

Harrison Herald

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Congressional Record
PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 172 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026 No. 4

House of Representatives
RECOGNIZING SHORELINE PUBLISHING
CONGRESSMAN GEORGE LATIMER SPEAKING ON THE FLOOR

Mr. Speaker, in a world where local newspapers and radio stations are disappearing, it is valuable to recognize and salute those organizations that are continuing to provide information about our local communities' life and times.

In Westchester County we owe a public debt of gratitude to Shoreline Publishing, which serves the people of southern Westchester with five community newspapers; a countywide Jewish monthly newspaper and a full-color quarterly magazine, *Westchester Women*.

Under the leadership of president and publisher Edward Shapiro, Shoreline provides and information lifeline across out towns with the *Pelham Post*, *Scarsdale Sentinel*, *Harrison Herald*, *Larchmont Ledger*--as you can see, alliteration still has its appeal--and the *New Rochelle Review*.

Editors Cynthia Pena and Joyce Farrell ensure timely local news reaches the readers in each community, as well as the readers of *Westchester Jewish Life*, which is always available in the local synagogues and temples. Other key Shoreline executives round out the local team, including Lauren Levine and Mary DeYoung.

I thank Shoreline Publishing from the floor of the House of Representatives for continuing to keep local news at the forefront of our hometowns.

Appointments, First of Year Resolutions Announced at Board Meeting

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

Former Harrison Mayor/Supervisor Ron Belmont welcomed the public to the January 1, 2026 Town Board/Village Board meeting, remarking that this was the 330th year of the Town. Father Joseph P. Tierney, St. Gregory the Great Church rendered the Opening Prayer.

"God of all time, help us to enter the New Year quietly, thoughtful of those who we are to ourselves and others, mindful that our words carry power. May we walk gently. May we speak only after we have listened well..." Father Tierney stated.

Belmont then introduced Ex-Councilman Fred Sciliano, who presented the Itinerary, beginning with Justice Daniel D. Angiulillo, sworn in by Justice Pasquale G. Gizzo; Town Clerk

Angela Sposato, Receiver of Tax-

es Michael Giordano, Councilwomen Elizabeth Brown, Gina Evangelista by Gizzo and new Supervisor/Mayor Thomas Scappaticci by Angiulillo.



Elizabeth Brown

The Invocation was delivered by Father Tierney and a short Council meeting followed.

First of the Year Council Resolutions encompassed appointments of Angela Vaccaro as Deputy Supervisor; Natalie Greco, Confidential Secretary to Supervisor; Frank P. Allegretti, Town Attorney;

continued on page 4

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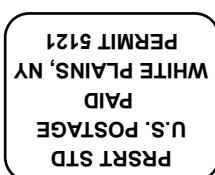
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The Next Play: High School Sports Through a Student's Lens

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Dobbs Ferry Senior guard Anthony Ficarotta (22) commits a hard foul on Westlake Sophomore guard Chayton Velez (3).



White Plains Senior Guard Rocco Briante (0) is trapped in his own corner by Pearl River Senior guard TJ



Junior Matteo Crino Up-Ends his opponent, Sophomore Matthew Rodriguez in New Rochelle's decisive win over East Ramapo.

Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins Announces Leadership Transitions and Promotions

With a new year and a new term, Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins announced a series of leadership updates within County government, honoring the retirement of a senior leader and highlighting key promotions from within the organization.

Deputy County Executive Richard Wishnie will retire at the end of January after more than 50 years of dedicated public service to the people of Westchester County. Wishnie's long and distinguished career included an appointment to Acting Westchester County Executive, laying the foundation for his role as Deputy County Executive. Wishnie, who also served at the Westchester County Director of Emergency Services, was elected to the Westchester County Board of Legislators in 1993, where he served six terms representing the Town of Ossining, the Villages of Briarcliff Manor, Ossining, and Croton-on-Hudson, as well as portions of the Town of Cortlandt. Before his service at the County level, Wishnie served the Town of Ossining as Councilman from 1976 to 1979 and as Supervisor from 1979 to 1983.

Jenkins said: "Richard Wishnie's career has been defined by deep commitment, thoughtful leadership and a genuine love for public service. He helped guide this County through countless challenges with steadiness and integrity. His institutional knowledge, kindness and dedication have left a lasting mark on Westchester County. On behalf of our entire workforce, I thank Richard for his service and wish him the very best in a well-deserved retirement."

