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JANUARY
2026
Volume 38
Number 8

Keeping you up to date on
SALES, HAPPENINGS & PEOPLE
In Our Town - St. James
PUBLISHED MONTHLY



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2026

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OUR TOWN

– ST. JAMES –

is a monthly publication produced
exclusively for the people of
St. James, Nissequogue and
Head of the Harbor, L.I., N.Y.

Email info@ourtownstjames.com for
Advertising & Copy Deadline

OUR TOWN is mailed directly to
every residence & business in the
11780 zip code area
(6559 total copies mailed)
St. James Post Office Permit #10
St. James, NY 11780

Published by
The St. James Chamber of Commerce
631-584-8510

email: info@stjameschamber.org
info@ourtownstjames.com
website: www.ourtownstjames.com

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PLEASE NOTE:

Advertising & Editorial Deadline
for the **FEBRUARY** edition of OUR TOWN • ST. JAMES is
THURSDAY, JANUARY 14 - 12 NOON

Distribution takes place on **January 26, 2026.**

MERCHANT SPOTLIGHT

Brooklyn Lands in St. James



Brooklyn's Best Baking Company

420 Lake Avenue, St. James • 631 686 5080

by Scott Posner

Beth Agliato, a resident of St. James, spent her career in the baking world until a course change occurred after having children. She moved from baking to real estate in order to have more control over her schedule while raising a family.

Today, those children are all grown up with children of their own. Beth now has five grandchildren: two 11 year-olds, two 7 year-olds and one 18 month old. No, the 11 and 7 year-olds are not twins – just two very amazing coincidences when sisters had children around the same time.

As a child, Beth found inspiration to become a baker from her “Nonnie Bella,” who is depicted in the bakery’s logo. Even when Beth was in bakery wholesaling, she always wanted a local cafe. Well, St. James is the lucky benefactor of her ambition.

Beth’s dream started when she found the location at 420 Lake Avenue. She then undertook an exten-

sive renovation of the interior and exterior, restoring the century old building to better than new. She even found an old stained glass window in the wall that serves as a decoration today. Beth’s ambition was to create a destination where “people can come sit in my house.”

The bakery has ample, comfortable and very welcoming seating. It’s a perfect stop to spend time with family and friends while enjoying their fresh baked creations.

Brooklyn’s Best Baking Company is a niche bakery. They specialize in mini cheesecakes, carrot cakes and uniquely flavored cookies such as s’mores and potato chip. A potato chip cookie? You heard me right... a potato chip cookie! Beth actually uses real potato chips in the preparation. I can happily report that the blend of sweet and salty really works! It’s a very successful taste with an extremely tasty conclusion.

All baking is done in the pristine kitchen. Nothing is frozen.

Beth has assembled an all-star



team. Many of you may recognize the manager Trevor, from his days at Bean’s Bagels. The team is rounded
continued on page 74



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photos by Rich Balter Photography

St. James Chamber of Commerce and Deepwells Farm Historical Society Celebrate the Holiday Season with Annual Christmas Tree Lighting

The St. James Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Deepwells Farm Historical Society, celebrated the start of the 2025 holiday season with its annual Christmas Tree Lighting on Saturday, December 6. Families filled the grounds for an afternoon of music, crafts, and holiday cheer, highlighted by performances from Gabe Dirla, Nikki Gargiulo, the Mills Pond 4th Grade Chorus, the Chorus

Line Dance Studio, and the Smithtown East Chamber Choir. Santa and Mrs. Claus also made a special appearance, delighting more than 200 children.

This year also marked the Chamber's first annual Snowflake Stroll, which proved to be a tremendous success. The Chamber thanks all the participating businesses and is pleased to announce that the Snowflake Stroll will now be offered as an ongoing Chamber member benefit moving forward.

The Chamber also extends sincere gratitude for the success of its first annual Toy Drive, thanking everyone who donated new, unwrapped toys to support local children.

Special thanks go to Ron Rothman and the Smithtown Rotary for coordinating refreshments; Spuntino for donating the hot cocoa; Michael Anthony's Catering for



providing the urns; James Spuntino for preparing and delivering the cocoa; and Sister Theresita for coordinating logistics. Rotary volunteers supplied the tent, cookies, cups, and serving essentials, with additional assistance from students of the Smithtown East and West Interact Clubs.

The Chamber offers heartfelt appreciation to Joyce Mazeo for her sponsorship and continued support; continued on page 8



AROUND TOWN



AROUND TOWN



Annual Christmas Tree Lighting

continued from page 6
to the St. James Chamber Board and the Deepwells Farm Historical Society Board for their dedication; and to all volunteers who went above and beyond to make the event a success.

Additional thanks go to Dan and Cheryl Jordan and the St. James Fire Department for transporting Santa and Mrs. Claus and helping make their arrival magical for the children.

A special note of gratitude is extended to Mark Parris of Paris Electric for lighting the holiday decorations along Lake Avenue and the Christmas tree at Deepwells.

The Chamber also thanks the Town of Smithtown, Supervisor Edward Wehrheim, and local officials for their continued support. Photography for the event was provided by Rich Balter Photography.

"The turnout and enthusiasm truly reflect the spirit of St. James,"

said Chamber President Kathy Weber. "We are grateful to everyone who helped make this year's tree lighting, and our new Snowflake Stroll, such a meaningful start to the holiday season."

The festivities continued with the St. James Menorah Lighting on December 14, and the Chamber thanks Ken and Laura Hirsch for coordinating this cherished community tradition.



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As we step into 2026, I'm grateful for the trust and support of our wonderful community. Whether you're dreaming of a new home, planning a sale, or simply seeking guidance, I'm here to help every step of the way. Wishing you a year filled with comfort, opportunity, and doors opening in all the right places.

Marianne Koke

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- 197 1st Street, Saint James
- 98 Hillside Avenue, Saint James
- 26 Grove Avenue, Saint James
- 295 5th Street, Saint James
- 44 Twixt Hills Road, Saint James
- 190 Northern Boulevard, Saint James (Pending)
- 42 James Neck, Nissequogue
- 5 Wilderness Road, Nissequogue
- 44 Quail Path, Nissequogue
- 9 Holly Lane, Nissequogue
- 1 Summit Trail, Nissequogue (Pending)
- 54 Prospect Avenue, Smithtown
- 155 Plymouth Boulevard, Smithtown
- 2 The Spout, Smithtown
- 263 North Country Road, Smithtown (Pending)
- 32 Kings Park Road, Commack
- 19 Samantha Drive, Coram
- 284 Bow Drive, Hauppauge
- 17 Verbena Drive, Hicksville
- 79 Woodlake Drive W., Woodbury



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What's Happening at the General Store?



by Arline Goldstein

The St. James General Store was abuzz with excitement as word spread that Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus were coming to visit the youngsters of St. James. The atmosphere was electric on Saturday, December 6, and Sunday, December 7, as long lines of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends accompanied eager children to meet Santa.

Most of the youngsters – ranging in age from toddlers to about six years old – waited patiently, ready to share their Christmas wishes. Of course, every child proudly reported that they had been “very good” all year, hoping Santa would deliver their wishes on Christmas

morning. Despite the long lines and steady crowds, everything ran smoothly thanks to Hillary and Kim Coony from the Suffolk County Parks Department, who expertly checked visitors in at their designated times and managed the flow with care.

While waiting, I had the opportunity to speak with several children about what they planned to tell Santa. Each one knew exactly what they wanted to say. Eve and Richie Coulton, both four years old and from St. James, shared how excited they were to meet Santa. Eve held a small, wrapped gift for Santa in her hand, tied neatly with a ribbon. Richie explained that Santa has a

continued on page 14



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What's Happening at the General Store?

continued from page 12
magic key. When asked what the key was for, he replied, "To open the door to bring in the presents." And when does Santa use it? "When he doesn't have a chimney to go down," Richie explained – of course!

Mrs. Krawczyk brought along her eight-month-old daughter, Alina, whom she prepared for this moment by singing "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" for weeks beforehand. Violet Krause, who is "six – almost seven," told me she planned to ask Santa for a Squishmallow and a mini Barbie. Aiden hoped for a new bike. Harper wished for a LOL House of Surprises, as Austin, a proud St. James resident, assured me he had been "a very good boy." Three-year-old John was hoping for a Gator Golf Set, where you aim to get the ball into a dinosaur's mouth.

The Hall family from Nisse-
quogue patiently waited their turn

while posing for a photo with their two adorable children, one resting comfortably in a stroller. And after the last child whispered their wish into Santa's ear, Santa and Mrs.

continued on facing page



A R O U N D T O W N



continued
Claus headed back to the North Pole, where they and the elves still had plenty of work to do preparing for Christmas Eve.

Inside the General Store, I admired the exceptional display of serving pieces perfect for holiday gatherings. A beautiful cheese board or cookie plate can make any treat feel extra special. Shoppers browsed thoughtfully, considering gifts for those on their lists, with so many unique choices available. In the toy area, thoughtfully enhanced for holiday gift-giving, I noticed charming and unusual stocking stuffers. Meanwhile, the Book Loft was filled with

children, teens, and adults browsing shelves full of intriguing and thought-provoking reads.

The Christmas Room offered a delightful step back in time. Stephanie Potts recreated a Victorian Christmas with her decorations, capturing the magic of a bygone era. The Reddock siblings – Brayden, Jack, and Ashley – along with their friend Sophia Long, stood admiring the beautifully decorated tree. I also met Jim and Katherine Collins, who moved to St. James from Nassau County six years ago. The General Store has long been known for its impressive ornament collection, and the Collins family

continued on page 16

What's Happening at the General Store?

continued from page 15
looks forward to adding a new ornament each year. They shared that they enjoy the General Store so much they often bring their grandchildren along.

Since 1857, the General Store has been a gathering place where townspeople exchange ideas, pleasantries, and local news. I was reminded that its purpose hasn't changed when I overheard a wonderful conversation at the checkout counter. Christine and Warren DeGennaro were paying for their purchases when Maureen MacDowell, who teaches kindergarten during the week and works at the store on weekends, began chatting with them. As gifts and hometowns were discussed, Mrs. DeGennaro mentioned her granddaughter, a kindergartener. When she named the school, Maureen smiled and said, "That's where I teach – and I'm her teacher!" To everyone's amazement, Maureen had also taught the child's mother some 20 years earlier. "I can't believe this!" was repeated more than once. Truly a small-world moment.

Stephanie Potts, wearing a delightful Christmas sweater, shared how excited she was to host Santa and Mrs. Claus and see the General



Store filled with cheerful crowds. She especially enjoyed watching children create their own ornaments at the activity table, helping to carry on the store's long-standing traditions. Ms. Potts mentioned that January will be a quieter month as the store gears up for Valentine's Day. When asked whether the decorations change with each holiday, she responded enthusiastically that they certainly do, with new gifts and window displays planned. "We will keep getting better and better while continuing to evolve," she said, "all while honoring

our old traditions." Among those traditions are the unique tree ornaments that customers eagerly anticipate each year. She was also delighted to offer hot chocolate and cookies from a local baker for the children and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

It truly was a wonderful day. I didn't hear a single "Bah Humbug" or spot a Scrooge in sight. While Christmas comes just once a year, the kindness, joy, and smiles on display are something we can carry with us all year long.

Happy New Year

As we welcome a new year, may your surroundings inspire you, your dreams expand, and your path lead to beautiful new beginnings.

Here's to growth, gratitude and exceptional moments ahead.

Highlighted closed sales:

7 Dodge Lane, Old Field \$5,100,000
4 Pheasant Run, Nissequogue \$4,900,000
601 Moriches Road, Nissequogue \$3,425,000
2 Dorset Lane, Babylon \$3,355,000
9 Pine Point, Nissequogue \$2,775,000
16 Gate Road, Head of the Harbor \$2,450,000
319 Old Mill Road, Nissequogue \$2,350,000
31 Branglebrink Road, Saint James \$1,917,500
44 Harbor Hills Drive, Manhasset \$1,890,000
14 Bob O Link, Northport \$1,600,000
10 Spring Hollow Road, Nissequogue \$1,300,000
15 Mariners Court, Centerport \$1,250,000
7 Wagon Wheel Court, Smithtown \$1,225,000
20 Grand Avenue, Northport \$1,060,000
3 Red Oak Road, Saint James \$900,000



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AROUND TOWN

2025 – A Year in Review and What a Year!

by Natalie Weinstein

This past year has been one of great change for Celebrate St. James and the old Calderone. A hardworking new administration has taken the helm with a recycled president (I hesitate to say “old” both figuratively and literally!). A new and amazing program and history director came on board. Phase 1 of our renovation has been accomplished, through a matching grant from the Gardiner Foundation and two wonderful donors. A marquee has been installed thanks to one of these donors providing funds once again, and a lift was installed to accommodate physically challenged folks through a county grant. State Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick arranged for a grant from New York State, and we are in the process of installing a brand new fire and smoke detection system which will allow us to open the building to the public with a larger capacity – all the while, bringing concerts to St. James throughout the summer for our



large audiences.

