

Harrison Herald



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Harrison High School Commencement Celebrates Character, Compassion and Achievement of Graduates

Harrison High School celebrated the Class of 2026 at Commencement on Friday, June 26th. Family, friends, administrators, faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Education gathered to recognize the exceptional graduates at the SUNY Purchase Performing Arts Center. The ceremony included a performance of When I Grow Up, from Matilda the musical, by senior members of the chorus.

Harrison High School Principal, Kimberly Beukema, welcomed family and friends gathered to celebrate the graduates before turning to address the Harrison High School Class of 2026 one final time. Ms. Beukema reminded graduates that as they enter a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, they are leaving high school with a quality that technology cannot replace, emotional intelligence, “You understand that someone else’s suc-



cess does not diminish your own, and that is something worth celebrating. Harrison High School is a better place because of you and stands as a reflection of your choices, your character,

and your humanity. The future does not simply need more artificial intelligence. It needs you.”

Board of Education President Kelly Kozak praised the hard work and per-

severance of the Class of 2026, reminding graduates that they leave Harrison with one of their most powerful tools, their voice. She encouraged them to use it with confidence, listen to others, and have the courage to challenge what needs to be questioned as they begin their next chapter.

Dr. Louis Wool recognized the 274 graduates for their leadership, service, academics, athletics, science, music, and art, then set every achievement aside. These are the least interesting true things about you, he told them. What endures is the ethic of care this class showed one another.

He pointed to the students themselves. To the student who noticed and elevated their beloved lunch lady. To another who, as a result of her science research, built wells that brought fresh water to people across the globe. To the

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Louis M. Klein Middle School Moving Up Ceremony Celebrates Largest Class in Harrison History

The Harrison community celebrated the Louis M. Klein Middle School 8th-grade class of 2026 at a Moving Up Ceremony held at the Harrison High School Performing Arts Center on June 25th. A highlight of the ceremony was the performance of “Moving Along,” an original song written by 8th-grade students in the Modern Music Studio.

LMK Principal Scott Fried welcomed families to “his favorite night of the school year,” before curtains opened revealing 325 eighth-grade students, the largest class in HCSD history. He described this class as living representatives of the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile who embody the district’s core values: “You left your mark on LMK and set an example for others to follow.”

Dr. Wool asked the graduates if they remembered reading The Hunger Games, where children’s names are drawn from a lottery. When her sister’s name is called, a fate no child should face, Katniss steps forward and stands in her place. He told another story about a name being called: a mother he once found weeping on an empty playground, because a student had

asked her daughter’s name, and no one ever had before. The bravest thing, he told them, is not stepping forward when your own name is called, but it could be stepping forward when someone else’s name is called, or it is never called at all, and you choose to be the one who asks. He closed with an inspiring reminder, “You are the largest class in our history, and you have the ability to make the high school even more magnificent than it is.”

Board of Education President Kelly Kozak thanked families and the Harrison community for their support of our children and our schools. She encouraged the eighth graders to reflect on how they have changed since arriving at LMK, and reminded them, “Stay curious. Stay open, and trust that you are ready for what



comes next.”

Student speakers Kevin Kearny and Erica Visogliosi shared reflections on “Looking Back” at their time at LMK and “Looking Ahead” to Harrison High School. Kevin reminded his classmates that they arrived at LMK excited, nervous, or scared,

but leave together as Harrison Huskies.

Harrison High School Principal Ms. Beukema officially welcomed the future Harrison High School Class of 2030 and led students in a symbolic procession out of the high school Performing Arts Center, marking their transition to high school.

Harrison Elementary Schools Graduation Ceremonies Honor First Academic Milestone of Fifth Grade Students

Harrison’s fifth-grade students from Harrison Avenue, Parsons, Preston, and Purchase Elementary Schools celebrated the first milestone of their education at Graduation Ceremonies attended by proud families, teachers, staff, and administrators. Board of Education trustees congratulated students and expressed appreciation to families for their support of the district’s children and schools.

Each principal welcomed families gathered to celebrate this milestone and thanked parents for their partnership throughout their children’s elementary years. The principals reflected on the students’ growth from their first days of kindergarten to becoming confident, thoughtful, and curious learners, encouraging them to carry the lessons and values of elementary school into the next step in their education.

Dr. Wool told two stories about a boy and his blanket and an invisible boy. The first, Trevor, age eleven, saw a homeless man on television, had his parents drive him out into a freezing night, and gave the man his blanket. That kindness grew into a system of shelters for an entire city. The second, invisible boy, attended seven schools before third grade; he could not read. One teacher saw him and told him he was a storyteller. That boy was Dr. Wool. He decided from then that no child in a school would ever go unseen. He reminded the rising sixth graders that they have the power to change a life by making sure that everyone feels seen, valued, and included, “I know you will make LMK a better place.”



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student artist who reminded us to celebrate the simple joys between a mother and a daughter. And finally, to the Summa cum laude students who, given the honor of selecting a class speaker, opened the choice to every senior. Small acts, repeated, formed an ethic of care that defined the Class of 2026. He reminded them that the world is transformed not by grand gestures but by the small, almost invisible acts of compassion we show one another.

Calling the Class of 2026 extraordinary young people, Dr. Wool praised the example they set through their choices, their character, and the way they lifted the people around them. “I am filled with confidence in them and could not be prouder of the Class of 2026.”

Three members of the graduating class offered reflections that captured the character of the Class of 2026 and the lessons they will carry into the future. Senior Class President Liam Azar celebrated the class’s collaborative spirit, noting that their willingness to support one another had become a defining strength. He credited both his classmates and the faculty who helped

shape them, sharing, “Teachers have raved about our collaborative spirit and inviting nature in the classroom... I think this eagerness to work together is a major contributor to our success as a class, and I also think it’s a testament to the staff and faculty who’ve helped us become who we are today.”

