Landon

Eager for Easter

Mt. Sinai Fire Department holds 15th annual breakfast with the Easter Bunny — **A12**



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Miller Place HS shot and discus thrower Scully looks to finish strong before heading south

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Fresh off setting a county record in the shot put in the winter, Miller Place High School track star Jillian Scully has her sights set on setting a new state record in shot put and another track and field event this spring.

A high school senior, Scully is determined to etch her name into the record books in the discus as well.

"I'm 100 percent confident I'm going to crush" the record in the discus, said Scully, who has suggested that the 2.2 pound discus has been flying out of her hand.

The current state record is 172 feet, while her personal best, which she threw last year, is 159 feet 8 inches.

"She has got enormous potential, which is why so many world class athletes are chasing her," said Bill Hiney, the Assistant Track and Field Coach during the winter and spring seasons for Southold High School and Scully's personal coach. Scully took a standing throw that traveled over 120 feet. Scully has also thrown the discus 150 feet against the wind and without warming up properly, Hiney said.



Scully competing at a state meet. Photo courtesy of Despina Scully

College coaches at several programs reached out to Scully to recruit her to their schools, hoping she could bring her athletic talents to their programs.

"We told her it was her decision" about which college to attend, said Jillian's father James Scully, who owns and runs the construction company JFS Contracting. His daughter responded that she'd ask them if she needed their help.

As it turned out, she made the decision on her own, selecting Louisiana State University.

"I walked on campus and I said, 'This is for me,'" said the six-foot, one-inch athlete. She

should be able to throw discus and shot put outside year round. Scully would also like to explore competing in the weight throw and the javelin.

"When I go to LSU, I want to try it all," said Scully.

Scully's father believes the weather will work to her advantage in Louisiana.

"She practices in the rain and will be out throwing when it's windy and cold," he said.

Scully is intrigued by the range of foods available in the Pelican state.

During one of her visits, she enjoyed fried alligator with rice.

"It tastes like chicken," she laughed.

Academic interests

Scully doesn't just want to finish strong athletically: she also would like to have a successful final showing academically.

"I want to make sure I hit honor role for the third and fourth quarter," she said.

As for her academic interests in college, she plans to study engineering and, in particular, is interested in biomedical engineering.

Scully could see herself as a Paralympic track coach one day.

She recalled watching a video of a world championship event in which a Paralympic athlete was preparing to compete. The athlete struggled with a prosthesis that was causing a problem.

"Not a single person there could help him," Scully said. "He missed out on competing."

She recalled telling herself that she'd like to be there to help, particularly after knowing how hard every athlete trains.

"I couldn't imagine how that felt for him," Scully said.

California dreaming

As for her own athletic performance, Scully would like to compete in the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in the discus.

Hiney recognizes that athletes with Scully's build and determination don't come along too often.

"You don't regularly get to train" athletes who have Scully's strength and frame, he said.

"Ambition is not in short supply," Scully's father James added. "She's motivated and she loves setting goals for herself."

Scully believes his daughter can accomplish anything she decides to try.

He and his wife Despina "Debbie" Scully have gone to their daughter's competitions during her high school years and are looking forward to traveling to some of the competitions in Louisiana as well.

As for their expectations, Scully believes they align with their daughter's.

When she reaches her goals, he said, "Is it surprising? Yes. Is it exciting? Yes. Are we shocked by the fact that she broke a record? No."



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SBU international students’ visas revoked

BY SABRINA ARTUSA
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Eleven international Stony Brook University students’ visas have been terminated by the federal government as of Thursday, April 10. The university’s Office of Global Affairs notified the students.

“We want to assure you that our Global Affairs team is exceptionally knowledgeable in advising our international community and are working around the clock to provide individualized support to our international students, faculty, and scholars,” reads a memo written by Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Carl W. Lejuez, Graduate School Dean Celia Marshik and Senior Associate Provost for Global Affairs Lindsi Walker. “They

are leveraging their extensive network of partners, including SUNY, to gather up-to-date information on resources and guidance.”

University representatives did not disclose why the visas were revoked. On March 21, Interim President Richard McCormick released a letter addressing unrest among international students. The letter came amid an increase in visa terminations across New York and the country.

In January, President Donald Trump (R) reversed a policy that prevented Immigration and Customs Enforcement from making arrests in schools and places of worship.

According to Inside Higher Ed, more than 700 international students have had

their visas revoked across the country as of April 11. In New York, at least 62 students across eight public and private universities have had their visas terminated.

“As you know, this is a time of heightened uncertainty for international students on the nation’s college campuses. I am writing to emphasize that you are a valued member of our campus community,” McCormick wrote in the March letter.

Students with questions regarding their visa status are directed to Stony Brook University’s Visa and Immigration Services, the office of International Student

Success, Counseling and Psychological Services, or the Student Support Team.



File photo.

Port Jefferson planning board considers boutique hotel on former Gap site

BY CAROLINE O’CALLAGHAN
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During the April 10 Incorporated Village of Port Jefferson planning board meeting, town officials conceptualized potential expansions to various properties, as they grappled with hypothetical stipulations and amendment alternatives from zoning standard compliance to parking accessibility.

Those properties included a long-overlooked site, 100 Arden Place, formerly known as the Gap clothing store location.

Senior Planner Daniel Gross summarized the applicant’s plan of developing the site into a boutique hotel. The project, in preliminary stages, is a four-story proposal with “mixed-use developments on the ground floor, a hotel lobby, [and] two stories of a 40-unit hotel space on the second and third-story.” The fourth story would house a rooftop bar and outdoor dining space, potentially, something Gross said would be “a unique feature within the C1 district.” The impacts on parking accessibility were a concern.