Wishnie said: "Serving the people of Westchester County has been an honor and a privilege. I am incredibly proud of the work we've done together and the dedicated public servants I've had the opportunity to work alongside. I thank County Executive Jenkins for his faith in me, and I leave knowing the County is in strong, capable hands."

Jenkins also announced leadership promotions that underscore Westchester County's commitment to developing talent from within.

Joan McDonald has been promoted to Deputy County Executive. McDonald brings decades of experience in public ser-

vice and infrastructure leadership, along with a deep understanding of government operations. She previously served as the Director of Operations, the New York State Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, and Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. She is also the Chair of the IDA and LDC, and the NYS Bridge Authority.

Jenkins said: "Joan's experience, judgment, and steady leadership make her exceptionally well-suited for this role. She has dedicated her career to strengthening communities, and her leadership will continue to be a tremendous asset to Westchester County."

McDonald said: "It is an honor to be appointed Westchester County Deputy County Executive. I greatly admire the leadership of Ken Jenkins, and look forward to working with him as he advances his agenda for Westchester County residents."

Emily Saltzman has been promoted to Director of Operations. Saltzman has served Westchester County for nearly a decade as the Deputy Director of Oper-

ations, and brings extensive experience from local and State government. She also serves on the Purchase College Council.

Jenkins said: "Emily's promotion reflects her deep institutional knowledge, strong leadership, and personal commitment to this County. She understands how government works and how to make it work better for the people we serve."

Saltzman said: "I am grateful to County Executive Ken Jenkins for the opportunity to continue serving the people of Westchester County. I look forward to working with our Commissioners, Directors, and the outstanding County workforce to provide programs and services to Westchester residents."

Under the leadership of McDonald and Saltzman, the Operations team guided the County through the COVID-19 response, oversaw the development of the County's \$2.5 billion budget, and launched innovative initiatives including the Housing FLEX Funds, the Local Transportation Assistance Program (LTAP), and the Department of Infrastructure Grants (DIG) Program.



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Senator Shelley Mayer Announces State Grant for Harrison Police Department



From L to R: Chief John Vasta, Senator Shelley Mayer, and Lt. Carmine Gentile.

New York State Senator Shelley Mayer joined the Harrison Police Department on Tuesday, January 6, to announce \$100,000 in state funding, secured by Senator Mayer, to assist the department in purchasing three new Harley Davidson Police motorcycles, equipped and outfitted with the proper lights, sirens, decals, and an additional battery. The Harrison Police Department's Motorcycle Unit will utilize these motorcycles for parades, funeral processions, and patrol operations when weather conditions permit.

State Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, "I am pleased to have secured \$100,000 in State funding to help the Harrison Police Department purchase three fully equipped Harley-Davidson police motorcycles. It is crucial that our officers have the necessary tools and resources to keep our community safe. Thank you to Police Chief John Vasta, Lt. Carmine Gentile, and the dedicated members of the Harrison Police Department for your continued commitment to public safety."

Harrison Police Chief John T. Vasta said, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Mayer for the diligent efforts in the planning, submitting, and awarding of New York State grant funds to the Harrison Police Department. This CREST grant funding has been put to good use - with the purchase of three fully outfitted Harley Davidson Police Motorcycles. Our motorcycle unit contributes greatly to the Department's Mission by improving highway safety through education and enforcement, as well as providing escorts of dignitaries and funeral processions."

The funding was awarded through the New York State Senate's Community Resiliency, Economic Sustainability, and Technology (CREST) Program. CREST grants are awarded to municipalities through application and administered by the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY), to use for improvement and infrastructure projects.



Harrison Herald • February 2026 •

Purchase College Hosts 8th Annual Startup Pitching Competition for Student Entrepreneurs

On Tuesday, December 2, Purchase College, SUNY took a page from reality television when the Economic program presented its own startup pitching competition, modeled on the popular ABC show *Shark Tank*. The Eighth Annual *Shark Tank* Competition gave students on five teams the opportunity to pitch their business ideas to entrepreneurs and investors.

The judges and audience determined the winners who received awards for their business pursuits. The \$4,500 in prizes was provided by the Dr. E. Lawrence Deckinger Family Foundation.