Faculty-selected speaker Jessica Vukel encouraged graduates to focus on what truly matters as they begin the next chapter, urging them to pursue lives rooted in compassion and humility while appreciating the simplicity of the present moment. Student-selected speaker Jonathan Lewis concluded with an empowering message about authenticity, reminding his classmates that they cannot control others’ opinions, only how they choose to live. He encouraged the Class of 2026 to embrace their individuality, telling them to “keep being weird, keep being you.”

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of diplomas, the turning of the tassels, and the traditional cap toss, a joyful celebration of the Class of 2026 and the culmination of their high school years.

Comptroller/Treasurer Maureen MacKenzie Steps Down After 30 Years of Service

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

Harrison Mayor Thomas Scappaticci opened the July 16th Town/Village Board meeting, beginning with a presentation by Robert A. Daniele of PKF O’Connor Davies on the status of Harrison’s finances since December 31st, 2025.

“We issued what is called an Unmodified Opinion,” Daniele began. “An Unmodified Opinion is a clean opinion. It is the highest level of assurance that an entity can receive. The Town is in great financial health. It has not exceeded what has been implemented as a Tax Cap back in June 2011, so over the past 15 years it has never exceeded the Tax Cap. The Town is supported by General Fund Reserves. You had revenues that exceeded your initial budget. You also had expenditure savings that were below the budget and that added to the Fund Balance.

“The Town utilized some of the Fund Balance to do some Capital Improvements in the community rather than borrowing. There is a new Recreation Center being built and the Town did utilize some

of its Fund Balance to fund that in conjunction with borrowing. The Town has a great AAA Bond Rating and that is going to help them develop their 2027 Budget.

“There is a lot of Capital Construction going on; the Town spent \$34 million in 2025. We do operate the Harrison Meadows Country Club, something to be monitored. The Town is self-insured for health insurance or health benefits; those claims could skyrocket, something to be monitored as well,” Daniele concluded.

Under Personnel, Request by Debra Scocchera, Personnel/Benefits Manager to accept the formal resignation of Comptroller/Treasurer Maureen MacKenzie after 30 years of service, effective July 31, 2026.

Finally, Public Hearings to amend Zoning Code Section 235-96 entitled “Memorandum on Multifamily Dwellings;” Zoning Amendment Petition, 99 Harrison Avenue, Robert and Stephanie Hassett were adjourned to Thursday, August 20th; Renaissance Harrison, 80 W. Red Oak Lane, approval for Special Exception Use Permit was adjourned to Thursday, September 3rd.



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New Firefighters Graduate from The Westchester County Career Fire Chiefs Firefighters Academy

Thirty-five recruits from 12 fire departments in Westchester and beyond graduated last month from the Westchester County Career Fire Chiefs Firefighters Academy. The new firefighters are going to work for nine departments in Westchester, two in Dutchess, and one in Orange. They were awarded their certificates before a packed house at the Chappaqua Performing Arts Center in New Castle.

Deputy County Executive Joan McDonald congratulated the graduates for successfully completing the rigorous academic and physical demands of their Academy training. She noted that firefighters need a broad range of skills to handle incidents ranging from building fires to hazardous materials to rescue and recovery efforts following severe storms.

McDonald said, “To Class 01-2026,



best of luck to you as you make your way in this demanding, rewarding and noble profession you have chosen. On behalf

of County Executive Jenkins, I wish all of you long, safe and successful careers.”

She also thanked the career chiefs,

Academy commanding officers, Academy instructors, and staff from the Department of Emergency Services for preparing the new firefighters for the challenges ahead.

Other speakers who lauded the graduates were DES Commissioner Susan Spear; Fairview Fire Chief Howard Reiss and Eastchester Fire Department Lt. Dominick DiRienzo, who served as one of the Academy’s commanding officers.

The local graduates and their departments are: Eastchester: Kevin Lee; New Rochelle: Michael Acocella, Rameek Boyd, Lonnie Jones, Anthony Petrone; Pelham: Anthony Romano; Rye: Jeffrey Fernandes; Scarsdale: John Madera; and White Plains: Joseph Carrier, Paul Clarke, Nicholas Constantino, Nolan Constantino, Michael DeRenzis, Nazir Hibbert, Christos Siapanides, Alexander Siapanides.

County Launches Green Initiatives Repository to Help Municipalities Advance Climate Action

Westchester County has launched the Westchester County Green Initiatives Repository, a new online resource designed to help municipalities share ideas, collaborate and accelerate local sustainability efforts. The repository brings together approximately 70 environmentally focused initiatives from communities across Westchester County, creating a centralized directory of proven programs, best practices and municipal contacts to support local climate action.

Developed through a partnership between Westchester County and The Climate Reality Project – Westchester County Chapter, the repository allows users to search initiatives by category, program and municipality. The site includes key contacts for each initiative, making it easier for local governments and community organizations to connect with one another and replicate successful environmental programs.

The repository currently features initiatives across 11 categories, including electric transportation, solar, energy efficiency, clean energy, waste reduction, nature-based solutions, building and zoning codes, workforce development, clean and equitable environment campaigns, non-residential sustainability efforts and other municipally managed programs.

Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins said: “Westchester County has long been a leader in sustainability, and this new repository reflects our commitment to helping every municipality build on that success. Communities shouldn’t have to start from scratch when developing environmental initiatives. By bringing together successful programs from across the County, we’re making it easier for municipalities to learn from one another and accelerate climate action that benefits all of our residents.”

Westchester County Director of Energy Conservation and Sustainability Peter L. McCartt said: “The Green Initiatives Repository is a practical tool that showcases the innovative work already happening throughout Westchester County. Whether a municipality is interested in expanding electric vehicle infrastructure, reducing waste, improving energy efficiency or launching a new sustainability program, this resource provides real-world examples and direct connections to the communities leading those efforts. Collaboration is one of the most effective ways to advance sustainability, and this repository helps make that possible.”