“Valet parking for hotel guests at St. Charles is the ideal solution,” said planning board member Laura Zimmerman. Zimmerman was referring to a lesser used parking lot located on the grounds of St. Charles Hospital. By giving the hotel guests free valet parking to the lot, this would avoid any further parking congestion issues in uptown Port Jefferson village. Parking is a big consideration for the project, since the rights to the parking adjacent to the Gap site have changed numerous times since it was initially bought in 1985. The Port Jefferson Gap was operational from 1992 to 2019.

Board members addressed prospective zoning conflicts. The scope of the project may change over time and require rezoning, based on the State Environmental Quality Review Act classifications.

The project is considered a Type 1 action pursuant to SEQRA, requiring a full environmental assessment based on the tall height of the building. Gross explained, “a short environmental assessment form has been submitted, but hasn’t been reviewed by SEQRA staff yet.” Gross mentioned potentially seeking rezoning from C1 to C2 district in order to maintain compliance, since C2 has a higher floor area ratio than that of the C1 district.

The fourth-story bar and restaurant would require its own assessment in order to review how noise and lighting impact the community upon its completion.

The applicant of the proposal would prefer to have a larger restaurant space and smaller or less hotel units, citing it as being more convenient for the mobility of Port Jefferson village residents and visitors. Advertising would be seen from the ferry, all the way into Connecticut.

The planning board discussed more than the hotel boutique. The meeting started with a review of draft minutes from last month’s meeting on village code: Chapter 129. The code aligns with issues pertaining to steep slopes and subsequent flood damage. They segued into other matters, which included another proposal for a four-story mixed-use property.

“When it comes to impacts, SEQRA gives the board all the latitude beyond our code to look at things and issues and request supplemental information, so in this discussion I was saying that SEQRA and Chapter 129, which is the VEQRA — Village SEQRA — allows the staff to go ahead and go contact [property owners] to work on these issues without having to have a code section that says steep slopes,” said Lee Rosner (planning board trustee), who led the meeting. Rosner continued, “Village SEQRA

gives the board’s ability to review all the latitudes to pull up any steep slope of a property to see a slope analysis.” This renders 129 unnecessary. It was determined that the village should have some of its own guidelines while complying to SEQRA standards when it comes to steep slopes.

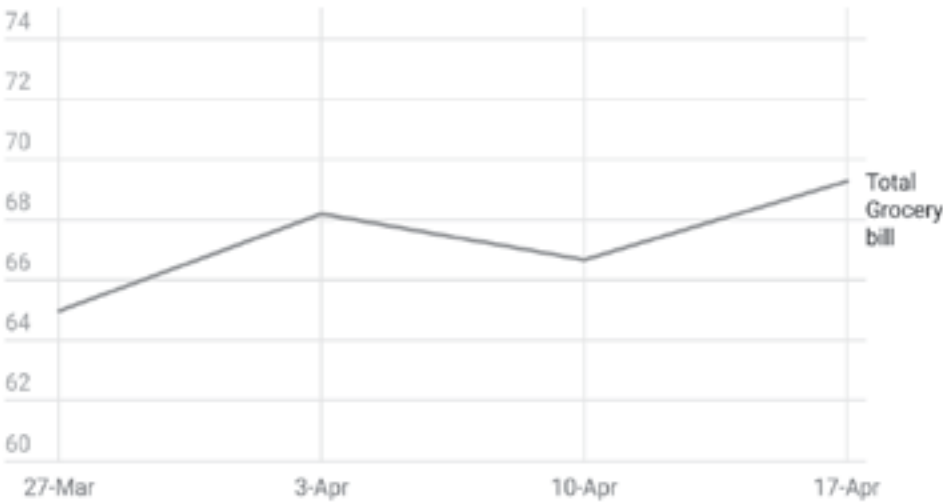
The board motioned to approve the minutes as amended, citing that the code should state “allows staff to work with property owners to address environmental issues” rather than “allows staff to

contact property owners.”

Board members also heard a presubmission application of a four-story apartment building project at 1506-1512 Main Street. The current building would be demolished and replaced with a 35,000-square-foot apartment complex that would house 40 apartments — seven studios and 33 one-bedrooms. The building meets all zoning requirements and FAR standards.

The cost of groceries each week

The items include a gallon of milk, a dozen white eggs, a mango, paper plates, whole wheat bread, butter, potatoes, tin foil, paper towels, bananas, ground beef and chicken cutlets. The prices are recorded weekly from a local supermarket.



Created with Datawrapper

From flying drones to eSports, PJ schools embrace technology in and out of class

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF
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Benjamin Batter, a 10th grader at Earl L. Vandermeulen High School, noticed a Nintendo Switch Joy-Con near the side of the road.

Rather than keep going, he took it apart, cleaned it, fixed the battery and got it to work.

His decision reflects the kinds of actions the Port Jefferson school district is taking as it embraces evolving technology in a host of contexts, providing new classes such as Esports as well as clubs, STEAM and drone camps.

US News and World Reports ranked Earl L. Vandermeulen High School as one of the best STEM schools in the nation, encouraging administrators and the Board of Education to continue to invest “energy and financial resources to build in this area,” said Robert Neidig, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in the Port Jefferson school istrict.

Indeed, Port Jefferson built a computer science center in the high school that opened before the start of the academic year and wanted to capitalize on additional opportunities.

This summer, the middle school and high school are partnering up with Inspirit AI in a two-week artificial intelligence boot camp taught by graduate students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford and others that offers personalized teaching.

“We’re providing the venue while the professors come and teach and work with our students in terms of projects they can create and build under their leadership,” said Neidig. “It’s something I’m very excited about [as the school gets] some of the best and brightest minds to wet their palate.”