- This year's grand prize of \$3000 for new business idea went to Get Loaded, a company that will create a fun lounge for students to socialize when doing their laundry. The Get Loaded team included Isabella Millan-Pedraza, Sebastian Ford, Yordi Gonzalez, and Michael M. Rice.
- The second prize for \$1,500 went to Tachynel Merveille, whose business idea, Tasty T Cuisine, is to provide home cooked Caribbean food to students late at night and to eventually open a restaurant in Manhattan.
- The Audience Favorite Prize for \$1,000 went to Focus Frame, an AI fueled app to help students with executive functioning and time management skills. Focus Frame was designed by Johan Abreu, Binta Bah, Constantine Farinaccio, Anthony Cruz, and Liam Pheffer.

"*Shark Tank* offers Purchase students incredible opportunities. We have contestants who are already running their small businesses, and the competition provides them with the chance to contemplate scaling up and dreaming big. Additionally, we have students who only have their big idea, and *Shark Tank* assists them in formalizing it into a doable business plan," said Assistant Professor of Economics, Iuliia Chikish, who spearheaded the competition.

Second prize-winner, Tachynel Merveille, reflected on the value of her experience, saying, "My biggest takeaway is that things rarely go exactly as planned, and that's okay. What truly matters is having a well-developed idea and the confidence to present it with real passion. When you stand firmly behind what you've created, everything else tends to fall into place, so no matter how big or small the idea, do it!"

Audience favorite winner, Constantine Farinaccio said, "Participating in the *Shark Tank* competition was a genuinely eye-opening moment. The challenge sharpened our ability to pitch under pressure, and we're grateful to everyone who showed up and supported the event. We're excited to take what we've learned and channel it into even stronger pitches going forward. Sincere thanks to the Dr. E. Lawrence Deckinger Family Foundation for making this possible."

This year's *Shark Tank* event was made possible by generous contributions from the Dr. E. Lawrence Deckinger Family Foundation.

The "sharks" were a diverse group of entrepreneurs who provided invaluable feedback after each student's presentation.

They included: Jocelyn Greenkey Underwood, Business Transformation Strategist and Founder- SiderRoad; Katie Mayer, Purchase Alum and Founder of EarlyBird Coffee Shop, Briarcliff Manor; Nick Read, Founder and CFO of Read & Right LLC; and Julie Tsai, Food Consultant.

Appointments, First of Year Resolutions Announced at Board Meeting

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John M. Murtagh, Deputy Town Attorney; Town Clerk Sposato, Marriage Officer, Registrar of Vital Statistics; Carol Caruso, Deputy Town Clerk, Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics; Michael Amodeo, Town Engineer; re-appointments of Maureen MacKenzie, Comptroller and Sean O'Connell, Deputy Court Clerk.

Appointment of Supervisor Scappaticci as Public Library Treasurer; appointments of Scappaticci, Vaccaro and Councilman Michael DiConstanzo as Police Pension Fund Officers for 2026.

Village Board First of the Year Resolutions included approval of First of the Year Resolutions adopted by the Town Board during the Town Board Meeting of this date; re-appointment of Jonathan D. Kraut as Village Attorney by the Mayor for term of one year and appointment of Andrea C. Rendo as Deputy Village Attorney for one year term by the Mayor, effective January 1, 2026.



FROM EMERGENCY ROOM TO OPERATING ROOM TO HOME THE SAME DAY. THAT'S EXCEPTIONAL.

At 4 a.m., Keith's pain became so unbearable that he went to the White Plains Hospital emergency room. Dr. Andrew Casden, Chief of Orthopedics, determined his leg pain was caused by a severely compressed spinal nerve and operated immediately. Keith returned home pain-free that same day—on his way to a full recovery and back onto the tennis courts he loves.



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Rye High School Football Honored with Rye Recognition of Excellence Award

The Rye High School football team was honored with the Rye Recognition of Excellence Award during a recent board of education meeting, celebrating a championship season that reflected the values of the Rye Commitment and brought pride to the Rye community.

The Garnets earned the recognition following their New York State Class A championship victory, completing an undefeated season marked by disciplined preparation, teamwork and resilience. The Rye Recognition of Excellence Award is presented to individuals or groups whose achievements demonstrate excellence, leadership and a positive impact within the school district and community.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tricia Murray commended the players, coaches and families for a season that resonated beyond the field and united students, staff, alumni and community members.

