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TIMES

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PUTNAM COUNTY'S LOCAL NEWSPAPER

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025

County Courtroom Named After Judge Reitz

The James F. Reitz Memorial Courtroom was officially dedicated June 13 on the third floor of the Putnam County Courthouse in Carmel, during a special ribbon-cutting ceremony hosted by the New York State Office of Court Administration, which included representatives from the 9th Judicial District.

Reitz was a county court and NYS Supreme Court justice who passed away in the courthouse in June 2019 from a heart attack at the age of 57.

"To name the courtroom in the Putnam supreme and county court for Jim, where he was one of the first judges to serve when it opened in 2008, is an honor for the people of Putnam County who loved him so much, and who are grateful his name will be there forever," said his widow, Barbara, when the bill was proposed back

in the early 2000s.

State Sen. Pete Harckham, D-Peekskill, sponsored the renaming bill in the Senate. At last week's ribbon-cutting ceremony, he called Reitz "an upstanding member of the Putnam community who performed his judicial duty with integrity and skill."

"Today, we honored his legacy of public service by officially renaming his former courtroom at the Putnam County Court in his honor," he said. "I am pleased my legislation helped make this possible for his family and loved ones."

Putnam County Executive Kevin Byrne, R-Mahopac, who sponsored the bill when he was in the Assembly, said Reitz "was not only a humane jurist but a man of tremendous energy, compassion, and intellect who continues to in-

Continued on Page 12



Local and state lawmakers gather with members of the New York State Office of Court Administration and representatives from the 9th Judicial District, along with Barbara Reitz, to honor her late husband and former Putnam County Court Judge James Reitz as they celebrate the renaming of the courtroom where he presided.

Brewster Fire Capt. is 'EMS Provider of the Year'



Brewster Fire Department Capt. Kevin Durmer was honored last week for his heroic efforts to save a drowning victim last year. Contributed photos.

Brewster Fire Department Capt. Kevin Durmer was recognized as the EMS Provider of the Year during a ceremony last week at the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firefighters' Association's annual convention in Lake George.

Durmer was recommended for the award by the Brewster fire chief after his heroic actions saved the life of a drowning victim last July.

Durmer was in the neighborhood of a reported pool drowning and "exhibited exceptional situational awareness and a profound sense of duty by arriving on scene within 1 minute of that initial dispatch," recounted the event emcee at the recent ceremony.

She said the patient was still in the pool, pulse-less, and family was struggling to keep him above the water.

With Durmer's help, the victim was pulled from the pool and he immediately began CPR. Additional firefighters arrived and with their assistance – along with help from



Durmer's wife – the patient came to.

"After 5 minutes of high-quality CPR, the patient regained a pulse and began breathing," said the emcee. "Capt. Durmer's immediate and decisive actions were pivotal in this patient's survival, especially with EMS resources being delayed and traveling from farther than normal. His ability to rapidly assess the situation, initiate lifesaving measures, and maintain

high-quality CPR under extreme pressure exemplifies the very essence of emergency response."

While the entire team's contributions were invaluable, she attributed the patient's positive outcome to Durmer's response.

"His actions not only saved a life, but also upheld the highest standards of the Brewster Fire Department and the emergency medical services profession, she said.



Members of Putnam County REACT recently picked up a van that was restored by students at the Career & Technical Education Center. Provided photo.

BOCES Students Restore Putnam REACT Van

A Putnam County emergency services vehicle given new life by Career & Technical Education students at Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES is back on the streets.

As part of a multi-month-long project, auto body, welding, carpentry, and construction electricity students refurbished an emergency response REACT van for the county. The organization works closely with fire, police, and EMS services to help disabled motorists and victims of auto accidents, and with the search and rescue of missing persons in Putnam and in the surrounding communities.

Officials picked up their newly outfitted rig at BOCES' Yorktown campus June 13.

"It's outstanding, and it saves our all-volunteer team funds that we would've had to use to do this work," said REACT Chief Warren Deitz, who had high praise for the work done by the CTE students.

"We bought some of the supplies, and students and teachers did the installation work – and it just came out phenomenal."

The chief hasn't ruled out returning in the fall for some additional adjustments to provide hands-on experience for new sessions of students.

Each CTE class took turns with the van. Steve Simpson's auto body students stripped out old wiring, removed existing shelves, and installed an air conditioning unit, while Rob Stanford's welding students added support to the roof to shore up the air conditioning unit.

Then it was off to carpentry where Chris Russo's students put in benches. Last, Larry Marino's construction electricity students ran all the wiring and added the necessary outlets and lighting.

The van's first scheduled public event is the Southeast Fireworks Extravaganza on July 6.

Letters to the Editor

Early Learning Center is a Win For Kids

Dear Editor:

As CEO of Community Based Services, Inc., we are committed to expanding opportunities for Putnam County residents seeking access to special education and services. For years, limited local options have forced the families of children with special needs to transport them outside of Putnam County.

Special needs kids frequently spend an hour or more on the bus every day, and these out-of-county transportation costs add up: \$1 million or more every year, paid for by taxpayers. It's an unfair, restrictive, and costly program that does not meet the needs of the children.

When Putnam County approached us about partnering on a first-of-its-kind program, we were

immediately supportive. Since 1981, CBS has been enhancing and transforming the lives of children and adults with special needs, therefore, we quickly recognized an alignment in our missions. With the recent passage of the early learning center – a ThinkDIFFERENTLY initiative – June 10, parents and families of preschool-aged children of all abilities are one step closer to getting the services they need, much closer to home with access to InterArts creative programming, as well.

We would like to thank County Executive Kevin Byrne and the county's Department of Health for their assistance in shepherding this critical program through the legislative process. Once finalized, not only will the early learning center save taxpayers money by dramatically cutting commuting times; it will provide a model for the rest

of our state – and the nation – to emulate.

Our InterArts building, located in the Town of Patterson, will be ready to support this program and accept children as soon as September, with a larger, brand-new space on the way shortly after that which will accommodate even more students.

During a time when the early learning center's future appeared in doubt, County Executive Byrne personally and passionately intervened to shed light and clarity on the importance of this initiative. With his leadership and the help and hard work of members of the Department of Health, especially Valerie Kurtz, the Legislature acted responsibly and unanimously to move this forward. Politics was put aside while the needs of the children and their families were prioritized.

This is a victory for compassion and common sense, and it is a vision for an inclusive preschool education which we are thrilled to be a part of.

Vicki Sylvester
CEO, Community Based Services, Inc.



Working Mom

By Holly Crocco

Our Little Boy is Growing Up

I have never considered myself to be very conservative when it comes to language or bodies, but being around 7-year-old boys is making me rethink that.

I've learned that toddler and young boys are a different breed, but in kindergarten and first grade, it seems they are really enjoying discussing their male parts.

Interestingly, Mike and I started to notice that when other boys would make jokes using slang, Mikey would just kind of sit there like he had no idea what they others were talking about.

For example, while playing a little football with family, at one point his cousin who is the same age doubled over dramatically, saying, "Nonno, you got me right in the (fill in the blank)!"

I paused, my husband shrugged, all the other adults laughed, and Mikey just looked at us, head tilted. I leaned over to my husband and asked, "Is it possible that's the first time he's heard that word?"

"No way. That's impossible," was Mike's response.

At swim lessons, one kid covered his chest and said, "My (use your imagination) are cold!"

Mikey crinkled his nose, and I internally cringed.

Now, while we're certainly glad our kid isn't the one walking around saying inappropriate things, my husband and I started to worry that he's grossly uninformed, and maybe we need to give him an education before one of his crude little friends does.

But what do we do? Give him flash cards with body parts and their matching slang words?

Mikey did the potty talk like all toddlers and young kids do, and Lord knows we let talk of bodily functions fly freely in our house, so how the boy could be such a prude is really a head-scratcher.

We felt better when, at a recent picnic with school friends where one of the boys strategically placed his hot dog and yelled, "Look guys, I have a weenie!" Mikey joined right in on the lewd gesture until a parent finally stepped in.

(I just reread that sentence and can't believe I typed it.)

At Mikey's recent physical at the pediatrician, the doctor had him

lay on his back while she pushed around on his stomach, then told him she was just going peek under his waistband to check his testicles. Mikey looked at me, his eyebrows pinched, and I decided to take advantage of the teachable moment.

"Mikey, testicles is real word for your privates," I told him.