As municipalities continue to develop innovative environmental programs, the repository will grow alongside them, serving as a living resource that supports collaboration and continuous improvement. Westchester County encourages municipal officials, community organizations and residents to explore the Green Initiatives Repository and learn more about the sustainability initiatives shaping communities across the County.

The Westchester County Green Initiatives Repository is available online residing on the Office of Energy Conservation and Sustainability’s page at: <https://wcecss.westchestergov.com/wcecss/search>

Westchester County Office for Women Hosts Empower Hour

The Westchester County Office for Women (OFW) held its July webinar of the Empower Hour series featuring OFW Acting Director Catherine Borgia and guest, Westchester County Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler. They discussed key health concerns for women, the essential role of preventative care including regular screenings and healthy habits and tips for maintaining a full and satisfying life as women age. The comprehensive conversation also included personal anecdotes shared by both women, emphasis on the importance of family history in charting one’s healthcare journey and valuable resources available to women in Westchester County.

Borgia said: “Thank you so much to Dr. Amler for sharing her wisdom and knowledge as both a medical professional and a woman with her own life experiences. Women are so skilled in advocating for their loved ones, and we must also advocate for our own health and vitality. Dr. Amler’s practical tips give us the roadmap.”

Amler said: “I am very glad to have the opportunity to talk about women’s health. So often, as partners, wives, mothers and daughters, we manage the healthcare of everyone else in our families and neglect our own. However, if our health suffers, so does the health of everyone around us. Preventive care is one of the most powerful tools we have to maintain good health, so if you remember one piece of advice, please keep up with your cancer screenings, risk assessments, vaccines and wellness visits. I cannot emphasize this enough.”

Women’s Health Resources:

Free Cancer Screenings:

westchestercommunityhealthcenter.org/cancer-screening-program/

Free Sexual Health Screenings

health.westchestercountyny.gov/aidshiv-services

Preventive Care Benefits for Women | HealthCare.gov

Celebrating Women’s Health Week! | Women’s Health | CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/womens-health/features/nwhw.html>

Women, Infants and Children’s Services (WIC)

<https://health.westchestercountyny.gov/wic-community-nutrition-services-sp-381>

For additional resources and to view past Empower Hour webinars, go to <https://women.westchestercountyny.gov>. To reach the Office for Women, call: White Plains Office weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (914) 995-5972, in Spanish, (914) 995-6581, after hours and weekends, (914) 995-2099.

JCCMW Appoints Four New Members to its Board of Directors

The JCC Mid-Westchester (JCCMW) has announced that local community leaders Laura Malick, Deborah Lichtenstein, Nancy Street, and Scott Zemachson have joined its Board of Directors, strengthening the organization's leadership as it continues to expand its impact across the community and inspire joyous lives.

"As board president, I am thrilled to welcome Laura Malick, Deborah Lichtenstein, Nancy Street, and Scott Zemachson to the JCCMW Board of Directors. Their diverse expertise and deep commitment to community service will undoubtedly enhance our mission and help shape our future. We look forward to their contributions in fostering a vibrant and inclusive community," said Rachel Moseley, Board President. "I am also grateful that Kate Eichel has agreed to serve as Board Vice President and that Deborah Yankwitt will serve as President of the JCC Nursery School Board. With the tremendous growth JCCMW is experiencing and our board continuing to expand, their leadership and support will be invaluable in navigating this exciting period of development."



Laura Malick



Deborah Lichtenstein



Nancy Street



Scott Zemachson

Kate Eichel is a lifelong volunteer. She joined the JCCMW Board in 2024 and has served on the Audit and Development Committees. She is currently a member of the UJA-Federation of NY Board of Directors and has been on the UJA Scarsdale women's board for many years, including three years as board chair. Eichel was a founding member of UJA's Bonim Atid venture philanthropy fund and is a proud alumna of JFNA's National Young Leadership

cabinet. She served as PTA president at Heathcote Elementary School. Eichel received her bachelor's degree in Economics from The Wharton School and is a co-chair of the Westchester County Penn Alumni Interview Program. She lives in Scarsdale with her family.

Deborah Yankwitt earned her bachelor's degree from Brandeis and her medical degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-School of Osteopathic Medicine. She worked for almost 20 years as a pediatrician, has served on the Temple Israel Center Board for many years and is currently a consultant at Yankwitt LLP. Prior to medical school, she was an assistant teacher at the League School for special needs children in Walpole, Massachusetts. Dr. Yankwitt and her family have been involved in various programs at the JCCMW since 2007 and have lived in White Plains for more than 20 years.

"We are honored to welcome these highly respected and accomplished leaders to our Board of Directors who are generously dedicating their time and energy to JCCMW's community-building mission," shared Elise Dowell, CEO of the JCCMW. "With shared values and a passion for the work we champion daily, they are poised to help make our flourishing organization even stronger."

JCCMW extends its sincere gratitude to Alison Singer for her meaningful service on the Board of Directors and Executive Board, as well as for her leadership as President of the JCC Nursery School Board. Her commitment to JCCMW's mission have made a lasting impact, and she will be greatly missed in her board role.

The JCCMW is a nonprofit organization that supports the community by offering outstanding cultural, educational, and human services programming to all people regardless of age, background, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Programs are grounded in Jewish values and are open to all! The JCCMW enriches families, connects friends, strengthens community, and helps people lead joyful lives. To learn more about the JCCMW, visit jccmw.org.

Scarsdale native Laura Malick returned to Westchester in 2015 after living in New York City's West Village and now lives in New Rochelle with her family. A residential real estate agent at Compass with The Zach + Heather Harrison Team, Malick previously worked in public relations for the performing arts, representing renowned classical musicians and Broadway talent. A JCCMW nursery school alumna, she is thrilled to return to the place where she grew up, now serving as a member of the Board of Directors and looks forward to strengthening connections throughout Westchester's Jewish community and beyond.

