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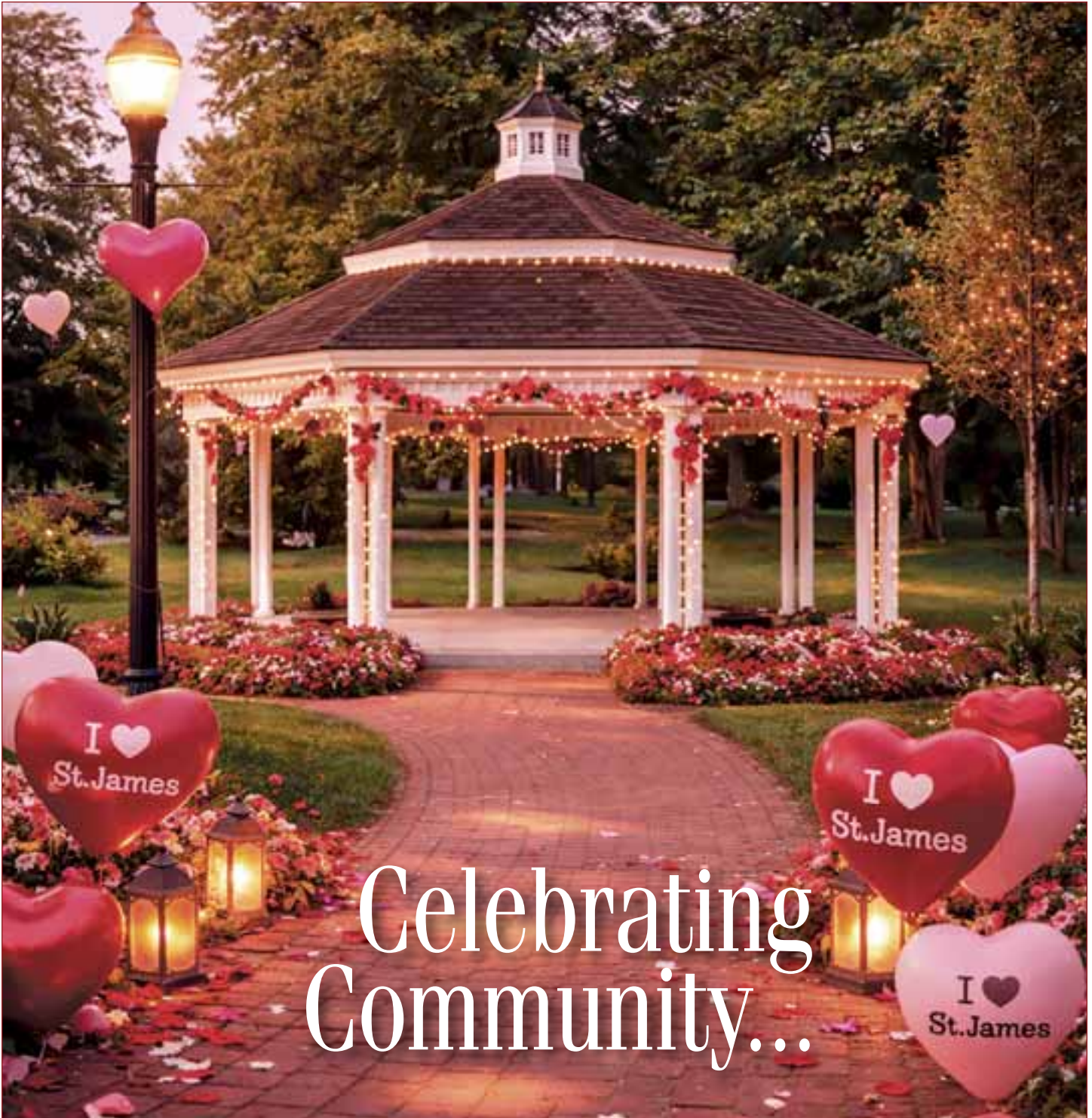
FEBRUARY
2026

Volume 38
Number 9

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

Our Town

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PLEASE NOTE:

Advertising & Editorial Deadline

for the **MARCH** edition of OUR TOWN • ST. JAMES is

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19 - 12 NOON

Distribution takes place on **March 2, 2026.**

MERCHANT SPOTLIGHT



Thic Chic Boutique - Thrift

by Scott Posner

Have you stopped into Thic Chic Boutique – Thrift, located at 367 Lake Avenue? If not, you're missing out. What is it exactly? We'll get to that, but first, my impression after stepping through the doorway...

You're immediately greeted by what feels like a visual work of art: a wide variety of clothing and gift items arranged to create a colorful, pleasing experience. The store itself is warm, welcoming, and full of personality – a perfect reflection of its creator, Happie Pomi-sel, who is equally warm, welcoming, and full of personality.

Happie has been in resale and retail for years, and on November 1, 2025, she opened her shop on Lake Avenue. Thic Chic Boutique – Thrift specializes in plus-size clothing, offering both new and what I like to call "curated" (rather than thrifted) items. There is an abundance of choices for both men and women. I personally purchased a "curated" shirt

with a whimsical fish print that felt far more boutique than thrift. Happie prides herself on unique finds paired with outstanding customer service, something clearly reflected in the impressive number of repeat customers.

There's also a great reason to visit often: the inventory changes constantly. Happie has a true talent for sourcing an incredible array of desirable items. This isn't a store where you buy something today only to see your neighbor wearing

the exact same piece next week. The selection is limited, distinctive, and refreshingly unique.

Thic Chic Boutique – Thrift is a wonderful resource for finding original, stylish plus-size clothing. In addition to everyday wear, Happie carries lingerie, evening attire, shoes, and gift items for all age groups. Her goal is simple: to ensure every customer feels comfortable, confident, and delighted with their purchase.

Store hours are Thursday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., with evening hours beginning in March. Mondays through Wednesdays are reserved for Happie's treasure hunts – when she's out finding those special pieces that make the shop so unique.

Take a stroll down Lake Avenue and stop in at #367. It's well worth the visit and is a refreshing reminder of how enjoyable it is to touch, see, and feel your purchases instead of just clicking online.



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\$1,274,000.

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 "WHOLE HOUSE RENTAL"

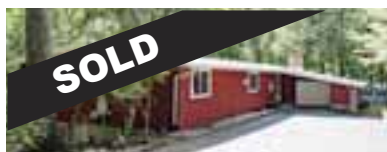
Lovely maintained Victorian style Colonial, Large EIK, 5 BRs, 3 full baths, Wall-to-wall carpet, hardwood floors, stackable washer/dryer. No pets & no smoking. Landlord maintains grass, Tenant responsible for snow removal. Detached garage not included. **\$5,000** mo. + utils.



FORT SALONGA "MID-CENTURY MODERN RANCH"

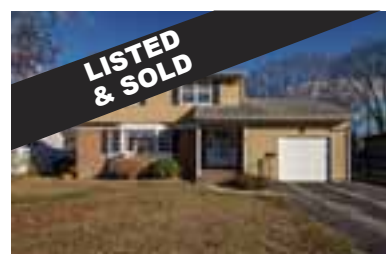
3 BR. 3 bath mid century modern Ranch w/vaulted ceilings, HW floors, lower level walkout, decks. One car att. garage. Kitchen, roof, some windows & HW floors updated 2015. LR with HW floors, built-ins & wood burning frplc, eat in galley kitchen w/granite tops. 200 amp electric, oil forced HA heat, thru wall AC units, primary BR w/att. bath, private balcony. Sliders to rear deck in kitchen & LR. 1 +/- private acres, R-43 Zoning, sold As-Is. Cul-de-sac location. Blacktop driveway, Kings Park schools, Northport Post Office. 275 gallon oil tank in garage.

\$699,000.



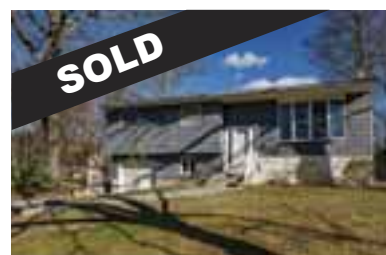
ST. JAMES "OUR EXCLUSIVE"

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 baseboard heat. Rear enclosed porch, .25 acre. **\$659,000.**



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 "DRIVE THROUGH FOR RENT"

Formerly a Dairy Barn on Lake Avenue, St. James. Two drive through isles and approx. 620 sq. ft. of building and walk in refrigeration units, plus 128 sq. ft. storage shed. Prime .50 acre corner Lake Avenue location in heart of town, adjacent Post Office. Gas heat. **\$4,000** mo. Triple net lease. Ideal for Drive Thru Convenience Store/Coffee Shop. Call for details.



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Nesconset – Southern Blvd
Suite 111 – 140 sq. ft. **\$475** mo.
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Suite 204 – 475 sq. ft. **\$1,270** mo.

Rent includes heat & electric. Ample parking.

CALL FOR A FREE MARKET ANALYSIS

AROUND TOWN

St. James St. Patrick's Day Parade Set for Saturday, March 14

Join us as St. James turns green for one of our most beloved traditions! The St. James Chamber of Commerce invites businesses, organizations, schools, clubs, and community groups to be part of our annual St. Patrick's Day Parade.

This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your business or organization, celebrate community spirit, and connect with thousands of spectators along the parade route.

We would love to see beautiful, creative floats – please decorate your vehicles and come dressed in

your most festive Irish attire to help make this parade truly magical for our community.

- 🍀 March with us
- 🍀 Promote your business or group
- 🍀 St. James pride

Now accepting applications to participate.

Please fill out the parade application on facing page to reserve your spot.

Let's make this year's parade bigger, brighter, and more spirited than ever!



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@stjames-chamber.org. Deadline for submissions is March 1, 2026.

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



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St. James Chamber of Commerce

St. Patrick's Day Parade

Saturday, March 14, 2026

1:00 p.m.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name of Business/Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-Mail: _____

of Marchers _____

**** PLEASE NOTE ****

ONE VEHICLE PER BUSINESS AND
MUST BE DECORATED WITH IRISH DECORATIONS

YOU MUST REGISTER
TO PARTICIPATE

Mail this form by February 18, 2026 to:

St. James Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 286

St. James, NY 11780

If you are a **Business** but **NOT** a Chamber Member -
Please enclose a check for \$25 per vehicle payable to the
St. James Chamber of Commerce

If you have any questions,
contact the St. James Chamber of Commerce

631-584-8510



AROUND TOWN

CELEBRATE ST. JAMES – PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE

News from the Celebrate St. James Center for the Arts

by Natalie Weinstein

January brought us snow, sneezes, and a gentle reminder that not everything about winter is fun and games. Yet as the year turned, we found ourselves wrapped in something warmer. We closed out 2025 with *Anastasia*, our first new stage production in our newly opened theatre space. New reviews, familiar faces, and the shared energy of people gathering together reminded us of a powerful truth: there is nothing quite like the gift the arts bring to a community.

As we step into the New Year, we are also stepping forward with purpose. We are proud to launch our capital campaign, an invitation to help sustain and grow this historic home for live theater. Naming and dedication opportunities are now available, offering a meaningful way to leave a lasting legacy. From sponsoring a theater chair, \$1,000 with your name displayed on a commemorative plaque, or convenient monthly payments of \$83.33 for one year, to other distinctive opportunities such as star lighting, curtains, and more, there are many

ways to help bring this theatre to life for generations to come.

There are also many ways to support our restoration mission beyond giving. From joining an art class to attending one of our performances, every program we offer is thoughtfully designed to raise funds for the continued upgrades of our beloved theatre. Each ticket purchased, each class attended, and each applause-filled evening brings us closer to preserving this space for future generations. Visit celebratestjames.org for details, or stop by for a tour, there is always a friendly smile waiting at the door.