Summer projects with Inspirit AI for a middle school and high school class, which will start out with 10 to 12 students each, will deploy coding and AI skills to accomplish different tasks, such as efforts to improve the environment or enhance medical services.

Drone and STEAM camps

All year round, the school district offers STEAM and drone camps.

While rooted in the world of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math, Port Jefferson schools envision using these technology-driven skills sets in other arenas.

“In coding for social studies or science” students apply the same computer science skills in various contexts, Neidig said.

Drones, meanwhile, have provided an

outlet for students interested in photography, videography and other applications.

Sixth-grader Jonathan Kogan appreciates the opportunity to work with others in the drone camp. He feels as if the drones expand his horizons.

“I like flying the drones and taking pictures

Program	Grades	Credit	Timing	When Started
Esports	HS	Yes	Academic Year	Started 2024-2025 School year
Drone Academic Camp	MS/HS	No	Summer/Academic Year During Academic Camps	Started 2023-2024 School Year
Inspirit AI	MS/HS	No	Summer 2025	Summer 2025
STEAM Academic Camp	ES/MS	No	Summer/Academic Year During Academic Camps	Started 2024-2025 School Year
Cybersecurity	HS	Yes	Academic Year	Started 2024-2025 School year

and videos,” said Kogan. When he’s operating something in the air it “feels like you’re flying as well.”

When the school was considering the purchase of new tables in the cafeteria, Batter took overhead photos with a drone. The Board of Education considered those photos when choosing what kinds of new tables to buy.

Drones can help in other contexts. In Rwanda and Madagascar, officials fly medicines by drones to populations that might otherwise be difficult to reach with other transportation.

As for the safety of the drones, Port Jefferson has educated the middle and high school students on altitude limits.

“Education is paramount in all these endeavors,” said Neidig. “Before drones go up, [students] are looking at the rules for flights” which vary depending on the area. “We have the ability to understand what the flight rules are in Port Jefferson.”

Robert Farenga, a high school and middle school teacher who runs the STEAM and drone camps and teaches esports, is planning on collecting student images from the drones in areas of the town and the school and putting up pictures around the school and in his classroom.

Farenga has discussed the use of drones in

real estate, entertainment, the party business, and advertising.

“A person who is trained in using drones and knowing how to edit that film or photography can create a lucrative business,” he said.

Esports

In the two sixth-grade Esports classes that started this year, students have had the opportunity to play games and learn about the business.

Farenga, who also runs the STEAM and drone camps, suggested the business is “one of the fastest growing sports industries around.”

Farenga teaches a mixture of high school students grades about programming, announcing of games, management, marketing and other aspects of the business.

In a class they take for academic credit, students learn about job opportunities while they also discuss social and emotional learning through gaming.

Students don’t take formal quizzes or tests, earning grades based on their participation and projects.

Eventually, Farenga would like to add virtual reality goggles, which allow drone fliers to see through the lens as the drone is flying.

He would also like bring in guest lecturers

who can share their experiences and background.

Artificial Intelligence

Port Jefferson schools are encouraging teachers to embrace educational opportunities through artificial intelligence.

Eva Grasso, the middle school/ high school library media specialist, is dispersing information to the staff and works with the middle school computer science students and engages them in critical thinking and problem solving activities.

AI is “insanely cool and super provocative in its potential for education in lots of fields,” said Grasso. At the same time, it could “have detrimental effects on society.”

Grasso sends out weekly tips to the middle and high schools that are meant to provide ways to learn more.

She has also worked with sixth graders in a range of subjects from algebra to language.

Even with AI, students are “finding their way back to those core skills that students 100 years ago and 100 years from now will need: can you collaborate, can you work well with others and can you recognize that frustration at not knowing something, which is not just a part of the process, but is an essential part of the process,” Grasso said

As educators, Grasso urges schools to teach students how to use AI responsibly.

In addition to Inspirit AI, Port Jefferson is also planning to offer a high school cybersecurity class this fall.

“We’re moving into this technology and offering these” options as a way to prepare students for the next steps in their lives, Farenga said.



Drone photo taken by students attending the Port Jefferson School District’s drone camp. Photo courtesy the Port Jefferson School District

Editorial



Support autistic voices beyond Autism Awareness Month

One in 36 children aged eight in the U.S. were diagnosed with the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One in 36 means that around 32 students are affected by ASD in a high school of 1238 students—the number of students enrolled at Smithtown High School West from 2023-2024. It means that 76 students from kindergarten to sixth grade in the Three Village School District may have trouble socializing, communicating and learning.

The number of adults impacted is less defined, with some adults going undiagnosed, though the CDC estimates 1 in 45 adults in the U.S. have ASD. These individuals are artists. They are educators, technicians, writers, engineers and leaders. They helped make our community, but our community was not made for them.

Often people with ASD have to “mask.” According to the National Autistic Society, people with ASD sometimes mask in order to appear non-autistic. Autistic people have described masking as “tightly controlling and adjusting how you express yourself based on the real or anticipated reactions of others.”

ASD causes the person to have trouble communicating in social situations. They may exhibit repetitive behaviors called “stimming” or strictly adhere to a fixed routine. They may get overstimulated by certain sensations or experiences. Autism is a spectrum, so it affects everyone in varying degrees.

People with ASD have helped shaped our society in significant ways. Greta Thunberg, for example, is a 22-year old environmental activist who inspired thousands to advocate for environmental protections. She is also on the autistic spectrum.

Renowned actor Anthony Hopkins is also reportedly on the autistic spectrum and was diagnosed late in his life.