He sat up and asked, "Like, my fronts?"

"Yes, your fronts." I turned to the doctor, feeling a blush creep up. "That's what we call his privates," I explained to her.

"My cocomelons?" Mikey asked, finding it funny that I was getting embarrassed.

"Yes, those." I stood up and slung my purse over my shoulder, hoping to make an exit.

"My wiener!" Mikey practically cheered as he hopped off the little cot.

"Yes, your wiener," I replied at the same time that I tried to turtle my head into my shoulders.

Go figure... The kid is mute when the doctor tries to ask him questions about school and friends, but apparently now is the time to speak up.

I didn't see the pediatrician scribble anything down or otherwise flag his chart, so hopefully she found the humor in the situation.

Recently, one thing that had me feeling exponentially better was chatting with his teacher during an end-of-the-year gathering, where all the boys were just plain feral and I found myself apologizing to her on behalf of all the boy moms.

"Pfft." She batted a hand in the air. "Please, I have two of my own."

She proceeded to tell me that her husband recently had to have a colonoscopy, and a day or so later when she passed her son's teacher in the hallway, the woman causally noted, "Hope your husband had a good time at the butt doctor."

Apparently her child had relayed the news to his teacher, and it was circulating the school.

Check in on your boy mom friends. We are not OK.

Holly Crocco is editor of the Putnam County Times/Press and mother of a 7-year-old boy. She can be reached at editorial@putnampresstimes.com.

Climate Smart Communities Grants Available for Municipalities

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Climate Smart Communities Grant Program is making \$22 million available to help municipalities take action to address climate change, announced DEC Acting Commissioner Amanda Lefton

recently.

Eligible projects include reducing flood risk by relocating or retrofitting critical infrastructure, reducing emissions from food waste, engineering feasibility studies, and other actions that target decreasing pollution and improving

health and community resilience.

Funding for the program is supported by the \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air & Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act and the state's Environmental Protection Fund, which was increased to a record \$425 million in the 2025-26 state budget.

Since the program's inception in 2016, DEC has awarded more than \$87 million to municipalities in support of local climate mitigation and adaptation projects.

If awarded a grant, municipalities are required to provide a local match of 50 percent of the total costs for most projects. Last year's state budget authorized DEC to provide up to 80 percent of the cost of municipal projects that meet criteria for financial hardship and for projects located in disadvantaged communities.

More information about the grant program and the request for applications are available at dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/climate-change. Applications are due by July 31.

A total of \$21 million is available for grants of between \$50,000 and \$2 million for projects that reduce vehicle miles traveled, reduce food waste in landfills, reduce hydrofluorocarbon emissions from refrigeration and cooling equipment, increase natural resilience through restoration or preservation of natural features, reduce future flood-risk including by relocating or retrofitting critical infrastructure, prepare for extreme heat and extreme weather events, and engineer feasibility studies for flood risk reduction and refrigerant management – among other types of implementation projects.

In addition, up to \$1 million is available for grants between \$10,000 and \$200,000 for planning, inventory, and assessment projects that are aligned with certain Climate Smart Communities certification actions in the areas of greenhouse gas mitigation, transportation, climate adaptation, and land use.

To apply for this latest round of grants, fill out the New York State Consolidated Funding Application at apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa.

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Deli Land - 508 Rte. 52
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Free Measles Vaccine

The Putnam County Department of Health will offer free MMR vaccines (measles, mumps, and rubella) for individuals exposed May 28 between 6 and 10 p.m., at Arturo's Tavern in Mahopac restaurant.

Exposed contacts who get measles cannot be vaccinated, so the clinics will be held after the incubation period, which ends June 19.

Residents who are not immune to measles, but were not exposed recently, may also receive a free vaccine.

Individuals who recover from measles are considered immune.

Putnam residents can also pay

for an MMR vaccine through their healthcare provider or pharmacy.

The health department will host a free MMR immunization clinic Friday, June 20 from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., at St. John's food pantry in Mahopac. This is a walk-in clinic and no appointment is necessary.

Also June 20, another clinic will be held from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., at the health department, 1 Geneva Road, Brewster. Appointments are required for this clinic and can be made by calling 845-808-1332.

A third clinic will be held Tuesday, June 24 from 5 to 7 p.m., at 121 Main St., Brewster.

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Obituary

Eloise (Kilcoyne) Viola

Eloise (Kilcoyne) Viola was born Aug. 5, 1944, in Mt. Kisco, to John R. Kilcoyne and Ann E. Kilcoyne, breaking the pattern theretofore created by the Kilcoynes of having their daughters at Danbury Hospital. She joined her older sisters Judith and Mary Lou at the family home in Brewster.



Eloise (Kilcoyne) Viola

After graduating high school from St. Mary's in 1962, she once again broke the family tradition of attending Good Counsel College (now known as Pace University) and instead attended Danbury State College where she graduated in 1966. She did, however, maintain the tradition of attending a college that was renamed after she graduated, as Danbury State College is now known as Western Connecticut State University.

Ellie spent her career as a music teacher in the Carmel School District, retiring in 2006.

Ellie was married for several years to Daniel Viola. She was a proud pet owner to her dogs Boozier and Toto. She very much enjoyed spoiling her nieces and nephews, as well as her great-nieces and nephews.

Ellie was the queen of the chocolate chip cookie and strawberry freezer jam. Her family

has not yet determined how she made perfectly- and consistently-sized cookies using two spoons rather than a cookie scoop. She chose not to share this secret.

Ellie was a huge fan of Tom Selleck, saving every magazine with Tom's picture she could find and nearly every movie he made (on VHS tapes). Like many teenagers with posters on their bedroom walls of their favorite band, yes, Ellie had her own collection of Tom's posters.

She was also a huge fan of thriller fiction and kept nearly every book she read from her favorite authors – Stephen King, Dean Koontz, Catherine Coulter, Nora Roberts, and the classics written by Agatha Christie were tucked into every corner of her house.

Ellie very much enjoyed jigsaw puzzles, card games, Mahjong, Games Magazine, and a good (or bad) joke shared by email or greeting cards, and often brought a list of a few jokes to family parties to share. Her family is very certain she has saved her best jokes to share with St. Peter.

In lieu of flowers, to honor Ellie please consider donating to the Susan G. Komen Foundation or contributing to the American Red Cross.

'John F. McArdle Memorial Highway' Closer to Fruition

Legislation dedicating a portion of Route 301 in Carmel after the late John McArdle has officially passed the Assembly and State Senate. The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Matt Slater, R-Yorktown, and Sen. Peter Harcham, D-Peekskill, designates the stretch between Belden Road and Gypsy Trail Road as the "John F. McArdle Memorial Highway."

"My family and I are thrilled that John's legacy will be continued by the renaming of this road in his honor," said his wife, Barbara McArdle. "John was loved by all, and this special recognition of his life and service to our community is something we are very grateful for."

McArdle, who lived in Carmel, served as a New York City Police Department lieutenant and emergency services unit leader. A veteran of the Bronx Task Force, Tactical Apprehension Team and Federal Emergency Management Agency's New York Task Force 1, he returned to duty Sept. 11, 2001, and was appointed on-scene coordinator for ESU's search, rescue and recovery operations at Ground Zero.

His heroism and leadership earned him the NYPD Honor Legion Medal of Valor, among numerous other commendations.

In retirement, McArdle continued to serve his fellow officers and first responders through extensive volunteer work, including his role as vice president of the Stephen P. Driscoll Memorial Lodge 704 and his involvement in HEART 9/11 and the Cops 4 Cops program.

"John F. McArdle exempli-



John McArdle was an NYPD lieutenant from Carmel.

fied courage and selflessness throughout his life, both on- and off-duty," said Slater. "We are honored to name this stretch of road in memory of a decorated law enforcement officer, a 9/11 hero, and a devoted family man.

John was most proud of his wife Barbara, their three daughters, and his grandson Chase. This dedication is a small but lasting tribute to a man who gave so much to others."

Harcham called McArdle a pillar of the Carmel community whose lifelong commitment to service was evident in all he did.

"From his distinguished career with the NYPD to his tireless advocacy for 9/11 responders and retired first responders, he brought professionalism and deep compassion to his every effort," said Harcham.

"I have known John and his family for a long time," added Kent Highway Superintendent Richard Othmer. "He was the definition of an All-American and gave his life for his country, commanding at Ground Zero. The entire McArdle clan reflects those same values, and it's comforting to know John's legacy will live on through his children."