Our stage is brimming with excitement this season. *Fiddler on the Roof* takes center stage with performances on March 13 at 8 p.m.; March 15 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.; March 20 at 8 p.m.; March 21 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and March 22 at 3 p.m. Our children's theatre workshop proudly presents *Shrek the Musical Jr.* on April 11 and April 12 at 2 p.m., showcasing the next generation of performers. Laughter takes the spotlight on April 24, when Stevie GB brings comedy to

our stage, kindly donating his talent to host this special benefactor event. Come out to support both Stevie and our theatre. Looking ahead to summer, *South Pacific* opens on June 12, promising sweeping music and timeless storytelling.

Beyond the stage, our theatre is alive with creativity. We offer a variety of art workshops, paint-and-sip events, art exhibits, and more, each designed to invite the community inside and support our ongoing restoration efforts.

By supporting this mission, you help preserve a treasured piece of history while ensuring that creativity, storytelling, and community continue to thrive. Join us as we bring the arts to life, on stage, in the classroom, and in the hearts of all who walk through our doors.



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4 Celestial Court | St. James, NY

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91 Harbor Road | Head of the Harbor, NY

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1 Spring Hollow Road | Nissequogue, NY

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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	

Curious about your home's value in today's market? We'd love to help.
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What's Happening at the St. James General Store?

by Arline Goldstein

Some of us are still recuperating from a hectic holiday season – and perhaps still finding pine needles between the sofa cushions! We reflect on the lovely memories made with family and friends, while Ms. Potts, the buyer, and the other storekeepers at the General Store remain fully engaged, energized, and looking ahead to a spectacular 2026.

So, what *is* happening at the General Store? You may not recognize it.

The store closes for at least two weeks in January to complete much-needed work. There is plenty of housekeeping to be done. At this time, the entire store is taken apart. Deconstruction is underway, and there is no sign of "holiday past"

anywhere to be seen. Every item is carefully preserved and packed away. By the time this story is published, the store may already be reopened after being closed for most of January. You can call 631-854-3740 to speak with a storekeeper and find out whether they have reopened.

February brings thoughts of Valentine's Day, and the store celebrates with a charming display. People show love in many different ways. Some choose romantic gestures such as flowers, chocolates, or gifts. Others show care by helping with chores, doing something thoughtful, or planning an experience like dinner and a movie. There is also a celebration of friendship

continued on page 59





ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE & GRAND MARSHAL RECEPTION

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026

Join us in celebrating one of St. James' most beloved traditions! The annual St. Patrick's Day Parade draws thousands of spectators from across the community and beyond—families, neighbors, and visitors who come together for a day of hometown pride, music, and celebration.

All sponsorships include visibility at both the Parade and the Grand Marshal Reception.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

EMERALD SPONSOR – \$2,000

- “Presented By” recognition on all parade and reception materials
- Logo featured prominently on event signage and marketing
- Banner placement at the beginning of Lake Avenue
 - Recognition at the Grand Marshal Reception
 - Social media and website spotlight
- Opportunity to address guests at the Reception
 - 6 Reception tickets

GOLD SPONSOR – \$1,000

- Logo on parade signage and marketing materials
- Recognition at the Grand Marshal Reception
 - Social media feature
 - 4 Reception tickets

SILVER SPONSOR – \$500

- Name/logo on select event signage
- Recognition at the Grand Marshal Reception
 - Social media mention
 - 2 Reception tickets

COMMUNITY SPONSOR – \$250

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- Recognition on social media

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dignitaries, chamber
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honorees for an
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of connection and
recognition.

Why Sponsor?

- Reach thousands of local residents and visitors
- Align your business with a cherished community tradition
- Support local families, students, and organizations
- Strengthen your presence in St. James

Reserve your sponsorship today! Email: info@stjameschamber.org Phone: 631-584-8510

The St. James Chamber of Commerce proudly thanks you for supporting our community and helping keep this tradition alive.



St. James Auxiliary Spreads Holiday Cheer to Local Veterans

Each holiday season, the St. James Fire Department Auxiliary has a cherished tradition of adopting a family in need and brightening their celebrations with generosity and care. This year, the Auxiliary took a meaningful new direction by choosing to support the veterans at the VA Hospital in Northport.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts and donations from our Auxiliary members, and the generosity of our fire fighters and EMS team, more than \$1,000 was raised in cash and gift cards. In addition, the group, along with the many donations from Fire Department members, collected hundreds of essen-

tial health items and clothing, all to be distributed to local veterans who need them most.

These donations will provide much-needed comfort and support to those who have served our country, especially during the holiday season.

Thank you to the St. James Auxiliary for their incredible commitment, energy, and compassion. The spirit of giving is alive and well in our community because of their example.

Thank you to all the members who donated. It's amazing how much we can achieve when we come together to help others.



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Stage Lights and Big Dreams: Meet Mireilla O'Donnell

Have you ever watched a theatre or dance performance and found yourself unable to take your eyes off one particular performer? It might be the lead, or someone in the ensemble, but there is just something magnetic about them. You see the magic written across their face, their joy unmistakable, as though the stage is the one place they feel most at home.

That is certainly true of Mireilla O'Donnell.

A thoughtful and vivacious third grader, Mireilla seems born to shine. Anyone who knows her is instantly charmed by her warmth and caring nature. Whether she is performing as an orphan in *Annie* or singing "This Is Me" from *The Greatest Showman* at a school talent show to remind her peers to be proud of who they are, the magic is undeniable. She is mesmerizing to watch, radiating genuine emotion and a deep love for performing as she pours her heart into every role.

Mireilla's journey began early. She started dancing at just three years old and stepped onto the stage for her first performance soon after. Since then, she has studied a wide range of dance styles, includ-

ing hip hop, musical theatre, tap, ballet, lyrical, cheer, and acro. At age five, she began taking acting lessons and quickly discovered her passion for theatre. With her sharp mind and expressive face, it was clear she had found her calling.

She has trained with Theatre Three, BSD, Think Big, and Tower Talent, performing monologues, commercials, skits, and full theatrical productions. Alongside her love of theatre came a natural passion for music. Mireilla has been taking singing and piano lessons for several years, and music fills her home daily. Whether she is practicing piano for NYSSMA or belting out her favorite songs, she seems to sing as effortlessly as she breathes, often waking up already humming, as though the quiet of the night can hardly contain her joy.

In September 2025, Mireilla received her first MainStage role as Tiny Tim in Theatre Three's *A Christmas Carol*. Over the course of 26 performances, she brought tears to audiences' eyes and nostalgia to



their hearts. Being part of such a dedicated and talented cast only deepened her love for acting and strengthened her commitment to the craft.

Now, Mireilla is preparing for her second MainStage performance in *Fiddler on the Roof*, where she will play Bielka. She is thrilled to be rehearsing with the Lighthouse Repertory Theatre Company and looks forward to charming audiences at the Celebrate St. James Center for the Arts and Twin Oaks Theatre. Set in the small village of Anatevka in 1905, *Fiddler on the Roof* tells the story of Tevye, a poor milkman, and his five daughters as they navigate tradition, family, and change. Against the backdrop of a close-knit Jewish community and the rising anti-Semitism of Czarist Russia, the musical explores universal themes of love, faith, and resilience. Rich in history and heart, the show leaves
continued on page 16



Stony Brook Harbor Water Quality Forum

Tuesday, February 3, 2026 from 7:00 – 9:30 PM
at Stony Brook Yacht Club
21 Shore Road, Stony Brook N.Y.

The Stony Brook Harbor Water Quality Forum presents a unique opportunity to learn about ongoing research and science-based efforts to protect and improve water quality in Stony Brook Harbor, Long Island Sound, and West Meadow Creek, including a presentation by Christopher Gobler, PhD, Distinguished Professor and Endowed Chair of Coastal Ecology and Conservation of the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences (SOMAS), Stony Brook University.

Participating Organizations:

Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Village of Head of the Harbor
Village of Nissequogue
Avalon Nature Preserve
Sea Grant New York
Three Village Community Trust
Long Island Sound Partnership
Save the Sound
Three Village Civic Association
Setauket Harbor Task Force
Saint James - Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition
Stony Brook University School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences (SOMAS)



For questions or additional information, please email: SBHWaterQualityForum@gmail.com

Stage Lights and Big Dreams: Meet Mireilla O'Donnell

continued from page 14
audiences laughing, crying, and reflecting long
after the curtain falls.

Mireilla feels incredibly blessed to take on this
new role and to perform alongside the talented
actors of the Lighthouse Repertory Theatre
Company. She is deeply grateful to director Tony
Chiofalo for the opportunity to shine on the
LRTC stage. Beautiful both inside and out, Mi-
reilla hopes her performances remind everyone
to always be themselves and to remember that
we are all born to shine in our own unique
ways.

Fiddler on the Roof – Show Information

Who: Lighthouse Repertory Theatre Company

Where: Celebrate St. James Center for the Arts,
176 2nd Street, St. James, NY 11780
(March 13-22),
and Twin Oaks Theatre, Freeport, NY
(March 27-29)

Show Dates: March 13, 2026 - March 29, 2026

Tickets: lighthouse theatre company.com/tickets

Please note that the role of Bielka is double
cast. For Mireilla's specific performance dates,
check Instagram or contact the theatre directly.



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December 2025 Rotary Club Meeting

by Adam Titterton

The Rotary Club of Smithtown meets for lunch at the Garden Grill from 12:15-1:30 p.m. Please feel free to participate as a guest and see firsthand all of the work the Rotary Club does for the community. For more information and their full calendar, please visit their website: <https://portal.clubrunner.ca/1770>

Here are some highlights of the December 2025 meeting:

Judy Marlow-Ratway, the Assistant District Governor, paid a visit to talk about her experiences as a Rotarian and share some helpful goals for how to grow membership (pictured here in red speaking to the Club and posing with Club President Ron Rothman).

Ilda Wistreich, Vice President of the Society for Lending Comforts to the Sick, was the guest speaker (pictured here in brown and also posing with Ron Rothman). The Society



for Lending Comforts to the Sick is a phenomenal charity that loans hospital and recuperative equipment free of charge to people in



need! They also run a great thrift shop to help fund their charitable cause. Visit their website for more continued on page 20

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December 2025 Rotary Club Meeting

continued from page 18
information (<https://www.lending-comforts.org/>) or, even better, visit their thrift shop (71 Blydenburgh Avenue Smithtown, NY 11787)

with donations or to do some last-minute holiday shopping.

Last, but not least, our very own Rotarian Dave Lewis surprised the Club with five chocolate ginger-

bread houses which he spontaneously raffled off to five lucky winners, bringing an exciting and delicious end to our meeting.

Thank you

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks for the extraordinary love, kindness, and support you've shown during this difficult time.

Losing Jerry — my devoted husband, dad, grandfather, brother, friend, and a proud New York State Supreme Court Justice — has been immeasurably difficult. But the outpouring of compassion from so many, has brought us comfort beyond words.

Honorable Jerry Garguilo was our North Star — a human security blanket — the kind of person who quietly did everything for everyone. He lived his life in service to others, guided by wisdom, integrity, empathy, and love. Seeing how many lives he touched and how deeply he was respected and adored has been both humbling and healing.

From your messages and calls, to your presence at services and the countless thoughtful gestures, we felt Jerry's spirit reflected in the care you've shown. For that, we are endlessly & heartfully grateful.

Thank you for standing beside us, for honoring him, and for reminding us of the incredible community that surrounded him — and now surrounds us.