"Your fellow students, your teachers, Garnet alumni and fans of all ages experienced a season we will always remember," Murray said.

Rye City Mayor Josh Nathan also addressed the team, praising the players for continuing the strong tradition of Rye High School football and highlighting the leadership and joy the team brought to both the school district and the City of Rye.

State representatives joined in recognizing the team's outstanding performance, noting not only the championship achievement but also the broader impact of the program on school spirit and community connection. They highlighted the program's long-standing culture of excellence, mentorship and commitment as key factors in the team's success.



The Rye Recognition of Excellence Award reflects the district's belief that student achievement is grounded in character, collaboration and perseverance. Throughout the season, the Rye High School football team exemplified these principles through its conduct, dedica-

tion and representation of the school.

The Rye City School District congratulates the Rye High School football team on its exceptional achievement and wishes continued success to returning players and graduating seniors as they pursue future academic and athletic endeavors.

Rye High School Model United Nations Club earns top honors at Central Model UN Conference

Members of the Rye High School Model United Nations Club earned both individual and team recognition at the 43rd Annual Central Model UN Conference, held recently in Syracuse.

12 Rye High School students participated in the conference, representing all

grade levels and including both first-time delegates and experienced participants. Students traveled together to Syracuse to attend what is widely recognized as the largest high school-led Model UN conference in the nation. In addition to committee sessions, students had opportunities to connect with peers from across the country, attend guest speaker presentations and take part in fundraising efforts supporting the International Committee of Artists for Peace.

Throughout the conference, students demonstrated strong preparation, collaboration and diplomacy while engaging in advanced committee simulations centered on this year's theme, Forging Unity in a Fragmented World. Their collective efforts resulted in Rye High School being named Best Small School Delegation, marking the first time the school has received a Best Delegation

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Harrison Teen Becomes First Local Girl Scout in 16 Years to Earn Gold Award

Harrison High School junior Samantha Ferrara earned the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor in Girl Scouting, on Oct. 20, 2025. She is the first Girl Scout from Harrison to receive the Gold Award in at least 16 years.

The Gold Award is rare and highly selective. Only about 5 percent of eligible Girl Scouts nationwide earn the distinction, reflecting the level of leadership, planning, and sustained community impact required.

Ferrara earned the award for her project, Sam's Sacred Style, which addresses textile waste and clothing insecur-

ity. Through the initiative, she collected, restored, and redistributed gently worn white Communion and Confirmation dresses to families in need.

To date, Ferrara has collected and redistributed 352 dresses and diverted more than 1,400 pounds of textiles from landfills. She was mentored by a co-founder of Helpsy, a textile reuse and recycling company, reinforcing the project's environmental focus. She also partnered with Food for the Poor and Angels of Hope to distribute dresses globally to girls facing clothing insecurity and to orphanages, expanding the project's reach beyond Westchester and the United States.

Beyond her Gold Award project, Ferrara has demonstrated a broader commitment to environmental education. She has published a children's book, *Compost with Coco*, focused on composting and the environmental benefits of food waste reduction, and has written and published a research paper examining consumer behavior and sustainability in the fast



Samantha Ferrara, with the new Town of Harrison Mayor Tom Scappaticci. The Mayor will be honoring Samantha at their February 5th, 2026 Town Board Meeting at 7pm.

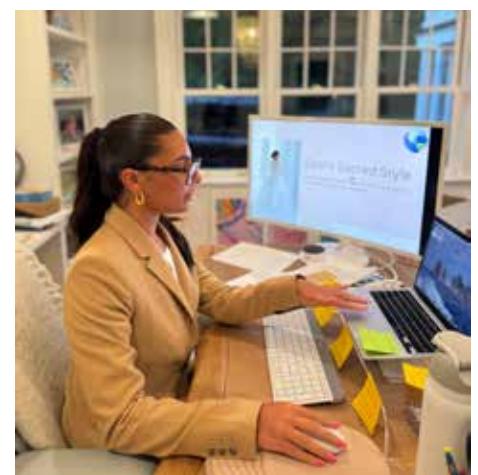
fashion industry.