Most people have some connection to a person who has ASD. Expanding consideration to the different needs and preferences of autistic individuals does not take much work. Offering different resources and services, like Father Andrew Garnett is doing in holding a sensory-friendly church service, is a great way to show that people with different abilities are valued. We can ask questions—what can we do to help? Perhaps we can communicate differently and avoid sarcasm. We can be cognizant of sensory issues. Most importantly, we can listen. Let’s make an effort to be more considerate to those with ASD and to learn about how we can make our community more inclusive, not just this April during Autism Awareness Month but always.

Letters to the Editor

Common-sense decision

At the Three Village CSD Board of Education meeting on April 9, a common-sense decision was finally made to remove the start time change from the 2025-26 budget. After months of under stimulating banter and a constant “will they, won’t they” cliffhanger hovering over every meeting, four of the seven board members voted to hold off on this nonsensical and very costly change. Reality came into play as metaphoric light bulbs slowly began to flicker representing all that would be lost educationally for the majority of our students to satisfy a 30-minute time adjustment. Over a million dollars of transportation costs alone would have partially negated our IG Program, increased elementary class sizes exponentially, erased some secondary extra-curriculars and electives and slashed SEVERAL positions both in and out of the classroom. And yet three members of the board continued to advocate for this change despite all that would be lost. How can these individuals truly believe the supposed benefits of going to school 30 minutes later could possibly outweigh the costs of what would be taken away? The persistent rambling about the 30 minutes of “extra sleep” continues to stick in my craw, particularly at the secondary level. If you want your child to sleep more, be a parent and tell them to go to bed. We don’t need a million dollars in transportation to send them to their rooms. Healthy sleep gains will be just as beneficial if they go to sleep 30 minutes earlier and still wake up for school, it’s a simple fact.

We now wait on eggshells to see how our million dollars will be re-allocated. The board has a lot of decisions to make before the May 20th vote and they need to carefully consider the fragile standing of this year’s budget. Three Village is in deep, and we need to save ourselves from drowning. Cooler heads must prevail and a more realistic vision for our district needs to be added to the playbook to ensure success for the ones we are all fighting for, the kids! I speak for many in the community when I express my satisfaction

knowing that our tax dollars will be going to academics rather than bus rides.

*Most sincerely,
Stefanie Werner
East Setauket*

Ward Melville track

I’d like to thank Sabrina Artusa for her excellent article highlighting the success of the Ward Melville boys 4 x mile relay team and of my son Jon winning the state indoor 1600-meter championship.

Jon began running cross-country when he entered seventh grade at Gelinas. He did not show a lot of promise over the course of his first two races, finishing nearly last, but his junior high coach, Claudia Rippe, encouraged him and made running fun and enjoyable.

Jon joined the varsity cross-country team at Ward Melville as a freshman and head cross-country, winter track and spring track coaches Ryan DeLuca and assistant coach Brian Liebowitz took Jon’s running to a whole new level. These two coaches provide training and instruction on every aspect of being a successful runner, including diet, stretching, warming up, cooling down, training, preventing injuries, getting proper rest and most importantly being a good teammate and leader.

As a freshman Jon won the Suffolk County 800-meter run championship and the next year was the Suffolk County sophomore 2-mile champion. That same year during winter track he ran the fastest 1000 meters in the United States for a sophomore. Over the last five years,coaches DeLuca and Liebowitz runners have been named to multiple all-conference, all-county, all-Long Island and all-state teams in all three running sports. Their knowledge of their sport and dedication to their runners are exceptional.

I don’t know if Jon was either the strongest or fastest runner in his state 1600-meter victory, but I’m fairly certain he was the most experienced runner in the field. Of the 12 runners, Jon ran the best race strategically — by far. Over the last four years, the Ward Melville coaches have provided Jon and his teammates the

opportunity to run over 50 races in major invitationals at some of the fastest indoor tracks on the East Coast located throughout New York and New England. By comparison, Jon has friends on other teams who’ve told him they rarely leave the Island to race.

I am so impressed by the Ward Melville cross-country and track programs and the quality of athletes that coaches DeLuca and Liebowitz have consistently produced — especially given how physically challenging the sport is. A few years ago one of Jon’s teammate’s sisters remarked, “You know what you do for a sport, other sports do as a punishment.” Funny and true.

*David Seyfert
Stony Brook*



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CORRECTION: In the April 10 issue, a letter by David Friedman was misattributed to Dylan Friedman. David Friedman was the author of the letter titled “The EPA should be protected.”

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

Opinion

In a life filled with blurry landscapes, we have the power to see the invisibles

Their names fly by after the final scene amid music that often recapitulates what we’ve just heard in a movie theater or at home during a streaming film.

In fact, oftentimes, the streaming services will suggest the next film before the credits role, giving us the option to move effortlessly from one movie to the next without pausing to allow the movie to resonate or to squint at the names during the credits.

Every industry is filled with the invisibles. These are the people who make stuff happen, but who are not at the center of an effort. Take dining out. We see the maitre d’, the waiter or waitress and we might even acknowledge the cook or the sushi chef. But, really, numerous invisibles are a part of the food process, from the fishermen who woke up before sunlight to catch the fresh fish we’re considering eating to the farmer who planted and harvested the vegetables

to the truck drivers who ship these products all over the state and the country.

We are often a part of a bigger industry that relies on the services of others, many of whom we don’t know or see but who contribute to our lives.

Products like pharmaceuticals rely on numerous contributions. Patients take a drug during its clinical trials, tended to by doctors and nurses, while scientists may have discovered a potential target for an illness or a disease and then searched for a small molecule that might change our fates or improve our condition.

The invisibles also glide by the way homes and the tops of trees pass as a part of a blurry landscape when we’re riding the Long Island Railroad.

We walk by people as we navigate a crowded sidewalk towards a Broadway show or on our way to an important appointment in the city.

