Harrison Herald

Shoreline Publishing, Inc.
Westchester's Community News
914-738-7869 • shorelinepub.com

decenber 2025 - vol. 21 - issue 12 harrisonherald.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...WW Magazine Winter 2025!

Proclamation Presented to Harrison Children's Center for 50 Years of Service

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

Harrison Town Supervisor Richard Dionisio called the November 6th Board meeting to order, beginning with presentation of a Proclamation to the Harrison Children's Center (HCC) in recognition of 50 years of service to the Town.

"For 50 years HCC has quietly supported working parents with stable, affordable childcare, providing preschool children with a safe and nurturing place to learn. In both the downtown and West Harrison locations, HCC has over 300 students, offering meaningful experiences for students with special needs. They made created a space for O.T., P.T. and Physical Therapy services," according to Catherine Tammaro, Director, Community Services.

"It is a very rare occasion that I get to finally thank the Town of Harrison for everything they have done. On behalf of the Harrison Children's Center, I want to extend our heartfelt thanks for the beautiful recognition of our 50th Anniversary. Fifty years ago, the Town Board and a group of women started HCC in West Harrison, spearheaded by Lola Geiger," HCC Executive Director Debbie Imperia stated.

Next, Actions and Resolutions included a request by Comptroller, Maureen MacKenzie to transfer available funds from the Town Fund Contingency Budget line to cover the cost of labor contract settlements, a decrease of $202,000; transfer available funds from Highway Fund Contingency Budget line to Highway Safety Budget lines to cover labor contract settlements and anticipated overtime that may be required for winter storms, a decrease of $342,000.

In Village Board Business, under Actions and Resolutions, MacKenzie requested a transfer available funds of $125,000 from Village Fund Personal Services Budget line to cover the cost of labor contract settlements.

MacKenzie requested acceptance of a Bond Resolution amounting to $745,000 regarding various equipment for the Police Department; Bond Resolution of $1,300,000 regarding construction of Fremont Street Parking Lot; Bond Resolution in amount of $2,825,000 regarding construction of new Community Center at 270 Harrison Avenue; requests to schedule Public Hearings for 2026 Preliminary Budget and 2026 Sewer Rent Fee, both slated for Wednesday, December 10th.

Happy Holidays!

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From cozy gatherings to new beginnings, our community is full of stories that start right here on these streets. I know how meaningful family time feels this season, and I'm grateful to call Harrison home.

Whether you're thinking about making your next move or hoping to bring friends and family closer to the place you love, **I'm here to help—with the kind of local insight only a neighbor can offer.**

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Community Leaders Gather to Discuss Advocacy in the Time of Change at WCA's Annual Advocacy Breakfast

Advocates, educators, and elected officials came together at the Harrison Meadows Country Club for the Westchester Children's Association's (WCA) Annual Advocacy Breakfast. Held each fall, the event serves as a forum for community stakeholders to explore pressing issues affecting children and families in Westchester County. Attendees, including State Senator Shelley Mayer, Assemblymember Steve Otis, a representative from Assemblyman Nader Sayeg's office, County Legislators Nancy Barr, David Imamura, Catherine Parker, Judah Holstein, Jewel Williams Johnson, and Emilijana Ulaj gathered for a thought-provoking program themed "Advocacy in the Time of Change."

Damali Peterman, Esq., author, mediator, and conflict management specialist, delivered the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Child Advocacy Lecture. Drawing from her new book Be Who You Are to Get What You Want, she highlighted authenticity as the cornerstone of effective advocacy and encouraged attendees to remain grounded and purposeful, even in challenging times. Peterman asked the audience to close their eyes and envision an ideal world that they saw. She shared, "that advocacy is not only about confronting what's wrong but daring to imagine what's possible."

The breakfast marked the first Annual Advocacy Breakfast under the leadership of Adam Rabinovitch, WCA's newly appointed Executive Director. "Each year, WCA brings together families, educators, and advocates to examine the issues that shape children's well-being," said Rabinovitch. "This year's program emphasized the importance of recognizing one's own capacity to effect change and to lead with purpose, even in challenging times."