Deborah Lichtenstein began her career in network news at ABC, where

she worked on 20/20, covered the 2004 presidential campaign, and produced for Nightline. Since moving to Westchester, she has been an active community volunteer, serving in leadership roles with the Heathcote Elementary and Scarsdale Middle School PTAs, supporting the Scarsdale Library Capital Campaign, and co-founding New York's first chapter of Young Men's Service League. Lichtenstein also volunteers with her therapy dog at White Plains Hospital. She currently lives in Scarsdale with her family. A member of the JCCMW Programming Advisory Committee, Lichtenstein is excited to join the JCCMW Board of Directors.

Nancy D. Street has decades of experience managing and consulting for organizations ranging from start-ups (including her own) to Fortune 100 divisions and political campaigns. She is founder and CEO of Lolovivi, a mission-based fine jewelry company, and also works with the Westchester County Board of Legislators while consulting on several political campaigns. Her career includes roles at American Express, Shearson Smith Barney, Merrill Lynch, and ALLearn, and earlier work in advertising at BBDO and J. Walter Thompson. A cum laude graduate of Brown University, Street completed the Merrill Lynch/Wharton Executive Education Program and is certified as a spin and yoga instructor as well as a natural foods chef. Street lives in New Rochelle with her husband and enjoys time with her grown children and their families.

Scott Zemachson has more than 25 years of experience in wealth management and is a Managing Director at Morgan Stanley and a member of The Kline Zemachson Richman Group, recognized by Forbes as a Best-In-State Wealth Management Team in 2025 and 2026. He was also named a Forbes Best-In-State Wealth Advisor in 2024 and 2026. A Penn State University graduate, Zemachson lives in Scarsdale with his family. He is active in the community through leadership roles with UJA-Federation of Westchester, the Scarsdale Schools Education Foundation, and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

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Calendar of Events



Historic Hudson Valley Summer Saturdays Series

Philipsburg Manor, Sleepy Hollow
The weekly family-friendly series featuring hands-on crafts, live demonstrations and interactive family activities through September 5 with programming that connects regional colonial history with hands-on learning and fun through themed activities, art projects, and self-guided tours of the Na-

tional Historic Landmark.

August 8 – Clay & Creation: Participants can create pinch pots and paint tiles inspired by Dutch Delftware. The event features a one-day-only exhibition of original ceramics by Thomas Commeraw, a free Black potter active in colonial New York.

August 15 – The Big Play Date: Features 18th-century recreational activities, including ninepins, stilts, and hoop-and-stick. Workshops include historic toy making and a percussion session led by KoSankofa.

August 22 – Seeds & Sprouts: Focusing on botany, horticulture, and historic medicine, the day’s programming includes guided garden tours, marigold potting, and the assembly of traditional herbal remedies.

August 29 – Preserves & Pickles: Exploring historic food preservation methods, visitors will learn about drying, canning, and smoking while pickling radishes and making sachets.

September 5 – Global Grains: The day features cooking demonstrations of grain-based dishes from around the world with chefs Rene Leon and Voila Afrique. Kids can create their own grain collage, paint with flour paste, and hear stories about bread from around the world.

Visit <https://hudsonvalley.org/events/summer-saturdays-at-philipsburg-manor/> for tickets.

Hospice of Westchester

“In Celebration” Gala Cocktail Reception

September 17, 2026, 5:30 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

Westchester Country Club, 99 Biltmore Avenue, Rye

In support of The Anna & Louis H. Shereff Caregiver, Complementary Care and Bereavement Programs. This year’s event will honor Susan Fox, President & CEO, White Plains Hospital and Regional Senior Vice President, Hudson Valley, Montefiore Einstein. The event will also feature a Celebration of Life for James P. O’Toole, a steadfast supporter, former Board Chair, and cherished member of the Hospice of Westchester family. A special recognition will be given to longtime supporter and Grand Sponsor of the event, Rochelle E. Shereff. Individual tickets (\$400), journal ads, and sponsorships are available. The evening will feature a vast array of culinary delights, an open bar, and entertainment. For more information, contact Holly Benedict at hbenedict@hospiceof-westchester.com or 914-682-1484, ext. 122.



The Great Jack O’Lantern Blaze

New York’s most highly anticipated fall tradition is back and bigger than ever. The Great Jack O’Lantern Blaze® returns to Van Cortlandt Manor with its longest trail of illuminated pumpkin displays in event history. At The Great Jack O’Lantern Blaze, running for 44 nights in Croton-on-Hudson from September 18 through November 8, the expanded path features exciting new

attractions. The Creature Feature Forest pays tribute to Van Cortlandt Manor’s history as home to a drive-in movie theater in the mid 20th-Century, inviting visitors to meet a cast of classic movie monsters carved entirely from pumpkins. Nearby, Literary Lane reimagines familiar fables, giving classic children’s tales a whole new glow. On the lawn of the site’s regal manor house, visitors are invited to an interactive dance party. As part of its 2026 expansion, Blaze is more accessible than ever, with expanded value pricing of just \$24 on select evenings. The Great Jack O’Lantern Blaze is presented by Con Edison. Contributing Sponsors include JPMorgan Chase and Northwell Phelps Hospital.

Hospitality Partners are Windrose on Hudson and Tarrytown House Estate. Beverage Sponsors include Captain Lawrence and Hudson North Cider Co. Media Sponsors are WHUD and The Peak. All events have limited capacity and regularly sell out; advance ticket purchase is required. Tickets went for all the activities went on sale on July 30 at www.hudsonvalley.org. Presales began July 27 for Historic Hudson Valley members, followed by app users on July 28, and social media fans and past ticket buyers on July 29. (Download at hudsonvalley.org/app to access the app presale).