We sit at a traffic light to turn left, waiting for the cars we can see, but not necessarily the people in them, to pass us so we can get to our destination.

When children are young, they see and observe everyone. As my wife and I used to say,

“the recorder is always on,” whether someone is lecturing about what children should know or do or is setting an example or, as the case may be, a counter example.

I was on a plane recently when a mother holding a baby in front of her stopped to wait for others to put away their luggage. Unconcerned about social convention, the young child stared at my wife and me, then shifted his eyes and looked directly at the people in the row across the aisle.

The mother continued to look straight, anticipating the moment when she could continue past us on her way to her seat.

Social convention keeps us from looking directly at people for too long. We don’t want to make them uncomfortable and, sometimes, we also don’t want to encourage everyone to engage in conversation with us.

As we pass through various grades, we become selective about our friends, no longer feeling the need to invite everyone in class to birthday parties.

When we’re older, we attend larger gatherings and we greet everyone. Well, no, not exactly everyone. We may not spend much time chatting with the busy waitress, getting to know

members of the other family at a wedding, or connecting with the Uber driver who took us to the catering hall.

We don’t need to acknowledge everyone all the time. That would be impossible. Some people also enjoy the freedom a cloak of invisibility provides. Some of my favorite parties, in fact, were those where so few people knew me that I had no social responsibilities or obligations, allowing me to dance with arms flailing and shoulders shimmying with a relaxed grain pasted across my sweaty face.

And yet, there are those times, when someone is sitting alone or is taking another long drive, when a few words might provide the kind of connection that helps them feel seen.

To return to the movie example, we sometimes watch characters who are otherwise ignored or written off who become central to other people’s lives. Those people may be waiting for an opening or an acknowledgement or for the opportunity to feel our recognition and appreciation. We can be moved by people who lived hundreds or thousands of years ago, but we can also move with those who share time and space with us today.

Rites of spring that we happily practice and some we don’t miss

The bright yellow forsythias and the pink azaleas, along with the dramatic magnolias and the delicate cherry blossoms contradict the miserable March weather we have been enduring.

But, you can’t fool Nature with adverse temperatures. She has her own calendar. Further proof of the season may be taken from the runny noses and watery eyes of the allergy sufferers, and the appearance of the tiny ants around the kitchen sink. And if you are among the lucky ones, you know what that means: call the sprinkler guys and the pool crew

to get on their schedules, check who will be available to mow the lawn this year, and

have the air conditioners tuned up and filters changed.

Yup. It’s spring.

If you have a boat, even a small one, it’s time to remove the shrink wrap, polish the teak and the hardware, check the engine, and if it is a sailboat, carefully look over the sails and count the life jackets. Maybe there is a new person who has joined the family.

If you have a garden, this is planting and seeding time. Get out the mulch and start spreading. Straighten the hose lines. Perennials are up, annuals are going in. Take a good look around the neighborhood. There seems to be a riot of daffodils throughout the yards and villages this year. And the fruit trees are bursting with color. Maybe it’s the contrast with the grey and the rain that’s been surrounding us.

There are chores we no longer need to do. I don’t know how many of you remember, but we used to have the snow tires removed

and the regular tires put back in their place. We would ask that the winter oil in the car be emptied and replaced with the summer oil at the gas station. We still need to give the car a thorough cleaning, however, and put the snow brush back into the trunk. The shovels and walkway salt go into the garage and, if we have one, the snow blower is returned to the far corner.

Inside the house, we need to put the heavy winter coats in the back of the closet, take off the long underwear if we wear that armor against the cold, put away the turtlenecks and shake out our lighter shirts, blouses and pants to prepare them for the warmer temperatures. Might as well look at the bathing suits, too. Maybe we need a new one this year.

Those who go on trips in the summer may well be studying locations and fares around this time, if they haven’t already. I’m not part of that exodus, however. Where can you go to enjoy the season better than right here on the

shores of Long Island? Others agree. They are my warm weather relatives and friends, and I welcome their company. We should start to get the guest room ready.

Amid all that activity and bustle, we must be sure to stop every now and then to enjoy the birdsong coming from the many bushes. And if we look hard enough, we can see birds’ nests in the branches of the trees and under the edges of porch roofs.

On a final note, spring is also the time when the world’s major holidays are observed: Ramadan, Passover and Easter. The holidays all include prayers for peace. Would that we could all celebrate the holidays concurrently in a world filled with only peace: no more warfare, no more hatred, no more violence.

Since we are all people praying for the same blessing, why has it been so impossible to achieve? Will it ever happen? May we someday truly turn our swords into plowshares?

Enjoy the marvel of the new season in peace.



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Year After Year

Mastic man sentenced to 20 years in prison for killing his housemate

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney today announced that Philip Walker, 58, of Mastic, was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty in February to Manslaughter in the First Degree for fatally stabbing his housemate, 63-year-old Jimmy Vaughn, three times with a knife.

According to court documents and the defendant's admissions during his guilty plea allocution, on June 30, 2023, at approximately 5:00 p.m., Walker stabbed Vaughn inside a room at the Shirley Motel on Montauk Highway. When paramedics arrived, Vaughn was found outside of room, bleeding from the left side of his chest and abdomen. He was taken to Long Island Community Hospital, where doctors attempted but failed to repair the hole in his heart. Vaughn was pronounced dead at approximately 6:20 p.m.

Walker fled from the motel after the incident, but Suffolk County Police officers arrested him on July 2, 2023, at a family member's home in North Amityville.



Philip Walker

On February 14, 2025, Walker pleaded guilty before Acting Supreme Court Justice Karen M. Wilutis to Manslaughter in the First Degree, a Class B violent felony.