ANGELA
NICOLE & KEVIN, JOELLE & CHRIS, JACQUELENE & AJ
AND ALL OF OUR GARGUILO FAMILY

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January Rotary Club Meeting

by Rob Dondiego

The Smithtown Rotary Club welcomed guest speaker Devin Walsh at its meeting on January 7, 2026. Devin, who was crowned Miss New York International 2025, is the founder of *Donate with Devin, Incorporated*, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping those in need. Devin launched *Donate with Devin* in May 2020. The pageant began at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as a socially distant pickup and delivery service providing clothing, household items and non-perishable food to individuals and families. Later that year, the initiative expanded into in-person fundraising events, and in December 2023, the organization officially became a registered nonprofit.

As Miss New York International, Devin continues to grow her charity through volunteer efforts, fundraising initiatives, public speaking engagements, donations and by using her platform to raise awareness for underserved communities. For more information or to get involved, Devin can be contacted at donatewithdevin@gmail.com or go to donatewithdevin.org.

**Pictured (L-R):
Rotary President Ron Rothman, Devin Walsh,
and Rotarian Herta Walsh.**



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LAKE GROVE. Encore 55+ development. Lovely 2 BR, 2 bathroom, second floor unit with elevator. Spacious rooms with lots of windows, making it light and bright. 2 car garage. Incredible active community with every amenity! **\$599,990.**

SOLD



SMITHTOWN. Tanglewood Hauppauge schools. Diamond 1 BR with office, hardwood floors throughout. Bright and light new bathroom. Sliding patio doors leading to patio. **\$250,000.**

SOLD



ST. JAMES. Fairfield 55 plus community. 3 BR, 2 1/2 baths, a garage. Designer show-place. Totally updated throughout. Primary BR on the first floor with an en suite bathroom. **\$619,990.**

SOLD



SMITHTOWN. Village of the Branch. Beautiful 3 BR 2 1/2 bath Colonial. This home was originally a carriage house and has been totally rebuilt. Still retains some unique features. Hardwood floors with an open floor plan, 2 car garage. **\$779,000.**

SOLD



ST JAMES. 4 BR, 2 bath expanded Colonial with huge primary bedroom. Hardwood floors throughout, spacious rooms. Basement. Quiet mid block location. **\$749,990.**

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TRAVELS WITH IRMA



Ireland

by Irma Gurman

Top of the Morning, I Say
You must visit Ireland someday,
The Emerald Isle will surely beguile.
Once there, you'll be tempted to stay,
For its beauty and warmth make you smile.

The limerick, Ireland's most representative poem, takes its name from County Limerick, where humorous 18th-century Gaelic minstrels were said to have entertained their audiences with witty verse. Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland, endured decades of conflict known as The Troubles, from the 1960s until 1998. These violent clashes erupted as the IRA fought to end British rule and unite Ireland. Memorials throughout the city bear solemn witness to those who lost their lives.

continued on page 26



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Colleen has been a professional designer for over a decade. She is a member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). As a Senior Design Consultant, she has helped hundreds of families across Long Island with their home organizing needs. Colleen finds it most rewarding to help her neighbors in our town. She has lived in St. James since 1993 and raised her five children here.



Colleen Caemmerer,
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TRAVELS WITH IRMA



Ireland

continued from page 24

Protestant Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, while the predominantly Catholic Republic of Ireland is an independent nation.

Many U.S. presidents were Irish or of Irish descent, including Andrew Jackson, Chester A. Arthur,



James Buchanan, James Polk, Ulysses S. Grant, John F. Kennedy, Andrew Johnson, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley. Ireland has also inspired and produced some of the world's greatest writers and poets, among them W. B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, and



George Bernard Shaw.

We began our journey in Belfast, then drove north to the Giant's Causeway, climbing its remarkable basalt formations shaped by ancient volcanic activity.

Traveling through rolling green countryside, we arrived at the
continued on page 28

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TRAVELS WITH IRMA

Ireland

continued from page 26
breathtaking Kylemore Abbey, once a monastery and now surrounded by exquisite gardens. We spent a day walking the historic walls of the picturesque city of Derry-Londonderry and later climbed the narrow steps of Blarney Castle to kiss the famed Blarney Stone - for a small fee, of course.

At the Belleek Pottery factory, we learned that artisans must apprentice for four years before being entrusted with the intricate China-making process. From there we continued to the Dingle Peninsula and hiked along the dramatic Cliffs of Moher.

A boat ride brought us to the remote and sparsely populated Aran Islands, a rugged landscape that has served as the setting for several films, including the acclaimed *The Banshees of Inisherin*.

Dublin proved to be a vibrant



and unforgettable city. We wandered the campus of Trinity College and viewed the beautifully illuminated Book of Kells in its magnificent library. A tour of the Guinness Storehouse taught us how the famous and surprisingly nutritious brew is made. We found the statue of the legendary Molly Malone and visited St. Patrick's Cathedral. We attended a performance of a Shaw

play at the historic Gate Theatre and stopped at Sweny's Pharmacy, made famous in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, where the owner read aloud from Joyce's work. That evening, we ended up in a pub where the singers were so hysterically funny that the show had to pause because I was laughing so loudly.

What a fascinating trip it was. We also visited Waterford and watched skilled artisans create their stunning crystal pieces.

Other colorful cities on our itinerary included Cobh, Cork, Killarney, Tralee, and Galway.

Walk down any street in Ireland and you will inevitably meet friendly people who invite you to share a drink and exchange stories. With smiles on their lips and warmth in their eyes, they make this country an endlessly welcoming and joyful place to visit.

Valentine's Day

is February 14th



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1 Summit Trail, Nissequogue | Pending – \$1,400,000.

Welcome to this contemporary Farm Ranch set on 2.16 acres in the scenic Village of Nissequogue featuring 4 bedrooms and 5 baths. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the Nissequogue River, this residence provides a blend of modern comfort, quiet retreat, and timeless design. MLS# 916981.



190 Northern Boulevard, Saint James | Pending – \$799,000.

Elegant expanded 4-bedroom, 2-bath Hi Ranch with an open and modern floor plan. The kitchen offers rich cabinetry, granite countertops, and a large island with pendant lighting. The upper level includes 3 bedrooms with hardwood flooring and a recently remodeled bath. MLS# 932745.



263 North Country Road, Smithtown | Pending – \$649,000.

Beautifully updated 3-bedroom, 3-bath Ranch-style home with refinished wood floors and freshly painted interiors. The main footprint of the house is the primary bedroom with ensuite bath and additional bedroom with built-in bookshelves, serviced by a hall full bath. MLS# 884806.



44 Twixt Hills Road, Saint James | Sold – \$950,000.

Classic 4-bedroom, 3-bath Colonial set on a .55 acre lot. The living room features crown molding and oversized casement windows allowing ample natural light while the welcoming den offers a marble surround wood-burning fireplace, perfect for cozy gatherings. MLS# 919505.



1 Christa Court, Lake Grove | Sold – \$865,000.

Remodeled Brookfield Colonial set on .55 acres on a peaceful cul-de-sac. The recently renovated kitchen showcases rich hickory cabinetry, Cambria quartz countertops, porcelain tile flooring, stainless steel GE appliances, and a cheerful breakfast area. MLS# 919584.



295 5th Street, Saint James | Sold – \$685,000.

Set on a quiet street, this 4-bedroom, 2-bath Expanded Ranch is just moments from a neighborhood park. The true centerpiece of this home is the inviting den, showcasing custom built-in shelving, a wood-burning brick fireplace, and sunlit picture window with a window seat. MLS# 906507.



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Town of Smithtown Unveils New Public Safety Command Center, Strengthening Emergency Response & Community Protection

The Town of Smithtown has officially unveiled its newly renovated Public Safety Command Center – an advanced hub of emergency management designed to elevate public safety operations townwide. Orchestrated and facilitated by the Department of Public Safety, this modernized center represents a major step forward in the Town's ongoing commitment to safeguarding residents, first responders, and public facilities with cutting-edge tools, real-time communication, and enhanced situational awareness.

"Thanks to the exceptional work of our Department of Public Safety, the Town of Smithtown now operates a state-of-the-art Command Center that is already making a profound impact on the safety of our residents. This upgrade has quite lit-

erally saved lives, particularly in our waterways, where our camera network has enabled water and ground units to quickly locate disabled boaters and swimmers in distress, and has provided critical support in law enforcement investigations throughout our parks. In emergencies where every second counts, the capabilities of this Command Center have proven invaluable. I want to commend Chief Lohmann for his steadfast leadership and extend my deepest gratitude to Deputy Director of Public Safety Catherine Caillat, whose expert coordination of grant funding, procurement, and project management made this achievement possible; and to John Gonzales, whose technological expertise brought this vision to life. We are also enormously grateful to the Parks Department,

especially Tom Heester and Frank Musarra, for their outstanding work overseeing construction. This project reflects the very best of Smithtown's commitment to safety, innovation, and community."

– Supervisor Ed Wehrheim

At the heart of the upgrade is a powerful network of more than 250 security cameras deployed across Smithtown's parks, marinas, buildings, and open spaces. This system includes motion tracking, automated alerts in key areas, and License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology, giving Public Safety personnel, and the responders they support, critical information the moment it is needed.

"I am extremely happy to see our new emergency operations center continued on page 32



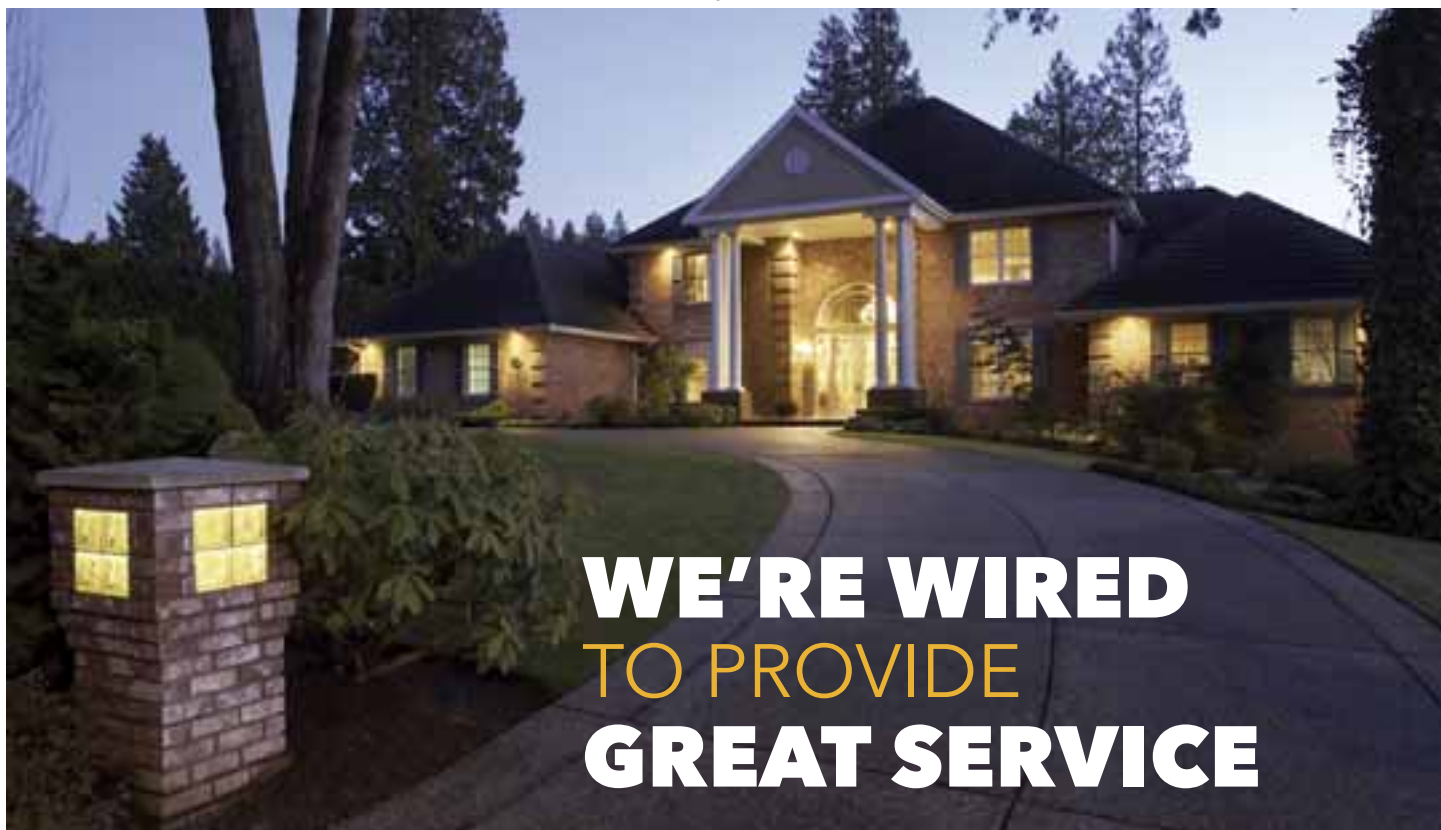
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New Public Safety Command Center