Left to right: Gabby Nanna, Nora Nicholson, Adam Rabinovitch, Damali Peterman, Limarie Cabrera, and Angel Gray.

The event fostered thoughtful discussion around sustaining advocacy efforts amid shifting public priorities, strengthening collaboration across sectors, and ensuring that every child in Westchester has the resources and support needed to thrive. Program and Policy Manager Angel Gray concluded the event by inspiring the audience to "show up and lean on each other as we continue to advocate for issues that are impacting Westchester's children".

Westchester Children's Association (WCA) is a multi-issue, child advocacy nonprofit that works to ensure that every child in Westchester is healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges, regardless of race or zip code. Since 1914, WCA has been the leading independent voice for Westchester's children by identifying their needs, making those needs known to the public, and ensuring those needs are met through advocacy and mobilization efforts. For more information about Westchester Children's Association, visit their website at www.wca4kids.org.

Jenkins Releases 2026 Budget Proposal

Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins has announced his first proposed Operating Budget for 2026. The $2.5 billion dollar budget cuts almost all County Department budgets by 8%, including the County Executive's budget, and eliminates 180 positions, essentially cutting the County workforce by almost 5%.

Jenkins said: "This has been an extraordinarily difficult year, and the budget process reflected that. We are operating in a moment of unprecedented uncertainty driven by the Trump Administration's decisions beyond our control. Federal cuts, shifting aid formulas and tariffs have created instability in local planning in a way we have not seen in recent memory. There's no way to sugarcoat it, this is simply the reality of this moment — and we are committed to leading through it with transparency, partnership and integrity."

Westchester County faced a staggering projected budget gap of $197.7 million. Jenkins, who is committed to not laying off County workers, first looked to eliminate 180 positions and tightened spending with targeted reductions.

Jenkins said: "There is no magic number, and there is no hidden money to fill the gaps. This budget is Trump turmoil."

County Departments to Undergo 8% Across-the-Board Cuts

- Hard Hiring Freeze and Elimination of 180 Positions - $28 million
- Reductions in Contracts, Technical Services and Expenses - $34.5 million
- Reductions in Overtime/Hourly - $11.6 million
- Right Sizing Social Services Relief - $5.2 million
- Reductions Equipment - $4.5 million
- Reductions Materials and Supplies - $2.6 million

Increasing Costs

For the 2026 proposed Operating Budget, the County is facing unavoidable financial pressures from the federal government that are largely mandated or tied to essential services.

The main contributors include:

- Rising Healthcare Costs - $65 million
- Pension Growth - $22 million
- Increased Social Services Relief - $21 million
- Transportation and Utilization for Children with Special Needs - $10 million
- An Increase in Debt Service - $8 million