In addition, Celebrate St. James has entered into a happy partnership with Tony Chiofalo and his Lighthouse Theatre Repertory Company. Our children's theatre production of Frozen Jr. on December 6th at 2:00 PM was held at the Bayway Performing Arts Center and Anastasia our 1st theatre performance will be held at our theatre on December 26th-28th (yep – our theatre, despite unfinished walls – drum roll!). And – there will be five main stage shows and four children's shows in 2026!

The Gala in October honored our visionaries, Joe Arico, Fran Cirillo, Michael Morbillo, Bob Retnauer, Neil Rosen, and Phil DeBlasio, along with Frank Dalene and Nancy Buzzetta. We showed the over 200 guests at Flowerfield our past in a town sponsored history documentary through the voice of the theatre itself, and a virtual walk through of the new Celebrate St. James Center for the Arts gave the attendees a

glimpse of what the future will hold.

What a year!! So many people to thank and so much support and encouragement from so many of you. And now we come to another exciting time – a time of the year when “giving” is in the air. Won't you consider joining those who have given so much of their time, talents, and dollars to bring a new dimension to the hamlet of St. James – to help our business district become the charming and busy walking town other theatres have created – to help our families join together in a place that not only celebrates the arts, but fosters community pride through learning and the celebration of St. James' place in the history of theatre.

Please visit and see our progress and the exciting plans for the future. Become one of our amazing volunteers, or a sustaining member. If you care and love our town, show your support. You, your family, friends and neighbors will benefit.

Hope you joined us for hot chocolate, cookie decorating, a sing-along and a visit from some of the cast from Lighthouse Productions as well as “you know who” on Saturday

December 20 from 2-4. If not, there's lots more to come – and Happy New Year!



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AROUND TOWN

The St. James Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the overwhelming success of this year's Snowflake Stroll, held December 7 through 13. This week-long celebration of local shopping and community spirit brought an exceptional turnout, once again highlighting the strength and vibrancy of the St. James business district.

Kicking off the morning after the Chamber's annual Christmas Tree Lighting, the Snowflake Stroll invited residents and visitors to explore the many shops, eateries, and service providers that make St. James such a special place. Participating businesses welcomed shoppers with festive décor, seasonal treats, and special promotions, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere throughout the town.

Shoppers earned raffle tickets through qualifying purchases at participating businesses, adding a fun and engaging element to the experience. Excitement continued all week long and culminated with the Grand Prize Drawing on December 14, recognizing the many community members who came out to

St. James Chamber of Commerce Celebrates a Successful Snowflake Stroll

support local merchants during the holiday season.

Participating Businesses

The Chamber is grateful to each business that took part in this year's event, including:

All Natural Soap; Basil Café Restaurant; Blissful Beauty Wellness; Brooklyn's Best Baking Company; Cultural Arts Center; Dolled Up New York; Eddie's Power Equipment; Gina Ireland Jewelry; Grape Culture – Wine & Liquor; Journeyman Barber Lounge; Kubat Barbers – A Cut Above the Rest; Lake Avenue Floral; Lake Avenue Gourmet Deli; KM Mouse Photography by Katrina Murphy; NoCo – North Country Kitchen / Wine / Cocktails; Peach & Pine Café; Saint James Brewery; Soul Brew; Spage's Pharmacy; St. James Jewelry Shoppe; St. James Nutrition; The

Brick Clay Studio & Gallery; The Long Island Violin Shop – Charles Rufino Violin Maker; The Trattoria – Rustic Italian Cuisine; and Thic Chic Plus Size Thrift Boutique.

A heartfelt Thank You to Our Businesses and Community

The St. James Chamber of Commerce extends its deepest gratitude to our outstanding participating businesses. Your creativity, enthusiasm, and dedication brought tremendous energy to this year's Snowflake Stroll, helping make it one of our most festive and engaging events yet.

We offer a very special thank you to Happie from Thic Chic Thrift Boutique and Anyssa from NoCo, who took on the Snowflake Stroll Committee with exceptional commitment. Through their hard work, creativity, and countless hours of effort, this year's event reached new levels of success. Their leadership and passion were instrumental in bringing this community celebration to life.

We also extend heartfelt appreciation continued on page 22

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ST. JAMES "NEW TO MARKET"

Diamond 4 BR, 2 bath Hi Ranch with freshly painted interior, beautiful oak floors, Andersen thermopane windows, gas HA heat & CAC. Oak kitchen cabinets. Fenced rear yard, one car garage. Convenient cul-de-sac location. Possible mother/daughter with proper permits. **\$725,000.**



ST. JAMES "OUR EXCLUSIVE JUST LISTED"

Colonial features 3 BRs, 1.5 baths, living room with step in bay window, formal dining room with slider to rear deck. Hardwood oak floors. Architectural roof, 1 car attached garage, 3/4 basement with partial crawl, updated oil base-board heat. Rear enclosed porch, .25 acre. **\$659,000.**



ST. JAMES "FARM RANCH"

Lovely diamond 4 BR, 3 bath Farm Ranch, 2 car side entry garage. BB lined blacktop driveway. Covered bluestone front porch, arch. roof, paver walkway, IGS, Vinyl Perfection siding, Andersen windows, EIK/white cabinetry, granite tops, SS appls. Oil HW 3 zone heat & 2 zone CAC. HW floors, full bsmnt, part fin w/OSE. Trex deck, generator hook up only, hot tub, landscaped yard, .58 level acre. Must see! **\$925,000.**



STONY BROOK "MEDICAL OFFICE CONDO"

Prestigious brick building in Medical Park. Former periodontist office, Includes office furniture & high end Interior finishes. Reception area, waiting room, 3 exam rooms, office & lab room. 1.5 baths. Full basement, part finished. Gas heat, CAC, Ample parking. Diamond condition. **\$329,000.**



STONY BROOK "OUR EXCLUSIVE"

The Oaks. Desirable Condominium complex. Spacious master BR w/en suite bath, whirlpool tub, double vanity, walk in closet. Additional BR, full bath. EIK w/oak cabinetry, LR w/gas fireplace, 9 ft ceiling, entry to private rear yard & deck. Full bsmnt, partially finished. 2 car attached garage. Gas heat and CAC. **\$800,000.**



ST. JAMES "CUSTOM QUALITY NEW CONSTRUCTION"

Custom quality new construction. Post Modern Hampton style Colonial features: 9' ceilings, wide plank white oak floors, coffered ceiling, custom large open Eik, white Shaker cabinets, quartz tops, oversized waterfall center island. Electric frplc in LR. Stunning primary BR & custom private bath. 3 add'l BRs & 2 full baths. Garage, 9' bsmnt w/OSE. Too much to list! Must see! **\$1,274,000.**



ST. JAMES "DRIVE THROUGH FOR RENT"

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AROUND TOWN



Snowflake Stroll

continued from page 20
ation to the Town of Smithtown, Town Supervisor Ed Wehrheim, and all of the town dignitaries who continue to show their unwavering support for the St. James community. Their presence, partnership, and encouragement play an essential role in the success of our local events and our mission to keep St. James thriving.

And of course, sincere thanks to the St. James community. Your commitment to shopping local, supporting small businesses, and embracing our cherished traditions is what keeps our town strong. Your participation throughout the Stroll showcased the true spirit of St. James.

Looking Ahead

This year, the Snowflake Stroll was open to all businesses in our community. Beginning next year, the event will become an exclusive member benefit of the St. James Chamber of Commerce.

We are also excited to announce that the Chamber will be hosting multiple Shop Local events throughout the year, continuing our mission to support and promote the St. James business community. The next Shop Local initiative is already in the planning stages and will take place this spring, offering another wonderful opportunity for residents to explore, enjoy, and support the businesses that make St. James shine.

Thank you again to everyone

who made this year's Snowflake Stroll such a memorable success. We are already looking forward to an even bigger and more magical Snowflake Stroll next year!

Closing Remarks

"As a Chamber, we are incredibly proud of what our businesses and community accomplished together during this year's Snowflake Stroll," said Kathy Weber, President of the St. James Chamber of Commerce. "The enthusiasm, kindness, and support shown throughout the week remind us why St. James is such a special place. We look forward to continuing to create events that bring our town together and highlight the amazing businesses that make our community shine."


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Celebrating Chanukah – The Festival of Lights



The St. James Chamber of Commerce Menorah lighting kicked off on a snowy December 14.

Hosted by Laura Hirsch, a large crowd braved the weather.





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As 2025 comes to a close, we're proud to reflect on a year marked by successful sales, trusted relationships, and results for our clients. Below is a snapshot of homes we successfully closed throughout 2025—each representing a client who trusted us with one of their most important decisions. As we step into 2026, we remain committed to thoughtful strategy, local expertise, and helping our clients achieve their real estate goals in every market.

Homes Successfully Sold in 2025

317 Old Mill Rd, Nissequogue \$2,799,000	537 Moriches Rd, Head of the Harbor \$1,150,000	17 Sunwood Dr, Miller Place \$860,000
15 Armand Ct, Head of the Harbor \$2,600,000	227 Belmont Cir, Yaphank \$1,125,000	28 Niagara St, Miller Place \$850,000
33 Bacon Rd, Head of the Harbor \$2,600,000	7 Short Path, Nissequogue \$999,000	57 Sarah Dr, Lake Grove \$750,000
21 Pondview St, James \$1,450,000	41 Quail Path, Nissequogue \$995,000	62 Jeremy Cir, Nesconset \$600,000
91 Harbor Rd, Head of the Harbor \$1,300,000	1 Cakewalk Terrace, Smithtown \$969,000	4 Dogwood Dr, Stony Brook \$550,000
428 River Rd., Nissequogue \$1,225,000	11 Woodcutters Path, Nissequogue \$915,000	342 Versa Pl, Sayville \$4,800
1 Highwoods Rd, St. James \$1,200,000	1 Spring Hollow Rd, Nissequogue \$902,500	11 Triple Oak Ln, Nissequogue \$4,500
51 Matinecock Ave, East Islip \$1,190,000	52 Tillotson Ave, St. James \$865,500	

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AROUND TOWN

New Outreach in Saint James

After a year of discussion, planning, and preparation, the Reverend Ian Wetmore, along with members of the Outreach Committee, Vestry, and congregation of St. James Episcopal Church, are pleased to announce the opening of a new ministry in 2026: Community Jigsaw Puzzle Sharing.

Jigsaw puzzle-loving members of the church first approached the Outreach Committee at the beginning of 2025 with the idea of expanding their informal puzzle sharing to include the wider community. The idea was warmly received by the committee and then presented to the Vestry for approval. Once approved, work began on gathering puzzles and identifying space to store and display them – and mission accomplished!

More than 100 puzzles have already been donated by parishioners and friends in support of this mini-



stry. The collection includes puzzles ranging from 30 to 2,000 pieces and represents many different manufacturers. Subjects vary widely, from beautiful gardens and fluffy puppies to sharks and warships. Some puzzles are square, others round, rectangular, or uniquely shaped. There truly is a puzzle for every interest and every age.

Everyone is welcome to participate in Community Jigsaw Puzzle

Sharing. Take home a puzzle, enjoy assembling it, return it the following month, and then choose a new one – as often as you like.

The Grand Opening of Community Jigsaw Puzzle Sharing will take place on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. After that, puzzle sharing will be held on the first Tuesday of every month, from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. All puzzles will be displayed and available in Mills Hall – the standalone building beside St. James Episcopal Church at 490 North Country Road, Saint James. A driveway located between the church and Mills Hall leads directly to the parking area.

If you would like to donate puzzles to be shared, simply bring them to the Grand Opening or on the first Tuesday of any month. We will gladly add them to our growing collection.