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Academic Honors

The following Putnam students have been named to the Dean's List at Fairfield University in Connecticut for the spring semester:

Brewster – Olivia Ambrosio, Kayla Fox, and Madison Martabano.

Carmel – Amelia Brennock, Kelly Conroy, Bethany McIntyre, and Matthew Wetzel.

Garrison – Brigid Muller and Molly Muller.

Mahopac – Joseph Bally, Michelle Dellamura, Caroline Feeley, Elizabeth Flynn, Gabriela Laca, Nevan Nystrom, Patrick O'Connell, and Andrew Silkowski.

Putnam Valley – Julianna De Giorgio.

The following Putnam students have been named to the Dean's List at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut for the spring semester:

Brewster – Christiana Res-tucci.

Carmel – Benjamin Cohen, Isabella Cornacchio, and Jillian Dero-se.

Cold Spring – Olivia Knox.
Mahopac – Marc Chang,
David Dellicolli, Michela Gaglio,

Sariana Gaglio, Alessia Gristina, Robert Margiotta, Kaitlyn Palange, and Charles Woolley.

Putnam Valley – Faith Caravone and Jordan Cuddy.

The Harvey School in Katonah has announced the names of Putnam students who have earned academic honors for the spring term. Several have been recognized as Cavalier Scholars with grade-point averages of 4 or higher, or being named to the Head's List with a GPA of at least 3.7, or the Honor Roll with a GPA of at least 3.3.

Putnam Valley – Dylan Cuddy, grade 10, Honor Roll.

Patterson – EmileyRose Murphy, grade 9, Honor Roll.

Brewster – Jackson Saccomanno, grade 12, Cavalier Scholar.

Mahopac – Elisabeth Scarf-one, grade 8, Head's List; and Ally Zimmerman, grade 8, Head's List.

The following Putnam students have been named to the Dean's List at Alfred State College for the spring semester:

Joshua Consentino of Brewster and Michael Smith of Carmel.



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ARE YOU READY FOR THE SUMMER SEASON?

Gas Prices Rise With Middle East Unrest

Average gasoline prices in New York rose 0.9 cents per gallon last week, averaging \$3.06 per gallon, according to GasBuddy’s survey of 6,118 stations in New York. Prices in New York are 2.9 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 49.7 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

The national average price of diesel has increased 4 cents in the last week and stands at \$3.48 per gallon.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in New York was priced at \$2.63 per gallon while the most expensive was \$3.99.

The national average price of gasoline rose 1.1 cents per gallon last week, averaging \$3.08

per gallon. The national average is down 9.5 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 32.7 cents per gallon lower than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country.

Five years ago, the average cost for a gallon of gas in New York was \$2.20, while nationally it was \$2.10. Ten years ago, those prices were \$2.93 and \$2.81.

“With Israel and Iran trading attacks, oil prices have surged to multi-month highs – setting the stage for additional price hikes at gas pumps across the country,” said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. “As long as tensions in the

Middle East continue to escalate, the risk of further impacts on oil prices remains high.”

He said he expects gas prices to rise by 10 to 20 cents, while diesel could climb 15 to 25 cents in the next few days.

“Motorists should prepare for what will likely be modest price increases – for now – but the situation has the potential to worsen at any moment,” said De Haan.

GasBuddy’s survey updates 288 times every day from a diverse list of sources covering nearly 150,000 stations nationwide. Its averages, graphs, maps, and historical pricing data covering the U.S. and Canada is available at <http://prices.GasBuddy.com>.

Nutrition Corner

By Allison J. Stowell
MS, RD, CDN



Summer Sides

Traditional summer sides are loaded with ingredients we’re typically looking to have less of in our diet. Yet, a summer meal would be incomplete without them. The good news is that there are creative ways to make the seasonal sides you love, with fewer of the attributes you’re seeking to limit or avoid like added saturated fat, sodium, and sugar. You won’t miss out on flavor or texture with these easy and delicious swaps.

Hold the Mayo: Typical seasonal summer meals include burgers, cheese, and other foods likely to be higher in saturated fat. Try coleslaw and potato salads made with oil and vinegar (like the recipe below), which are lighter than traditional versions of these creamy salads to make your meal more heart healthy.

Veggies Please: It’s also easy for summer sides to be high in carbohydrates. Yet, sides are the perfect opportunity to round out your plate with colorful vegetables. Go for a summer salad topped with seasonal berries, grilled vegetables, charred romaine, or simple sliced fresh garden veggies.

Protein Power: Replace the usual ingredients with protein-rich substitutions. Use whole grain, bean based, or protein-enhanced noodles for pasta salad. Choose brown rice, bulgur wheat, or buckwheat for grain salads in place of refined pasta or rice. Lastly, use plain, non-fat Greek yogurt to boost the protein in dips and other creamy concoctions.

No Salt Added: Bean salads and other sides made from canned goods, bottled dressings and seasonings may offer more sodium than you realize. Look for “no salt added” or “unsalted” canned goods and seek to make seasoning blends from scratch whenever possible. Choose marinades and sauces labeled as “light in sodium” or “less sodium”, rather than “reduced sodium” to increase the likelihood that you’re choosing products with less salt per serving. (A reduced sodium product is only 25% lower in sodium than

the original version, which may still be too high in some products).

Allison J Stowell MS RD CDN serves as the online dietitian for Hannaford Supermarket. To learn about FREE, virtual nutrition classes and more, visit Hannaford.com/dietitians. For more on the Guiding Stars nutrition guidance program, visit GuidingStars.com.

Grilled Potato Salad with Herbs (2 Guiding Stars) www.Hannaford.com

A fresh twist on traditional potato salad. Pick up bagged, pre-washed baby potatoes for added convenience.

- Ingredients:
- Cooking spray
 - 2 (24-oz.) bags baby gold potatoes
 - 5 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
 - 2 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
 - 2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
 - 3 stalks celery, diced
 - 1/2 cup finely chopped chives
 - 1/2 cup finely chopped dill
 - 1/2 cup finely chopped parsley
- Directions:

Coat grill grates with the cooking spray. Set grill to medium-high. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the potatoes to pot and cook 7-10 minutes, until just tender. Drain in a colander and pat dry with paper towels. Cut potatoes in half. Toss potatoes with 2 tablespoons oil and season with salt and pepper.

Add potatoes to grill cut-side down. Cook potatoes 5-10 minutes, until browned and tender, turning occasionally.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine remaining 3 tablespoons oil, vinegar and mustard. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in the celery, herbs and potatoes. Serve immediately.

Tip: If your potatoes are smaller and might fall through the grill grates, cook the potatoes in a grill pan on the stovetop for the same amount of time.

Skewer Street Tacos

(Family Features)
Bundle Skewer Street Tacos

- Ingredients:
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
 - 1 onion, diced
 - 1 tablespoon cumin
 - 1 tablespoon onion powder
 - 1 tablespoon garlic powder
 - 2 tablespoons salt
 - 1 tablespoon pepper
 - 1 teaspoon coriander
 - 1/4 cup lime juice
 - 1/4 cup vegetable oil
 - 10 pounds chicken or beef shoulder steak, sliced thin
 - taco shells or tortillas
 - salsa (optional)
 - shredded lettuce (optional)
 - diced tomatoes (optional)

Directions:

Combine garlic, onion, cumin, onion powder, garlic powder, salt, pepper, coriander, lime juice and vegetable oil. Coat meat thoroughly.



ly. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour, or up to 24 hours.

Preheat grill to 400 F. Thread small bundles (about 3 ounces each) onto skewers. Aim for three per skewer to streamline portioning.

Grill chicken until it reaches internal temperature of 165 F. For steak, grill to desired doneness.

Transfer bundles to small taco shells and serve with salsa, lettuce and tomatoes, as desired.

Source: Current

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Brewster Welcomes Chico Alvarez & Mafimba, and Bookends Band



Chico Alvarez and Mafimba will perform June 25 in Brewster.

**Brewster Music
Sumer Concert Series
2025 Lineup**

6/25:
Chico Alvarez & Mafimba
(Afro-Cuban)
7/2:
Bookends Band
(70s and beyond)
7/9:
Way Behind the Sun
(country)
7/16:
Tilly Foster Bluegrass Band
7/23:
John H. Smith Band
(blues/jazz)
7/30:
Genevieve Faivre & Friends
(Brazilian, jazz & more)

The Brewster Summer Music Series will welcome Chico Alvarez and Mafimba, a dynamic and versatile Afro-Cuban band, Wednesday, June 25 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., at the gazebo at Southeast Veterans Park at the corner of Railroad and Morningthorpe Avenue in the village.