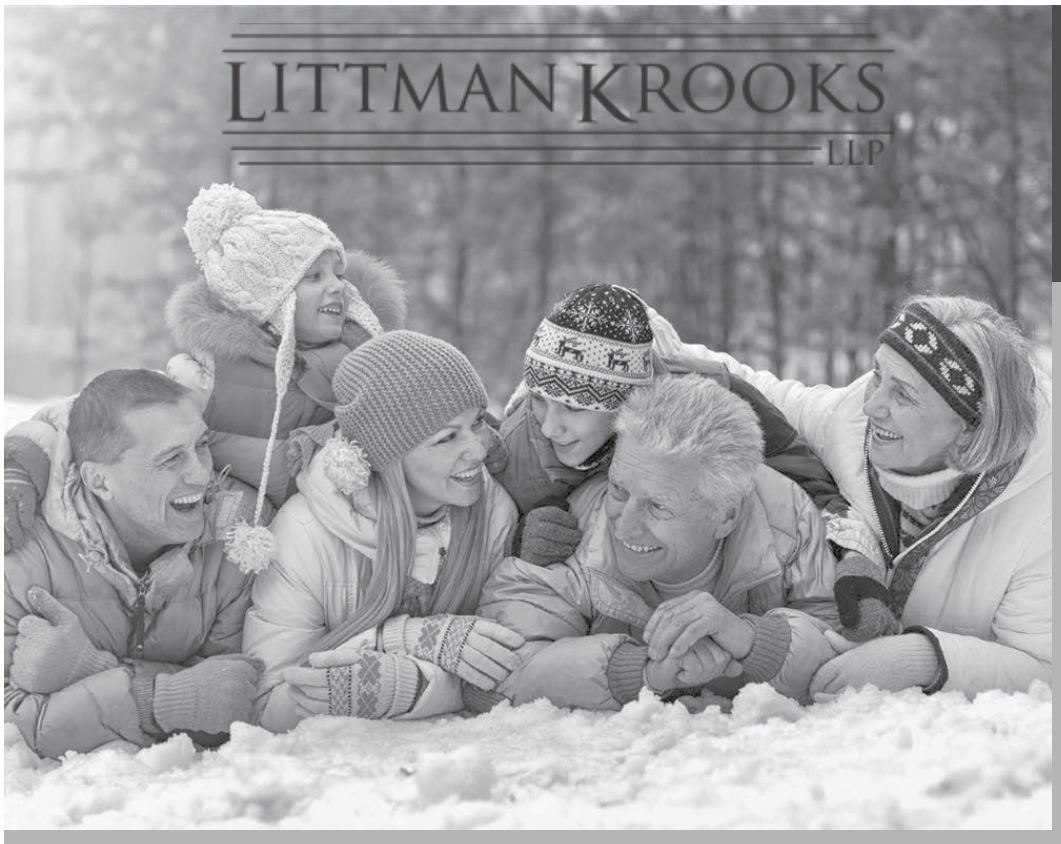
County Executive Ken Jenkins

Sales Tax Revenue

The 2026 proposed Operating Budget is based on flat sales tax revenue projections for 2026, while accounting for significant cost increases across several mandated and mission-critical areas. In 2025, sales tax was originally budgeted to grow 3.5% over the 2024 forecast however, year-to-date collections through September 2025 are flat compared to 2024. The full-year 2025 forecast is now $943.5 million, $26.3 million below budget. For 2026, the County estimates $970.4 million in sales tax revenue, which represents a 2.8% increase over the revised 2025 forecast of $943.5 million, but is essentially flat when compared to the original 2025 budget projection of $969.8 million.

Another critical issue is the loss of MGM and its bid to build a full-gaming casino in Yonkers. That decision alone represents an estimated $17 million in lost annual revenue for the County, not including the ripple effects across Westchester's economy in the form of lost sales tax growth that would have followed.

In Westchester County, a portion of the County's sales tax is shared back with cities, towns and villages, with the exclusion of Mount Vernon, White Plains, Yonkers and New Rochelle, and school districts. The share back program helps ease the financial burden on local budgets. As long as revenue is coming to the County, the initiative should help municipalities to keep property taxes lower than they would otherwise need to be.



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Harrison National Guard Soldier Receives New Rank, New Responsibilities

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general for the state of New York, announces the recent promotion of members of the New York Army National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

John Kozak from Harrison, and assigned to the 466th Area Support Medical Company, received a promotion October 7, 2025 to the rank of sergeant.

Army National Guard promotions are based on a Soldier's overall performance, demonstrated leadership abilities, professionalism and future development potential.

These promotions recognize the best qualified Soldiers for a career in the New York Army National Guard.

Army National Guard Citizen Soldiers who serve our state and nation are eligible for monthly pay, educational benefits (from the state and federal government), travel across the globe, technical and leadership training, health and dental insurance and contributions towards retirement programs similar to a 401(k).

For more information about the New York Army National Guard, visit www.dmna.ny.gov or www.1800goguard.com

The New York National Guard (New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs) is the state's executive agency responsible to the Governor for managing New York's Military Forces, which consists of nearly 20,000 members of the New York Army National Guard, the New York Air National Guard, the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard.

Jenkins Releases 2026 Budget Proposal

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Jenkins said: "People are not spending money because of the chaos and uncertainty coming out of Washington. The instability created under Trump has seeped into Westchester County and is wreaking havoc on our finances — and we are not alone. Local governments across New York State and across the nation are confronting the very same pressures."