continued from page 30
come online. The upgrades to the technology in the room will allow us to serve the residents of the township more effectively, as well as being able to provide time critical intelligence to our officers and partner agencies. The work by Deputy Director Caillat, our Technical Services Section, and the Parks Department as well as the contractors was seamless and I would like to commend them all for their work."

– Chief Thomas J. Lohmann,
Director of Smithtown
Department of Public Safety

These tools are not just for monitoring; they are actively saving lives. At the bluff, for example, cameras have repeatedly assisted water and ground rescue units in locating disabled boaters and individuals attempting dangerous swims between the bluff and Short



Beach. In emergencies where seconds matter, the Command Center's

capabilities have proven invaluable.
continued on page 34

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I N T H E N E W S

New Public Safety Command Center

continued from page 32

The renovated facility now gives dispatchers instant access to live video feeds, electronic doors, and alarm systems at Town facilities, allowing them to provide precise, real-time intelligence to situational awareness ensures that every response – whether to a fire, medical emergency, facility intrusion, or maritime incident – is faster, safer, and more coordinated.

The total cost of the project was \$266,667, with \$200,000 secured through a Congressionally Directed Spending Grant championed by the U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer. The effort aligns directly with New York State's goal of expanding local capabilities under the National Response Plan, strengthening the Town's crisis communication infrastructure and incident-management capacity.

Renovations and technology up-

grades were completed in just five months through exceptional coordination across departments. Construction was overseen by Tom Heester and Frank Musarra, whose attention to detail ensured the facility was built to the highest standards. The project reflects the strong leadership of Deputy Director of Public Safety Catherine Caillat, who managed all grant funding, procurement, and execution from start to finish, as well as the technical ex-

pertise of John Gonzales, Tech Services – I.T. Security Coordinator, whose knowledge of security systems and IT design was essential to bringing the Command Center's advanced capabilities online.

The enhanced Public Safety Command Center stands as a testament to Smithtown's forward-leaning approach to public protection, integrating technology, training, and teamwork to ensure a safer, more resilient community for all.



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SHORT STORY

Queens Girl Meets America's Wonders

by Carol Giuliani

I never considered myself a true nature lover, nor did I stop to smell the roses when I was younger. As I moved through the passages of my life, I began to appreciate the natural wonders that surround us, especially those found right here in the

United States.

My self-discovery truly began in 1997, when we took a Tauck tour of the National Parks. Our journey started in Yellowstone National Park. Friends who had visited before warned me that its beauty was nearly impossible to describe, and



that visitors are merely guests in a land ruled by wildlife. Standing beneath the Yellowstone sign with our tour group, I remember thinking, "Just another nice park."

How wrong I was.

Upon entering the park, it becomes immediately clear that you are a guest in the house of Mother Nature. We stayed at the magnificent Old Faithful Inn, which echoed the natural beauty of its surroundings. Our ground-floor room offered an unexpected and unforgettable gift. The window looked directly onto Old Faithful. I would sit on the floor of the beautifully decorated room, rest my head on the windowsill, and watch this natural wonder erupt every few hours.

It was difficult to comprehend the enormity of nature's ability to regulate such power with perfect precision. After each eruption, the time of the next one was posted, as if nature itself kept an orderly schedule. When the geyser began to stir, it felt almost like a birth. Steam and water bubbled up in small bursts, rising higher and higher until it seemed the earth might split open. Then it quietly retreated back into its cocoon to rest until the next event. It was mesmerizing and a powerful reminder of nature's dominance over mankind.

My next encounter with nature as
continued on facing page

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SHORT STORY

continued

a girl from Queens unfolded in an equally memorable way. George and I were staying in another lovely hotel within the park, this time on the second floor overlooking Yellowstone Lake. Gazing out the window, I casually said, "Oh look, they have plastic bison on the grass downstairs." He quickly warned me not to go outside, explaining that they were very real. Moments later, I saw one blink, move, and swish its

tail. City girl meets nature. In that instant, I truly understood that I was a guest in their world, and they were allowing me a glimpse into it.

After Yellowstone, we traveled to what I consider the most magical place I had ever seen: Grand Teton National Park. The hotel there features a grand staircase that leads to a breathtaking panorama of floor-to-ceiling windows. Beyond the glass, the magnificent Teton Range rises dramatically against the sky.

The view quite literally took my breath away. It felt surreal, as if the mountains had been painted onto the horizon rather than carved by nature. Sitting quietly in one of the chairs, I reflected on how unaware I had been of the beauty within our own country. Why were people rushing off to Europe when scenes like this existed right in our own backyard?

The next leg of our journey
continued on page 38



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SHORT STORY

Lingering Lyrics

by June Capossela Kempf

Following up on my writer's group prompt for this month (song lyrics that mean something to you) proved more challenging than expected. I was already in a mood after listening to an acquaintance deliver a graphic, blow-by-blow account of all his ailments and misfortunes. I will refer to him here as Dred Foley. Given that state of mind, the only musical lyrics that came to me were:

"Gloom, despair, and agony on me
Deep, dark depression, excessive misery
If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all
Gloom, despair, and agony on me."

This was the theme song from the old television show *Hee Haw*, sung by Roy Clark, Buck Owens, Grandpa Jones, and Gordie Tapp. The four were shown sitting on a front porch, holding jugs of moonshine, wailing about the misfortunes of their lives. Grandpa would let out a long, exaggerated moan at the end of each stanza, and before you knew it, the gloomy message was completely lost in laughter.

Seriously, though, there are so many songs that have meant far more to me over the years. The freedom songs sung by Peter, Paul and Mary and Aretha Franklin profoundly impressed me in the sixties. Even before that, Oscar Hammerstein's "You've Got to Be Taught," from the musical *South Pacific*, struck a chord in my heart that I have never forgotten. It begins slowly:

"You've got to be taught to hate and fear
You've got to be taught from year to year
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear..."
Then the music builds to a dramatic crescendo:
"You've got to be carefully taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight

To hate all the people your relatives hate..."

Finally, it shifts to a delicate pianissimo:

"You've got to be carefully taught."

Hammerstein faced enormous backlash at the time.

The world was not ready for the message he was conveying, and he was pressured to remove the song from the show. He steadfastly refused. Thankfully, it was heard by millions of dear little ears and hearts.



My favorite and most cherished lyrics, however, also come from the pen of Mr. Hammerstein, *Some Enchanted Evening*. It still warms my heart as I recall first meeting my sweetheart, Ron, and instantly knowing we were meant for each other so many years ago.

I wonder what lyrics appeal to Dred Foley. I imagine they might be some bleak passage from *Les Misérables*. But now, as I think about it, what am I really doing here, complaining? All because Dred finds comfort in confiding in me. Perhaps it is time for me to change my tune.

"Who can explain it, who can tell you why?"

Fools give you reasons. Wise men never try."

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 KeithPublications.com. She also writes essays and is the facilitator for the Adult Writers Group at the Smithtown Library.

Queens Girl Meets America's Wonders

continued from page 37
brought us to Bryce Canyon National Park, where the landscape appeared as though the world had been turned upside down and left its imprint on the earth. From there we traveled to Zion National Park, where we spent the night in a cabin. I felt deeply privileged to sleep among towering trees and majestic mountains, surrounded by the sounds of animals living freely in their natural domain.

Our final stop was Salt Lake City. I must be honest, it felt as though I had entered another country. The city was immaculately clean, but everyone seemed to look



remarkably alike, with little visible diversity. I found the experience unsettling, reminiscent of a Stepford-

like scene. The people were unfailingly polite and kind, yet I could not wait to leave.

At the Salt Lake City airport, we witnessed about one hundred young men in suits saying goodbye to their families. Curious, I asked what was happening and learned that they were leaving at age eighteen to begin missionary work as part of Mormon religious teachings. It was a reminder of how many subcultures and traditions exist all around us, often unnoticed.

From there, we flew to Las Vegas to visit family. But that is another story. And no missionary work there.



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SHORT STORY



by Carol Giuliani

My childhood home had the most distinct smells – familiar only to my brother and me, and of course to my mother and father. It was the scent of warmth, love, and safety all rolled into one, with a hint of whatever was cooking that day.

There was an expectation of sorts as you approached the small front door of the white Cape Cod house in Bellerose. It was always decorated with the appropriate seasonal wreath, complete with a

Smells of My Childhood Home

matching bow – made by my mother, of course. Even before stepping inside, you anticipated the comfort and love of family.

Living in the house, versus visiting it, brought two different awarenesses of smell. As a guest, there was always the aroma of freshly perked coffee from my mother's Farberware coffee pot, drifting through the house as she rose early to prepare breakfast for whoever was staying with us. She functioned so perfectly in that tiny kitchen, which somehow expanded with joy and laughter when filled with the people she loved. The small colonial four-seater table enveloped everyone like a warm blanket. Never did we feel cramped or cluttered, it seemed to have magical powers to expand whenever needed.

That kitchen had its own distinct personality, shaped by the rhythms of daily life in a family of four. Even

before opening my eyes in the morning, I could smell my mother starting breakfast downstairs. The scent of coffee felt as though someone was caring for the day ahead of me, making everything seem less demanding and more tolerable – through my teenage years and later, when I worked in the city and lived at home until I married.

There was always something simmering on the stove or baking in the oven – my mother's pot roast, or her Sunday tomato sauce, which I swear soaked into the curtains, the napkins, and everything else in the house. On Sundays, it felt as though the smell lived in the bones of the house, especially if you were Italian.

My mother also did a great deal of baking. She was an excellent baker, especially around the holidays. She had one of those cookie
continued on page 45

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The Blackboard Bulletin



Dogwood Elementary Students Go 'On Set' at Newsday TV

Dogwood fifth graders recently had the unique opportunity to experience the exciting world of broadcast journalism at the Newsday Offices in Melville.

Students learned about news reporting, editing, social media and advertising. They experienced using a green screen to report the weather and even participated in a mock press conference.

The fifth graders left with a new skill set to use during their school broadcasts, titled, Dogwood News 5 Broadcasts.