The free performance promises an evening of rhythm, culture, and world-class musicianship.

A staple of New York’s Afro-Cuban music scene for more than three decades, Alvarez brings deep Cuban roots fused with a vibrant New York flair. Born in Brooklyn and raised in Cuba, he has led several acclaimed bands and currently fronts the powerful 10-piece conjunto Mafimba. Known for their stylistic versatility, the group performs a blend of jazz, Latin jazz, salsa, charanga, and mambo, showcasing beloved Cuban and New York classics from the golden eras of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.

Alvarez’s performance history includes appearances at major venues and festivals such as Lincoln



The Bookends Band will perform July 2.

Center Out of Doors, Celebrate Brooklyn, SummerStage, NJPAC, and Harlem Jazz Festival. With a resume that spans some of the most iconic stages in the region, this is a rare and special opportunity for Brewster audiences to experience a true master of Afro-Caribbean music.

The following Wednesday, a special pre-holiday-weekend celebration featuring the debut performance of the Bookends Band is scheduled July 2.

The Bookends Band, one of Westchester’s premier acts, is known for its soulful mix of classic rock gems, rare covers, and compelling original songs. With a loyal fan base, the band is bringing its powerful energy and signature harmonies to Putnam County for the first time.

Founded in 1976 by Pelham natives Chris Brown and Joe Summo as a folk duo, the group evolved into a full-scale rock band that became a staple on the local college circuit. Today, Bookends Band features four lead vocalists and a lineup of seasoned musicians who deliver a versatile, emotion-packed show that spans decades and genres.

The Town of Southeast Cultural Arts Coalition will bring local and regional professional musicians to Brewster on seven consecutive Wednesday nights in June and July. New this year, Wandering Daves and Carmel Creamery will be onsite.

Bring your lawn chairs and picnics and enjoy these evenings under the summer sky with neighbors and friends.

This is an outdoor event. For cancelation updates due to weather, go to www.culturalartsco.com/brewster-summer-music-series.html.

Statewide Artist Fellowship Program

A new opportunity for New York artists to partner with state agencies to develop innovative engagement for key state initiatives was recently announced by Gov. Kathy Hochul. Administered by the New York State Council on the Arts, the State of the Arts Fellowship will bring artists and government together to foster community connection, enhance public spaces, and amplify vital public service initiatives.

Guidelines for the program are available at arts.ny.gov/SOAFellow. The deadline to apply is July 8.

The State of the Arts Fellowship will embed selected artists within three state agencies for year-long residencies beginning in the fall. Artists from all disciplines – including visual, performance, literature, film, and interdisciplinary practices – are invited to apply for this unique opportunity.

The inaugural placements are: Office of General Services (Albany) – revitalizing the Empire State Plaza through creative, community-focused programming; Office of Mental Health (at least one facility serving an upstate area and at least one in the NYC region) – destigmatizing mental health issues and promoting access to OMH services; and Office of Victim Services (Brooklyn or Albany) – working with underserved populations to reduce barriers to access the Fair Access to Victim Compensation Act.

Through a collaborative process, fellows will work closely with state agencies to address pressing issues and implement projects that leave a lasting impact on communities across New York. Fellows will be chosen by the host agency and NYSCA. The award amount per artist fellow is \$60,000, inclusive of all project expenses.

“NYSCA has long recognized the essential role that artists play in our state: as changemakers and futurists, as bridge builders between communities, and as teachers and leaders,” said NYS Council on the Arts Director Erika Mallin.

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A rendering of the proposed new Brewster firehouse, provided by KG+D Architects.

See Plans for New Brewster Firehouse

Residents of the Brewster-Southeast Joint Fire District are invited to the department headquarters on Main Street on Sunday, June 29, to tour the existing facilities and view the proposal for a new firehouse.

There will be two sessions:

from 10 a.m.to noon, and 2 to 4 p.m.

All residents living within the boundaries of the fire district are encouraged to attend. There will be attractions, popcorn and snow cones for kids, while adults will be invited to tour the building

and attend the presentation. The project pre-construction manager, architects, and commissioners will be on hand to answer questions.

The proposal will be placed on the ballot during an upcoming special bond referendum for voter approval.



Elder Law Advice *Alan D. Feller, Esq.*

Medicaid Spend-Down Strategies

I was performing a little Medicaid research one day in the 2010s. On my computer screen was a copy of New York’s Medicaid Reference Guide. I figured it was a good idea to know exactly how a regulation was worded if I was going to mention it during a fair hearing. My intention was to print out only the two relevant pages and place them in the case folder.

Clicking “print” did not immediately set off any alarms.

However, after the seventh page was spit out of the printer, I realized the computer thought I wanted to print the entire guide. For those keeping score at home, New York’s Medicaid Reference

Guide is 1,006 pages – slightly shorter than Stephen King’s post-apocalyptic epic novel “The Stand” and only marginally less depressing.

Normally, a quick-twitch reaction would lead me to cancel the print job and start over. This time, however, the cancelation had no impact on the printing. Buttons were pressed, but no appropriate electronic impulse followed. Page after page exited the machine in defiance of the laws of science.

Following some drastic anti-computer maneuvers, the printer stopped. The final page count was well north of 300. Lessons were learned, safeguards were set up. No such printing mishap ever happened again.

The real takeaway from this episode was that Medicaid has an excessive amount of rules.

The sheer number of Medicaid rules may be exorbitant, but these rules are not necessarily designed to be adverse to a Medicaid applicant and their family members.

Medicaid planning includes a concept known as the “spend-down.” Although Medicaid is a federal health insurance program, the states and local counties administer it. State law tailors many of the Medicaid eligibility rules to fit community norms. For example, the Individual Medicaid resource limit for 2025 is \$32,396. While Community Medicaid applications are not penalized for asset transfers, Nursing Home Medicaid asset transfer penalties are a fact of life.

Getting below that number can be a challenge, especially considering the realities of dealing with a serious long-term illness and the concerns regarding the five-year lookback. Add to that, New York has a well-known reputation as a high cost-of-living state. Luckily, Medicaid allows applicants to use excess resources to pay for home repairs and modifications which may ultimately benefit a spouse or other occupant.

In a Nursing Home Medicaid situation where the applicant still owns their residence and an intent to return home letter is filed, repair costs can significantly lower the resource total without incurring a penalty. Maintaining good records and receipts is a must in that situation.

Irrevocable Pre-Need Funeral Plans are another popular spend-down option. Contracting with a chosen funeral home allows the Medicaid applicant to set aside a sizable amount of money to cover funeral costs without a penalty.

For a cost that will eventually have to be paid by the family, the pre-payment solves a Medicaid problem and removes a familial burden at the same time.

Medicaid also has an in-
Continued on Page 12

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Family Fun at Chamber Street Fair in Carmel
The Greater Mahopac-Carmel Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual spring street fair along Gleneida Avenue in Carmel on May 27. Visitors...

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Putnam County Community Events

Donations Sought

Donations for the Patterson book sale may be dropped off beginning Saturday, Aug. 9 at the Patterson Fire Department grounds, 13 Burdick Road. Books, CDs, DVDs, Blue-Ray discs or vinyl LPs may be deposited in a POD storage container near the pavilion on the grounds (not left outside). Only books in good condition. It would help if fiction, non-fiction, and children’s books are packaged in separate, labeled bags or boxes. No magazines, textbooks, encyclopedias, VHS or cassettes.

Restaurant Gift Card Raffle

The Putnam/Northern Westchester Women’s Resource Center is hosting its annual restaurant gift card raffle, with tickets available for purchase through Sept. 1. Tickets are \$10 each or three for \$25, and may be purchased at prwwrc.org. Winners will receive a \$100 give certificate to a participating restaurant.

Carmel Cruisers

The Carmel Cruisers are returning to Wendys in the Putnam Plaza, 1894 Route 6, Carmel, for their fourth season of free car shows for the community. The will be at Wendys every other Saturday from 3 to 8 p.m., through Sept. 20, and every Sunday morning from 9 a.m. to noon through Oct. 12.