Prioritized Essential Services

Despite the mounting financial pressures, Jenkins remains committed to protecting the programs that residents rely on most, maintaining essential services, ensuring that funding continues for the programs that support those most in need, from vulnerable children to critical social services and community resources.

Program funding will include supporting food security efforts, ensuring that victims of domestic violence have the protection and resources they need, offering free vaccine clinics, recycling opportunities, and maintaining free workforce development programs and services including our One Stop, local job fairs, job training and entrepreneurial support. The County has also budgeted to include continuing senior nutrition programming and our TIPS telehealth initiative, and keeping our mobile crisis teams and youth mental health programming in place.

Additional Allocated Dollars:

- Low Income Child Care –$16.6 million
- Access to Counsel Eviction Prevention Programs - $3.7 million
- Child Care Scholarships- $2 million
- Mental Health Clinic- $1.5 million
- Federally Qualified Health Centers - $1 million
- HERRO Program - $300 thousand

Proposed Budget

To address remaining budget challenges amid ongoing federal uncertainties and mandates, the County is proposing:

- A property tax levy increase of 5.27%, as allowed by New York State, which translates to an average annual impact of $60 for every $500,000 in assessed property value.
- Use of the full tax cap to allocate $4.5 million in support for Sewer Districts, ensuring critical infrastructure needs are met.

This approach balances fiscal responsibility with the County Executive's commitment to protecting essential services for residents.

Jenkins said: "Make no mistake about it this is a Trump tax increase. This budget reflects tough but necessary decisions. Every department is facing an 8% reduction, and we are implementing a hard hiring freeze that will eliminate 180 positions — avoiding layoffs while maintaining essential services. Even with these cuts, the budget does not account for potential future reductions from the federal government. Our goal remains clear: protect the programs residents depend on without sacrificing fiscal stability by tapping into reserves."

Toys for Tots Kicks Off 2025 Holiday Giving Campaign Across Westchester/Putnam

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Toys for Tots Westchester & Putnam has officially launched its 2025 Holiday Giving Campaign in Westchester County, inspiring the community to help bring joy to local children in need. The annual campaign aims to collect 100,000 new, unwrapped toys to be distributed to families throughout the region this holiday season.

This year's kickoff celebrates the generosity of Westchester / Putnam residents, businesses, and community partners. Collection boxes are being placed across the county, making it easy for everyone to get involved in spreading holiday cheer.

"To think this year children might not have received a toy was hurtful to all of us. To see all the amazing talented people step up and work as one is unbelievably humbling," said Patricia

LaForey, Westchester / Putnam County Co-Coordinator for Toys for Tots. "It's amazing to see how our community is showing up year after year especially this year to make sure no child is forgotten."

Campaign Details

- Duration: Now through December 23, 2025
- Goal: Collect 100,000 toys for local children
- How to Help: Donate a new, unwrapped toy at participating Westchester / Putnam businesses, sponsor a collection box, or volunteer
- More Info: Visit Toys For Tots website or follow @ToysForTotsWestchesterPutnam on social media for updates and volunteer opportunities

Toys for Tots, founded by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, is a national nonprofit program that collects and distributes new, unwrapped toys to less fortunate children during the holiday season. Since its founding in 1947, Toys for Tots has delivered joy and hope to millions of children across the country.

Celebrate Sleepy Hollow Holidays with Dickens, Tea, Victorian Cheer

Hudson Valley neighbors and visitors alike can celebrate the holiday season with dramatic performances of Dickens's 'Christmas Carol' at the historic Old Dutch Church in Sleepy Hollow on select weekends in December. Performances take place on Dec. 13-14, 20-21.

Master storyteller Jonathan Kruk, along with musical accompaniment by Jim Keyes, tells the Charles Dickens story of Ebenezer Scrooge, the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future, and Tiny Tim in a joyous rendition of the holiday classic, produced by Historic Hudson Valley.

Additional holiday programs throughout December offer visitors a vari-

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Westchester County Kicks Off Annual Holiday Gift Drive

Westchester County's 20th annual Holiday Gift Drive has begun.

First launched in 2005, the drive collects toys as well as monetary donations to buy presents and gift cards to help the County brighten the holiday season for the most vulnerable children in Westchester. The drive services around 1,000 children in foster care, the homeless and child welfare systems.