Dogwood fifth graders recently visited the Newsday Offices in Melville.

photo courtesy of Smithtown CSD



Masters Of Their Craft

The Smithtown Central School District is proud to recognize Mills Pond STEM Instructional Specialist Serena Spata and Tackan Elementary STEM Instructional Specialist David Junz, who have been accepted into the prestigious New York State Master Teacher Program.

The program honors outstanding K-12 public

school STEM teachers and counselors who demonstrate excellence in instruction, a commitment to their own professional growth, and a passion for collaborating with colleagues to inspire the next generation of STEM leaders.

SCSD Director of Science Dr. Stephanie O'Brien praised the recognition. "We are so proud of Serena and Dave for being named Master Teachers, she said. "In their roles as STEM Specialists, they have been driving forces behind our newest curriculum initiatives, making science and mathematics more accessible and engaging for every student. This honor is a true testament to their dedication to excellence in instructional design and teaching."

From left, Director of Career and Technical Education Christine Lofrese David Junz, Serena Spata, Director of Mathematics Angelica Babino and Director of Science Dr. Stephanie O'Brien.

photos courtesy of Smithtown CSD.



The Blackboard Bulletin



Smithtown High School East Hosts E-Bike Safety Presentation

Smithtown High School East is taking proactive steps to educate students and families about e-bike safety.

During the past several months, High School East students have been researching the growing concerns surrounding e-bikes, including the risks they pose to both riders and pedestrians. As part of this learning initiative, Stony Brook Children's Hospital representative Jamie Ryan, along with David Regina, Suffolk County Police Deputy Police of Patrol, and Suffolk County Special Assistant District Attorney, Maureen McCormick, visited the school on Jan. 14 to share expert insight on injury prevention and real-world safety concerns related to e-bike use.

The presentation reinforced the importance of responsible riding and helmet use, highlighting sobering statistics: more than 20,000 people are injured annually while riding electric bicycles, with approximately 3,000 requiring hospitalization. Notably, 97% of injured e-bike riders were not wearing a helmet at the time of their accident.

The visit also aligned with recent communication from Principal McNeil, who reminded families that riding an e-bike on school property is strictly prohibited unless the bike is walked.

High School East students, under the guidance of High School East



Smithtown High School East held an e-bike safety presentation on Wednesday, January 14.

photos courtesy of Smithtown CSD.

teacher, June Tener, played a key role in leading the presentation

and sharing their Civic Leadership class research with peers.



The Blackboard Bulletin



Exceptional Academic and Athletic Programs at The Knox School

Knox Athletics continues to distinguish itself on the regional stage, reflecting the discipline, preparation, and commitment that define The Knox School's approach to athletic development. Across programs, Knox student-athletes are earning recognition not only for competitive success, but for the habits and character that prepare them for the next level.

This year, Varsity basketball standouts Luke Baumbach '27 and Jacob Sanon '26 were named to *Newsday's Top 25 Private and Prep School Boys Basketball Players* for the 2025-2026 season – an honor reserved for the most elite talent across the region. Their recognition underscores the strength of Knox's nationally recognized basketball program, which attracts student-athletes seeking high-level competition within a supportive academic environment.

Both Luke and Jacob exemplify the leadership, focus, and work ethic that define Knox Athletics. Through rigorous training and intentional coaching, the program emphasizes preparation, goal-setting, and discipline – skills that translate far beyond the



court. At Knox, winning is never the end goal; it is the result of a process designed to help students perform at their best while balancing academics and personal growth.

That same standard extends to the water. Senior Crew Team member Maria Meleiro Goncalves has already received multiple early collegiate scholarship offers from prestigious Division I programs, including Temple University and Washington State University. Her success continues Knox's long-standing tradition of excellence in rowing, reflecting the strength of the program's individualized training model and college guidance for student-athletes pursuing competitive recruitment.

Knox Athletics offers a wide range of opportunities – including Crew, Equestrian, Golf, Volleyball, Tennis, Soccer, Badminton, and Basketball – designed to foster a love of sport while helping athletes of all levels realize their potential.

Families interested in learning more about Knox's exceptional academics, athletics, and student experience are invited to attend the Winter Open House on Saturday, February 7. To register, call 631-686-1600 or email admissions@knoxschool.org.



The Blackboard Bulletin



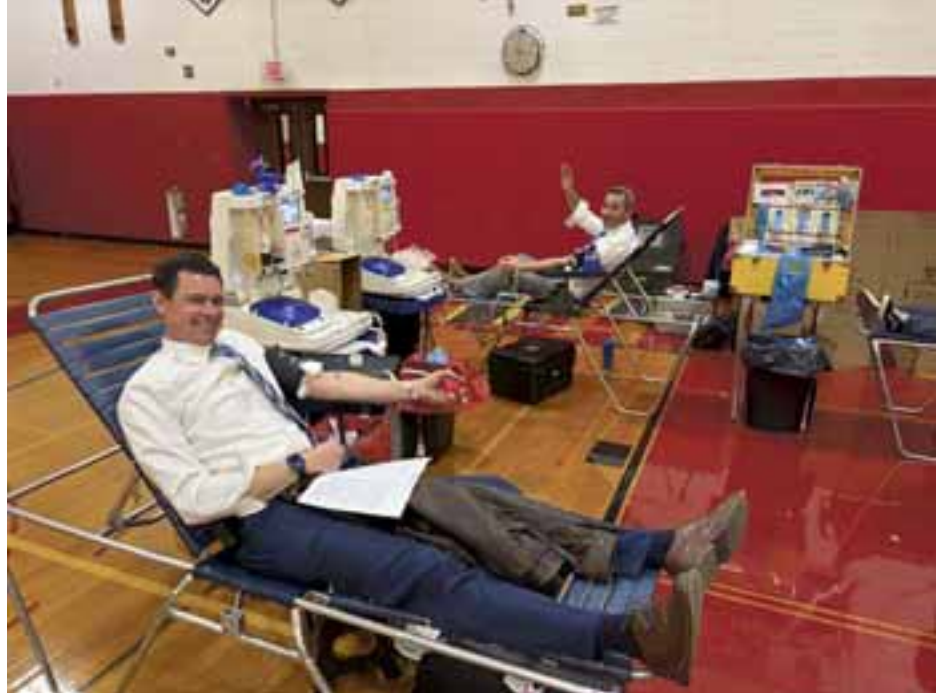
Smithtown High School East Teacher Making Positive Change

For his work with Smithtown High School East leadership students, social studies teacher Joseph Toth has been named one of just 15 educators nationwide to receive the 2026 Lead4Change Fellowship.

"I was very surprised," said Toth. "To be one of only 15 people selected nationwide is a great honor. I knew we had a strong chance, but this recognition means a lot."

High School East Leadership students traditionally organize meaningful school-wide initiatives, including the annual 9/11 remembrance ceremony, Pep Rally, Spooky Hallways, a blood drive and participation in the No Place for Hate anti-bullying pledge. This year, Mr. Toth expanded the program's impact even further by organizing eight service-learning projects throughout the spring. One standout initiative involved partnering with the Interact Club to grow hydroponic gardens, providing fresh, healthy food donations to the Smithtown Emergency Food Pantry.

"We wanted to do more service-learning projects for our East leadership students," Toth explained.



"Not only are we teaching leadership in the classroom, but we're also showing students that their voices can be heard beyond it."

As a Lead4Change Fellow, Mr. Toth will receive a \$500 grant to enhance his classroom for the upcoming school year, along with invitations to professional conference calls and national events.



For his work with Smithtown High School East leadership students, social studies teacher Joseph Toth has been named one of just 15 educators nationwide to receive the 2026 Lead4Change Fellowship.

photos courtesy of Smithtown CSD.

SHORT STORY

Smells of My Childhood Home

continued from page 40
presses – the butter cookie kind – that fascinated me. She would fill the canister with dough, press it down, and out came perfect little star-shaped cookies, each then topped with a maraschino cherry. She made hundreds of them, then moved on to making Struffoli with her mother next door, continuing a cherished tradition. All of this took place in that tiny kitchen with its special magic. The smells of holiday baking were so exceptional they were hard to describe – you just knew it was that time of year. Even now, the smell of vanilla instantly brings me back to 251st Street, sitting at that small colonial table, watching Christmas cookies being made.

The living room was very traditional. First, we had a black-and-white Dumont television, then later replaced by a console. There was a three-seater couch, a chair my father sat in, and a rocking chair where my mother knitted, her yarn basket at her feet. The room was rarely used, and when I think about it, it was rare that all four of us were there at the same time. There were usually books on the coffee table – *Reader's Digest*, which my father loved, and *Mechanics Illustrated*, reflecting his passion for machinery and fixing things. In the winter, the radiators hissed and clanked, making it the perfect place to cuddle under a blanket and watch television.

My mother was an immaculate person. One day a week, the house smelled unmistakably of Clorox bleach: bleach in the bathrooms, bleach in the kitchen sink, bleach in the laundry. Washing clothes was a chore: she carried the laundry basket down the basement stairs, then took the wet clothes out the back door to hang them on the clothesline in the yard. You always knew it was wash day by the smell of bleach. The bedrooms always smelled as though the sheets had just been changed moments before you walked in, carrying a special inviting scent that seemed to say,

Please jump on the bed, get comfortable, and take a nap. The beds were always neatly made, with spreads and cover pillows perfectly in place. My mother never left a bed unmade, and there was never a wrinkle in the sheets.

My bedroom, on the top floor,

changed smells as I got older. At first, it smelled of Crayola crayons – oh, how I loved that box of 64 colors. Later came lotions, powders, and makeup as I began experimenting with growing up. Clean sheets were my mother's

continued on page 46

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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

Host ribbon cuttings, grand openings, or anniversary celebrations
Submit updates for Chamber-managed social media features.

Participate in committees and volunteer groups.

Access sponsorship packages for high-impact visibility at events, banners, and holiday programs.

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.

From major annual traditions like the St. Patrick's Day Parade, St. James Day, the Tree Lighting, and the Spring Egg Hunt, to newer initiatives like the Snowflake Stroll and Outdoor Movie Nights, the Chamber continues to expand opportunities for business growth and community celebration.

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

Ready to Register?

Register or renew today at:
www.StJamesChamber.org

For assistance, contact:
info@stjameschamber.org or call
631-584-8510

We look forward to partnering with you in 2026.

Together, we build a stronger St. James.

Smells of My Childhood Home

continued from page 45
pride. When you rested your face on them at night and smelled the fresh outdoor air from drying on the line, it was the best feeling in the world.

That house lives on in my memory through scent. My brother and I still talk about the smells, the size of the kitchen, and how much life it somehow held.

Sometimes I'll be in a store or someone else's home and catch a familiar scent from my mother's house. It signals to me that the memory of smell remains faithful to my brain – even at 83 years old. I truly believe that is how my childhood still breathes through me. Memories are a wonderful thing, and when they are attached to one of the senses – specially smell –

they open an entirely new vista. There is nothing better, as we age, than nostalgia. It's like someone tucking you in and softly saying, *Everything is going to be okay. You are safe.*





P.O. Box 286
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www.StJamesChamber.org

S E R V I N G O U R C O M M U N I T Y

Membership Application 2026

Dear Business Owner:

2026 Membership Dues - St. James Chamber of Commerce
January 1, 2026- December 31, 2026 (no pro-rating)..... \$225.00

Please fill out form below and return with check to:

ST. JAMES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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 \$ _____



Suffolk County North Shore CALENDAR OF EVENTS



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

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February

Art - Call for Entries: Until Feb 2, Long Island Biennial 2026, The Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.heckscher.org 631-380-3230

Art: Until Mar 15, Emma Stebbins: Carving Out History, The Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.heckscher.org 631-380-3230

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

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

Children Outdoors: Sun Feb 1, 1-3pm, Sunday Funday: Shadows & Surprises, Sweetbriar Nature Center, 62 Eckernkamp Drive, Smithtown, NY 11787, www.sweetbriarnc.org, 631-979-6344.