‘Fixers’ Needed

Sustainable Putnam needs volunteer “fixers” with skills in either sewing, gluing, basic electrical or mechanical work, to help at its Repair Cafés. These “repair coaches” work together to diagnose and repair a wide array of household items. Volunteers are provided with snacks and lunch. Email volunteer@sustainableputnam.org or call 646-598-6560.

Al-Alon Meetings

Al-Alon meetings take place Tuesdays and Fridays at 7 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 2103 Route 6, Brewster. Enter from the Husted Road double-white door.

Women’s GOP Club

The Putnam County Republican Women’s Club meets every third Thursday of the month. Consider joining in discussion about Republican programs, policies, and issues affecting the county. Email the president at utnamwomensgop@gmail.com for more information, including time and location.

Monday, June 23

Plant Swap

Bring a healthy outdoor plant to Reed Memorial Library in Carmel between Monday, June 23 and Friday, June 27, and take one home in return. Whether it’s a seedling, cutting, or potted plant – join the swap and spread the green.

Tuesday, June 24

Roaming Readers

Reed Memorial Library in Carmel presents Roaming Readers on Tuesday, June 24 at 10:30 a.m. Meet at the library and enjoy a casual walk through Carmel. All fitness levels. Registration is required at carmellibrary.org/calendar.

Beginner Yoga

Reed Memorial Library in Carmel will present gentle mat yoga for

beginners Tuesday, June 24 at 6 p.m. Learn the foundations of safe movement, basic yoga poses, and breath work in a welcoming environment. Each session includes 45 minutes of guided instruction. Bring a yoga mat, towel or blanket. Registration is required at carmellibrary.org/calendar.

Wednesday, June 25

Summer Music Series

The 2025 Brewster Summer Music Series continues Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., at Southeast Veterans Park at the corner of Railroad and Morningthorpe Avenue: Chico Alvarez and Mafimba playing Afro-Cuban on June 25; The Bookends Band playing music from the 70s and beyond July 2; Way Behind the Sun playing country July 9; The Tilly Foster Bluegrass Band on July 16; The John H. Smith Band playing blues and jazz July 23; and Genevieve Faivre & Friends playing Brazilian, jazz and more July 30.

Thursday, June 26

Job Searching

A free job search virtual session is scheduled June 26 from 7 to 8 p.m. A discussion with human resources professionals discussing tips and ideas to shorten a job search. Hear about the latest resume rules, how to ace the interview, best salary negotiation tips, and more. Register by emailing vickie@thecareercorner.biz.

Summer Reading Kickoff

Mahopac Public Library will kick off its summer reading program Thursday, June 26 at 2 p.m. The Master Gardeners from Cornell Cooperative Extension will present “Monarchs, Milkweed & the Pollinator Pathway,” an educational program for patrons ages 4 and older. Bring a pre-washed white T-shirt to decorate with a butterfly motif following the presentation. Registration is required at www.mahopaclibrary.org or call 845-628-2009, ext. 139.

Live Concerts

The Town of Carmel Recreation & Parks Department will hold free concerts the following Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m. at Sycamore Park in Mahopac: June 26, Andrea & the Armenian Rugriders; July 3, back to the Garden 1969; July 10 Nashville Drive; July 17 Ladies Night NY; July 31, Patrick Perone Elvis Tribute & the Blue Suede Rockers; Aug. 7, Good Old Brothers.

‘The Long Game’

Patterson Library will show “The Long Game” on Thursday, June 26 at noon. The inspiring true story of five young Mexican-American caddies in South Texas in 1957 who were banned from playing on the golf courses where they worked. Undeterred, they built their own course, catching the attention of their school superintendent, who became their coach. Adults only. To register, call 845-878-6121 or go to www.pattersonlibrary.org.

Southeast Town Board

The Southeast Town Board will meet at 7 p.m. the following Thursdays at Town Hall: June 26, July 10 and 24, Aug. 7 and 21, Sept. 11 and 25, Oct. 9 and 23, Nov. 6 and 20, and Dec. 4 and 18.

Friday, June 27

Farm Market

The Putnam Valley Farmers Market will begin take pace Fridays from 3 to 6:30 p.m. from June 27 to Aug. 29, at Tompkins Corners Cultural Center, 729 Peekskill Hollow Road, Putnam Valley. Mel’s Sweet Treats, Cucumber Hill’s Meat and Poultry, Johanna’s Jewelry, and more.

Saturday, June 28

Fishing Derby

The Lake Carmel Park District will hold its annual fishing derby Saturday, June 28 (rain date Sunday, June 29). Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at Beach 4, at Lake Shore Drive East and Placid Road. The last weigh-in is at 11 a.m. There will be three divisions, from adult to children, with trophies. Also, raffles, and free snacks for kids. Lake Carmel residents and guests only. Catch and release, so bring a bucket. Email lcpdclerk@townofkentny.com.

Lawn Party

Putnam History Museum will host its annual lawn party Saturday, June 28 at 4 p.m. at the Highlands Country Club in Garrison. Live jazz music from the Todd Londagin Quintet, drinks and canapes, hat competition, and more. Tickets range from \$70 to \$250 at putnamhistorymuseum.org.

Bubble Bus

Children of all ages and their families are invited to join Kent Public Library on Saturday, June 28 between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. to celebrate the start of summer with a visit from The Bubble Bus. Enjoy bubbles, music, and dancing to kick off summer in style. Registration required.

Food Drive

Putnam Community Action Partnership and State Sen. Pete Harckham will hold a food drive from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday, June 28, at the Drew United Methodist Church, 28 Gleneida Ave., Carmel. Seeking rice, canned protein (tuna, chicken, beef stew, beans), cereal, juice, crackers, children’s snacks, and spaghetti sauce (no glass jars). Also, shampoo, conditioner, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, and feminine hygiene products are also needed.

Sunday, June 29

New Firehouse Proposal

Residents of the Brewster-Southeast Joint Fire District are invited to the department headquarters on Main Street on Sunday, June 29, to tour the existing facilities and view the proposal for a new firehouse. There will be two sessions: from 10 a.m.to noon, and 2 to 4 p.m. There will be attractions, popcorn and snow cones for kids, while adults will be invited to tour the building and attend the presentation. The project pre-construction manager, architects, and commissioners will be on hand to answer questions.

Monday, June 30

Astronomy Presentation

Join Dr. Michael Zeilnhofer at Kent Public Library on Monday, June 30 at 6 p.m. for an astronomy presentation, “A Moon with an Ocean: Europa and the Clipper

Mission.” This talk will be presented in person and on Zoom. Register at kentpl.librarycalendar.com.

Summer Reading Kick Off

Reed Memorial Library in Carmel will present a summer reading kickoff celebration June 30 at 11 a.m. featuring Charlie and the Bubble Factory. For families with kids age 2 and older. Registration is required at Carmellibrary.org or 845-225-2439.

Tuesday, July 1

Kent Town Board

The Kent Town Board will meet the following Tuesdays at 7 p.m. at Town Hall: July 1 and 15, Aug. 5 and 19 (daytimes), Sept. 2 and 16, Oct. 7 and 21, Nov. 18 and 25, and Dec. 2 and 16.

Garden Club Meeting

The Lake Mahopac Garden Club will meet Tuesday, July 1 at 11:30 a.m., at Airport Park in Mahopac. Enjoy the meeting and a catered lunch. \$15. The program topic is “fun and games” featuring interactive table games with prizes.

Wednesday, July 2

Carmel Town Board

The Carmel Town Board will meet at 7 p.m. the following Wednesdays at Town Hall: July 2 and 9; Aug. 6 and 13; Sept. 3, 10 and 17; Oct. 1, 8 and 15; Nov. 5, 12 and 19; and Dec. 3 and 10.

Library Meeting

The Reed Memorial Library Board of Trustees will meet at 5 p.m. in the reference room of the Carmel library on the following dates: July 2, Aug. 6, Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Nov. 5, and Dec. 3. Board meetings are open to the public.

Friday, July 4

Live Music

The Town of Carmel Recreation & Parks Department will host a free Fourth of July concert on Friday, July 4 at 6:30 p.m. at Red Mills Historic Park in Mahopac Falls, featuring the Norm Hathaway Band.

Independence

Day Celebration

Mekeel’s Corners Chapel will host its annual Independence Day Celebration on July 4 from 10 a.m. to noon, at 321 Route 301, Cold Spring. Music, readings and more. Register at putnamhistory-museum.org.