"I wanted to show that meaningful change can start locally and still reach far beyond our community," Ferrara said. "Many of the girls I worked with felt embarrassed or discouraged because their families couldn't afford a new dress. Being able to support them, restore their confidence, and show them how reusing clothing also helps the Earth was incredibly meaningful."

Ferrara serves as vice president of

the Harrison High School Environmental Club and interns with the Harrison Sustainability Committee, where she supports local initiatives related to composting, recycling, and sustainable practices. She hopes to pursue a future that combines science, research, teaching, and community-based impact, allowing her curiosity to drive hands-on learning and service.

The next Sam's Sacred Style dress distribution event is slated for early March at St. John's the Baptist Church in White Plains. For updates and additional information, follow Sam's Sacred Style on Instagram.



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From Despair to Hope: Conquering Peripheral Neuropathy

"My feet feel like they're on fire." "Each step feels like I'm walking through wet paint." "I can't sleep because my hands and feet tingle all night." "I live in constant fear that I'll fall."

What do all of these people have in common? They each suffer from Peripheral Neuropathy (PN). It is estimated that more than 20 million people in the United States have PN. Unfortunately, this figure may be significantly higher as the disease is often misdiagnosed due to its wide array of symptoms.

Ginnette Diaz, Licensed Acupuncturist, founder of White Plains Acupuncture, shares the belief that PN is more common than even the worst estimate. "I've been treating neuropathy, in all its various forms, for over 15 years, and so often my patients come to me because of the symptoms, not because of a diagnosis. They read one of my news articles, or read the testimonial of another patient, and say to themselves, 'Hey, I feel the same thing.'"

Frankie M. of Rye testified to this: "I remember my husband driving me to my consultation and I saw a woman running just outside our neighborhood. I was so envious- I

just kept thinking 'I would give anything just to walk again.' My primary care doctor told me my troubles with pain and balance were just symptoms of old age and gave me a prescription. I was so depressed."

Fortunately, Frankie would eventually see Ginnette Diaz on the local news talking about similar symptoms and how she offers a real solution at White Plains Acupuncture. "I just knew I had to see her. She was my last hope."

"Almost all of our patients come to us with a story similar to Frankie's. They've been everywhere else. They've been told there's no hope. They've been told it's 'just part of getting older,'" shares Jeinny, a Patient Care Technician at White Plains Acupuncture. "It just breaks my heart, but I know how much we can help people like Frankie, so I'm always so happy when they walk through our door."

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves, often caused by (and always compounded by) a lack of blood flow in the hands and feet. This lack of blood flow results in a lack of nutrients, and the nerves begin to degenerate and die. This causes pain and other sensations ranging from

uncomfortable to debilitating. Because neuropathy is a degenerative condition, once those nerves begin to deteriorate they will continue to do so until they are completely expired, leaving those suffering with crippling balance issues. "In this case, the absence of pain is not necessarily a good thing," shares Ginnette Diaz. "This usually indicates that your nerves are hanging on by a fragile thread."

Those diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy often face a very grim reality: Western medicine declares that there is no solution, while alternative therapies offer little to no results. Ginnette Diaz and the staff at White Plains Acupuncture have a track record that proves that they are different, and they pride themselves on being "the last resort with the best results."

So exactly how is Acupuncturist Ginnette Diaz able to reverse the effects of this degenerative disease? Through a unique blend of one of the most time-tested therapies and the most cutting-edge. "Acupuncture has been used to increase blood flow for thousands of years, and it helps get the necessary nutrients to the affected nerves. But the real magic happens when I integrate ATP Resonance BioTherapy®. This is a technology that was originally developed by NASA to expedite healing and recovery."

"I just can't say enough about White Plains Acupuncture," Frankie shares through tears of joy. "My husband and I moved here 3 years ago and he's gone to the beach almost every day. I always stayed home because of the pain and discomfort. But yesterday, I walked on the beach with him! And next week we're starting dancing lessons. I am truly living life these days." "According to Frankie's test

results, she has seen a 74% improvement in pain and functionality, which is on par with a majority of our patients," shares Jeinny. "But more important than those test results is the joy she's expressed in being here, and getting to hear about all the amazing things she's able to do because she feels great!"