Adults Roller Skating: Wed Feb 4, 6-8pm, Adults 21+ Roller Skating in Greenport, Greenport American Legion, 121 Third Street, Greenport, NY 11944, www.greenportamericanlegion.org, 631-333-2644.

Comedy: Fri Feb 6, 7 & 9pm, Josh Johnson: The Flowers Tour The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com



Art Workshop: Fri Feb 6, 6:30-8pm, Be My Valentine: Seashell Relief Sculpture with Anna Chan Gallery North, 90 N Country Road, Setauket, NY 11733, <https://gallerynorth.org>, 631-751-2676

Music: Fri Feb 6, 8pm, Mad Dogs & Englishmen, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Beach Walk and Cleanup: Sat Feb

7, 10am-12pm, AMSEAS Beach Walk \$ Cleanup at Hallock State Park, Hallock State Park Preserve, 6062 Sound Avenue, Riverhead, New York 11901, <https://parks.ny.gov/visit/state-parks/hallock-state-park-preserve>

Art Explorers Club - Kids: Sat Feb 7, Art Explorers Club, The Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.heckscher.org/visit/kids-families/explorers, 631-380-3230

Children / Festivities: Sat Feb 7, 2-4pm, Super Bowl "Saturday" for Kids, Emma Clark Library, 120 Main Street, Setauket, NY 11733, emmaclark.librarycalendar.com 631-941-4080

Craft Fair: Sat Feb 7, 10am-5pm, Valentine Craft Fair, Charles B Wang Center, Fine Art Drive, Stony Brook, NY 11794, www.islandfairs.com 631-885-1267

Art Talk: Sat Feb 7, 3-5pm, Curious Phenomena: Recent Works by Melinda Hackett ArTalk Gallery North, 90 N Country Road, Setauket, NY 11733, <https://gallerynorth.org>, 631-751-2676

Magic: Sat Feb 7, 7:30pm, Michael Carbonaro: Wonderboy, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

continued on facing page





Suffolk County North Shore CALENDAR OF EVENTS



continued

Music: Sat Feb 7, 8-10pm, Itzhak Perlman in Recital, Staller Center for the Arts, 100 Nicolls Road, Stony Brook, NY 11794, www.stallercenter.com, 631-632-2787

Music: Sat Feb 7, 8pm, Commotion, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Culinary Class: Tue Feb 10, 6pm, Love at First Bite Pasta Cooking Class with Chef Eric LeVine at 317 Main Street! 317 Main Street, Farmingdale, NY 11735, www.317MainStreet.com, 631-921-4670

Adults Roller Skating: Wed Feb 11, 6-8pm, Adults 21+ Roller Skating in Greenport, Greenport American Legion, 121 Third Street, Greenport, NY 11944, www.greenportamericanlegion.org, 631-333-2644.

Bingo: Wed Feb 11, 7:30pm, Disney & Nickelodeon Music Bingo, 317 Main Street, Farmingdale, NY 11735, www.317MainStreet.com, 631-921-4670

Crafts & Cocktails/Adults: Thu Feb 12, 6:30pm, Crafts & Cocktails: Tea Cups & Trivia / Adults The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold



Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Performance: Fri Feb 13, 8-10pm, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Staller Center for the Arts, 100 Nicolls Road, Stony Brook, NY 11794, www.stallercenter.com, 631-632-2787

Comedy: Fri Feb 13, 7:30-10:30pm, Valentine's Comedy Show, SquareHead Brewery, 405 High Street, Holbrook, NY 11741, www.squareheadbrewing.com, 631-710-8901

Music: Fri Feb 13, 8pm, Eli Young Band and Lanco: Call You a Friend Tour 2026, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

Beach Walk and Cleanup: Sat Feb 14, 10am-12pm, AMSEAS Beach Walk \$ Cleanup at Hallock State Park, Hallock State Park Preserve, 6062 Sound Avenue, Riverhead, New York 11901, <https://parks.ny.gov/visit/state-parks/hallock-state-park-preserve>

Crafts / Children: Sat Feb 14, 2-4pm, Crafternoon, Emma Clark Library, 120 Main Street, Setauket, NY 11733, emmaclark.librarycalendar.com, 631-941-4080

Crafts & Cocktails/Adults: Sat Feb 14, 11am-4pm, Sweetheart

Saturday / Adults The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Music: Sat Feb 14, 8-10pm, Crystal Cimaglia in the Power of Love - An Intimate Tribute to Celine Dion, Staller Center for the Arts, 100 Nicolls Road, Stony Brook, NY 11794, www.stallercenter.com, 631-632-2787

Music: Sat Feb 14, 7pm, Almost Queen: A Tribute to Queen, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com/

Nature / Outdoors: Sun Feb 15, 1pm, Falling In Love With Wildlife, Sweetbriar Nature Center, 62 Eckernkamp Drive, Smithtown, NY 11787, www.sweetbriarnc.org, 631-979-6344.

Music: Sun Feb 15, 5-7pm, An Unforgettable Valentine, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Wine Pairing: Sun Feb 15, 11-1pm, Chocolate & Wine Pairing Class, Sannino Vineyard, 15975 County Road 48, Cutchogue, NY

continued on page 50





Suffolk County North Shore CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Artisans



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1935, www.sanninovineyard.com,
631-734-8282

Music: Sun Feb 15, 4-6pm, Ridotto Concert: Pianist Chaeyoung Park in Recital, Huntington Jewish Center, 510 Park Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.ridotto.org, 631-385-0373

Children: Mon, Feb 16, 11am-1pm, Ink & Independence The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Children: Tue, Feb 17, 11am-1pm, Legends of the Dragon The Whaling Museum & Education Center, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, www.cshwhalingmuseum.org, 631-367-3418

Crafts / Children: Tue Feb 17, 10:30am-12pm, Perler Palooza (School Closed for Winter Break), Emma Clark Library, 120 Main Street, Setauket, NY 11733, emmaclark.librarycalendar.com 631-941-4080

Adults Roller Skating: Wed Feb 18, 6-8pm, Adults 21+ Roller Skating in Greenport, Greenport American Legion, 121 Third Street, Greenport, NY 11944, www.greenportamericanlegion.org, 631-333-2644.



Art: Thu Feb 19-April 12, Colors of Long Island: Student Art Exhibition, Long Island Museum, 1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook, NY 11790, www.longislandmuseum.org 631-751-0066

Exhibit: Thu Feb 19-May 24, 50 Years of Apple Computers: The Kevin Lenane Collection, Long Island Museum, 1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook, NY 11790, www.longislandmuseum.org 631-751-0066

Exhibit: Thu Feb 19-May 24, LI Gamers: Complementing Video Games, Long Island Museum, 1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook, NY 11790, www.longislandmuseum.org 631-751-0066



Exhibit: Thu Feb 19-May 24, Video Games: The Great Connector, Long Island Museum, 1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook, NY 11790, www.longislandmuseum.org 631-751-0066

Music: Thu Feb 19, 6pm, An Evening with Paris Ray at 317 Main Street! 317 Main Street, Farmingdale, NY 11735, www.317MainStreet.com 631-921-4670

Exhibit: Thu Feb 19-Sept 13, The Seat of Action: Long Island in the American Revolution and Beyond,



Long Island Museum, 1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook, NY 11790, www.longislandmuseum.org 631-751-0066

Childrens Book & Craft: Fri Feb 20, 2-3pm, Lunar New Year Craft & Book Reading with the Author of "It's Chinese New Year. Curious George", Huntington Public Library Station Branch, 1335 New York Avenue, Huntington Station, NY 11746, 631-421-5053

Music: Fri Feb 20, 8-10pm, CountryLIVE, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Music: Fri Feb 20, 8pm, Best of the Eagles: America's Top Eagles Tribute Band, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

Educational Tour: Sat Feb 21, 11am-12:15pm and 2-3:15pm, Long Island 250th Tour Voices of Liberty: Joseph Lloyd Manor in the American Revolution, Preservation Long Island at the Joseph Lloyd Manor, 1 Lloyd Lane, Lloyd Harbor, NY. www.preservationlongisland.org

Fair / Festival: Sat Feb 21, 10am-3pm, Southold WinterFest, Main Road, Southold, NY 11971, 631-734-7600

Music: Sat Feb 21, 8-10pm, Don

continued on facing page



Suffolk County North Shore CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Artisans



continued

Jovi, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Music: Sat Feb 21, 8pm, Jessica Kirson at the Paramount, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

Beach Walk and Cleanup: Sat Feb 21, 10am-12pm, AMSEAS Beach Walk \$ Cleanup at Hallock State Park, Hallock State Park Preserve, 6062 Sound Avenue, Riverhead, New York 11901,

Nature / Outdoors: Sat Feb 21, 11am, Superheroes of the Sky Sweetbriar Nature Center, 62 Eckernkamp Drive, Smithtown, NY 11787, www.sweetbriarnc.org, 631-979-6344.

Performance: Sun Feb 22, 7:30pm, A Bronx Tale: The One Man Show Starring Chazz Palminteri, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

Music: Sun Feb 22, 7pm, The Cowbills The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Book Reading: Wed Feb 25, 6:30pm, Beyond the Book: A Marriage at Sea by Sophie Elmhirst / Adults, The Whaling Museum &

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

Adults Roller Skating: Wed Feb 25, 6-8pm, Adults 21+ Roller Skating in Greenport, Greenport American Legion, 121 Third Street, Greenport, NY 11944, www.greenportamericanlegion.org, 631-333-2644.

Bingo: Wed Feb 25, 7:30pm, Boy Band & Pop Diva Music Bingo, 317 Main Street, Farmingdale, NY 11735, www.317MainStreet.com 631-921-4670

Comedy: Thu Feb 26, 7pm, Kathy Griffin: New Face, New Tour, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

Music: Fri Feb 27, 8pm, Voyage: Celebrating The Music of Journey, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

Music: Fri Feb 27, 8pm, Tribute to Celine Dion Featuring Elisa Furr, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org, 631-727-4343

Beach Walk and Cleanup: Sat Feb 21, 10am-12pm, AMSEAS Beach Walk \$ Cleanup at Hallock State Park, Hallock State Park Preserve,



6062 Sound Avenue, Riverhead, New York 11901,

Music: Sat Feb 28, 7:30-9:30pm, Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra, Staller Center for the Arts, 100 Nicolls Road, Stony Brook, NY 11794, www.stallercenter.com, 631-632-2787

Boxing: Sat Feb 28, 7:30pm, Joe DeGuardia's Star Boxing Presents: Rockin' Fights 53, The Paramount, 370 New York Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.paramountny.com

Music: Sat Feb 28, 8pm, The Bronx Wanderers, The Suffolk, 118 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901, www.thesuffolk.org 631-727-4343

March

Art: Until Mar 15, Emma Stebbins: Carving Out History, The Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743, www.heckscher.org 631-380-3230

Art: Until April 12, Colors of Long Island: Student Art Exhibition, Long Island Museum, 1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook, NY 11790, www.longislandmuseum.org 631-751-0066

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

Gallery North Features Mark Van Wagner in *Repercussions*

Gallery North is pleased to present *Mark Van Wagner: Repercussions*, on view from February 19 to April 4, 2026. An opening reception will be held Thursday February 19, from 6-8 p.m. As a complement to the exhibition, Gallery North will host an ArTalk on Saturday, March 14 from 3-5 p.m. The exhibition, reception, and ArTalk will be free and open to the public.