On April 14, 2025, Justice Wilutis sentenced Walker to 20 years in prison.

"Today's 20-year sentence reflects the gravity of this senseless violent act. While the defendant's guilty plea acknowledges responsibility

for his actions, it does not diminish the tragedy of a life cut short," said District Attorney Tierney. "Justice requires that we hold all individuals accountable for their violent actions and this sentence ensures just that."

This case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Dena Rizopoulos of the Homicide Bureau, and the investigation was conducted by Detective David Gelsomino of the Suffolk County Police Department's Homicide Squad.

— SUFFOLK COUNTY D.A.'S OFFICE

POLICE BLOTTER

The following incidents have been reported by Suffolk County Police:

Vehicle window shot during road rage incident on the LIE

Suffolk County Police Fourth Squad detectives are investigating a road rage incident during which a driver shot what detectives believe to be a BB gun into another vehicle in Lake Ronkonkoma on April 10.

A man was driving a 2018 Chevrolet pickup eastbound on the Long Island Expressway eastbound between Exits 59 and 60 at around 8:40 a.m. when he was involved in a road rage incident with another driver who fired what detectives believe to be a BB gun into the rear driver's side window of the Chevrolet. The suspect was a male driving a white Honda Civic with tinted windows. The Chevrolet driver, who was alone in his vehicle, was not injured.

Detectives are asking anyone who may have witnessed this incident to call the Fourth Squad at 631- 854-8452 or anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-220-TIPS. All calls will be kept confidential.

Three massage parlors raided

Suffolk County Police arrested two people on April 11 during a massage parlor raid at foot spas in Medford and Selden.

Following an investigation by Sixth Precinct Investigative Unit officers, with the assistance of Town of Brookhaven personnel and the Town of Brookhaven Fire Marshal, arrested the following for Unauthorized Practice of a Profession, a felony: Jianfen Ye, 47, of Flushing, Queens, an employee at Zensation Foot Spa, located at 3316 Route 112 Unit G in Medford; and Ruogu He, 42, of Bayside, Queens, an employee at Foot Relaxing Station, located at 1070 Middle Country Road Unit 14 in Selden.

In a separate incident, Suffolk County Police on April 9 arrested a man and a woman during a massage parlor raid in East Northport.

In response to numerous community complaints, Second Precinct Investigative Unit officers, in conjunction with the Town of Huntington Fire Marshal and Building Department, conducted an investigation into Tranquil Spa, located at 165 Larkfield Road, and arrested two employees.

Ling Li, 40, of Flushing, was charged with two counts of alleged Unauthorized Practice of a Profession, a felony, and two counts of Prostitution, a misdemeanor. Jian Lin Zhang, 56, of Flushing, was charged with allegedly Promoting Prostitution 4th Degree and Criminal Nuisance 2nd Degree, both misdemeanors.

CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Do you recognize this man? Photo from SCPD

Wanted for leaving scene of accident

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Fifth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the man who allegedly left the scene of a motor vehicle crash in Holbrook in March.

The man pictured above was allegedly operating a black Nissan Sentra when the vehicle struck a parked, unoccupied Chevrolet Tahoe in the parking lot of Costco, located at 125 Beacon Drive, on March 30. The damage to the Tahoe was valued at approximately \$5,000.

The Town of Huntington issued several summonses and violations to the business.

All parties were issued Desk Appearance tickets to appear in court at a later date.

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

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

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Port Jefferson Health and Wellness Fest

BY JOSHUA KIM
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

The 16th annual Port Jefferson Health & Wellness Fest was held Saturday, April 12, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Meadow Club, on Rte. 112 just off the 347. The event was organized by the Greater Port Jefferson Chamber of Commerce and supported by 12 sponsoring institutions, including the three major hospitals in the area: Stony Brook Medicine, John T. Mather Hospital and St. Charles Hospital.

The many attendees who parked in the adjacent Port Plaza’s parking lot were directed across the street and into the venue by Suffolk County Crossing Guards in bright neon yellow raincoats. Inside the Meadow Club, the glistening crystal chandeliers, marble floors, and bright, lively atmosphere struck a sharp contrast with the cold, gloomy weather outside.

The Fest was supported by over 50 local health providers, businesses and organizations that filled over 90 tables where they could distribute brochures, merchandise and, in some cases, massages. The standard rate for a table was \$250, while Chamber of Commerce partners paid \$200 and nonprofits \$100 – some

organizations, like Hope for Cleo Animal Rescue, which brought along puppies, attended for free; “animals are a draw,” said Barbara Ransome, the director of operations at the Chamber.

Stony Brook Medicine commanded the largest presence with 11 different tables dedicated to several health topics, including obstetrics-gynecology, urology and chronic kidney disease. Dr. Soo-Jin Lim of the Stony Brook Medicine Heart Institute spoke of the opportunity that the event provided to screen people who might typically ignore their health, saying that they had referred at least one person with high blood pressure to treatment.

Mather Hospital had the next largest presence with eight tables arranged along the side of the room, also dedicated to similar health topics.

St. Charles Hospital had fewer tables, but, as in years past, they provided the refreshments for the fest. The head chef at St. Charles Hospital Mohamad Saleh, or “Chef Mo,” who typically makes sure that “the patients in the hospital are getting food they like and eating healthy food,” made healthy muffins and Açaí bowls. “[We’ve] had a great experience with everybody—some of them are actually patients in the hospital,” said Chef Mo.



Scenes from the Port Jefferson Health & Wellness fest. Photos by Joshua Kim

The event also was not limited to only organizations or businesses traditionally associated with health and wellness: everyone from the Port Jeff Free Library to Port Jeff Bowl to, Moloney Family Funeral Homes had a table set up, seeing the event as an opportunity to “put their name and face out there.” However, many of these groups used the event to highlight health-related services they offered that were less well-publicized, such as the Port Jeff Free Library’s “huge range of programs, from nutrition facts to stroke awareness, to a workshop on knee and shoulder pain.”