By seamlessly blending the ancient science of acupuncture with modern medical solutions, Ginnette Diaz has achieved a 90% success rate in reversing the effects of neuropathy. She starts each patient with an initial consultation during which a sensory exam is performed. "This not only aids in making a proper diagnosis, but it helps to define just how much nerve damage has occurred," explains Ginnette Diaz. "This is important because if a patient has suffered more than 95% damage, there is little that I can do to help them. I'm familiar with the medical miracle but I know my limits as a practitioner and the limits of my medicine."

When it comes to treating Peripheral Neuropathy, regardless of its origin, early detection greatly improves your chances of a full recovery.

If you or someone you love are suffering with chronic pain that presents as burning, tingling or 'pins and needles,' or you've recently been diagnosed with Peripheral Neuropathy (PN), it's important to know that there are options.

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State Senator Shelley Mayer Passes Legislation to Improve Emergency Medical Services



State Senator Shelley Mayer announced that her bill, S.8806, which amends previously enacted legislation directing counties, working in coordination with cities, towns, villages, and other EMS providers, to develop comprehensive, countywide plans for coordinated emergency medical services, has passed the Senate unanimously.

This legislation builds on the EMS bill that was signed into law last year, sponsored by Senator Mayer and Assemblyman Steve Otis, by adding provisions requiring the Department of Health (DOH), in consultation with state and regional emergency medical services councils, to provide a model format for county plans and provides for DOH review and feedback to the counties. This bill gives counties a clear roadmap to assessing and improving EMS within their counties and will strengthen and improve EMS statewide.

State Senator Shelley Mayer said, "I am pleased that the State Senate has passed this important legislation to provide greater support to EMS providers across New York. This agreement between the Legislature and the Governor represents a meaningful step toward addressing the serious, statewide challenges facing our EMS systems, including the gaps in coverage and unacceptable wait times affecting communities both upstate and downstate. By establishing a framework for counties to better coordinate emergency services and supporting them throughout the review process, we are helping ensure that EMS providers have the tools they need to care for New Yorkers. I am grateful to my colleague, Assemblyman Steve Otis, for his partnership in this effort, and to the dedicated EMS professionals across the state, especially those in my district, not only for their service, but also for their longstanding advocacy. I look forward to this legislation coming before the Assembly."

Assemblyman Steve Otis said, "The goal of our legislation, and the Chapter Amendment approved today, is to advance the EMS reform process by asking local governments to work together to evaluate the status of EMS service in their areas and develop county plans to make sure every New Yorker has reliable emergency medical response. We believe that EMS planning statewide must respect the variation and flexibility that has been the hallmark of emergency response in New York. Counties, cities, towns, and villages will work together to draft plans that include the variety of public and private provider structures based on what local officials believe will be the most successful in their region. Our great appreciation goes to Governor Kathy Hochul, the NYS Department of Health, our municipal government, emergency service, and fire district organizations for working with Senator Mayer and me to move this important next step forward."

TABLE HOPPING with Morris Gut

February is loaded with foodie indulgences. The Chinese Lunar New Year, 'Year of the Fire Horse' celebration runs from February 17 to the 23rd. Many Asian eateries will be extending the festivities thru the month with special dishes and menus. Be sure to check ahead for exact dates, times, and pricing. Here are some tasty suggestions...

SOUP DUMPLINGS AT MISTER CHEN

Mister Chen in Mamaroneck and Scarsdale serves a modernized Chinese menu espousing popular traditional regional dishes. It is carving out a place all its own thanks to owner Paul Chen and his mom who is head chef. I was excited about the dumpling station where you can watch the cooks prepare a variety of Chinese dumplings from scratch. Take a careful bite and suck up that delicious warm broth, then savor the delicious pork or crab filling. If you are a novice, the staff will show you how. Have also enjoyed their Pork Belly Sandwich, meaty Spareribs, General Tsao's Chicken, spicy Kung Pao Chicken, and Jumbo Prawns with garlic sauce. There's even old fashioned Chow Mein. Mister Chen, 265 Mamaroneck Ave., Mamaroneck. 914-777-1212 www.misterchennyc.com

Aberdeen Seafood & Dim Sum, 3 Barker Ave., White Plains (914-288-0188), in the Residence Inn, will be offering a special Chinese New Year's menu. You can also celebrate with a run through their popular Dim Sum, or from the regular menu. www.aberdeenswhiteplains.com.