Pelham Art Center

August Figure Drawing

August 7, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Enjoy a relaxed evening of creativity and artistic exploration. Artists of all experience levels are welcome in this supportive, low-pressure space. A nude figure model will provide a range of timed poses for two hours. Please bring your own art supplies; all mediums are encouraged.

Cost: \$20 | Tickets available at <https://pelhamartcenter.app.neoncrm.com/nx/portal/neonevents/events?path=%2Fportal%2Fevents%2F41793>

Junk Journal Night

August 14, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Turn scraps and keepsakes into unique collaged pages. We encourage participants to bring their own journal and collage materials, though additional supplies will be available if needed. This event is free and open to the public.

Visit pelhamartcenter.org for further details.

Westchester County Parks and Share Creative present

The Robison Summr Concert Series

Kensico Dam Plaza, Valhalla, 7 to 9pm



August 13 -- **Captain Jack** (Billy Joel Tribute)

August 21 -- Uncaged (Zac Brown Tribute)

August 27 -- Damn the Torpedoes (Tom Petty Concert Experience)

Free admisstion and parking. Visit parks.westchestercountyny.gov

Liberty Tree Commemorating America 250

In celebration of America’s 250th anniversary, the Village of Pelham Manor, Village of Pelham, Town of Pelham, Pelham Public Schools, and community organizations are announcing a community-wide Liberty Tree Initiative to honor our shared history while investing in our shared future.

Inspired by the historic Liberty Trees of the American Revolution, these native, climate-resilient trees will serve as living symbols of civic engagement and community stewardship while strengthening Pelham’s tree canopy, supporting biodiversity, reducing urban heat, and improving climate resilience.

This October, coordinated Liberty Tree plantings will take place across the Pelhams, coinciding with Pelham Public Schools’ commemoration of the Battle of Pell’s Point and America’s 250th anniversary.

The Liberty Tree Initiative is intended to continue the broader community effort to expand Pelham’s tree canopy. In April 2027, that effort will continue with a community Earth Month tree seedling giveaway in partnership with ConEdison, giving residents the opportunity to plant free trees in their own yards and neighborhoods.

Together, these efforts will create a living legacy that honors our history, strengthens our environment, and benefits future generations.

Stay tuned for additional information as planning continues.

Rye High School Celebrates Class of 2026 at 95th Commencement Ceremony



Rye High School celebrated the Class of 2026 during its 95th commencement ceremony at Nugent Stadium on June 18, recognizing the achievements, growth and contributions of the graduating class before an audience of family members, friends, faculty, staff, administrators and board of education members.

Principal Andrew Hara welcomed the graduates, reflecting on their accomplishments across academics, athletics, the arts and community service. He encouraged the students to remember that their greatest impact will be measured by how they make others feel valued, included and supported.

The ceremony featured several student performances. Eliza Chai opened the evening with a performance of the national anthem, accompanied by American Sign Language performers Alexandra DellaSalla, Margaret Derman, Alexandra Huen, Phoebe Lee, Charlotte Lincoln, Abigail May and Melisa Pirinccioglu. In addition, Leah Arus, Hunter Gillies and Samuel Surak performed “The Climb” by Miley Cyrus, while Fiona Green and Lucas Gordon performed a duet of “That’s Life” by Frank Sinatra. The ceremony also included a traditional Latin Oration delivered by Carson Miller, Greta Murdoch and Sloane Paul on behalf of the senior class.

The attendees heard remarks from Board of Education President Jane Anderson, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tricia Murray, Senior Orator Caroline Bartlett, salutatorian David Singer and valedictorian Grace Wang.

In her address, Dr. Murray praised the graduates for demonstrating leadership, resilience, compassion and service throughout their time at Rye High School. She encouraged them to embrace reflection as they prepare for future opportunities and challenges.

“The graduates sitting before us tonight are ready, not because they have everything figured out, but because they have learned how to think, how to adapt, how to grow and how to reflect,” Dr. Murray said. “That is the foundation of lifelong learning and the spirit of The Rye Commitment.”

Bartlett reflected on the friendships, experiences and lessons that have shaped the Class of 2026. Encouraging her classmates to appreciate the present moment and trust themselves through life’s uncertainties, she shared the personal advice that has guided her own journey: “Never have a doubt.”

Singer focused on the supportive nature of the Rye community, describing it as the “bubble” that helped students thrive academically, socially and personally.

“Our bubble will burst, and over the next couple months we will take our own unique journeys,” Singer said. “However, even when the bubble pops the foundation that created the bubble never changes. We will never leave the bubble; it will always find its way back to us.”

Wang reflected on the people and experiences that have shaped her life, comparing them to pieces of a mosaic that continues to evolve over time. Drawing from memories of family, friendship and community, she encouraged her classmates to embrace the next chapter while carrying those experiences with them.

“Let’s embrace this transition as another fleeting moment in the making,” Wang said. “Class of 2026, the version of you that walked these halls, that stumbled and grew and laughed breathlessly, they don’t disappear when you cross this stage. That version is irreplaceable, so take every piece of it with you.”

Signifying the conclusion of one chapter and the beginning of another, the graduates crossed the stage to receive their diplomas, which were presented by Board of

Education President Jane Anderson. After moving their tassels, members of the Class of 2026 celebrated the milestone with family, friends and faculty.