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A R O U N D T O W N

We're Looking for Our 2026 Grand Marshal!

Who will lead St. James down Lake Avenue this St. Patrick's Day?

The St. James Chamber of Commerce is officially accepting nominations for our 2026 St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshal – and we're looking for someone who truly embodies the heart, spirit, and pride of our community.

Do you know someone who:

- Gives back to St. James in extraordinary ways?
- Is a cheerleader for our local businesses and organizations?
- Represents the values, tradi-

tion, and community spirit our parade is known for?

- Would make us proud as they lead the line of march on Saturday, March 14, 2026?

Nominate them!

Submit the name, a short description of why they deserve this honor, and your contact information.

Let's celebrate the people who make St. James shine.

One outstanding community member will step into the spotlight as our 2026 Grand Marshal!



Send nominations to:

info@stjameschamber.org

Questions? 631-584-8510

Deadline for submissions: January 19, 2026

St. James – let's find our next leader of the green!

Calling All Princesses & Princes!

St. James Chamber of Commerce

St. Patrick's Day Parade Royal Court – Saturday, March 14, 2026

The St. James Chamber of Commerce is now accepting nominations for our 2026 St. Patrick's Day Parade Princes and Princesses! We're looking for outstanding local children who embody community spirit, kindness, pride in St. James, and St. Patrick's Day joy!

Nominees must:

- Reside in or attend school in the St. James/Smithtown area
- Be enthusiastic, respectful, and excited to represent our community
- Be accompanied in the parade by a parent or guardian

- Recommended ages: 5–13 years old

- Be available to ride in the parade on March 14, 2026

This is a magical opportunity for children to shine, celebrate their heritage, and be part of one of St. James' most beloved traditions.

To submit a nomination: Email the child's name, age, photo, and a brief description of why they would make a wonderful Prince or Princess to parade@stjameschamber.org. Deadline for submissions is February 1, 2026.

We can't wait to meet our 2026 Royal Court and celebrate St. James in true Irish spirit!



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A R O U N D T O W N



Congratulations to Marty Thompson on celebrating 50 years of service in the St. James Fire Department. A lot has changed over his 50 years of service. *Jaws* was the top-grossing movie, Gerald Ford was president, gas was about 55 cents a gallon, *Saturday Night Live* and *Wheel of Fortune* debuted. During all those changes, Marty continued to serve the community of St. James. Thank you Marty!

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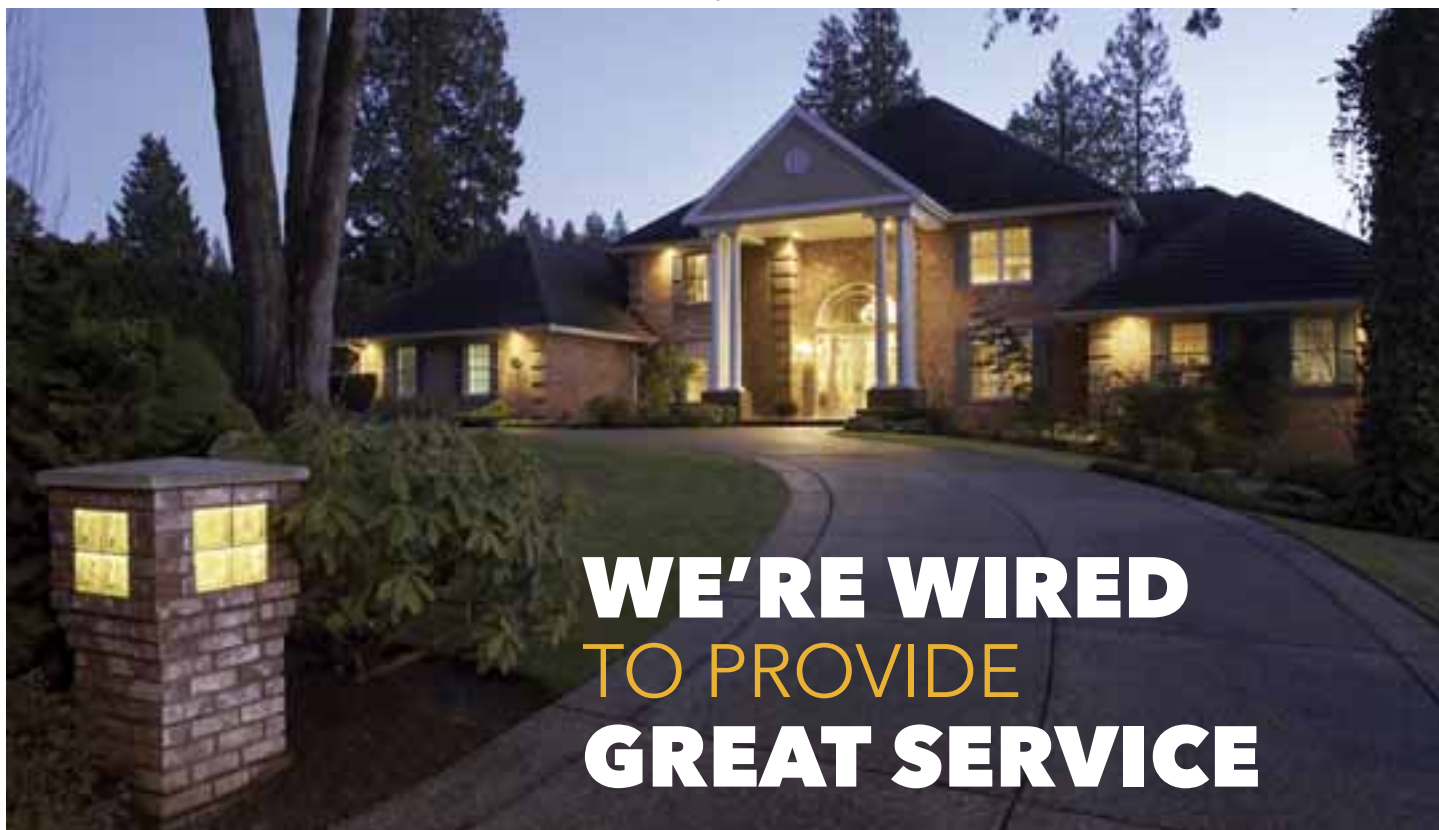
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AROUND TOWN

Stories of the Spirit

by Joe Giaquinto, Psychic Medium and Paranormal Investigator

As a psychic medium, what consistently impresses me about communication with the spiritual world is how much information is always available to us in the form of signs or messages. Mediums and paranormal investigators tune into these clues, whether they come in the form of mental or physical mediumship, psychic energy data, physical events, or paranormal phenomena.

As families celebrate the beauty, joy and love of the December holidays, many also think of those no longer with us – the empty chair at the dinner table, the relative who always had a clever quip or tall tale to tell, or a partner that shared your private space with you each night.

As our towns are blessed with

*I am forever walking upon these shores,
Between the sand and the foam.
The high tide will erase my footprints,
And the wind will blow away the foam.
But the sea and the shore will remain
Forever.*

– Kahlil Gibran

happy faces, the land hand-painted white by winter snow, and the red, green, blue and white holiday lights hung for all to see, I'd like to share two heartwarming stories of the otherworldly kind with happy endings that show the continuation of life beyond physical death.

Jeff's Story

When I was a member of an advisory committee for a local non-denominational church on the North Fork of Long Island, I had the pleasure of knowing a passionate fellow who worked with the church.

His name was Jeff and he was dedicated to organics and living a healthy, positive life. He founded a school for organic horticulture, and his graduates were affectionally called the Green Guerillas.

I remember waving hello to Jeff one day when I saw him leave a local wholefoods supermarket. Two weeks later, I received an email

continued on page 34

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As we welcome 2026, we want to start by wishing you and your families a year filled with **health, happiness, and sunny days ahead.**

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Wishing you a bright, happy, and prosperous New Year!

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Stories of the Spirit

continued from page 32
from the church that God had taken Jeff to heaven.

After his death, I had attended one of our church's business meetings where we sat around the table and talked about church activities and upcoming events. One of the

members remarked that Jeff would probably find a way to get in touch with me from the other side.

Fast-forward eighteen months later... I received an email from my hair stylist. She knew I was a medium. (One day I sat in the barber chair waiting for my haircut and I

told her I felt like I was sitting in Atlanta, Georgia. She replied that the man who just had his haircut in that same chair before me lived in Atlanta, Georgia).

The stylist gave me the name of a woman who wanted a psychic for one of her events at her restaurant in the next town. The woman managed their catering operations, and we met to discuss the venue. Unfortunately, the owner of the establishment didn't feel it would be appropriate to have this event in a bar setting.

The visit was not for naught however – the woman told me she wanted to arrange a private reading for her daughter at her home in another town several miles away.

We set up a calendar date. When I arrived to do the readings, I met the family which included the woman from the restaurant and her daughter's family. We sat in the living room and I began the readings.

One spirit immediately came through: It was their father who had passed. I spoke with his spirit; he gave me enough detail to validate that I was indeed talking with their father. His name was Jeffrey – I'm sure you know where this story is going!

When the event was over, the family went into the dining room to have some food and drink while I stayed in the living room. Two of the children then came in to sit with me and chat about their father's life.

They thanked me for bringing him through. Then they told me something that made me smile – they said their father's greatest joy was working with his students – the Green Guerrillas!

It was the same Jeff from our church! He'd found a way to lead me to his own family through three separate individuals and towns, to give his loved ones a message of comfort and joy and the validation
continued on page 36



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A R O U N D T O W N

Stories of the Spirit

continued from page 34
that his soul had survived physical death.

Jeanne's Story

Early in my ghost hunting days (before I began working as a medium professionally) I became friends with a woman named Jeanne. I first met her at Raynham Hall Museum in Oyster Bay where she gave historical tours, talking about the Townsend family, George Washington, the Culper Spy Ring and the Revolutionary War.

Because Raynham Hall is so haunted, I found myself bringing my ghost hunting group there for tours on a regular basis. Jeanne was always happy to have us visit the museum: We would record or photograph something interesting from the paranormal during each visit.

As time went on, I met Jeanne's family and became friends with her husband and sons and would often visit them for the holidays. Ghosts would be the favorite topic of conversation at holiday parties.

Sadly, one day I found out Jeanne had lost her loving mom. After her mom's passing, the signs began...

The first sign was with an old Abbott and Costello movie I bought on Amazon called *Time of Their Lives*. I hadn't seen the movie in decades. It's a wonderful film about two people (Lou Costello and Marjorie Reynolds) who are accidentally shot as traitors during the Revolutionary War and their ghosts are doomed to walk the earth until their innocence can be proven

continued on page 38



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AROUND TOWN

Stories of the Spirit

continued from page 36
through a secret letter from George Washington that was hidden in an old mantle clock.

The movie takes place during the Revolutionary War, the same period of history and events as Raynham Hall where Jeanne worked.

The movie also included similarities to another haunted place called the Country House Restaurant in Stony Brook. The Country House is the home of a ghost named Annette Williamson. Annette has haunted the property for 300 years, murdered after mistakenly being accused of being a British loyalist – just like in *Time of Their Lives*. The Country House even looks a bit like Danbury Manor – the fictional home used in the movie.

When the DVD arrived in the mail, I anxiously watched the film. One-third of the way into the film,

there is a scene indicating the passage of time by showing a tree with valentines carved in the bark. On one of the valentines were the initials, JG – my initials!

The second sign was also in the film when it showed the date of September 23rd. It was the same calendar date that Jeanne's mom had passed!

During this time, my paranormal team had planned on doing an investigation at a rehab and nursing facility in Huntington. I suggested Jeanne come and join us for the event. Since her mom had just passed, I told her it would be good to be around other people. Jeanne agreed. She hoped a message would somehow come through from her mom's spirit.

On the day of the event, I stopped at the quaint St. James General Store to buy some penny candy for my group. I bought things

like salt-water taffy, twizzle sticks, peppermint sticks and hard candies. There was one type of favorite candy I didn't buy however: lico-rice.

As darkness fell, I arrived at the parking lot of the rehab center. Before going into the facility, I prepared my team for the investigation by giving them instructions about being discreet during the walk-through and not bothering any of the residents. Jeanne was standing next to me as I spoke.

Jeanne had told me earlier that she gave her mom a secret word before her mom died; if I was able to get the secret word from her mom's spirit, Jeanne would know her mom made it to heaven.