Running through Monday, December 15, residents can drop off new, unwrapped gifts appropriate for newborns up to age 21 at one of six locations throughout the county. Please no stuffed animals or violent toys.

Monetary donations are accepted in the form of gift cards, Zelle, or checks made payable to: "Westchester Child Welfare Holiday Fund."

Donations may be mailed to Barbara Sabater 112 East Post Road, Room 637, White Plains, New York 10601.

Electronic Donations may be sent via Zelle to the ID email: WCDSSHolidayGiftDrive@gmail.com.

County Executive Ken Jenkins said: "The joy and excitement of receiving a holiday gift is about more than just getting a new toy – it sends a message of love. Every child deserves that experience, but especially those children who find themselves in difficult circumstances this holiday season. Please, if you're able, help us send that message of love to children in Westchester who really need that message the most. And please join me in

thanking Barbara Sabater who founding this gift drive 20 years ago. Her commitment to this effort and the children of Westchester County is an inspiration to us all."

Department of Social Services Commissioner Leonard Townes said: "Childhood experiences shape us in way we don't always realize. For children experiencing homelessness or separation from family, the effects can be traumatic, having long-term consequences for their health and well-being. Dropping off a gift in a box or making a monetary donation may be a small thing for us, but for a child, that gift lets them know they're not forgotten, that they do matter, that the world is not a cold, heartless place."

Gift Drive founder Barbara Sabater, program coordinator of constituent affairs for the Westchester County Department of Social Services, said: "I'm so thankful to all the residents, businesses, community groups and others who have helped us for two decades provide happier holidays for children in our care. If you can get to a drop box with a toy, we appreciate you. If you can make a monetary donation, we appreciate you. There are other ways to help too. School groups, scout groups, religious groups and others have collected gifts for us as well, as the County's Youth Bureau did last year with a special focus on our most forgotten population, the teenagers. If you want to help that way, please reach out to me at bms7@WestchesterCountyNY.gov or call (914) 995-1937 and I can help coordinate. Let's make this a great holiday for our kids."

Westchester County Youth Bureau Executive Director Ernest McFadden said: "The Westchester County Youth Bureau, along with our Youth Board, our local school districts and My Brother's Keeper (MBK) partners are so excited to be collaborating for the second year in support of the Department of Social Service Annual Holiday Drive. Last year, our youth who helped with the gift collection got so much value out of that process. This year, they will assist by helping us understand what our older youth would most enjoy receiving as gifts. Our support reflects our commitment to fostering a stronger, more compassionate community for everyone, especially during the holiday season."

DROP OFF LOCATIONS:

Westchester County
Michaelian Office Building
148 Martine Avenue,
White Plains

Dept. of Social Services
Central Office
112 East Post Road,
White Plains

Mt. Vernon District Office
100 East First St.

Peekskill District Office
750 Washington St.

White Plains District Office
85 Court St.

Yonkers District Office
131 Warburton Ave.

Purchase Students, Residents Rally to Highlight A.I. Bots and Toxic Materials Present in Children's Toys this Holiday Season

For decades, the biggest dangers with toys were choking hazards and lead. At a press conference last month, NYPIRG brought together students, advocates, and community leaders to raise awareness about the hidden dangers in children's toys highlighted in the 40th Trouble in Toyland report. While these problems still exist, technological "advances" since the 1980s have created new, often more alarming issues. Speakers discussed findings related to AI-enabled toys capable of inappropriate conversations, products containing toxic materials, and counterfeit or recalled toys still being sold online.

"No one should have to question whether the toys they're buying for a child might be toxic or unsafe," said Matthew Paolucci, NYPIRG Project Coordinator. "What's especially concerning this year are the new toys with AI capabilities flooding the market. Many offer little to no clarity about how they collect or use children's data and have very limited parental control options.

With the holiday shopping season approaching, we're holding this press conference to make sure people know about these risks."