Saturday, July 5

Backyard Olympics

The Town of Kent Recreation & Parks Department will present Backyard Olympics on Saturday, July 5 from 10 a.m. to noon at Edward Ryan Memorial Park, 43 Park Road, Kent Lakes. Open to Carmel Central School District and Kent residents. Free ice cream. Register by Friday, June 27 at https://secure.recl.com/NY/kent-ny.

Tuesday, July 8

‘Jaws’

Patterson Library will show “Jaws” on Tuesday, July 8 at noon to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its release. Adults only. To register, call 845-878-6121 or go to www.pattersonlibrary.org.

Wednesday, July 9

Investing 101

Mahopac Public Library will present “Investing 101” on Wednesday, July 9 at 6 p.m. Learn the basics of different investment options, how to assess risk, and how to create a plan tailored to your goals. Registration is required at www.mahopaclibrary.org or 845-628-2009, ext. 100.

Microsoft Word Series

Mahopac Public Library will begin a Microsoft Word series Wednesday, July 9 at 6:30 p.m. Proficiency in Microsoft Word is a high-demand skill in the job market. This three-week series will take participants from getting started to creating polished documents. Register to attend in person or virtually, at www.mahopaclibrary.org or 845-628-2009, ext. 100.

Thursday, July 10

Kaleidoscope Workshop

Reed Memorial Library in Carmel will hold a kaleidoscope workshop with the Nutty Scientist on July 10 at 11 a.m. An investigative workshop into the science of kaleidoscopes. For children age 6 and older. Registration is required at carmellibrary.org or 845-225-2439.

Friday, July 11

‘Peekskill Riots Part 2’

Mahopac Public Library will present “Peekskill Riots Part 2: ‘The Friendly Town by the River’” on Tuesday, July 11 at 6 p.m. Join documentary filmmaker Jon Scott Bennett for an in-person showing of the episode. Register at www.mahopaclibrary.org or 845-628-2009, ext. 100.

Saturday, July 12

LCPD Summer Fest

Lake Carmel Park District will hold its 33rd annual Summer Festival on Saturday, July 12 (rain date July 13) from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Beach 3 at East Lake Shore and Brewster Drive. Food, music, swim races, kids activities. Swim race registration begins at 9:30 a.m., with races starting at noon. Lake Carmel residents and guests. Email lakecarmeladvisory@gmail.com.

‘Stone Walls of New England’

Putnam History Museum will present “Stories in Stone Weekend: ‘Sermons in Stone: The Stone Walls of New England and New York’” with Susan Allport on July 12 at 5 p.m., at 63 Chestnut St., Cold Spring. Tickets are \$12 for PHM members and \$15 for non-members, or \$10 for a virtual ticket. Hear Allport discuss her book. Register at www.putnam-historymuseum.org.

Send Us Your Community Events

Let everyone in Putnam County know about your upcoming Community Events and Events Online

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Carmel Comes Alive With 'Putnam Pride'



The sixth annual Putnam Pride was celebrated June 14, with a rally along Gleneida Avenue in Carmel from the historic courthouse to Gilead Presbyterian Church, followed by a gathering at Veterans Memorial Park.



Angel Elektra and Shay D'Pines lead the event, along with DJ Brittany, Starr, Sly Saturn, Amber Guesa, Mx. Diagnonsense, and I.Den.t.T.



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See “Daunting Diagonals” with your own eyes at Kent Public Library.

Artist Brings Fenway Park to Kent Library

Two paintings featured in James Sparks’ “Stadium Series” will be on display at Kent Public Library through June 30, sponsored by Friends of the Kent Library.

As a young child growing up in Boston in the 1950s, Sparks’ father would take him to many iconic Red Sox/ Yankee rivalry



Artist James Sparks is this month’s featured artist.

repetition of patterns in contrast to the mayhem of the crowd,” he explained. “In the study of decaying leaves, parallel floorboards provide order to the random assembly of leaves. If successful, the randomness of the imagery is experienced in a more formal, abstract context.”

For many years, Sparks’ subject matter has focused on the theme of complexity and diversity as found in nature, especially when the scale is manipulated and enlarged. “This theme – where movement, space, and form interact – presents itself in my paintings of stadium crowds at sporting events as well as in more recent paintings of dried leaves accumulating in a corner of my porch or that congregate along the pathways that meander in the wooded area behind my studio,” he said.

For more information, go to www.jamesbsparksartist.com or kentlibrary.org.

department. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 845-808-1332 or visit www.putnamcountyny.ny/health.

Free Measles Vaccine

Continued from Page 2

Most people have received the two-dose MMR vaccine as a child, typically at 12 to 15 months, and a second dose again between 4 and 6 years of age. Adults born before 1957 are generally considered immune due to likely prior exposure, but adults born in or after that year may need additional protection that can be supplied from one dose of the MMR vaccine.

Those vaccinated between 1963 and 1967, when a less effective vaccine was used, should speak to their healthcare provider to see if they should be revaccinated with a current MMR vaccine. Today’s modern MMR vaccine as series of two doses was introduced in the U.S. in 1971.

Mahopac Fourth-Graders Have Fun With History



Photos provided by Mahopac Central School District.

At Austin Road Elementary School in Mahopac, fourth-graders recently brought their knowledge of the American Revolution to life through a creative, interdisciplinary project that blended history, art, and technology.

The effort brought together STEAM teacher Patricia Huestis, art teacher Chris Williams, and fourth grade teachers Mary Jean Cerbini, Katie Douma, Carolyn Ryan, Jerry Volpe, Tiffany Ziegelhofer, and teaching assistant Adrienne Eppolito.

Over the course of the school year, the team designed a project that would build academic and

creative skills across subjects.

“This was a truly integrated project that combined social studies, art, and STEAM,” said Huestis. “It was a team effort from start to finish, and it’s been incredibly rewarding to see students apply what they’ve learned in such a creative and meaningful way.”

The students began by studying key events and themes of the Revolutionary War in their social studies classes. Working in small groups, they conducted research on related historical paintings, which served as the inspiration for handmade puppets they created in art class.

With their puppets and historical knowledge in hand, the fourth-graders wrote scripts for a short film set in a fictional art museum, where the paintings and characters came to life in a “Night at the Museum”-style twist. In STEAM class, the students used the video editing software WeVideo – a tool they had practiced with earlier in the school year – to produce their final films.

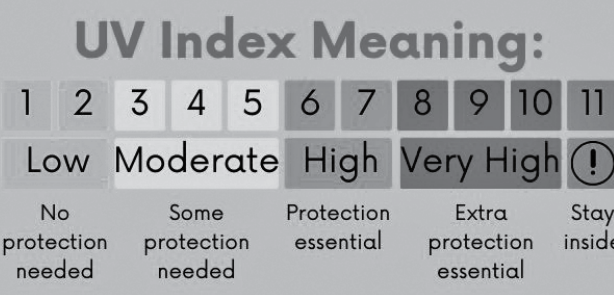
The hands-on project allowed the students to strengthen skills in research, writing, collaboration, art, and digital storytelling while deepening their understanding of American history.

Fish, Crocodiles & Snakes, Oh My!





JFK Elementary School students recently had artwork they created throughout the year on display in the IDEA room at the Brewster school for friends, faculty, and families to admire. There were self-portraits, grinning crocodiles, brightly colored fish, hearts, rainbows with pots of gold, and landscapes using various materials and supplies. After viewing the art, families enjoyed an ice cream social.