Ku Asian Bistro, 480 New Rochelle Road, in the Chester Heights section of Bronxville (914-668-8877), has a fine hand with their regional Chinese fusion specialties. 'Ku' is a Chinese word meaning 'fantastic', so let the chefs surprise you with their delightful Asian fusion flavors. From the Chinese kitchen try the Spareribs, Shrimp with Long Bean, Moo Shu Pork, Kung Pao Chicken, and General Tso's Chicken. Free parking. www.kuasianbistro.com

O Mandarin Chinese Cuisine, 361 N. Central Ave., Hartsdale (914-437-9168) will be serving the classics: Peking Duck, assorted Hot Pots, and hearty Mandarin Pork Shank, in their beautifully decorated dining room. Recommended by the Michelin restaurant guide. www.omandarin.com

ASIAN FUSION & VIETNAMESE & KOREAN & TIBET! Communities in Vietnam, Korea, Tibet, Thailand, and Singapore also mark the Lunar New Year. Local venues to check out:



Saigonese, 158 S. Central Ave., Hartsdale (914-288-9088), good spot for Spring Rolls, big bowls of Pho, Spareribs, and delish Bun Vermicelli Bowls with lettuce wraps. Closed in Lunar New Year's Day, Jan. 22. www.saigoneseartsdale.com

Jewel of Himalaya, 751 Central Park Ave., Scarsdale (914-874-5506) & 34 Triangle Center, Yorktown Heights; a tasty fusion of Tibet/Indian/Nepal cuisines serving Momo Dumplings and Stir-Fried Noodles. www.himalayarestaurantny.com

The Banh Mi Shop, 148 Mamaroneck Ave., White Plains (914-686-6888). Len Dang's specialties include Grilled Short Ribs, a variety of Banh Mi Sandwiches, great Brussels Sprouts with lemongrass and garlic, and Grilled Pepper Shrimp. www.thebanhmishopny.com

WANT TO COOK IT UP YOURSELF?

If you are an intrepid home cook and want to pull the old wok out of the closet and oil it up, you may want to visit big bustling H-Mart for a wide variety of pan-Asian products. They are located at 371 N. Central Ave., Hartsdale (914-448-8888). There is another H-Mart in the Highridge Shopping Center on Central Park Ave., Yonkers. www.hmart.com Though smaller, Top Asia Mart/New Golden Village Oriental Market, 365 Central Park Ave., Scarsdale (914-437-9795), would also be a good bet.

(Morris Gut is a restaurant marketing consultant and former restaurant trade magazine editor. He has been tracking and writing about the food and dining scene in greater Westchester for 30 years. He may be reached at: 914-235-6591. E-mail: gutreactions@optonline.net)

Rye High School Model United Nations Club earns top honors at Central Model UN Conference

continued from page 6

award at the conference.

Several students also earned individual honors for their performance. Miles Silber and Rajan Patel received Honorable Mention recognition in the Advanced NATO Committee. Dylan Smailes was named Outstanding Delegate in the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Caleigh Wardle earned Outstanding Delegate recognition in the UN Disarmament and International Security Committee.

The Rye High School delegation included Ainsley Parks, Chloe Wang, Dylan Smailes, Evelina Levickaja, Fiona Green, Greta Murdoch, Lily Zaicek, Miles Silber, Owen Rothstein, Peyton Leahy, Rajan Patel and Caleigh Wardle.

The district also recognized the contributions of Model UN Club advisor Mr. Bannon, whose leadership and guidance supported students throughout their preparation and participation in the conference.

The Rye City School District congratulates the Rye High School Model UN Club on this outstanding achievement and commends the students for representing their school with professionalism, thoughtfulness and global awareness.

Former Employee of Rye Bakery Pleads Guilty in Connection with \$100k Theft

Westchester County District Attorney Susan Cacace announced that a former employee of The Snackery Bake Shop, in Rye, has pleaded guilty in connection with his theft of over \$100,000 from the bakery during his employment there.

Paul DiPietro, 39, of White Plains, pleaded guilty to one count of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony. He is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge George Fufidio on April 9.