I now held the bag of candy in my hands and told the group I had brought some treats for everyone. I then looked into the bag and tried
continued on facing page

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A R O U N D T O W N

continued to describe the types of candy I brought with me. Suddenly, my mind went blank. The only thing that I could think of was licorice (which I hadn't bought.)

When I uttered 'licorice', Jeanne said, "What?" I turned to Jeanne and said, "Is that the secret word from your mom?"

She exclaimed, "It was!"

Suddenly, all the security lights in the parking lot started flashing on and off. I told Jeanne her mom was 'winking' at her because she had made it to heaven.

The signs continued – a year later, at the anniversary of her mom's death, Jeanne was on her way to the bank and on the license plate of the car she was following was the word, "Mom." Jeanne called to share this sign with me.

After I hung up the phone, I went shopping and stopped at a local lot-

tery retailer to buy some scratch-offs where I also got a sign from her mom... the scrabble ticket I scratched off had the word, licorice, as one of the winning words.

What messages from your spiritual family are waiting for you?

These messages and signs come through in many forms. You may feel inclined to turn on the car radio and suddenly a song plays that was your departed family member's favorite tune. Perhaps you are twenty stories up in a high-rise building, and a butterfly appears outside the window. Or maybe you are reminiscing about a loved one who passed and the room lights begin flashing as if somebody was flipping the light switch repeatedly.

Our spiritual family can always find ways to communicate with us, if we are willing to be open and attentive enough to receive their messages and signs, in whatever form

they appear.

The ability to see, hear or feel the message, or understand the sign being given to us, is a wonderful ability we all share. As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest, scientist and philosopher has been attributed to saying, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

It is my hope that, during this holiday season and the new year, your messages and signs from those who have transitioned to spirit can help you with your life's journey, bring you answers to your questions, closure to unfinished business, and comfort from your grieving.

Have a joyous, prosperous and healthy New Year's celebration!

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A R O U N D T O W N

Annual Membership Registration Now Open for 2026

Join the St. James Chamber of Commerce and Be Part of a Growing, Connected, and Thriving Community

The St. James Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce that 2026 annual membership registration is now open! Whether you are renewing your membership or joining for the first time, this is your opportunity to align with a strong, engaged organization that champions local businesses and community pride.

Membership ensures your business is promoted, supported, and connected throughout the year through Chamber events, marketing opportunities, and community partnerships.

Membership Benefits

- Marketing, Promotion & Visibility
- Business listing in *Our Town* Newspaper – the Chamber-owned publication delivered throughout St. James.
- Feature articles highlighting your business in *Our Town* Newspaper.
- Listing on the St. James Chamber of Commerce website with business details and logo.
- Social media spotlights and marketing promotions on Chamber platforms.
- Exclusive participation in the annual Snowflake Stroll – a benefit included with your membership.

Events, Networking & Community Engagement

Invitations to all General Membership Meetings, networking

events, and ribbon cuttings.

Opportunity to host a Chamber meeting at your business, allowing us to showcase your storefront, services, and story to fellow members and the community.

Member participation in beloved annual community events, including: Spring Egg Hunt, St. Patrick's Day Parade, Annual Tree Lighting, St. James Day, Summer Outdoor Movie Nights, Seasonal Shop Local Events (Spring, Summer & Winter).

Priority access to sponsorship opportunities for Chamber events and programs.

Support, Resources & Business Development

Direct access to Chamber leadership for guidance, visibility strategies, and networking connections.

Opportunities to collaborate with other Chamber members on promotions and community initiatives.

Local advocacy and partnership with town officials to strengthen the St. James business district.

A voice in shaping Chamber programs, events, and strategic planning.

Additional Opportunities for Members

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Why Join the St. James Chamber of Commerce?

The Chamber is the heart of St. James business life – connecting merchants, professionals, organizations, and community members. Membership ensures your business stays engaged, visible, and supported all year long.

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Renewing or joining today ensures your business will be included in all Chamber programs, events, and marketing opportunities throughout 2026.

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PO BOX 286
ST. JAMES, NY 11780

Thank You

2026

Return this portion with remittance of \$225.00

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Owner / Principal _____

Address _____

Bus. Phone _____ Fax _____

Mobile _____ Mobile # for publication on website Yes _____ No _____

Business email: _____ Bus. Website _____

Type of Business / Category listing for website _____

With payment of the dues, I do hereby agree to uphold the Constitution and By-laws of the St. James Chamber of Commerce, Inc. and to conduct myself in a manner that is constructive and furthering the goals and principles of this organization.

Signature _____ Date _____

For Chamber Use Only

Date Paid _____ Check No. _____

2024 Dues \$225 _____ R _____ A _____ Amount \$ _____



Pets for Adoption at Smithtown Animal Shelter

Cuteness overload alert – we proudly present our recent Pets of the Week, a lively bunch of older kittens, aged 5 to 10 months, poised to bring joy, laughter, and warmth to your life! As the chilly days of winter approach, there's no better time to add a snuggly companion to your home!

These fluffy, playful furballs are overflowing with personality! They're not just adorable; they're friendly, curious, and ready to leap into your heart and home. We know that many of these kittens have formed delightful friendships during their time with us, so we're hoping to adopt them in pairs. However, we're open to separating them for the purr-fect fit!

Each of our lively kittens is eager to meet you! They're ready to curl up in your lap and fill your home with love as the temperatures drop. By adopting a pair, you'll ensure they have a buddy to snuggle with, but we're more than happy to help you find the right match if you're looking for a solo companion.

Currently, there are a variety of male and female cats & kittens

available to adopt or foster. If you are looking for a fun loving, yarn tossing ball of love, stop by the Kitten Nursery or the Cat Condos at the Smithtown Animal Shelter and find a perfect soulmate or two!

All of the felines at the Shelter are current on vaccines and have received a full workup (blood work, Feline HIV & Leukemia tested, physical exam etc.) by a board certified Veterinarian.

Foster Opportunity

If you have no other pets or young children at home, and are looking for a way to serve your community, please consider signing up to be a foster. Foster parents provide temporary care for cats, kittens, and dogs in their own homes. Some animals need as little as two weeks of care, while others may need care for extended periods of time.

Download the Foster Application at:
<https://www.smithtownny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4325/Foster-Application>

Thinking About Adoption?

The Smithtown Animal Shelter's primary concern is finding the perfect home for each animal that finds his/her way to us. The Animal Control Officers and Kennel Attendants at the Smithtown Animal Shelter will go out of their way to ensure both the rescued and rescuer are made for one another.

Residents who have other pets can arrange to bring your four-legged family member to the shelter or set up an at home meet & greet to see how your prospective family member does with other family, pets and the household itself. Please allow yourself an hour minimum to meet with your potential new family member.

Hours at the Smithtown Animal Shelter are currently Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.- 3 p.m. (Sundays and Wednesday evenings by appointment only). To inquire about the Pet of the Week or to meet your potential soulmate, please call the Smithtown Animal Shelter at 631-360-7575.

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TRAVELS WITH IRMA



Tunisia – A Land of Delights!

by Irma Gurman

Surprise! Tunisia is a fascinating country! It has antiquity, beautiful Mediterranean beaches, colorful medinas, the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert. We had so many varied experiences that they are too numerous to mention in a short ar-

ticle.

This small country has been inhabited by Berbers, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Ottoman Turks and the French. Their language is a blend of the above. Dougga, El Djeb, Speitla, and Carthage have spectac-

ular archeological sites where we learned about Tunisia's history

After it achieved independence from France in 1956, its forward thinking prime minister Habib Bourguiba made education a priority and school became compulsory continued on facing page

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TRAVELS WITH IRMA

continued
and free. Students learn French and English aside from speaking Tunisian and Arabic. Many of its liberal Muslims drink wine and do not pray 5 times a day but they do observe Ramadan. We visited St. Vincent de Paul Church in Tunis, The Grand Mosque in Kairouan (one of the oldest in the world), and the 6th century El Ghriba synagogue in Djerba, a city that is a living museum with murals on almost every wall.

We sampled exotic and delicious foods such as harissa, gazelle horn pastries, camel, shakshuka, excellent wine, dates and more dates, and olives and more olives.



We spent an afternoon learning about permaculture from an environmentalist farmer. He grows olives that are totally organic. It was interesting to learn that most people grow their own olives and bring them to olive presses, sometimes powered by donkeys. The oil is then

placed in large containers.

We visited two museums, The Bardo, which contains one of the world's greatest collections dating back over several civilizations, and the El Djem, whose mosaics were moved intact from ancient homes.

continued on page 51

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COFFEE BREAK

HAPPY New Year



Answers on page 50

Across

1. Warm synthetic textile
4. Handheld pyrotechnics
10. Ice melt phase
13. Freezing-point reducer spreader
15. Airflow-adjusted cold
17. Wind-formed snow pile
18. Cable-driven ascent

19. January full moon
21. January gemstone
23. Transparent road ice
25. Surface ice crystals
26. Cold-induced tissue damage
27. Add insulating layers
29. Needle-bearing winter foliage

30. High-wind heavy snow event
32. Sublimated surface ice
34. Seasonal metabolic slowdown
36. Slow-moving ice mass
40. Behavioral reset at year start
41. Rapid snow slide
42. Thermal barrier

Down

2. Frequent nor'easter zone
3. Refrozen ice pellets
5. High-latitude region
6. Gem assigned to month
7. Drip-formed ice taper
8. Psychologically clean slate
9. Surface-area footwear
11. New Year's standard

12. Low core temperature
14. Cold-exposure inflammation
16. Seasonal dairy drink
20. Rimed snow pellets
22. Heat-retaining material
23. Winter-related
24. Late-winter season
25. Light intermittent snow

28. Maximum axial tilt point
31. Angling through lake ice
33. Month near Earth's perihelion
35. Hand insulation
37. January 6 observance
38. Permafrost biome
39. Equal light and dark

COFFEE BREAK

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

		7	4			2		1
					1			
		9						7
		4			8			
		3		6				9
	6				9			3
		2		8		3		
	9		6			1	2	
1					4		7	5

Answers on page 50

RIDDLES & TEASERS

The Pet Store

Question 1:

Dave spends exactly \$80 buying new tropical fish for his tank.

- Clown Loaches cost \$9 each
- Neon Tetras cost \$4 each
- Angel Fish cost \$10 each

In total he buys TEN fish, including at least one of each variety. How many Neon Tetras did Dave buy?

Question 2?

What five-letter English word can be pronounced the same even with four of its letters removed?

Answers on page 50



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COOK'S CORNER

Homemade Chicken Soup is Ideal for Cold and Flu Season

Cold and flu season arrives each year. Though there might be little people can do to avoid catching a cold or coming down with the flu, certain approaches can make it easier to get through a bout with either illness. Flu vaccinations have been found to lessen the severity of infection with the influenza virus, while rest and plenty of fluids can help reduce the length of time a cold puts people out of commission.

Knowing what to eat when combatting a cold and the flu also can help people treat each virus. Chicken soup has long been a go-to when fighting a cold, and this recipe for "Homemade Chicken Noodle Soup" from Lines+Angles makes a worthy addition to anyone's cold- and flu-fighting culinary repertoire.

Homemade Chicken Noodle Soup Makes 8 servings

- 1 3 1/2-pound whole chicken
- 10 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 8 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 6 stalks celery, trimmed and sliced
- 3 onions, peeled and sliced
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced
- 8 sprigs fresh parsley
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme



- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tablespoons butter
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
- 12 ounces wide egg noodles

For the chicken stock:

1. Rinse the chicken inside and out under cold running water. Place the chicken in a large pot, set over medium heat and add the chicken broth. Add 1/4 of the carrots, 1/3 of the celery and 1/3 of the onions. Add the garlic, 2 sprigs parsley, thyme, bay leaf and enough water to just cover the chicken. Bring broth to a

boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 1 1/4 hours, or until chicken is very tender, skimming any foam from the surface of the broth.

2. Remove chicken from broth and place in a colander to drain and cool. Strain the broth through a very fine mesh strainer into a large, clean soup pot. Discard the vegetables used to flavor the stock.