In this year's Trouble in Toyland report, we focus on:

-- Our testing of four toys that contain A.I. chatbots and interact with children. We found some of these toys will talk in-depth about sexually explicit topics, act dismayed when you say you have to leave, and have limited or no parental controls. We also look at privacy concerns because these toys can record your child's voice and collect other sensitive data, by methods such as facial recognition scans.

-- Toys that contain toxics, including toys shipped from other countries that contain lead, phthalates and other toxins.

-- Counterfeit toys that are illegal and almost surely weren't tested for safety, including fake Labubu dolls that have been confiscated by the thousands this year.

-- Water beads, a longtime threat, which will finally have some restrictions when marketed as toys.

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Westchester County Office for Women Holds Fifth Annual Thanksgiving Food Share Program for Domestic Violence Victims

The Westchester County Office for Women (OFW), in collaboration with New Dawn Family Resource Center of Pound Ridge and advocacy agencies from across the County, assembled close to 400 Thanksgiving grocery bags for food insecure families; primarily those affected by domestic violence. The bags contained a full course Thanksgiving meal -- a fresh turkey with all the fixings and a seasonal pie for dessert. The Market at Pound Ridge Square was the scene of the assembly and provided all the elements of the meal, many of which they generously donated or discounted.

The program was funded by anonymous contributions of $30,000 to New Dawn and $20,000 in Community-Based Organization (CBO) funds from the Westchester County Board of Legislators. This funding will also support a Christmas Food Share program in December.

Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins said: "We know that in Westchester County there are many people who suffer from food insecurity, and with tremendous loss of SNAP dollars from the Federal government, there are now even more. The County has stepped up by infusing Feeding Westchester with more dollars but we need programs like these to close the gap. Thank you to all the collaborators who made this happen and are bringing some comfort to those who need it most this holiday season."

Westchester County Office for Women Director Robi Schlaff said: "Our holiday food share program has been an important part of supporting families impacted by domestic violence since 2020, but this year, with the cessation of SNAP benefits, it is critical. Families have gone from food insecure to no food at all and our food pantries are overwhelmed. We are so grateful for the private donations and County funds to New Dawn and the generosity of The Market at Pound Ridge, which make the supplies possible, and to our OFW staff and partner agencies who willingly work to get these bags ready and delivered to those in need."

Westchester County Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT) Director David M. Ryan said: "Right now, there is a tremendous need. I received requests for over 2000 turkeys and grocery bags and was able to connect to various food pantries and other resources beyond what we could provide. I am hopeful that everyone we reached out to has met their needs. It truly takes a village. Every victim should enjoy a hearty, healthy and delicious Thanksgiving meal for themselves and their family as they move forward on their pathway towards healing and peace."

Westchester County Legislator Erika Pierce said: "It is important to remember our families who are experiencing domestic violence in this holiday season. These families have been through so much, and often continue to suffer financially. I was happy to have been on hand to help prepare the Thanksgiving packages, but also to provide $20,000 in County funding to New Dawn to help support this effort. Being able to help provide food and other resources to these families, particularly at this time of year, means so much."

Purchase Students, Residents Rally to Highlight A.I. Bots and Toxic Materials Present in Children's Toys this Holiday Season

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-- Recalled toys, which we bought again this year, even though it's illegal for anyone to sell them.

-- Toys that contain button cell batteries or high-powered magnets, both which can be deadly if swallowed.

State Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, "Thank you, U.S PIRG, for your extremely important report on the safety of toys in 2025-26. We need to draw attention – and demand response – to the report's findings that there are too many AI chatbots in toys for young children, toys with toxic materials, counterfeit toys, and other dangerous toys in our marketplace. Thank you for the warnings for parents and caregivers in advance of the holiday toy purchase season, and particular thanks for the policy suggestion for lawmakers to ensure children's safety is paramount when it comes to toys. As chair of the New York State Senate Education Committee, I know our children's safety cannot be compromised by manufacturers or inadequate regulation. This report shines a light on the toy industry and the need for meaningful regulatory change."

Janine O'Connor, Chief Program Officer for The Child Care Council of Westchester said, "The Child Care Council of Westchester champions the healthy development of children.