People from all over Suffolk, and even Nassau County, attended the fest. Some had seen the promotions in the paper or on

Facebook; some had “just been passing by” on the road and decided to pop in and still others had attended the fest other years and were coming back.

Two friends, Kim and Marianna, had heard about the event on Instagram and came from Nassau County and Babylon to “understand and better [their] own health” as they neared retirement age. “It’s great to see that they have so many supporters, people who are willing to come out on a Saturday to help other people understand the importance of taking care of yourself,” said Kim. “It’s much bigger than I had expected.”

“We really feel that the Village of Port Jefferson has become a mecca for health and

30,000 gallons of sewage discharged into Port Jefferson Harbor

BY WILLIAM STIEGLITZ
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

On the morning of April 14, an approximate total of 30,000 gallons of partially treated sewage was discharged into Port Jefferson Harbor over the course of two hours. According to the Suffolk County Department of Public Works, the discharge was caused by an electrical malfunction on a ultraviolet disinfection unit. Upon identifying the problem, the plant ran the effluent through a second UV system, while they repaired and tested the first, then returned to routine operations. While the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation confirmed that the plant is now operating normally, but there are still health concerns.

Port Jefferson village put out an alert, saying the sewage reached the surface of the water, and without the sewage having been fully disinfected, it can carry high levels of pathogenic bacteria and viruses. Residents and visitors are warned “to take precautions before recreating in Port Jefferson Harbor.” Additionally, the DEC announced a temporary closure on shellfishing for the harbor and its tributaries. The closure impacts approximately 1,639 acres of shellfishing beds in the NS5 harvest

area, including Setauket Harbor, the Narrows and Conscience Bay, and will last until the department determines shellfish in the area are safe to use for food.

The response from local environmental groups has been one of concern for both the human and ecological impact. “It’s early spring, which means it’s spawning and breeding time for many species,” said Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. She explained that finfish like winter flounder were at risk, as well as turtles and birds of prey that feed on juvenile fish. The horseshoe crab was of particular concern, as its population is already in steep decline in New York’s north and south shores. “This is the time when we want to protect this species, not add pollution to the water, which would harm them.”

Esposito predicted it would take “at least a couple of days” before the waters return to a normal state, but that it “is dependent upon water circulation and the tide.” She also said it would help for the DEC to do an investigation of what caused the UV unit to malfunction. “Is it because the unit is old? Does it need to be upgraded?” she asked. “Accidents happen, alright. And we understand that. But they need to assess the root cause and prevent it from happening again in the future.”



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"Catharsis", painted by Erich Preis. Photo by Sabrina Artusa

Artist explores themes of autism in exhibition

BY SABRINA ARTUSA
EDITOR1@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

The work of Erich Preis, a Huntington native, decorates the walls of Trinity Community Art Center. Four-foot-tall paintings showcase apocalyptic scenes, foreboding and eerie. His work addresses both internal and external turmoil. Giant gears loom over desolate lands like storm clouds; the people in the paintings, vulnerable and unclothed, either cower or push onward.

Preis has been dedicated to art since he was 9 and studying at the Huntington Fine Arts school. Afterward, with the support of his high school art teacher, he went to the Fashion Institute of Technology where he received his associate's degree in art and design. Then, he continued to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts with a partial scholarship. During his tenure at the academy, he was awarded the Charles Toppan Memorial Prize.

In his storm series, Preis explores vulnerability, discomfort and the threat of unbridled technological advancement. "They relate to 911, a lot of them," he said. "And they also relate to man's battle against the machine and my own struggle with autism, you know, the repetitive motion of my mind."

There is a painting named "Catharsis." It is smaller than the others and depicts a

triple self-portrait, each face with a different expression. The center face is bisected by a gear and the opened mouth is detached from the face, set wide in a scream. This piece more directly addresses Preis' relationship with his autism.

"It was very healing to do this piece," he said. Preis also studied art therapy and received his bachelor's degree in the subject from C.W. Post. He then founded the Spirit of Huntington Art Center, where he helps his students enjoy the calming artistic process that has helped provide him with a creative outlet to express himself and cope with his autism.

The gear, a signature feature of his work, has manifested in his paintings over the course of his career.

"When I was 14 years old, a lawnmower fell apart and I was fascinated by this gear," he said. "I always had this gear around and when I was in FIT I started to integrate the figure with gears."

Preis lost his roommate Michael Noeth when a plane hit the Pentagon on 9/11. Since then, the gear has taken on a new meaning. In some pieces, it is like a plane — the storm reminiscent of a nuclear explosion.

The culmination of the series, "Salvation," is in the middle of the room and is the largest. The painting was the most difficult of those depicted and took Preis two years to complete. Bob Hendrick, one of the founders of the center and an artist

Continued on A11

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Artist

Continued from A10

himself, commented on the technique and composition: “There is a certain symmetry to it. It is masterfully done.”

While the other paintings emit a sense of panic, fear and hopelessness, “Salvation” depicts the second coming of Christ. The death and resurrection of the people, the heroic angels diving past flames to bring the people back up to the light, provide a sense of solace, even as two gears grind among flames.

Priest of the neighboring Trinity Episcopal Church, Father Andrew Garnett admired what Preis was able to achieve. “Through art we have a deeper insight into what is going on,” he said. Garnett is holding a “sensory-friendly” service on April 27 at noon for all those who find the organ too loud or the typical sermon overwhelming. The service is inspired by autism awareness month.