For the soup:

1. Skim any fat off the top of the strained broth.
2. Remove and discard the skin and bones from the chicken and cut the meat into bite-sized pieces; set aside.
3. Melt the butter in a large Dutch oven set over medium heat. Add the remaining carrots, celery and onions and cook for about 7 minutes or until the onions are translucent. Add the chicken pieces and chicken stock, season with salt and pepper. Bring soup to a simmer and cook for about 30 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.
4. Chop the remaining parsley; add the parsley and egg noodles, stirring frequently. Cook for 8 to 10 additional minutes or until the noodles are tender.
5. Ladle into soup bowls and serve hot.

Zesty Wings Make a Perfect Playoff Party Palate Pleaser

Football fans know there's nothing quite like the playoffs. Whether your passion rests with college football or the action on the professional gridiron, there's plenty of exciting football to watch in the early weeks of winter.

Game watch parties are wildly popular. Indeed, big games are even more enjoyable when watched alongside fellow fans. When hosting a game watch party at home, certain culinary staples, including

chicken wings, need to make an appearance. Fans hosting playoff parties this playoff season can ensure guests get what they need by offering up these "Zesty Chicken Wings" from Lines+Angles.

Zesty Chicken Wings Makes 4 servings

For the marinade:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small white onion, finely

- chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 cups Barbecue sauce (your favorite)
- 1/4 cup sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon turmeric

continued on facing page

COOK'S CORNER

Zesty Wings Make a Perfect Playoff Party Palate Pleaser

continued

For the chicken wings:

- 1 1/2 pounds chicken wings
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 tablespoon oil, for the grill

1. Combine all of the ingredients for the marinade in a food processor. Pulse until blended well.
2. Rinse chicken wings under cold running water and pat dry with paper towels. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Place the marinade and chicken wings into a large resealable plastic storage bag. Seal the bag

securely. Squeeze the bag several times coating the chicken wings thoroughly with marinade. Place the bag in the refrigerator and marinate overnight.

4. Prepare the grill for direct grilling. Brush the grill grate lightly with oil. Barbecue the wings over

medium hot coals or at medium high-heat for 5-7 minutes on

- each side (turning once, halfway through) until they are cooked through and golden brown.
5. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce (optional).



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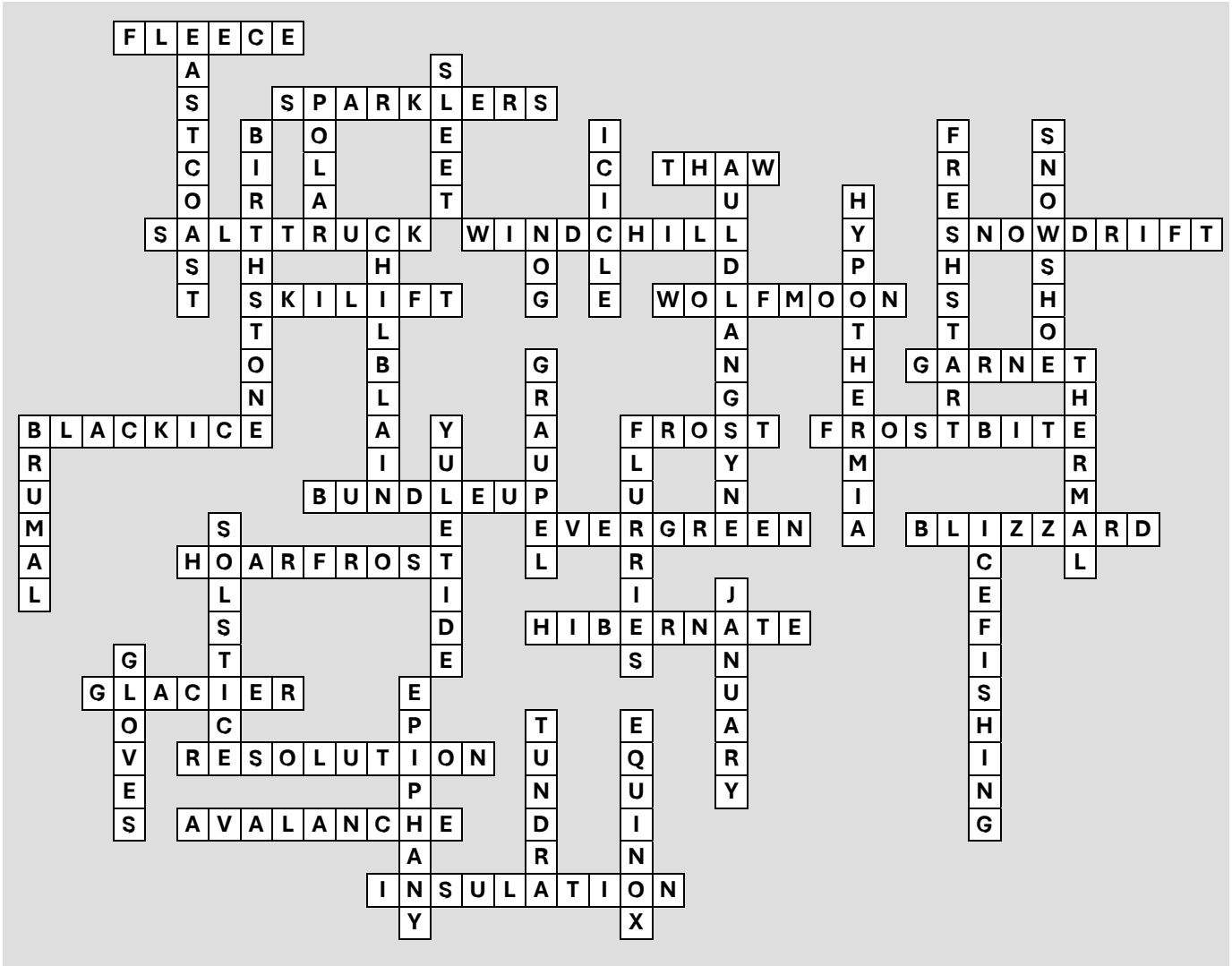


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COFFEE BREAK

Solutions From Pages 46-47



Sudoku Solution

3	8	7	4	9	6	2	5	1
6	2	5	7	3	1	9	4	8
4	1	9	8	5	2	6	3	7
9	7	4	3	1	8	5	6	2
8	5	3	2	6	7	4	1	9
2	6	1	5	4	9	7	8	3
7	4	2	1	8	5	3	9	6
5	9	8	6	7	3	1	2	4



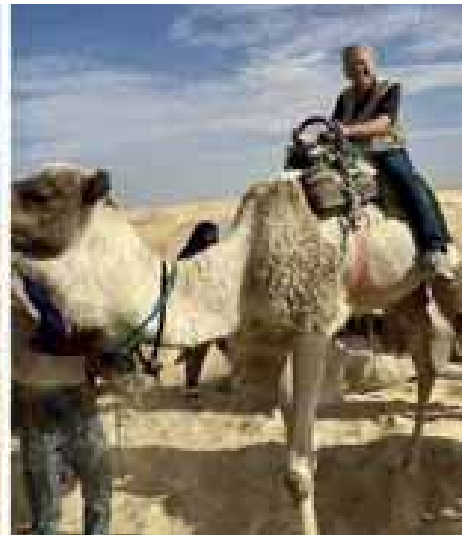
Riddles & Teasers Answers

Question 1: The answer is 3

Question 2: Queue

Tunisia

continued from page 45



We met an artisan who designs and produces magnificent original works of art in his factory and watched his skilled employees cut and place the tiny squares.

We stayed in an adorable tree house in an oasis and learned how the people harvest dates, another huge export.

Hammamet is the biggest resort in Tunisia. Originally a fishing village, this gorgeous area resembles Mykonos with its blue and white houses against the brilliant sky. Many Europeans vacation or have permanent homes here.

Several Star Wars scenes were filmed in the Berber villages of

Tatouine where granaries have been converted into delightful hotels

Watching sunset over the Sahara was so beautiful and romantic! Baking bread in a fire pit under a starry sky, sleeping in a tent and, of course, taking that requisite camel ride.

The country was the site of many battles during World War II and we spent a very emotional hour at the North Africa American cemetery where 2,841 heroes are laid to rest.

Another highlight of the trip was

a visit to the magnificent Roman amphitheater of El Djem, the third largest in the world.

This is just a small taste of Tunisia's delights, but I hope that it has whetted your appetite. Pay it a visit. You won't be sorry!



Rotary: Making a Difference Near and Far

Recently Smithtown Rotary Club had the privilege of donating 30 warm winter coats for students in need. What may seem like a small gesture can make a world of difference for a child who would otherwise face the cold without proper clothing. Seeing these coats reach families who truly need them is a powerful reminder of why service matters – and why Rotary continues to be such an important force for good.

The spirit of *Service Above Self* is what drives Rotary members to show up, roll up their sleeves, and make an impact every single day. Beyond coat drives, Rotary's work touches lives locally and globally.

Every coat donated, every hour volunteered, and every project completed reinforces Rotary's mission to create lasting, positive change - near and far.

The Smithtown Rotary Club is



grateful to everyone involved and proud to continue supporting the

incredible work Rotary does in communities around the world.

Smithtown Rotary Donates to Food Pantry

The Smithtown Rotary Club recently donated \$10,000 to the Smithtown Emergency Food Pantry. Established in 1984, the Smithtown Food Pantry provides essential support to residents who are struggling to feed their families. Donations like this help sustain the pantry's operations, ensuring it can continue serving individuals and families in crisis.

The pantry is supported and staffed entirely by volunteers from several local churches, reflecting a community-wide commitment to helping neighbors in need. Donations are essential to sustaining its mission and ensuring that families in need have a dependable resource to turn to.

To learn more, visit: smithtown-pantry@optonline.net or call 631-265-7676



Pictured (L-R): Lynn Sisti from Sts. Philip & James Roman Catholic Church, Rotarian Father Vladyslav Budash from the Byzantine Catholic Church, Ruth Roman and John Monaco from the New Jerusalem Church, Rotarian Herta Walsh, Rotary President Ron Rothman, Pat Westlake of the Smithtown Emergency Food Pantry.

Smithtown Rotary Makes Charitable Donation to Angela's House

The Smithtown Rotary Club President, Ron Rothman (right), proudly presented a \$1000 donation to Bob Policastro (left), founder of Angela's House. Angela's House was established by Bob and his wife, Angie Policastro, in honor of their daughter, Angela, who was born with severe brain damage and became medically fragile.

The organization's mission is to support families caring for children with chronic, complex, life-threatening or medically fragile conditions. Angela's House coordinates essential home care, provides medical equipment, and offers a wide range of support services to families in need.

Today, Angela's House assists over 600 children each year. They operate three homes located in East Moriches, Smithtown, and Stony Brook. Notably, the Stony Brook location is the first home in New York State capable of caring for children who require ventilator support.

For more information, visit angelashouse.org or call 631-979-2620.



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The Other Side of Well

by Carol Giuliani

I'm just coming back from one of the worst trips of my life – a trip from the familiar side of being well to the darker, frightening side of being ill. I never really thought about what it means to be truly sick. I've had my share of joint replacements, viruses, and even COVID back in 2020, but nothing severe. You start to fool yourself into thinking you can handle anything, even at 83. I've got this, I told myself.

Before my knee replacement, I even asked the surgeon if I was too old. He assured me I wasn't – that I was flexible, mobile, and that this surgery was the best way to keep a good quality of life in my later years. That's all I wanted: quality of life. I never once imagined I'd be sitting on the "other side of well," blindsided by how sick I could become.

The surgery was on October 28th at Mather Hospital, and I have no complaints about the care. As a nurse, I felt completely confident in the clinical team. Communication was excellent, I had a spinal block (no intubation at my age, thank you very much), and very little discomfort. I was discharged the next day, walking out on my own.

I got home, didn't feel great, but figured it was normal. Four days later, I experienced chills like I'd never known – bone-shaking, violent chills that made me think, *What on earth is this?* I'm supposed to be on the other side of well. I just had a knee replacement. I'm supposed to be starting therapy and getting on with life.

The nurse in me finally whispered, *Test for COVID.*

The optimist in me said, *No way. I'm fine. I just got out of the hospital.*

Ah, denial – the quiet enemy that brings us down.

I keep plenty of tests in the house (Amazon must think I'm running a clinic), so I took one. Faint positive. Took another. And another. And another. By the fourth, it was un-



mistakably double-line positive. COVID. Omicron. I stared at the test thinking, *How?* People asked if I got it in the hospital. I told them, "No, I caught it standing in front of my refrigerator trying to decide which chocolate bar to eat."