Repercussions, Mark Van Wagner's first solo exhibition at Gallery North, presents the artist's Sandbox sculptures and paintings. Van Wagner investigates inner and outer topographies through aggregates of materials including natural sand collected from various locations around the world, pigmented sand, debris, polymer glues and cardboard boxes. These common materials provide ideal components to explore time, location and substance. Each of Van Wagner's works simultaneously references archeology, geology and sociology while merging natural and man-made cycles of accretion and erosion, formation and destruction. Viewers

witness the consequences of impact events and the reverberation of forces. The implications of conflict and ruin are present but juxtaposed against suggestions of humor and restoration, which reaffirms the cyclical nature of life and invites the viewer to contemplate impermanence.

Mark Van Wagner is a Long Island based sculptor and painter. He has exhibited regionally and internationally including a solo exhibition in Vienna, Austria and inclusion in the Hecksher Museum's Long Island Biennial. Van Wagner is a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago.

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.

For more information, visit gallerynorth.org or find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or Twitter (@gallerynorthli).



Seismic Shift



Rose Garden

Student Artists Showcase MLK Jr. Day With “Share Your Dreams for Our Community” Virtual Art Gallery Expo

The Town of Smithtown Youth Bureau, in partnership with the Smithtown Unity Council, is proudly showcasing a virtual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Community Art Gallery titled “Share Your Dreams for Our Community.” The gallery features original artwork submitted by students in grades K-12, inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s enduring legacy of unity, understanding, and bringing people together.

The Town of Smithtown Youth Bureau and the Smithtown Unity Council invited students throughout the township to express their hopes for a stronger, more connected community through creative works, including drawings, paintings, poems, digital art, photography, and mixed-media pieces. Each submission reflects a personal vision for



unity and the role young people hope to play in shaping a stronger, more united future.

Community Service recognition is being awarded to participating students, with students in grades 6-12 receiving one hour of Com-

munity Service credit and students in grades K-5 receiving a Certificate of Participation.

The virtual gallery is now live on the Town of Smithtown website at smithtownny.gov/734/Martin-Luther-King-Jr-Day-Virtual-Art-Gallery, honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy while showcasing the creativity and optimism of Smithtown's youth.

To get involved with future Youth Bureau events, apply to become a volunteer with the Smithtown Youth Bureau Volunteer Corps. Complete and submit the online volunteer application form, available on their website at www.smithtownny.gov/YBVolunteer. Adults and students are invited to register.



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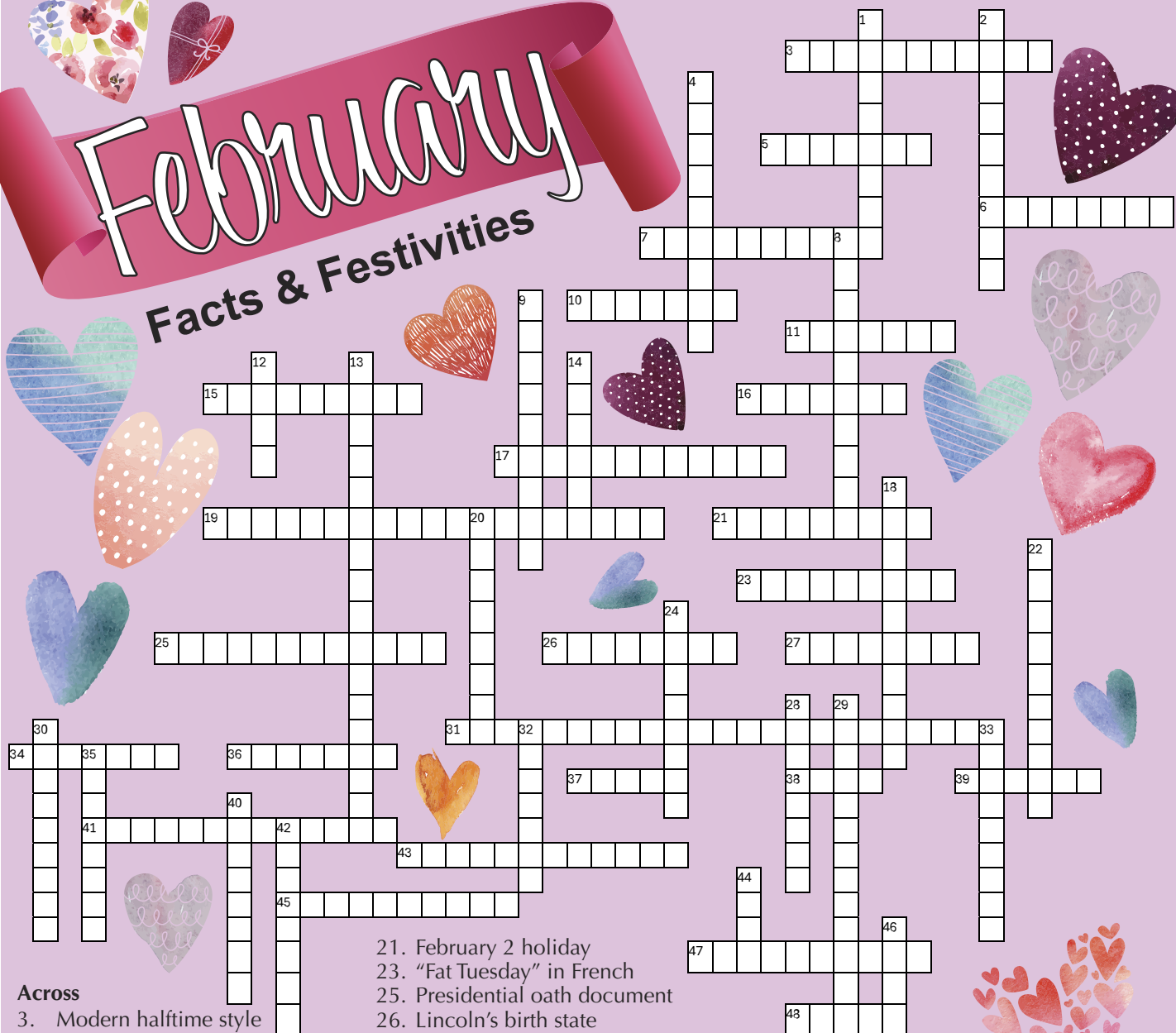
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Coffee Break

February

Facts & Festivities



Across

3. Modern halftime style
5. Poet of resilience
6. February zodiac sign
7. Origin of shadow legend
10. Founder of Negro History Week
11. Calendar reformer
15. Only president with nonconsecutive terms
16. Inauguration site
17. Biathlon skill
19. Olympic motto

Down

1. Field measurement
2. Cabinet officer title
4. Louisiana Purchase president
8. Ash Wednesday focus
9. Folklore forecast sign
12. Pre-Easter season
13. Chaucer work on romance

21. February 2 holiday
23. "Fat Tuesday" in French
25. Presidential oath document
26. Lincoln's birth state
27. Groundhog classification
31. Law shifting federal holidays
34. Broom sport
36. NASA mathematician
37. Mardi Gras parade group
38. Forward-takeoff jump
39. Banned athlete practice
41. Black unity movement
43. Phil's hometown
45. Phil's accuracy claim

14. Quarterback protection
18. Medieval Valentine belief
20. Face-down sled sport
22. Roman fertility festival
24. First Black Oscar winner
28. Chemical of attraction
29. First Winter Games year
30. February championship

47. Site of first Super Bowl
48. Presidential abbreviation
49. Study of time
50. Super Bowl trophy

**Solution on
page 56**

Coffee Break

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

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

Solutions on
page 56

RIDDLES & TEASERS

Alphabet Soup

Question 1:

What four-letter word can be written forward, backward, or upside down and can still be read from left to right?

Question 2:

What starts with T, ends with T, and has T in it?

Question 3:

What has 13 hearts but no other organs?



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

Answer for Question 3: A deck of cards.

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by Natalie
Weinstein,
ASID Allied

Preparing for the Season Ahead

Seasons come and go and while we look forward to the changing of the seasons, (which is one of the reasons we love Long Island) they always seem to creep up on us! Somehow when "the warm and cozy" of our winter dwelling begins to look a little tired, we seem to forget that spring will be coming sooner than we think. In the olden days, the coming of spring brought with it the ritual of "spring cleaning". It was the time when housewives threw open the windows, changed the slipcovers, beat the rugs and cleaned their homes from top to bottom.

Today's lifestyle often doesn't leave the woman (or man) of the house much time to devote to preparing for the coming season. In my design world, spring is the best time to accomplish a renovating or decorating project so that homes are ready for summer enjoyment and entertaining. Common sense tells us that this cannot be achieved in the space of one short season – unless there's been some homework done beforehand, often lots of homework. I call it making the plan and the plan. The first plan is intentional. Let's say it's a kitchen renovation where research is required to interview and hire professionals and determine a timeline and budget – and along with that goes the floor plan, the key to its ultimate success. This way, the winter season becomes the "prep" time to hit the ground running in the

spring.

So, while you are curled upon your sofa, in front of a cozy fire (or not), take an imaginary walk thru your home as if you were a visitor or heaven forbid, a designer! What do you see? A little clutter here and there – or a lot? A room in need of a paint job? Plants that have seen better days? Rooms that haven't been really cleaned in a while? Perhaps a space whose furniture needs rearranging or replacing? Or... all of the above?

First, don't panic. It's still winter! Now's the time to make the plan(s). Write down what will bring spring into your home and start with a plan to declutter so you can really get to a good cleaning. There are so many organizing plans out there but, to me, the "power of one" is the best. And now is the time to start. Pick one drawer or one closet or one cabinet. Take everything out, determine what stays, goes, gets donated, or sold, and organize what's left. Stand back and take in the

good feeling of accomplishment. That one will lead to another and another. I've seen it happen time and again.

Once you have decluttered and deep cleaned, and removed the dark and dreary of winter, you can think about bringing spring in – through lighter brighter colors, in walls and accessories, seasonal plants and refreshing scents, or by adding a new piece here and there.

So what is the lesson learned? If you take stock of what you'd like spring to look like in your home and you create the plan now, you will be able to achieve your goals with less stress and better results. By the way, you don't have to do this alone. Involve your family in the process. If you all take ownership of your home with shared responsibilities, maintenance will be so much easier. And... bring in the professionals whose expertise and advice can help you make good decisions in creating a realistic budget. Your own team can make the spring season a renewal and rebirth in your home. Do it now and by the time spring comes, you will be ready.

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.



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A R O U N D T O W N

St. James General Store

continued from page 10
and family, and in schools,
children exchange Valen-
tine's cards.

A gift from the General Store is always special. I find this to be true when I give a cap featuring an image of the General Store, which delights the recipient. Bookmarks make another thoughtful gift, especially for those who belong to a book club. Be sure to check out the unique jewelry, faux fur pieces, and the treasures in the Book Loft. Any of these make a truly special gift.

The General Store is also famous for its display of sweets. Old-fashioned treats bring back memories, including candy sticks, rock candy, molasses candy, and more. Did you know that in Japan, women traditionally give chocolates to men on February 14, and then on March 14, known as White Day, men give chocolates to women? It is a sweet bit of trivia.

Treat yourself to some chocolate.



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New Tax Laws for 2026 That You Should Know

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

The new year brings more than resolutions and fresh starts; it also ushers in several tax changes that could affect your wallet. Whether you're saving for retirement, funding your child's education or supporting your favorite charity, here's a few things you need to know about the tax landscape in 2026.

More room to save for retirement and healthcare.