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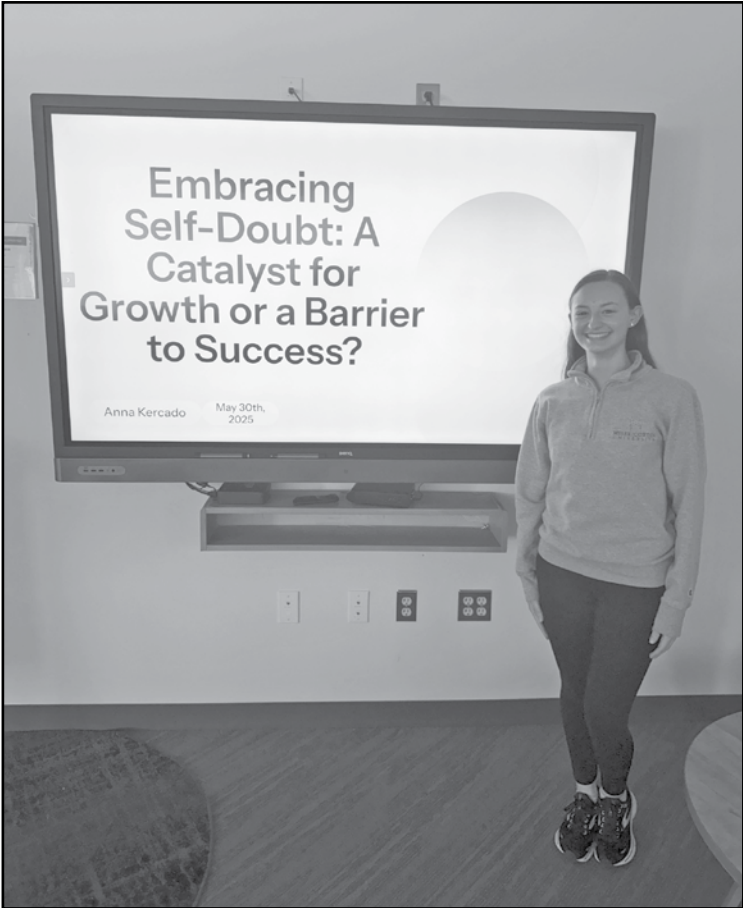
Sunscreen Tips:

- Use sunscreen with SPF of at least 30 with UVA and UVB protection
- Apply 30 minutes before sun exposure
- Do not apply to wet skin
- Reapply every 2 hours
- Apply generously to all exposed skin



Putnam County
Department of Health

Brewster Seniors Give TED Talks



Brewster seniors recently presented TED Talks on the topics of their choice.

Town of Carmel Recreation And Parks Department

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Brewster High School seniors in English 12 classes recently presented TED Talks highlighting the culmination of weeks of research, writing, and practicing.

“For my students, they must give a 9- to 10-minute talk on any topic they like,” said teacher Robert LoAlbo. “It should be something about which they are passionate. Their goal is that by the end of the talk, the audience should walk away from it with not only further knowledge about the area, but also should be inspired to live and act differently. Often, the talks charge the audience with a task now that they are aware of this new information.”

This year’s seniors shared topics such as: “Have We Taken Technology Too Far?” by Ariana Clancy; “The Power of Knowing How The World Sees You” by Jayron Sandoval; “Discipline: A Key To Your Success” by Alisa Giordano; “Pay to Play: How the NIL is Hurting College Sports” by Timothy Carlin; and “It’s Not All About The Glitz & Glamour” by Jamie Lynn Spennicchia.

Emma Durante, a high school volleyball and lacrosse player, spoke about mental health for athletes. Her talk was titled “Behind the Glory, The Silent Struggle.”

“Chasing perfection can become a test – your identity can depend on your performance,” she said. “The expectations, maintaining grades, fighting for scholarships – quitting is just not an option. We live in a culture that glorifies the grind. But what if we change the conversation?”

“Faith Isn’t Blind” by Will Astrologo was all about how living a faithful life requires confidence and composure where the future isn’t certain.

“When you are spiritual in your life you look at the track ahead,” he said.



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SpringFest Unites Mahopac Students



A parade and pie-a-teacher fundraiser were some of the highlights of SpringFest at Mahopac High School. Photos provided by MCSD.



Mahopac High School recently hosted its fourth annual SpringFest – a student-led celebration that showcases the school’s extracurricular offerings and commitment to inclusivity, connection, and school pride. The event kicked off with a parade around the perimeter of the two gymnasiums, recognizing the many student clubs and sports teams that help shape life at MHS. Afterward, each club hosted a table with information about their mission, how to join, and interactive activities for their

peers. “SpringFest is designed to celebrate what makes Mahopac unique, including student voices, their passions, and the many ways the school community comes together,” said social worker Jennifer Stytzer. The event concluded with the popular “pie-a-teacher” fundraiser hosted by the Mahopac Against Cancer Club. Proceeds benefit the American Cancer Society, offering students a chance to have fun while supporting a meaningful cause.

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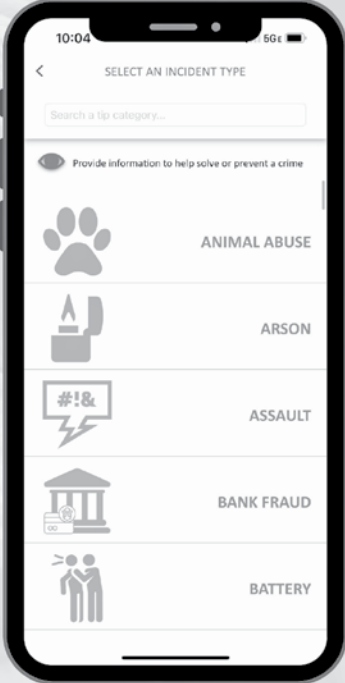
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Firefighters from across Putnam were called to extinguish a brush fire April 9, 2024, on a hillside on the old Kishawana Golf Club property on Route 22 in Brewster.

State Increases Support for Wildland Firefighter Training

New York’s Volunteer Firefighter Training Stipend program is being expanded to reimburse costs related to basic wildland fire suppression for firefighters involved in fighting wildfires, announced Gov. Kathy Hochul recently.

The course, a joint effort of the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Service’s Office of Fire Prevention and Control. and the Department of Environmental Conservation, covers responsibilities, fire behavior, weather, and other factors related to wildland firefighting.

Over the last two years, New York experienced 268 wildfires that burned nearly 7,900 acres of land, averaging less than 11 acres in size. This number does not include the Jennings Creek wildfire last year, which burned more than 5,000 acres over a span of 14 days. To contain the Jennings Creek blaze, 427 fire companies – which were nearly all volunteer – sent more than 1,300 firefighters to assist.

“Now more than ever it is crucial to make training as accessible and affordable as possible for those

who work to keep us safe,” said Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray. “Last year’s Jennings Creek fire was a firsthand example of why it is so important that structural firefighters be trained to handle wildland fires, too. We thank the men and women who comprise New York’s volunteer fire service and encourage them to take advantage of these training opportunities.”

Established in the state’s 2024 budget, the Volunteer Firefighter Training Stipend program, administered by the Office of Fire Prevention and Control, seeks to strengthen the volunteer fire service by offsetting the costs of required trainings, making it easier for new recruits to join volunteer fire departments and help protect their communities.

Training covered by the program will reimburse \$250 per student and will be led by the DEC with assistance from Office of Fire Prevention and Control staff. DEC forest rangers are expert wildland firefighters who hold dozens of trainings in wildland fire management each year to assist with build-

ing local capacity among other responders.

Fire departments should contact their county fire coordinator to schedule a course at the local level.

Since Aug. 31, 2023, more than 1,400 firefighters have successfully completed training through the stipend program.

Additional information, including how to apply, can be found at www.dhses.ny.gov/new-york-state-volunteer-firefighter-stipend-program.

Approximately 9 million New Yorkers – nearly half of the state’s population – are served by volunteer firefighters. Yet in recent years, more than 75 percent of these departments have reported a decrease in the number of individuals willing to volunteer and serve. This is further compounded by the increased operational responsibilities beyond fire protection to include vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, hazardous material spills, and weather-related rescue operations.

At the same time, calls for service have increased 29 percent from 1997 to 2020.

New Mid-Hudson Libraries Mobile App Launched

The Mid-Hudson Library System has launched a new mobile app designed to streamline library services from any mobile device, making it easier for library users to access resources, manage their accounts, and stay updated about library events.

With user-friendly features and seamless integration, the app is set to transform the way communities connect with their libraries in Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Putnam, and Ulster counties.

“We are thrilled to offer this new service which makes life easier,” said Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS executive director, “This new app puts millions of library items at your fingertips and helps you interact with your public library and connect with the collections of all 66 member libraries.”

Features of the new app include:

- Store your library card barcode digitally and use the app to scan your barcode at a participating library.
- Push notifications for library news and alerts; and in-app (and soon push) notifications for holds, items due soon, overdue,

and account expiration.

- Scan any book to see if the libraries have a copy; and search the catalog and place holds.
- Make lists (separate from the lists in the Discover catalog).
- Reading tracker feature.
- Quick links to digital library services like Libby, Transparent Language, and JobNow.
- Find nearby libraries and their hours with links to navigation; and use the app to navigate the Mid-Hudson Library System Road Trip around all 66 libraries – with souvenirs available all summer.