“I think this is some of my best work because it deals with my emotions,” Preis said of the series. “I really hope that one day they end up in a museum.”

The exhibit will continue until April 27. In September, Preis will have an exhibit at the Long Island Art League, where he will exhibit his sculptures as well.

Erich Preis standing next to the centerpiece, “Salvation”.

Photo by Sabrina Artusa



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Breakfast with the Easter Bunny

BY BILL LANDON
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Sunday was the Mt. Sinai Fire Department's 15th annual Breakfast with the Easter Bunny from 8 a.m. until noon at Company 1 on Mt. Sinai Coram Rd. It was a robust turnout with raffles silent auctions and plenty of food where the kids had their picture taken with the Easter Bunny. No one left hungry.



Mt. Sinai Fire Department's breakfast with the Easter Bunny. Photos by Bill Landon



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Wow! You guys really knocked our socks off yesterday!

The food was a huge hit at my mom's "Celebration of Life" gathering. Everyone raved about the food and especially the presentation. The Gemelli Pasta salad was a party favorite. My favorite was the Shrimptini, deviled eggs and fruit cups. We used all of my mom's china, silver, crystal, punch bowl and serving trays. My mother would have approved :) ~ Bellport, NY, 8 April 2023

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Oh, most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of heaven, blessed mother of the Son of God, immaculate virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh star of the sea, help me & show me here in, you are my mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in this necessity There are none who can withstand your power. Oh show me herein you are my mother. Oh Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. (3 times). Oh Holy Mary, I place this cause in your hands. (3 times). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can obtain my goals. You gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me, and that in all instances of my life, you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things as you confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you in eternal glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. E.S.F. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. The request will be granted. This prayer must be published after the favor has been granted.

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Your Turn: Passover traditions

BY RABBI JOSHUA GRAY
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Nothing brings me back to my childhood, gathered around the kids' table with my brothers and cousins, like the Hillel sandwich. This singular Passover concoction is a mixture of maror (horseradish) and charoset (a sweet apple and nut mixture), packed between two pieces of matzah, or unleavened bread. If your mouth is not immediately watering at the sound of this combination, I don't think anyone would blame you. It is only after you try this Passover staple that you fully understand the strangely amazing symphony that is the bitter herb dueting with the sweet pieces of apple and wine. All of this occurs between the satisfying crunch of the matzah. I assure you this combination is one that you, and your tastebuds, will never forget.

RELIGION

Over 70 percent of Jewish people in the United States will attend a Passover, or Pesach, seder this year. The seder (meaning "order") is a ritual meal, complete with storytelling, song and general togetherness. We use a special book called a Haggadah to tell the story of the Israelite Exodus from

slavery in Egypt, our subsequent opportunity to live as a free people, and the constant desire to reach our promised land, either literally or proverbially. We are told to continue the tradition; to pass down this important story l'dor vador, from generation to generation. Children are an integral part of the ritual, and we all kvell (burst with pride) as our littlest seder-goers muddle through their designated songs and readings.

The aforementioned combination of bitter and sweet is no accident. The story of Passover and its rituals are a beautiful part of being Jewish. The message is also a universal one: with freedom comes the responsibility to work toward justice for all people. I always get a bit emotional during our seder when we recite the ten plagues of Egypt; the method by which the hard-hearted Pharaoh finally let the people of Israel go. It is tradition to remove a drop of wine from our cups as we recite aloud each

plague. Why do we do this? On a macro level, we recognize that our cups of celebration are

pain and unrest in our human community. We recognize that while we might be free, there are so many in our world who do not enjoy such self-determination. Individually, we might ask ourselves what could be holding us back from feeling entirely free. What might we be able to let go of that will allow us to live a more meaningful life?

One of the most important moments in our seder comes as we recite the line: "In every generation each individual is bound to regard themselves as if they had personally gone forth from Egypt." Not only do we balance both bitterness and sweetness through the lens of Jewish memory, but we are specifically challenged to put ourselves in the place of those who have gone before us. We grow our empathy for the human family as we build this skill of compassionate curiosity.

While the goals of Passover are lofty and the rituals might feel a bit baroque, just remember the Hillel sandwich. We are nourished by the tastes from our past as we strive toward a future of justice for all people. On a baser level, Passover evokes memories via taste, smell, song and story. I wish all of you a "Chag Pesach Sameach," a Happy Passover, and remember, you are always welcome at my table. Try the Hillel sandwich. Trust me.



Rabbi Joshua Gray at Temple Isaiah's Second Night Community Seder that took place on Sunday evening, April 13.
Photo courtesy Rabbi Joshua Gray

never completely full so long as others in the world suffer. The sweetness of freedom from bondage is fused with the bitterness that comes with the knowledge that there is still

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Hurricanes too much for Wildcats

BY BILL LANDON
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

When the Hurricanes of Westhampton came calling on the Wildcats of Shoreham-Wading River both teams traded scores well into the 2nd quarter when the Canes netted three unanswered goals pushing the Wildcats back on their heels. Westhampton showed why they're undefeated as they stretched their legs, edging ahead the rest of the way to win the game 15-8 handing the Wildcats their first loss of the season in the division II matchup Thursday night.

Senior attack Charlotte Erb led the way for the Wildcats netting three goals and teammates Grayce Kitchen and Morgan Lesiewicz banked two goals apiece. Sophomore goalie Sophia Giangreco had five saves in net.

— Photos by Bill Landon

- 1 Sophomore midfielder Maddy Herr breaks downfield for the Wildcats.
- 2 Senior attack Grayce Kitchen drives towards the crease in a home game against Westhampton.
- 3 Sophomore goalie Sophia Giangreco with a save for the Wildcats.







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