There's good news for savers: Contribution limits for retirement accounts are going up. If you're under 50, you can now contribute up to \$7,500 to an IRA, which is up from \$7,000 in 2025. Those 50 and older can contribute an additional \$1,100, for a total of \$8,600.

The limits for 401(k), 403(b) and governmental 457(b) plans are also increasing, with workers younger than 50 able to defer up to \$24,500. Visit IRS.gov and search "401k limit increases" for an article outlining the details.

Health savings account limits are rising too. In 2026, individual coverage increased to \$4,400 and family coverage to \$8,750. If you are age 55 or older and are not enrolled in Medicare, you can contribute an additional \$1,000 as a catch-up contribution.

The start of the year is an ideal time to review your contributions and consider increasing them, even by small amounts which can add up over time.

A catch-up rule for high earners.

If you're 50 or older and earned more than \$150,000 last year, there's a new wrinkle in your retirement planning. You can still make catch-up contributions to your workplace retirement plan, but they must now be Roth contributions rather than traditional pre-tax contributions. This includes 401(k), 403(b) and 457(b) plans.

While you won't get an immediate tax break, Roth contributions offer tax-free income in retirement



and can provide a tax-free legacy for your heirs.

Expanded benefits for 529 education plans.

Families using 529 plans to cover K-12 expenses will see the annual federal distribution limit double from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per student. The definition of qualifying expenses has also expanded to include curriculum, books, certain tutoring expenses and testing fees.

This change provides more flexibility for families with overfunded plans and increases options for managing education costs across multiple children or beneficiaries.

New charitable giving provisions.

The rules around charitable deductions are shifting in two directions. Taxpayers who take the standard deduction can now deduct up to \$1,000 in cash donations (\$2,000 for joint filers) to qualified organizations.

However, those who itemize deductions face a new threshold: only charitable contributions exceeding 0.5% of adjusted gross income are now deductible. Donors may want to consider bunching strategies or using donor-advised funds to maximize their tax benefits.

Getting help.

Navigating these tax changes can be challenging, but you don't have to go it alone. A qualified financial advisor and tax professional can help you understand how these and other changes affect your specific situation. Together, you can develop strategies to make the most of new opportunities while minimizing your tax burden.



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.

Edward Jones, its employees and financial advisors cannot provide tax or legal advice. You should consult your attorney or qualified tax advisor regarding your situation.



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HEALTH NOTES

Use It or Lose It – Improve Your Hearing by Avoiding Hearing Deprivation

by William A. Kent, BC-HIS

Hearing is a complicated process. It not only involves the ears and the complex parts of them, it also involves the nervous system and the part of the brain that receives and interprets the sounds; an important part of the auditory process.

This is the way I describe it... when you hear sounds, they go through the ear, the first step of the hearing process. Traveling through the nervous system, to the part of the brain that is responsible for hearing and determining what that sound actually is. As your hearing gets weaker, let's say from the AGE factor, other parts of the system start to lose their ability to function as well. It is for this reason why it is so important to have your hearing checked, and if a loss is discovered, react and do something about it. Auditory Deprivation can, and will occur mostly in people who have hearing loss and do nothing about it. What occurs in individuals who suffer from AD, is the brain no longer receives enough sound



stimulation over a period of time and the brain fails to recognize simple or difficult sounds that it is responsible for identifying. Not surprisingly, we see patients who have gone years without wearing hearing instruments who then feel it's time to do something about their hearing loss. They are fit with hearing instruments and still have problems with AD in the beginning of the wearing process. However, those who follow a rehabilitation program designed for them, soon experience significant change in

their ability to process sounds and understanding of words more clearly. "Furthermore it's imperative to understand that using hearing instruments will not restore hearing already lost, however, they can play an important roll in your ability to keep what you have longer, than if you don't use them. In analogy, squeezing a ball in one hand and not the other daily for three or four weeks; it's obvious that the stronger muscle is going to be in the side that was exercised and not the other. The same premise can work with sound stimulation in your ears."

If you or loved one suspects you have a problem hearing, don't wait. Time is precious, 'Listen to Life', have your hearing tested.

Editor's Note:

William Kent is the director and owner of Long Island Hearing an Audiology and Hearing Instrument Practice. A family run practice founded in 1985 they have offices in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Contact them at 1-800-698-5200. Consultations are complimentary.



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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,

Yep – it's the New Year and I am already tired of all the talk about those healthy physical goals like the gym, better foods, and injectable weight loss meds. I like the idea of New Year, fresh start, but if I'm not motivated to do these things at other times of the year, what makes January 1 so special? So here's my question: What one thing can I do to help me change my frame of mind so I can stick to a healthy lifestyle? – Weight on my Mind.

Dear Weight on the Mind,

Your questions are a great approach to reaching any goal. "When you choose to change your thoughts, you begin to change your life." Before you can power through into a "healthy lifestyle" you have to work through your "old programmed" mind. So, that one New Year's thing to learn is how to stop in the moment. Make sure that you have well-practiced go-to's when you feel stressed, upset, or challenged. Routines like deep breathing, counting from 1-10 or even saying a mantra or prayer will help you in these challenging moments to just... simply... stop. Once you stop, you have a better ability to make different choices, like avoiding unhealthy foods or ditching the gym. You can help yourself learn how to stop by adding an alarm to your phone periodically throughout the waking day. When you hear it, take a moment to practice your stop technique. The more you practice when you are not challenged, the easier it will become to have it ready to go when the challenge is great. The ability to stop in the moment is the true foundation of change and it can help every resolution out there!

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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by Terri Pace

What are the “Essential” Essential Oils for your home?

I love that I have tools at my fingertips right here in my own home. I love

having easy access to solutions for common every day challenges... that they are natural... that they are safe for use by the entire family, even my children... that they are effective! What follows are some of the oils I consider essential in my daily life!

Choose Your Mood & Intention

Your home is the gathering of the individuals in your family. If you are like my family, each individual member has a different mood, energy level, work schedule, etc., and their own set of challenges that they bring to the “table.” Throughout the day, I will select an essential oil for the diffusers throughout our home with different intentions for each room.

Kitchen

For the kitchen, the heart of our home, I often select immune boosting, mood uplifting blends! I love the uplifting properties of any of the citrus essential oils, like Lemon, Lime, Bergamot, or Wild Orange. These essential oils, often high in D-Limonene, can also be very supportive to the immune system. I pair these citrus essential oils with Peppermint, Spearmint, Wintergreen, or Birch essential oils to open our airways, clear out the cobwebs of our mind, and for a natural boost in energy!

These aromas are also perfect for all the different times of day! These essential oils help:

- Get the “drowsy” out of our mornings – no need for coffee or harmful stimulants to get the hazy mind to be more alert!
- Pep up our afternoons – especially when there is a lot more “day” left in our day, if you know what I mean!

I also keep many essential oils on a spice rack near my stove. Adding a drop of two of spice oils like Basil, Cassia, Cinnamon, Fennel, Lemon, Marjoram, Oregano, Pep-

permint, or Thyme essential oils can add robust flavor to any recipe! And a must-have for every kitchen is Lavender essential oil to soothe any skin irritation earned while cooking! Watch out for sharp knives and hot stoves!

Office/Work Environment

For the office, you will always find a large selection of essential oils at my fingertips. Am I looking to remain calm through a project with a taxing schedule or pressing deadlines? In those moments, I use an essential oil in the wood category for grounding and stabilizing effects on my nervous system. My favorites are Coapiba, Frankincense, and Sandalwood essential oils.

Am I in need of some focus or creativity? In my home-based office, distractions abound so I reach for my *Creativity Blend* of 3 drops each of Frankincense and Lemon, and one drop each of Cypress, Sandalwood, Peppermint, and Melissa essential oils. Blending essential oils is an art and easy to do with a little bit of training and no fear of experimentation. Like a favorite

continued on facing page



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HEALTH NOTES

continued food recipe, you may start with instructions you got from someone else or a family tradition, and with a little confidence and some inspiration, you begin to customize it with your own special flare!

Bedroom

For the bedroom, I want a peaceful environment and an escape from the chatter inside my head; two things that help me get a good night's sleep. As I lay my head down on the pillow, I look for the gift in every experience, and give thanks to God for never giving up on me and showering me with His love! Essential oils which help promote this peaceful and grateful posture are Frankincense, Cedarwood, Lavender, Sandalwood, Spikenard, and Wild Orange to name a few. In combination with each other or individually, I apply them over my heart, on the bottom of my feet, and inhale deeply as I express my gratitude for all that I have been given!

As we begin the New Year, I in-



vite you to discover the benefits of living and loving natural solutions in your life. Attend one of my FREE continued education workshops, online conference calls, and/or webinars to see how high-quality tested grade essential oils can open many possibilities for you!

Not into group workshops or classes? I invite you to contact me for your free private, personal wellness consultation and to get samples of essential oils which can support your specific wellness goals: simply.natural@outlook.com

Optional Invite: Living Well Challenge

1. Register for our next 5-Day

Living Well Challenge starting in February 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. We offer you samples of three products to 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 tools you will use – it's the long-term cost of doing nothing and hoping your body can keep up on its own.

Essential oils are safe, effective and very affordable. However, not all essential oils are created equal! Be an educated consumer and use only certified pure, therapeutic grade essential oils for your family!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



St. James Chamber of Commerce

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

**Saturday, March 14
1:00 PM**

Woodlawn & Lake Avenues
to St. James Gazebo

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Registration Link

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- ✓ A strong voice with local government

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Aunt Meme's Wise Words



large print books you want. Ask me about retirement. Say things to me that include, "Well at your age you should ..." or "Wow! I can't believe how fast you walk... at your age!" Underestimate experience at your own risk.

People never overestimate age so

be ready for a surprise when I run circles around you. My value is not determined by your view of me. It is determined by my view of myself. And, I love the looks of those "youngsters" that struggle to keep up with my pace!

Last month we spoke about the constant acceleration of time, how each year passes with ever increasing pace. The same nephew that shared his theory about "non-linear exponential acceleration of time," recently shared a cosmic shift we all go through. The shift seems to happen overnight. It is the drastic change from being seen as young versus "not young."

For his entrance into the latter, I am purposely not using that horrid 3 letter word that starts with an O and ends with a D with an L in the middle. In one day two people shared concerns about his retirement, which he has not planned. I love his response, asking: "Seems like yesterday you were concerned about my lack of experience and being too young." Suddenly concerns about youth and lack of experience were replaced with concerns about the opposite. There was a "sudden shift" going on, to add insult to injury, that very day his wife went to the library and was asked if she needed the requested book printed in LARGE FORMAT!

The world seems to see US as old long before WE come to that conclusion. Most of you know exactly what I mean, while the rest of you will understand sooner than you think.

My thoughts? I don't care! See me as you wish. Offer me all the

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Whose Shoes Are These?

by Lorrie Anne Minicozzi

*Whose shoes are these? They look really quite new,
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White leather upper and a stiff molded sole
Your very first pair for your very first stroll*

*Whose shoes are these? Tiny sneakers, Velcro clasp
Blinking lights as you walked made you giggle and gasp
Into the puddle you jumped with a splash
Making mud-pies, mud corn and even mud-hash*

*Whose shoes are these? Black dress shoes – so worn
The first day of kindergarten and your new uniform
I remember you walking proudly on the bus
So brave and excited and so wondrous*

*Whose shoes are these? There's still grass in the cleat
Soccer, lacrosse, baseball – my tiny athlete
There you were in the field, kicking dust and smiling wide
My heart skipped a beat from the pride welled inside*

*Whose shoes are these? Teddy slippers with seams,
Soldier boots to command your army of dreams
Cowboy boots for riding ponies and beans from a tin
Or the soft velvet feel of the Indian moccasin*

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