I have never been so sick. It felt like something evil had taken over my body – stealing every ounce of energy and leaving me depleted, unmotivated, and barely functional. Time stopped. The world went on around me while I sat helpless, watching my own life from the sidelines. For two solid weeks, all I did was monitor my temperature and oxygen – 47 times a day, at least – because the last place I wanted to end up was back in a hospital with respiratory issues.

I was told not to retest until day 10 or 11. At day 12 – still faint positive. Day 14 – finally negative. I celebrated, thinking, *Now I can recover.*

Wrong.

At my follow-up appointment, my orthopedic surgeon spotted (well, I spotted and pointed out) an abscess stitch on top of my knee that still hadn't healed. He began squeezing and manipulating a knee that had just been through surgical trauma. I thought, *So this must be*

the other side of well – because it sure feels like the other side of hell. Then he put two stitches in without lidocaine. He was so fast I didn't even have time to punch him.

That was a week ago. I've been dressing it daily. If it's not better by Monday, it's back to the hospital for a clean-out and antibiotics.

I'm telling you all this because we should never take good health for granted. After 70, good health comes in small, precious doses.

What complicates everything is the perception of illness when you've been a nurse for 48 years. Reality and denial collide. I used to listen to patients tell these stories, and now the words are coming from my own mouth.

People have been wonderful – helpful and supportive. I've had aides in the house (bless them for entering a COVID zone). Today, I might go out for the first time. The surgeon said I could drive, though the 47-pound bandage on my knee might throw off my balance – but sure, I can drive.

Never, ever take your health for granted. You know those old sayings from your grandmother, "If you have your health, you have every-

continued on facing page

SHORT STORY

Selecting a Story

by June Capossela Kempf

Every once in a while, a reader will ask, "Where do you get your ideas from?" Others, usually with an eye roll for emphasis, will say, "How do you come up with this stuff?"

Ideas come from a plethora of places. When a good one rises to the surface, some writers can run with it immediately, the words flowing onto the page like a raging river. But turning an idea into a full storyline can also be a struggle. Doubt creeps in, fear follows, and suddenly "writer's block" becomes the excuse of the day. That's when the real trouble begins.

An annoying inner voice starts shouting: "This is going nowhere!" or "Maybe this wasn't such a great idea after all." For me, this usually occurs a few days before a looming deadline.

I can sit on an idea for weeks, unable to get past the first paragraph, telling myself the words will come if I just walk away for a while. But they don't. Because the truth is, the only way to get anything done is to sit down and do it. For this particular essay, the malaise lasted nearly the entire month. I'd walk away to call a friend, watch TV, find some diversion, and then, of course, watch more TV.

My husband Ron finally asked, "How come you're not getting up in the middle of the night to jot down an inspiration?"

"Because my phone isn't charged," I told him, "and neither



am I."

I actually operate on two deadlines. The first is on the Tuesday before the new month, when I bring a draft to the Smithtown Library Adult Writers Group. I rely on the group's critique to help me tighten and improve my work. After that, I revise, again and again, until I have something I feel ready to submit to this publication. Ideally, it reflects my own cocktail of satire and slightly warped humor.

But this time? I arrived at the meeting with almost nothing, because that's exactly what I'd managed to write. I found myself wishing I had used one of the writing prompts the group offers at every session. Instead, I had only five days left to send my piece to Robin, Our Town's editor... and once again, I wandered off to surf the TV channels.

That's when I stumbled onto a rerun of a show called *Ghosts*.

Bingo. There it was, a better idea: haunted houses.

They're scattered all around St.

James. I could visit them, interview the homeowners, maybe even encounter a spirit or two. Suddenly I was energized. I'd heard for years about the little girl ghost who supposedly lingers at the top of the staircase in the General Store – the child who, legend says, fell to her death on the steep stairs to the second floor. The Second Avenue Theatre is rumored to have activity as well, not

to mention Deepwells.

And just like that, ideas began appearing as if on cue – often exactly when I need them most, and just in time for me to craft a story in under five days.

Editor's Note:

June Capossela Kempf, of *St. James*, is the author of *Yo God Jay's Story* – a unique spin about raising a special needs child and *Lady of the Dollhouse* published by Keith Publications.com. She also writes essays and is the facilitator for the Adult Writers Group at the Smithtown Library.



continued from previous page thing"? Well, ladies and gentlemen: it's true.

When you're ill, the world shrinks down to one priority – getting better. Everything else becomes background noise. You watch TV and think, *Do these people even understand how important it is just*

The Other Side of Well

to be healthy? And a part of you wonders if you're ready to rejoin the world yet.

This is just my first story as I work my way back to reality. I have a long road ahead, but I'm pushing, trying to stay as independent as possible. That's a whole other topic: independence – and we'll talk about

that another time.

For now, my philosophy is this: If I can do it myself, I will. If I can't, I'm finally wise enough to know that asking for help isn't weakness – it's choosing to continue this journey with as much quality as I can.

Let's go.



Grape (left) and *Brick* (right)

Gallery North Features Melinda Hackett in *Curious Phenomena*

Gallery North is pleased to present *Curious Phenomena: Recent Works by Melinda Hackett*, on view from January 8 to February 15, 2026. An opening reception will be held Thursday, January 8 from 6-8 p.m. As a complement to the exhibition, Gallery North will host an ArTalk on Saturday, February 7 from 3-5 p.m. The exhibition, reception, and ArTalk will be free and open to the public.

Curious Phenomena presents small- and large-scale paintings by Melinda Hackett. Playful clusters of biomorphic shapes dance, tumble, float and perform amid vibrant environments that condense macro and micro worlds. While Hackett uses nature as a reference, each piece is a poetic invention of the artist's imagination. The colorful

stages on which these mysterious – yet familiar – forms are placed create visual flavors that influence the viewer's mood and feelings, transforming their overall experience. Each piece engages our curiosity and invites us to contemplate our own perspective, even while we explore the relationships between each form. Hackett's practice has been influenced by botany, mid-century modern pattern design, as well as the artwork of Arthur Dove, Joan Miró, and Hilma af Klint.

Melinda Hackett is a New York and Southampton based painter and printmaker. She received her MFA from the Parsons School of Design, The New School. Her work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions and is in

many public and private collections including the Parrish Art Museum in Southampton. She divides her time between the East End and Manhattan.

This exhibition is generously sponsored by the Field Family, Jefferson's Ferry, Pet ER 24/7, Printers 3 and Suffolk County's Department of Economic Development and Planning. The exhibition, reception, and ArTalk will be free and open to the public.

Gallery North is a public, not-for-profit, fine art gallery promoting the region's finest contemporary regional art and craft. Established in 1965, Gallery North is located at 90 North Country Road, Setauket, and focuses on contemporary art in
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Suffolk County North Shore

Artisans

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Our Town is Online!

Access the QR code to see the comprehensive Calendar of Event Items, Directory Listings, and more.

Stay up to date
with Our Town!

January

Art: Tues & Fri, 12-5pm, and Sat & Sun 11:00am-5:00pm, Wendy Klemperer: Wrought Taxonomies – Animal Sculptures, Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum: 180 Little Neck Road, Centerport, NY 11721, www.vanderbiltmuseum.org 631-854-5579

Music: Mondays 7-10pm, Musicians Night at Shandon Court, 115 East Main Street, East Islip, NY 11730, catering@shandoncourt.net 631-581-5678

HOLIDAY LIGHTS: Until Jan 3, Sun-Thu 5-10pm, Fri-Sat 5-11pm, Jones Beach Holiday Lights, Jones Beach State Park, NY, www.magicoflights.com/locations/jonesbeach/

HOLIDAY LIGHTS: Until Jan 4, Family Holiday Festival at the Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10460, www.bronxzoo.com

Wine Workshop: Weekdays, 12-4pm, Create Your Own Blend: RGNV Wine, RGNV, 6025 Sound Avenue, Riverhead, NY 11901, estefany@rgnywine.com, 631-298-0075

Wine Pairing: Thu Jan 1, 12-5pm, New Years Day Sparkling Wine-Chocolate Pairing, Sannino Vineyard, 15975 County Road 48, Cutchogue, NY 11935,

www.sanninovineyard.com, 631-734-8282

Dancing: Fri Jan 2, 5:30-7pm, Country Line Dancing, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079

Children/Free Hot Cocoa: Fri Jan 2, 11am-4pm, Warm Up on Frosty Fridays, The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Music: Sun Jan 4, 4-6pm, Ridotto Concert: The Raconteur Piano Trio, Huntington Jewish Center, 510 Park Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.ridotto.org, 631-385-0373



Seniors / Photography Club: Mon Jan 5, 6:30-8pm, Photography Club, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079 (free)

Seniors / Educational: Wed Jan 7, 11am-12pm, Virtual / In-Person: Memorable Music Television Moments, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY

11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079 (free)

Crafts & Cocktails/Adults: Thu Jan 8, 6:30pm, Crafts & Cocktails: Secret Signals / Adults The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Children/Free Hot Cocoa: Fri Jan 9, 11am-4pm, Warm Up on Frosty Fridays, The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Music: Fri Jan 9-Sat Jan 10, 8pm, MJ The Illusion, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Comedy: Sun Jan 11, 6-9:15pm, Comedy Night at the Seaport Diner, Seaport Diner, 5045 Nesconset Hwy., Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776, 631-645-5152

Music: Sun Jan 11, 7-9pm, Queen - A Royal Tribute, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Seniors / Music: Mon Jan 12, 7-8pm, Vinyl Listening Club, Connet

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Suffolk County North Shore CALENDAR OF EVENTS



continued from page 57
Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716,
<https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>,
631-567-5079 (free)

Seniors / Educational: Wed Jan 14, 7-8:30pm, Virtual / In-Person: George Washington Slept Here, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716,
<https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>,
631-567-5079 (free)

Seniors / Educational: Thu Jan 15, 2:30-3:30pm, Virtual / In-Person: A Look Back at the Early Days of Advertising, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716,
<https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>,
631-567-5079 (free)

Seniors / Educational: Thu Jan 15, 7-8:30pm, Natasha Jugo: Murder or Suicide, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716,
<https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>,
631-567-5079 (free)

Music: Fri Jan 16, 8pm, Masters of the Telecaster, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org,
631-727-4343

Children/Free Hot Cocoa: Fri Jan 16, 11am-4pm, Warm Up on Frosty Fridays, The Whaling Museum &



Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724,
www.cshwhalingmuseum.org,
631-367-3418

Performance: Jan 17-Feb 8, Brighton Beach Memoirs, Theatre Three, 412 Main Street, Port Jefferson, NY 11777,
www.theatrethree.com,
631-928-9100

Music: Sat Jan 17, 8pm, Eyes of the Nile, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901,
www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Music: Sun Jan 18, 7-9pm, Albert Lee, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901,
www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

STEM Adventure / Kids: Mon Jan 19, 10am-12pm, Ninja Nee and the Secret of the Signal Tower (STEM Adventure), Sands Point Preserve, 127 Middle Neck Road, Sands Point, NY 11050,
www.ninjanee.com, 516-571-7901

Board Making / Craft: Mon Jan 19, 11am-1pm, Build Your Nation: Game Edition / Kids Families, The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724,
www.cshwhalingmuseum.org,
631-367-3418

Seniors / Poetry: Tue Jan 20, 2:30-3:30pm, Afternoon Poetry Club: Children's Poetry, Connetquot Pub-

lic Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716,
<https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>,
631-567-5079 (free)

Seniors / Educational: Wed Jan 21, 11am-12pm, Wild Birds of Long Island, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716,
<https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>,
631-567-5079 (free)

Book Reading: Wed Jan 21, 6:30pm, Beyond the Book: Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage / Adults, The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724,
www.cshwhalingmuseum.org,
631-367-3418

Children/Free Hot Cocoa: Fri Jan 23, 11am-4pm, Warm Up on Frosty Fridays, The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724,
www.cshwhalingmuseum.org,
631-367-3418

Music: Fri Jan 23, 8pm, The Warped Tour Band, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Performance / Tea Party / Kids:

continued on facing page





Suffolk County North Shore CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Artisans



continued

Sat Jan 24, 1-2:30pm, Princess Tea Party, Ballet Long Island, 1863 Pond Road, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779, www.balletlongisland.com, 631-737-1964