The new Mid-Hudson Libraries mobile app is in both the Apple and Android app stores.

The Mid-Hudson Library System is a cooperative public library system chartered by the New York State Board of Regents and overseen by the NYS Education Department via the Division of Library Development. It is dedicated to working with 66 member libraries to strengthen local library services while saving local tax dollars.

For more information, visit www.midhudson.org.

County Courtroom Named After Judge Reitz

Continued from Page 1

spire others in Putnam County and beyond. I was proud in my former role as assemblyman to sponsor and pass the state legislation which designated this courtroom, and I am honored to help continue his legacy of community dedication and fairness today.”

“Judge James Reitz was a model public servant whose legacy will deservedly continue for generations,” added Assemblyman Matt Slater, R-Yorktown. “This courtroom will be a constant reminder of his compassion and love for Putnam County. I applaud all of our partners in government

for remembering such a great friend.”

A lifelong resident of Putnam County and graduate of Carmel High School, Reitz served as a Carmel town justice between 1996 and 2006 before winning election as a Putnam County Court judge in 2007. He also served as an acting justice with the NYS Supreme Court.

One of Reitz’ many achievements included instituting the Drug Treatment Court in Putnam County, which gave residents an innovative way to get a second chance in the judicial system. The drug court’s success made it a model for similar courts around the country, and was featured in an Emmy Award-winning documentary.

A third-generation, life member of the Mahopac Falls Volunteer Fire Department, Reitz was also a member of the Rotary Club of Carmel.

Medicaid Spend-Down Strategies

Continued from Page 6

come spend-down protocol incorporated into the Community Medicaid system. The current Medicaid income limit for 2025 is \$1,800 per month. For many New Yorkers, their pension and Social Security amounts far exceed that \$1,800 limit. Excess income can either be protected with a Pooled Supplemental Needs Trust or by reducing the amount by submitting paid or unpaid medical bills.

This medical bill spend-

down program ensures excess income is not wasted or unnecessarily paid to the provider for the coverage months impacted.

We may not be enamored of all of the regulations contained within the 1,006 pages of the Medicaid Reference Guide, but what we do appreciate is the collective understanding that New Yorkers pay more for goods, services, and housing costs than residents of other states.

A New York Medicaid applicant should be able to maintain a secure and sustainable quality of life while receiving the best health care possible.

Alan D. Feller, Esq., is managing partner of The Feller Group, located at 572 Route 6, Suite 103, Mahopac. He can be reached at alandfeller@thefellergroup.com.

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Detector Dogs: Agriculture’s Best Friend

FAMILY FEATURES

They may be cute, fluffy and friendly, but some dogs also have an important job: protecting America’s food supply.

By deploying specially trained beagles, Labrador retrievers and Jack Russell terriers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal Plant Health Inspection Services’ (APHIS) Detector Dog Program puts elite canines to work on the front lines at international airports, mail facilities and border crossings throughout the nation. These furry sleuths maneuver between passengers and luggage to search, locate and respond to the presence of banned fruits, plants and meats that may harbor damaging insects and diseases that threaten the country’s agricultural production and natural resources.

The program was started in 1984 and soon grew in demand. By 2009, APHIS opened a 17-acre National Detector Dog Training Center near the Atlanta International Airport. At the center, dogs and their handlers go through an 8-10-week training program to learn how to inspect passenger luggage and handbags for agricultural goods such as fruits, vegetables, beef and pork.

Detector dogs patrol ports of entry, borders and airports to keep harmful pests, like invasive fruit flies, out of the country. For example, labrador retrievers and their handlers protect the nation’s fruit by patrolling citrus orchards along the Texas-Mexico border in search of infested or diseased crops.



Safeguarding U.S. agriculture and natural resources is part of the program’s mission, but APHIS’ Detector Dog Program also partners with countries like Canada and Taiwan to supply guidance, training and testing of canine detection. There are even detector dog teams on the job at cargo airports throughout countries in the Pacific, tasked with identifying invasive species and stopping them from reaching Hawaii. The work these dogs and their handlers do is critical to help stop the spread of invasive plant and animal pests and diseases that could ravage America’s agriculture.

A detector dog’s career spans 6-8 years before they retire at 9 years old. At retirement age, 90% of dogs are adopted by their handler. In the rare case they are not, the handler will recommend a good home and a successful adoption program ensures all dogs are well placed.

Constantly on the lookout for new pups, APHIS works closely with animal shelters, rescue groups and private individuals to find the right dogs for the job from anywhere in the country. New recruits are 1-3 years old, heartworm negative, have high food drive and are environmentally and socially friendly. The ideal candidate is often that high-energy, hard-to-handle pooch who simply needs a job and a purpose.

If you or someone you know would like to help the program grow its squad of super sniffers, email usdacanineadoptions@usda.gov, call (887) 797-3899 or learn more at aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/ppq-program-overview/nddc.

Content courtesy of USDA

What Women Should Know About Their Heart, Kidney and Metabolic Health

FAMILY FEATURES

Some women may be unaware they’re living with risks for heart disease, kidney disease and metabolic conditions like diabetes, which drive risk for cardiovascular disease.

The interplay among these conditions is called cardiovascular-kidney-metabolic (CKM) syndrome, according to the scientific experts at the American Heart Association. Consider these facts women should know about CKM syndrome.

Cardiovascular Disease is the No. 1 Killer of Women

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), which includes heart disease and stroke, affects nearly 45% of women ages 20 and older, and 1 in 3 women will die from it, according to the association.

“Despite heart disease being the leading cause of death for women, most women are not aware of their risk for heart disease,” said Sadiya S. Khan, M.D., M.Sc., FAHA, American Heart Association volunteer and a member of the science advisory group for the association’s CKM Health Initiative, supported by founding sponsors Novo Nordisk and Boehringer Ingelheim and champion sponsor DaVita.



Photos courtesy of Shutterstock



Women may develop heart disease differently than men and experience symptoms uncommon in men. Women are more likely to have blockage in smaller blood vessels around the heart and, while chest pain is the most common heart attack symptom, women are more likely than men to experience pain in the arms, jaw and neck, too.

Early Action is Key

According to a study presented at an American Heart Association scientific conference, women with either Type 2 diabetes or chronic kidney disease are predicted to reach elevated risk for CVD 8-9 years earlier than women with neither condition while women with both conditions may reach high risk 26 years earlier.

Risk Factors are Connected

The health factors that comprise CKM syndrome are connected. They include high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol, excess weight, high blood glucose sugar and low kidney function. If something goes wrong in one area, it affects others.

“Knowing your health numbers is critical to optimize your CKM health and prioritize prevention of heart, kidney and metabolic disease,” said Khan, who is also the Magerstadt professor of cardiovascular epidemiology and an associate professor of cardiology and preventive medicine at Northwestern School of Medicine.

Since high blood pressure and early stages of kidney disease and diabetes often don’t have symptoms, regular screening is necessary to be aware of your risk.

Pregnancy and Menopause Affect Women’s CKM Health

Each pregnancy is a window into later heart and kidney health, according to Janani Rangaswami, M.D., FAHA, professor of

medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences and co-chair of the scientific advisory group for the American Heart Association’s presidential advisory that defined CKM syndrome.

Pregnancy complications such as pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes and gestational hypertension are risk factors for future chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease, Rangaswami said.

Changes during menopause also influence long-term heart and metabolic health. This includes declining estrogen levels, increased body fat around the organs, increased cholesterol levels and stiffening or weakening of blood vessels, per the American Heart Association. Early menopause (before age 45) is linked to a higher risk for kidney disease, Type 2 diabetes and CVD.

“Women can mitigate those risks by getting appropriate treatment for their menopause symptoms,” Rangaswami said.

Social Factors Affect Women’s Health

Negative economic, environmental and psychosocial factors are associated with lower levels of preventive health behaviors like physical activity and healthy eating and higher levels of conditions like obesity and diabetes. Some factors affect women differently than men. For example, marriage is associated with worse health for women, and women are more likely than men to delay medical care because of costs, according to an American Heart Association scientific statement. Women are also more likely to have their health concerns dismissed, Khan said.

Women should know their risk and self-advocacy is critical. They should request thorough screenings that assess heart, kidney and metabolic health at visits with their health care providers. Visit heart.org/myCKMhealth to learn more.