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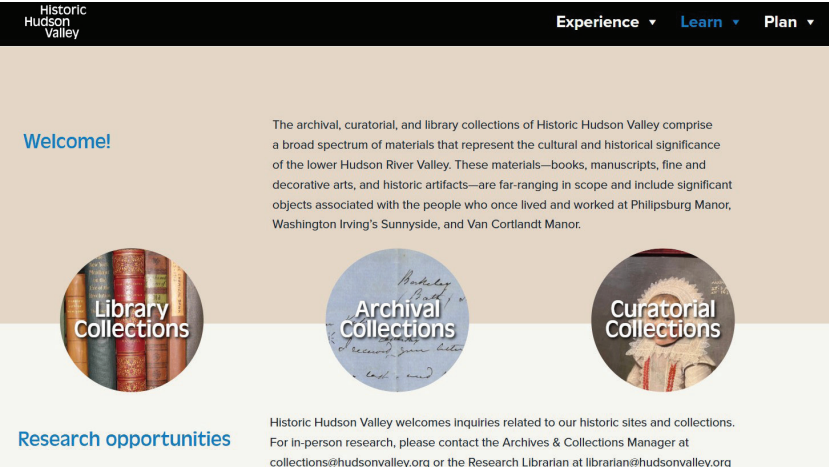
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Historic Hudson Valley Launches Digital Library and Collections Portal



Historic Hudson Valley is proud to announce the launch of its digital library and collections portal. The extensive collections management platform contains over 20,000 items and is completely free to use, making centuries of regional history accessible to researchers, students, educators, genealogists, and history enthusiasts worldwide. This institutional milestone was made possible through major grant awards, including a \$238,810 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and a \$137,735 grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources, a program funded by the Mellon Foundation.

“It is fitting that Historic Hudson Valley should be launching the Digital Collections Portal during our seventy-fifth year,” said Waddell Stillman, President of Historic Hudson Valley. “The thousands of books, manuscripts, and objects to be discovered through the portal represent the commitment of our founder, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to safeguard and interpret the history of the Hudson Valley in all its facets. We are thrilled to make these collections freely available to students, scholars, and the general public in perpetuity.”

During the multi-year digitization process, library and archival staff stabilized, digitized, and prepared metadata for approximately 4,300 manuscripts, while curatorial staff inventoried and photographed over 7,000 objects. The new portal helps share vital historical narratives from the region, including personal records from Revolutionary War soldiers, insights into the lived realities of slavery and resistance in the colonial North, the records of early free Black landowners, and the experiences of regional women operating as business owners, suffragists, and domestic workers.

“Historic Hudson Valley’s unique collections span the centuries and many continents,” noted Elizabeth L. Bradley, Ph.D., Vice President of Programs and En-

gagement, “but they all connect back to the rich and varied history of our region. It is exciting to bring our holdings online during the United States’ semiquincentennial year, when so many Americans are rediscovering their history, and to introduce Historic Hudson Valley’s curatorial and archival treasures to a digital audience during the celebration of our founding.”

The newly launched portal helps integrate Historic Hudson Valley’s physical holdings into a unified digital resource. The archival collections feature over 6,000 manuscripts, maps, and graphics spanning the 17th through the 20th centuries. The curatorial collections contain nearly 8,000 original and family objects from individuals who lived and worked at Philipsburg Manor, Washington Irving’s Sunnyside, and Van Cortlandt Manor. Finally, library collections have approximately 20,000 monographs, rare books, and subject files dating from 1529 to the present.

To begin exploring the digital library and collections portal, visit <https://hudsonvalley.org/resources/library-and-collections/>

Historic Hudson Valley’s physical archives, library, and research collections, are located at 639 Bedford Road in Pocantico Hills, are accessible to researchers and the public by appointment.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Grant Number MA-253041-OMS-23. It was also supported by a Digitizing Hidden Collections grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). The CLIR grant program is made possible by funding from the Mellon Foundation.

Historic Hudson Valley, Westchester County’s largest cultural organization, educates and entertains tens of thousands of visitors a year through school programs, tours of National Historic Landmarks,

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Table Hopping with Morris Gut: Tasty Summer Drives

Hit the road this summer with a good food destination in mind...



alex577.com

Mumbai Katta: Anita Gawde is a dynamo! The owner of Mumbai Katta Indian Restaurant, 227 Westchester Avenue, Port Chester, is always on the move. At one moment, she greets guests at the door, the next she disappears into her kitchen, the next she is on the dining room floor touting her dishes. It is her heartfelt tribute to the tasty street foods of regional India. Anita and her husband Jayant have been marking a second anniversary with a newly expanded menu that now includes Tandoori and regional Kebabs. The dishes are loaded with flavor. Reserve ahead for a traditional Thali banquet. www.mumbaikatta.com

Tesoro D’Italia: I first met Peter Lucaj when he was managing Ciao in Eastchester. Just over a dozen years ago, he and his brothers Mark and Don took over Tesoro d’Italia, 160 Marble Avenue, Pleasantville. I have enjoyed watching them evolve this expansive multi-faceted restaurant into a destination for fine regional Italian cuisine and full service catering. You can sit along the handsome wine wall. Lovely private rooms are available for groups. Dive into such specialties as Chicken Payard, Black Linguine Pescatore, Chicken Scarpariello, Broiled Veal Chop, or Grilled Pork Chops with the works. Happy hours in the bar/lounge are most inviting starting at 3 PM weekdays. There is a weekday luncheon special: \$24.95, noon to 3 PM. www.tesoroditaliany.com

Squire’s: Squire’s, 94 North State Road, is approaching a milestone 60 years in Briarcliff Manor. Kudos to owner Kurt Knox and his team. You may have heard about their classic Burgers and massive Prime Rib (served on weekends). They offer a big menu filled with delightful tavern specialties. There is literally something for everyone in your group from tasty finger foods and sandwiches to a giant portion of Fish & Chips. All reasonably priced. www.squiresofbriarcliff.com

Las Mananitas: This Mexican restaurant on top of Route 684 in Brewster offers dramatic views of the East Branch Reservoir and a multi-tiered outdoor patio for relaxing and picture taking. There are plenty of window seats and a fireplace room for comfort, too. They often host Mariachis, DJ and drink specials at their big bar. Look for such kitchen specialties as: El Aquacate, avocado stuffed with crabmeat and shrimp; Carnitas, three soft pork tacos; Sizzling Fajitas; and Sinaloa, jumbo shrimp wrapped in bacon stuffed with Manchego cheese. Ample free parking. www.lasmananitasrestaurant.com

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.