Music: Sat Jan 24, 8pm, The 3 Impersonators, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Children's Performance: Fri Jan 23-Feb 21, Winnie The Pooh, Theatre Three, 412 Main Street, Port Jefferson, NY 11777, www.theatrethree.com, 631-928-9100

Adult Craft/Wine: Sun Jan 25, 11am-1pm, Sea Glass Wine Charm Making, Sannino Vineyard, 15975 County Road 48, Cutchogue, NY 11935, www.sanninovineyard.com, 631-734-8282 (Includes a mug of warm spiced wine!) Fee

Music: Sun Jan 25, 3pm, Fearless: The Taylor Swift Experience, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Seniors / Music: Mon Jan 26, 7-8:30pm, Acoustic Jam Session, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079



Seniors / Craft: Mon Jan 26, 6-8pm, Fiber Arts Club, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079

Seniors / Education: Tue Jan 27, 1:30-3pm, Ancient Wisdom: The Labors of Hercules, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079

Seniors / Education: Wed Jan 28, 2-3:30pm, I Saw It At the Met, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079



Seniors / Education: Thu Jan 29, 6:30-8:30pm, Raiser & Kenniff: The Daniel Penny Case, Connetquot Public Library, 760 Ocean Avenue Bohemia, NY 11716, <https://www.connetquotlibrary.org/>, 631-567-5079

Music: Fri Jan 30, 8pm, Purple XPeRieNCE The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Theater / Music: Sat Jan 31, 7-9pm, DRUM TAO - The Best, Staller Center for the Arts, 100 Nicolls Road, Stony Brook, NY 11794,



www.stallercenter.com, 631-632-2787

Craft Fair / Mystic: Sat Jan 31, 6-10pm, NYSF Full Moon Market, The Fit Factory, 620 Johnson Avenue #4, Bohemia, NY 11716, www.newyorksolarfaire.com, 516-336-9547

Music: Sat Jan 31, 8pm, Strange-love: The Depeche Mode Experience, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

February

Children: All February, 11am-4pm, Hidden Hearts Scavenger Hunt / Kids, The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Children/Crafts and Fun: Sun Feb 1, 11am-3pm, 2nd Annual FrostFest - A Day of Wintry Wonder, The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Visit
ourtownstjames.com
to see a complete listing of
2026 North Shore
Art events

The Blackboard Bulletin



Smithtown Schools Robotics Team Making Waves

Over the past several months, the Smithtown Robotics Team has demonstrated remarkable leadership, mentorship, and commitment to expanding STEM opportunities both within the district and across the globe.

Most recently was the team's third annual G.I.R.L.S. Night (Girls Inspiring Robotics and Leadership in Smithtown) – an evening designed to encourage and empower female students in grades 6-12. Through panel discussions, Q&A sessions, and networking with engineers, educators, alumni, and robotics team members, attendees explored STEM careers, heard stories of perseverance, and built confidence in their own potential.



The team also put their technical skills to the test at the Half Hollow Hills Invitational, an off-season event modeled after the official FIRST Robotics Competition. The team performed extremely well, advancing to the quarterfinals and gaining valuable experience as they prepare for



the upcoming competition season.

The Smithtown Robotics Team has even extended their impact internationally by mentoring a robotics team from Botswana as they prepared for the FIRST Global Challenge, an Olympics-style international robotics competition held this year in Panama City, Panama. Meeting weekly since August, SCSD students shared design strategies, provided engineering feedback, and supported the team through challenges such as limited electricity, internet constraints, time zone differences, and language barriers. Their combined perseverance paid off as Team Botswana traveled to Panama and competed with great success.



The Smithtown Central School District robotics team has had an impactful school year in district and across the world.

Photos courtesy of Smithtown CSD

The Blackboard Bulletin



Compassion and Service to the Community: an Essential Part of Education at The Knox School

At The Knox School, service is more than a requirement – it is a lived expression of the belief that compassion is the cornerstone of meaningful education. Led by faculty member Gail Roach, the Service Learning program helps students connect classroom learning to real-world needs through three focus areas: what we can do for our school, our local community, and the world.

Mrs. Roach, a longtime volunteer herself, says her students really enjoy seeing the impact of their efforts: “The goal is to help them make connections between what they’re learning and how they can apply it to the outside world.” She adds that hands-on, animal- and ecology-related projects are often the most meaningful for students. Recent initiatives include building birdhouses for overwintering birds, constructing feral cat shelters, as well as baking homemade dog treats and crafting toys for Smithtown Animal Shelter. Students also visited the shelter to interact with the animals – an experience Mrs. Roach describes as especially powerful: “They really connected with seeing it and being there.”

The program also partners with local food banks, children’s and veterans’ programs, coastal conservation organizations, and community shelters. One of the most poignant efforts has been partici-



pating in the Memory Project, through which Knox students create heartfelt portraits for children facing adversity around the world – an experience that deepens cultural understanding and reinforces the universal power of kindness.

Through intentional reflection and student-directed project planning, the Service Learning program encourages students to examine real-world challenges, identify their personal strengths, and collaborate thoughtfully toward solutions. The experience reinforces the qualities that define a Knox graduate – individuals who are committed to service as a means to support the greater good and who carry these values into college and beyond. Whether coordinating fundraising events, contributing to sustainability efforts, or lending their talents to partner organizations, students learn that leadership is not a title but a daily practice.

For senior Arianna Parand, now



in her second year of Service Learning, the program has been one of the most meaningful parts of her Knox experience. “It’s a personal goal of mine to help in any way I can,” Arianna says. Her favorite project has been preparing treats and toys for the animal shelter: “I loved spending time with the animals and knowing our work made a difference.”

To learn more about The Knox School’s programs and our commitment to developing compassionate, community-minded leaders, families are invited to contact the Admissions Office at admissions@knoxschool.org or visit www.knoxschool.org.

2026 – Reinventing Yourself Through Your Home



by Natalie Weinstein, ASID Allied

It's a new year! Is it full of promise for you or the "same old"? These past few weeks, for me, have been filled with BUSY!!

Wonderful family visits, big doings at the Celebrate St. James Art Center, and many former clients revisited. Looking back on my 2025, there have been a lot of changes and challenges as I'm sure many of you have experienced.

January, however, they say is the month of looking ahead – of resolve – promises made to oneself to do better, be better. Interestingly, while January is not an official "organize your home" month, it goes right along with promises to ourselves. When we control our "stuff", we can create a more orderly, less stressful life. Sadly, by February, many of our resolutions fall by the wayside because life gets in the way.

For me, January has special meaning. It's the month of my birthday and every one of them seems to come more quickly! It's also the month I celebrate the start of my design career – now 53 years. That's amazing, even for me to realize. My dear clients seemed to have aged with me and, like myself, see their homes as a pivotal part of their lives. At a time when some people have advised me (and I'm sure, them, as well) to slow down, they and I are re-inventing ourselves.

In the last few months, my phone has been ringing with the voices of

the past – our combined past – as many former clients happily discover I'm not dead and am still actively working! Many have decided to leave the homes we've created together 15, 20 or 30 years ago and are starting a new chapter in their lives. Downsizing and eliminating the stress of large homes that are now empty nests, have, on Long Island, become the mecca of lifestyle change as more and more condos and senior communities become available.

Talk about stress – moving is definitely one of the most stressful things in life! It's the ultimate challenge of parting with life in the past and facing a relatively unknown future. It's hard for everyone, but as we grow older, it's definitely more taxing on the mind and body for many. Enter – me!

This past week, I met with two clients I haven't seen in years and laid out a plan – yes, always a plan and a plan (a floor plan, that is) for a seamless move. While it takes a bit of doing, even the ones for whom change is really hard, it can become an exciting new beginning, with help and a positive attitude.

What about you? Are you – a happy single, a young married, a busy family "chauffeur", a getting kids ready for college parent, or any person at a cross roads in life? January can be the month where your home plays a big part in keeping those New Year promises. You can re-invent yourself by starting in your own home. Whether you stay or go,



changes large or small, can move you forward in life. So start with the "power of one" – one drawer, one closet – then one room – as you move through your home and organize it and your life. It might be hard when you start, but it's freeing and fruitful and it can be fun (yes, fun!). Get help if you need it, or go it alone. The journey is worth the time and effort.

So – get ready to re-invent yourself in 2026. The world is a big place where we often have no control – ah – but our homes, our safe haven – that's another thing.

Editor's Note: Natalie Weinstein, ASID Allied, is an accredited designer, acknowledged business leader, entrepreneur, author, media personality and motivational speaker. Her interior design firm, Natalie Weinstein Design Associates, has been creating lifestyle changes in homes and public spaces, decorating for countless clients since 1973. For questions, please call - 631.862.6198 or email us - info@natalieweinstein.com. Visit our website www.natalieweinstein.com.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

We are working hard to make Our Town more robust than ever and we would love to know your thoughts.

Please contact us at info@ourtownstjames.com and let us know what you think.

Attention Business Owners - Have You Joined Your Chamber Of Commerce? **Grow Your Business with the St. James Chamber of Commerce!**

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- ✓ Free monthly meetings with dinner included
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- ✓ Free vendor tables & promo opportunities
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- ✓ A strong voice with local government

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and community spirit. Let's grow together—right here in St. James.



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| Barry Bros. Landscaping | Load Manager Inc. | Smithtown Library |
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New Year's Financial Resolutions: Making Them Stick

by Scott Posner,
CFP, A.A.M.S., CRPC, CPE

As the calendar flips to a new year, millions of Americans pledge to improve their financial lives. But without a concrete plan, those well-intentioned resolutions often fade quickly.

Financial goals consistently top the list of New Year's resolutions. A 2025 CFP Board study shows that financial resolutions are prominent, with saving more money (45%) and reducing debt (32%) ranking among the top three goals.

Unfortunately, most resolutions don't last. A 2023 Forbes Health poll found that over half of people give up on resolutions by the four-month mark and only 1% make it the full year.

The challenge isn't a lack of desire for change. People may set the same resolution year after year, revealing a disconnect between intentions and action. Or it may be that they try to tackle too many goals at once, or aim higher than is realistic, setting themselves up for disappointment.

Set smart financial goals. Before crafting your action plan, consider which financial priorities matter most to you. If you need ideas, here are some areas where you may want focus in 2026:

- Regularly review your financial goals and track progress toward meeting them
- Increase your 401(k) contribu-



utions or max out your IRA and/or HSA contributions

- Pay down debt strategically and negotiate lower interest payments
- Build an emergency savings fund of six to 12 months
- Save more consistently

Be specific. Vague resolutions like "save more money" rarely succeed. Instead, it can help to make goals specific and measurable. For example, rather than making a resolution to "start an emergency fund," commit to a specific goal, such as, "I will put \$100 a month into an emergency fund."

This shift from general to specific transforms wishful thinking into actionable steps. When goals are attainable, it's easier to track progress and stay motivated.

Find an accountability partner. Don't go it alone. Having someone to check in with can help you stay on track. This could be a spouse, friend or family member who shares similar goals.

Consider working with a finan-

cial advisor who can help you create a realistic plan, monitor your progress and adjust strategies as needed. A professional can provide expertise and accountability, making it easier to stay on track throughout the year.

Start small and build momentum. Rather than overhauling your entire financial life all at once, focus on one or two priority areas. Identify where the largest gap exists between your current situation and where you want to be, then concentrate your energy there.

Breaking larger goals into smaller, manageable actions makes them less overwhelming and more achievable. Each small win builds confidence and momentum for tackling the next challenge.

The new year offers a fresh start and renewed motivation to improve your financial health. With specific goals, a solid action plan and the right support system, this could be the year your financial resolutions finally stick.

Editor's Note:

Financial Focus is a monthly feature written by Scott Posner, CFP, CRPC, A.A.M.S., an investment representative with Edward Jones Investments. This 130-year-old firm has over 10,000 offices around the world with one here in town at 542 North Country Road in the Old St. James School House. Mr. Posner has serviced both personal and institutional investors for over 32 years. For more information or to request optics for future columns, call 631-862-2020.

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Scott R. Posner, CFP®, CEPA®, AAMS™
Financial Advisor
542 North Country Rd Suite A
St James, NY 11780
631-862-2020

Position information

On-call branch office administrator

Hours:

Very Flexible

Location:

Saint James and surrounding locations

To be considered for this position, please contact:

Caroline Curry 631-862-2020

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**Check Your
Hearing,**

**Hearing Help
Might Be
the Answer**

by William Kent

The intensive listening effort demanded by untreated hearing loss can be very stressful. Experts believe that even if you have a mild hearing loss that is not being treated, cognitive load increases significantly. Research also shows that unaddressed hearing loss is frequently associated with other physical, mental and emotional health issues that diminish everyday quality of life functions.