DA Cacace said: "Small businesses are the lifeblood of our county's economy, and they often have the fewest resources to defend themselves against fraudulent conduct. That Mr. DiPietro targeted his then-employer, a beloved bake shop in the Rye community, for his misdeeds is deeply troubling. We are working to ensure the victim in this case is made whole, as we do for all victims of economic crimes."

Between 2021 and 2022, DiPietro stole \$105,379 from his employer at the time, The Snackery Bake Shop, in Rye, by adding unauthorized salary increases to his biweekly paycheck, making unauthorized personal charges on the bakery's credit card and using company funds to pay for his personal American Express bill.

The investigation was conducted by the City of Rye Police Department.

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Emily Rowe-Smith, of the Economic Crimes Bureau, with the assistance of Forensic Accountant Michael Frenza.

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New Year's Resolutions

BY BERNARD A. KROOKS, CERTIFIED
ELDER LAW ATTORNEY
SPECIAL GUEST CONTRIBUTOR:
JOEL KROOKS, ESQ.

As we enter 2026, there are important federal and New York State estate tax changes that should be on every client's radar. Whether you're updating an existing estate plan or starting one for the first time, understanding the updated exemption amounts, gift tax figures, and planning opportunities is essential to protect your legacy and minimize tax exposure.

Due to the One Big Beautiful Bill, the federal estate and gift tax exemption for 2026 is \$15 million for each individual, up from \$13.99 million in 2025. Thus, in 2026, a married couple can give away during lifetime or on death (or a combination thereof) \$30 million without incurring federal estate or gift tax.

New York, of course, has its own estate tax which kicks in for taxable estates over \$7.35 million, up from \$7.16 million in 2025. However, New York does not have a gift tax, although any lifetime gifts made within three years of death are "clawed back" into the decedent's New York taxable estate for purposes of calculating their New York state estate tax. New York's estate tax has a notable "cliff" provision: if your estate's value exceeds the exemption by more than 5 percent, the entire estate—not just the excess—is subject to tax. This makes precise valuation and planning critical for estates close to the exemption threshold.

In addition, each individual is still permitted to give \$19,000 in 2026 to as many people as they wish in any calendar year. This number did not increase from 2025. Thus, a married couple who has three children and seven grandchildren, can give \$38,000 (\$19,000 each) to each of them in 2026, an aggregate of \$380,000, without paying gift taxes or even having to file a gift tax return. Moreover, gifts made for educational or medical purposes are not subject to the \$19,000 limit so long as the gifts are made directly to the educational or medical provider. Annual gifting remains a highly effective tool to reduce the size of your taxable estate over time. Coordinating gifts with your overall estate plan can shift future appreciation out of your taxable estate and help avoid both federal and state estate taxes.

Lastly, beginning in 2026, new limitations will apply to charitable deductions for taxpayers who itemize.

Charitable contributions will be deductible only to the extent they exceed 0.5 percent of the donor's adjusted gross income (AGI). This means that smaller charitable gifts may not generate any tax benefit for itemizers unless total contributions rise above this threshold. As a result, clients may wish to reconsider the structure of charitable giving, particularly with respect to year-end contributions and donor-advised funds. Furthermore, taxpayers who claim the standard deduction will be eligible for an above-the-line charitable deduction starting in 2026. This provision allows deductions of up to \$1,000 for individual filers and \$2,000

for married couples filing jointly, providing a limited tax incentive for charitable giving even when itemizing is not advantageous.

If you do not yet have an estate plan in place, consider making it a priority this year to have one prepared by an experienced estate planning attorney. If your existing plan has not been reviewed recently—or if you have experienced significant life changes—now is an ideal time to revisit your strategy. With the updated 2026 exemption amounts in effect, coordinating with an estate planning attorney and your financial advisor can help ensure your legacy goals are preserved

as the tax landscape continues to evolve.

Bernard A. Krooks, Esq., is a founding partner of Littman Krooks LLP. He was named 2021 "Lawyer of the Year" by Best Lawyers in America® for excellence in Elder Law and has been honored as one of the "Best Lawyers" in America since 2008. He was elected to the Estate Planning Hall of Fame by the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils (NAEPC). Krooks is past Chair of the Elder Law Committee of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC). Mr. Krooks may be reached at 914-684-2100 or by visiting the firm's website at www.littmankrooks.com.

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