Do You Need to File a New York Estate Tax Return? Understanding the 2026 Rules, the Tax Cliff, and Common Filing Confusion

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

Does an Estate Need to File a New York Estate Tax Return?

When a person dies, one of the first tax questions an Executor or Administrator must consider is whether the estate must file an estate tax return. In New York, the answer depends on the size of the estate, the decedent's residency, certain lifetime gifts, and whether the estate owns New York property.

Importantly, the requirement to file a New York estate tax return is separate from whether estate tax is actually owed.

The 2026 New York Estate Tax Exclusion – For individuals dying in 2026, New York's basic estate tax exclusion amount is \$7,350,000. Generally, a New York resident's estate must file a New York State estate tax return if the decedent's federal gross estate, plus certain includible taxable gifts, exceeds that amount. The exclusion is adjusted over time based on the decedent's date of death. For comparison, the exclusion was \$7,160,000 for deaths in 2025.

The federal gross estate generally includes all property in which the decedent had an interest at death, including real estate, bank and brokerage accounts, retirement accounts, business interests, tangible personal property, certain trust interests, and life insurance owned by the decedent or payable to the estate.

This is a gross value test. The estate must first consider the total value of assets before deductions are applied to determine whether tax is ultimately owed.

Lifetime Gifts and the Filing Threshold – New York also requires estates to consider certain taxable gifts made during the decedent's lifetime. These gifts may need to be added back when determining whether the estate exceeds the New York filing threshold.

As a result, making large gifts shortly before death does not necessarily eliminate a New York estate tax filing requirement or potential estate tax liability.

Nonresidents Who Own New York Property – A nonresident's estate may also be required to file a New York estate tax return if the decedent owned real property or tangible personal property located in New York and the federal gross estate, together with certain includible gifts, exceeds the New York basic exclusion amount.

For example, if a Florida resident dies owning a New York cooperative apartment, house, or other New York real property, the estate may have a New York filing obligation even though the decedent was not domiciled in New York.

What Form Is Filed and When Is It Due?

When a New York estate tax return is required, the estate files Form ET-706, New York State Estate Tax Return. The return is generally due nine months after the decedent's date of death, and any tax due is generally payable within that same period.

An estate may request an extension of time to file and/or pay when additional time is needed. However, interest may apply if tax is paid late.

When Is New York Estate Tax Actually Owed?

Whether estate tax is actually owed depends on the taxable estate after allowable deductions and credits are applied. Common deductions may include funeral and administration expenses, debts, mortgages, certain charitable transfers, and the marital deduction for qualifying transfers to a surviving spouse.

Therefore, an estate may be large enough to require a New York estate tax filing but still owe no New York estate tax after deductions are applied.

The New York Estate Tax "Cliff" – One of the most important features of New York's estate tax is the so-called "cliff." If the taxable estate is at or below the basic exclusion amount, no New York estate tax is owed. If the taxable estate is slightly above the exclusion amount, some tax may be owed. However, once the taxable estate exceeds 105 percent of the basic exclusion amount, the estate loses the benefit of the New York exclusion entirely.

For 2026, 105 percent of the \$7,350,000 exclusion is \$7,717,500. Once the taxable estate exceeds that amount, the estate may be taxed from the first dollar rather than only on the amount above the exclusion.

This rule can produce a significant tax liability from a relatively modest increase in the taxable estate. Careful planning is particularly important for New York residents whose estates are near or above the exclusion amount.

Estate Tax Rates and Portability – New York's graduated estate tax rates can reach 16 percent. New York also does not provide por-

tability between spouses. This means that if the first spouse to die does not use his or her New York estate tax exclusion through proper planning, the unused exclusion is not automatically transferred to the surviving spouse.

This is an important consideration for married couples whose combined estates may exceed the New York exemption amount.

Form 706 vs. Form 1041 – Executors and beneficiaries often confuse Form 706 and Form 1041, but they address different taxes.

Form 706 is an estate tax return. It reports the value of the decedent's assets at death, applies allowable deductions, and determines whether estate tax is owed. For New York estate tax purposes, Form ET-706 serves a similar function.

Form 1041, by contrast, is an income tax return for an estate or trust. It reports income earned after death during the administration of the estate, such as interest, dividends, capital gains, rental income, or other taxable income.

For example, a brokerage account may be reported on Form 706 at its date-of-death value, while dividends or capital gains earned by that account after death may later be reported on Form 1041.

An estate may need one form but not the other. A smaller estate may have no estate tax filing obligation but may still need to file Form 1041 if it earns sufficient income during administration. Conversely, a larger estate may need to file Form 706 or New York Form ET-706 even if it earns little or no post-death income.

Conclusion – Determining whether a New York estate tax return is required can be complex. Each estate must be reviewed based on its assets, debts, deductions, residency, New York property, lifetime gifts, and post-death income.

Proper estate planning may help individuals and married couples reduce or avoid unnecessary estate tax, preserve available exemptions, and simplify administration. Executors and Administrators should work with an experienced estate attorney and coordinate with the estate's accountant to determine which filings are required, identify available deductions, meet deadlines, and address probate, creditor claims, taxes, and distributions.

Because relying on general assumptions can lead to costly mistakes, professional guidance can help ensure that the proper filings are made and the estate is administered as efficiently and properly as possible.

Bernard A. Krooks, Esq., is a founding partner of Littman Krooks LLP. He was named the 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. Krooks may be reached at 914-684-2100 or through the firm's website at www.littmankrooks.com.

Westchester County Departments of Senior Programs and Services and Parks, Recreation and Conservation to Host Senior Dance Party

The Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services (DSPS) and Westchester County Parks, Recreation and Conservation are hosting a Senior Dance Party on Wednesday, August 19 from 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Glen Island Park, located at Weyman Avenue in New Rochelle. This year's event is open to all seniors, who are encouraged to come out and enjoy a dance-filled day.

Commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services Mae Carpenter said: "The best dance partners are laughter, friendship and great music. A little music, a little movement, and good company can turn strangers into friends."

Attendees will enjoy a day that includes a live DJ, dance lessons and a complimentary lunch. The Senior Dance Party is free to attend, but reservations are required. Complimentary parking at Glen Island Park will be made available.

To attend this year's Senior Dance Party, please call Events To Remember at (914) 218-3968 and make your reservation by Wednesday, August 5. For information about the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services, call (914) 813-6300.



New Jersey Woman Admits Stealing Over \$130,000 from Westchester Employers

Westchester County District Attorney Susan Cacace announced that Michelle Pennant, of Patterson, N.J., has admitted stealing over \$130,000 from two of her former employers.

Pennant, 48, pleaded guilty on June 17 to two counts of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony, and one count of Criminal Tax Fraud in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony.

She is scheduled to be sentenced on Oct. 28 by Judge Erin McGoey.

DA Cacace said: “Westchester County is a vibrant place to do business, except if you are a fraudster or thief. When people steal from our local businesses, that raises their operating costs, which get passed along to the rest of us bit by bit. That’s why my Economic Crimes Bureau works around the clock to root out fraud, waste, corruption and larceny, helping drive down costs for small businesses and ensuring that the rest of us aren’t left to pick up the tab.”

Between March 2023 and April 2024, the defendant stole \$70,250.46 from one of her employers, a Westchester-based construction company. Between April 2022 and April 2024, the defendant also stole \$62,548.08 from another of her employers, a home decorating business. During the same period, the defendant failed to remit the appropriate tax in connection with this unreported income to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance.

This case was investigated by the Harrison Police Department, the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, the Investigators Squad within the District Attorney’s Office and forensic accountant Michael Frenza.

The case is being prosecuted by Economic Crimes Bureau Chief Gwen Galef.

Historic Hudson Valley Launches Digital Library and Collections Portal

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and Halloween-themed experiences, which have earned a national reputation as among the best in the country.

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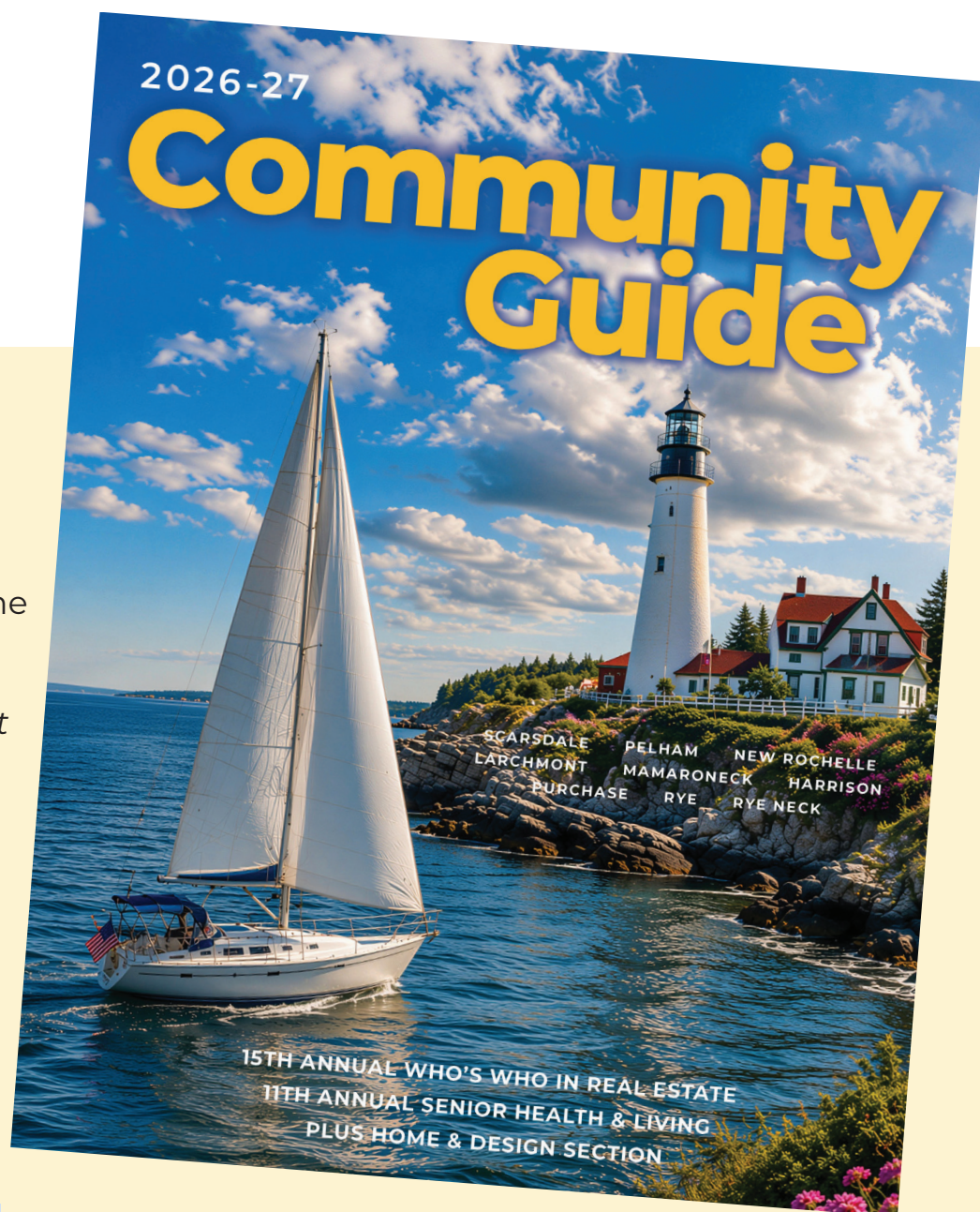
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