Withdrawal from social situations, a lessened ability to cope, and reduced overall psychological health are a few of the conditions associated with unaddressed hearing loss. Often people with untreated hearing loss feel angry, frustrated, anxious, isolated and depressed.

A recent study showed that hearing loss is associated with an increase risk of depression in adults in all age groups, but most pronounced in 18 to 69 year olds. Another study conducted in Italy, looked at working adults 35 to 55 years of age, with untreated mild to moderate age related hearing loss and found that they were more prone to depression, anxiety, and interpersonal sensitivity than those with no hearing issues.

Here's the good news. For the vast majority of people with hearing loss, intervention can help. Research shows that people with loss of hearing, who are fit with prescriptive hearing instruments by a licensed provider see improvements in their ability to communicate in most situations. In addition, with those same people, mental health often rallies and depressive symptoms are often reduced. Many regain emotional stability, have an easier time in joining in groups, and become more socially engaged. They experience a greater sense of safety and independence and feel more in control of their lives and see a general improvement in their overall quality of life. Many even report improvements in their relationships at home and/or at work.

Simply put, the majority of hearing instrument users say they are satisfied with changes that have occurred in their lives due to hearing instrument usage. Many say they feel better about themselves, and life overall as a result.

Getting a hearing test is the first step in your quest for help. In most cases health insurance covers all or most of the costs for such testing. If hearing instruments are recommended by your hearing health-

care provider, you should be given options that make it easier to make that decision. Areas such as cosmetic, ease of use, and financial are concerns that a dedicated provider will help you with in making a correct decision.

Wearing hearing instruments today, compared to years ago, is not the same; results are dramatically different and ease of use is the focal point of today's digital technology. With most prescriptive hearing instruments being totally automatic, and some being totally invisible, it makes hearing instrument usage much more appealing and satisfying.

Treat yourself. Get a hearing test. Most health insurers provide for an annual hearing test with little or no out of pocket expense. Start listening to and enjoying life again. Call to schedule that test before you forget. It's worth 30 minutes of your time, isn't it?

Editor's Note:

William Kent is the Director of Long Island Hearing, an Audiology and Hearing Instrument Dispensing Practice established in 1985. With offices in Nassau and Suffolk County they can be reached at 1-800-698-5200 for more information. Consultations are complimentary. See them on the web at www.lihearing.com.

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HEALTH NOTES

Ask Ron



Ron Villano, M.S., LMHC, ASAC, CCH is the leading expert in working through change. As a father who lost his 17-year old son in an auto accident, he always speaks from the heart. As a licensed mental health counselor, he guides others on how to work through difficult times. As a national speaker and author of The Zing, Ron has appeared on TV and radio throughout the world. He will help you to Embrace the Power of Change in your personal and professional life.

Dear Ron,

We are newlyweds on our own for the first time, and this is our first Christmas together. Our issue is that we have medium sized families on both sides and everyone wants us to come over for the holidays. In the past, we had no issue going and staying and being exhausted at the end of all the holiday celebrations; but we sometimes did the visits separately because they were happening at the same time. Things are different now; and now we

want to start creating our own traditions and being together rather than apart. How can we tell our families without hurting their feelings.

– Newlyweds wanting space

Dear Newlyweds,

Start the busy holiday season by intentionally planning the days and times you want to spend together, just the two of you. Write that down first. Then compare it with the invitations you've received. Look at each invitation one at a time and decide what works best for you. This keeps you from feeling overwhelmed by the entire calendar and makes it easier to adjust plans if needed. Accept the invitations that support a healthy balance at home and let hosts know your decision as early as possible so they can plan. If you can't attend, a small gesture like flowers, a gift, or a handwritten note can still show your thoughtfulness. It's okay to put yourselves first, especially as you build your new life together. Setting these boundaries now can help you feel more at ease – and often removes the guilt of skipping a holiday gathering.

Editor's Note:

Ron Villano, M.S., LMHC, ASAC, CCH, is the founder and director of Family & Personal Counseling, located at 872 Middle Country Road in St. James. He is an author of the book *The Zing*, has appeared on national TV, along with appearances on the Verizon FiOS1 network. With offices in St. James, Bohemia, East Islip, Levittown and Masspeth and a staff of 20 therapists from all backgrounds – Family & Personal Counseling addresses individual and family concerns of all ages. For additional information call 631-758-8290 or visit www.FamilyAndPersonalCounseling.com and www.RonVillano.com to listen to his featured interviews.

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Living Well Challenge



by Terri Pace

The Cost of NOT Supporting Your Health

We know what to do... we don't always do it.

The truth of this axiom is increasingly revealed in the choices we make every day. Choosing not to proactively support your foundational health doesn't create an immediate "problem," but over time hidden costs mount up – physical, mental, emotional, and even financial. These are the lifestyle consequences of NOT honoring the laws of the body!

Yes, the body has laws! "It functions in certain ways and they're non-negotiable. It has principles it runs on, and you can't object. You can't! You are not in charge of the universe. You're not in charge of your biology. In this sense, your body works the way it works, period." – Laura Jacobs, Creator, *Discover Brilliant Solutions*

And the villains... the toxins, ultra-processed foods and all the junk food... is anti-establishment, meaning anti-biology, and it does have significant impact on your body. And it's absurd to expect to feel your best when you know you are taxing your body beyond its capacity.

Too many people are running around completely oblivious to the laws of their body. And they spend their time chasing symptoms, "put-

ting out fires," and doing more and more "intervention activities" just to get through the day. Here are a few of these hidden costs that can mount up:

1. Nutrient Deficiency Accumulates Quietly – Modern foods, even "healthy" ones, contain fewer vitamins and minerals than they once did due to soil depletion and industrial farming practices. Without supplemental support, your body must work harder with fewer resources.

Lifestyle cost: Less energy, decreased resilience to stress, impaired immune response, and feeling "run down" more easily.

2. Lack of Healthy Fats Reduces Cellular Efficiency – Omega-3s and essential fatty acids (EFAs) play foundational roles in brain, heart, cardiovascular, and cellular wellness, but most people fall short.

Lifestyle cost: Cells may not perform optimally, which affects how you look, think, feel, and function daily.

3. Ignoring Your Microbiome Adds Up – Your microbiome influences digestion, nutrient absorption, immune signaling, brain chemistry, and overall vitality. Diet, stress, sleep, and environmental exposure can disrupt microbial balance.

Lifestyle cost: Less efficient digestion, reduced nutrient absorption, and increased strain on detox and energy systems.

4. Energy, Focus, and Resilience Decline Over Time – When your body doesn't have the micro-nutrients, fats, and the ideal micro-

biome to support its needs, daily life feels harder – like driving a car without regular maintenance.

Lifestyle cost: Fatigue, reduced motivation, inconsistent sleep/energy, and difficulty staying consistent with healthy habits.

5. The Real Hidden Cost – Neglecting foundational habits can also impact both finances and quality of life over time:

- need for more coffee and convenience foods to create energy
- craving carbs and weight gain
- less rejuvenating sleep (aging faster)
- need for more stress-relieving diversions, like increased alcohol consumption
- more pain, less enjoyment doing the activities you love
- more quick fixes instead of long-term support
- doctor visits, co-pays, medication side-effects, lost workdays, lower quality of life

Simple Truth: Healthy foundations are nearly always less expensive than "catch-up care" later.

Don't wait until these "costs" are NOT HIDDEN anymore and your body is crying out for relief! Once this happens, there's limited margin for error. You've got to go extreme. You've got to be super disciplined to get out of a dysfunctional state. And that's not fun for anyone.

Living Well Challenge, Your Golden Opportunity

If you want to learn about how to operate your body, under its immutable laws, then hear this! There are only two things that ever go wrong: Too much of the wrong continued on facing page

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HEALTH NOTES

continued thing (toxic) and too little of the right thing (deficient). And once you solve those two things, you are golden.

Our 5-Day Living Well Challenge offers you a simple, daily foundation for whole-body wellness. We selected THREE foundational products so anyone can begin supporting their body with the nutrients and microbiome care modern life often lacks. Today's food supply – because of soil depletion, convenience eating, stress, and lifestyle demands – doesn't reliably deliver the vitamins, minerals, healthy fats, or microbiome diversity our bodies rely on for energy and long-term vitality. This trio solves that with three easy, evidence-informed products designed to work together.

1. Whole-food nutrient complex helps fill daily nutrient gaps created by modern diets and is designed to support energy, resilience, and longevity.

Why it matters: Even with healthy eating, modern agricultural practices and fast-paced lifestyles make nutrient gaps common, too common if you ask me. VMG+ gives

your body the raw materials it needs to function optimally.

2. Omega-3 complex with eEFAs are essential for your heart, brain, and nervous system, and must be consumed regularly since the body cannot make them on its own.

Why it matters: Healthy fats are one of the most overlooked nutrient categories in modern diets, yet they're crucial for cellular and cardiovascular health, mood balance, and vitality.

3. Gut Biome complex that uses advanced time-release technology to deliver pre-, pro-, and post-biotic components to the right places in the digestive system.

Why it matters: Your microbiome influences digestion, immune function, mood messaging, and nutrient absorption. Modern lifestyles (processed food, stress, environmental toxins) can disrupt this delicate ecosystem.

Living Well Challenge Next Steps

1. Register for our next 5-Day Living Well Challenge starting in January 2026 (QR code in accompanying ad)

2. Get your 5 Day Product Pack

(\$25 cost)

3. Complete your vitality assessment and get started!

Your body is designed to thrive, but modern life makes that harder. These three products give your body what today's lifestyle doesn't – complete daily nutrition, essential fats for cellular and cardiovascular health, and a strong microbiome. When you support your foundation, everything else in your wellness journey becomes easier. The real cost isn't the price of the bundle – it's the long-term cost of doing nothing and hoping your body can keep up on its own.

Want/need a deeper dive and you are ready to get started? Join us for our next 90-Day Reset!

I invite you to participate in our next 90-Day Reset! This is a simple way to clean up after the yearlong party. Join me at our free workshop on January 7, 2026 to learn more or simply contact me for more information!

Find information on other events and workshops here:
<http://oils.link/TerriPace> No purchase necessary to attend!



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AUNT MEME'S WISE WORDS



Farewell 2025 and Hello 2026! Yes, I hear you! The year 2025 went by alarmingly fast and I have some disconcerting news for you. The year 2026 will probably go by even quicker. My nephew, who volunteers for this paper, calls it "Non-linear, exponential acceleration of time." Fancy way to say, as we age, time accelerates! As a child, the week before Christmas was an eternity. Summer vacations seemed like a lifetime. Not any more! Days whiz by!

Well, what are you going to do about it? The year 2027 will be here before you know it. So, how will you dig in and thoroughly enjoy 2026 – especially the people in our lives.

I am not sure why but how come people have fewer gatherings with friends and family than past generations? Do we have less time to entertain? Has it become too expensive? Maybe its social media sharing tips on how to produce the most perfect event. This can cause undue stress and sometimes serious

competition. I get it. We want to be great hosts and give our guests an extremely memorable and wonderful experience. However, have we gone too far? Back in "my day" friends frequently entertained. I don't remember a lot of fuss beforehand. Entertaining was simpler and

more fun.

So, here is my New Year's challenge. Host at least one "As-Is" party. "As-Is" means no preparation. Your home will be "As-Is". Your guests can be encouraged to arrive "As-Is" as well. Pot luck will make it even easier.

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Merchant Spotlight

continued from page 4
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and Instagram at Brooklyn's Best Baking Company. They are open from 7 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday and closed on Monday.

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Gallery North

continued from page 56
a variety of disciplines, including painting, drawing, printmaking, ceramics, and sculpture. Exhibits explore the diversity and vitality of the arts on Long Island, while classes, workshops, talks, and annual festivals involve community members in the lively process of art making. Next door, in The Studio at Gallery North, the community is provided with a diverse selection of educational programming, including classes and workshops in a variety of mediums, such as watercolor, life drawing, papermaking, as well as printmaking, done in house on our printing press. For more information, visit gallerynorth.org or find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or Twitter (@gallery-northli).

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