Infants and toddlers need toys they can see and feel. Books with pictures and simple words. Toys that develop small and large muscles, creativity, imagination, and language. Digital products, including AI, can delay development. Of particular concern is that some AI toys have an addictive design that includes a loop that may impact social emotional regulation. This is compounded by the growing overuse of screen time which slows children's physical, language and emotional development. It is simply wrong to provide children with toys we know will hinder their growth."

Mark Jaffe, President and CEO of The Greater New York Chamber of Commerce said, "We acknowledge NYPIRG for its Annual "Trouble in Toyland" Report. Not everyone is aware of the dangers that certain toys pose for our young children. That's where NYPIRG comes in. Their Trouble in Toyland Report helps inform us that not all toys are safe. It brings awareness and offers advice that helps protect children from dangerous toys and the potential risks that come from their use. This report should be a must read for all parents, guardians, teachers, lawmakers and regulators."

"If a toy breaks, we know it right away. But if a toy contains toxics such as lead or phthalates, or a chatbot interacts with our child in a way we don't approve of, we don't necessarily know," said Teresa Murray, Consumer Watchdog Director for U.S. PIRG Education Fund and

co-author of the report. "The scariest part is that we can't actually see all the dangers a toy might pose. That's deeply troubling."

In our digital age, when it's hard enough for parents to keep up with online dangers such as AI on phones and computers, toys are a new, often-unexpected frontier.

TIPS TO AVOID UNSAFE TOYS

-- Subscribe to email recall updates from the CPSC and other U.S. government safety agencies available at www.recalls.gov;

-- Shop with NYPIRG's Toy Safety Tips, available at toysafetytips.org;

-- Report unsafe toys or toy-related injuries to the CPSC at SaferProducts.gov;

-- Review the recalled toys and compare them to toys in your children's toy boxes;

-- Remember, toys on our list are presented as examples of potentially-dangerous toys. Our list is not exhaustive and other hazards may exist;

-- Put small parts, or toys broken into small parts, out of reach. Regularly check that toys appropriate for your older children are not left within reach of children who still put things in their mouths;

-- Eliminate small magnet and balloon hazards from your home;

-- Be aware that toys connected to the Internet, AI enabled, as well as apps and websites, may be collecting information about children inappropriately.

-- Consider purchases only from known, trusted sellers or the trademark holder. Companies you've never heard of warrant more research.

-- If you have a toy or any other product in your hands, look for clues the item may be counterfeit: Does the label list country of origin? This is required for toys and many other items.

-- Look for labeling on toys that says it's non-toxic.

-- Make sure that anything that's electric says it's UL-approved.

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After graduating among the top of his class at New York University School of Medicine, Dr. Tepper trained at the renowned Institute of Reconstructive Plastic Surgery, NYU Langone Medical Center, completing his plastic surgery residency as well as fellowships in craniofacial reconstruction and pediatric plastic surgery.

Dr. Tepper lives in Greenwich, provides specialized care from Manhattan to Connecticut and consults worldwide. He is acclaimed for his role in the separation of conjoined twins Jadon and Anias McDonald, performing similar surgeries twice more in Brazil.

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At Veterans Day Ceremony. County Honors Heroes Who Served

VSA Director Josh Gaccione

Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins and Veterans Service Agency Director Joshua Gaccione joined local veterans and other officials last month to honor the commitment of all who have serve at the County's annual Veterans Day Ceremony at Lasdon Public Gardens and Veterans Memorial.

The event celebrated the enduring commitment of veterans both in service and in their communities after their military service.

County Executive Jenkins said: "Veterans Day is a time for the nation to express our gratitude for those who put country before personal safety to ensure our enduring liberty. But, we want to make sure that in Westchester County, every day is Veterans Day. Our gratitude for your service is deep and real. But it is through the ongoing work that our Veterans Service Agency does for veterans and their families, that we put our gratitude into action. We see you, we appreciate you, and we are here for you and your families just as you were here for us."

Veterans Service Agency Director Gaccione said: "Today, we honor a commitment few understand and even fewer make. As all veterans know, the mission doesn't end when the uniform comes off. What truly defines our veterans is their ongoing commitment to service. We are incredibly proud to witness these same patriots carrying that sense of duty into our communities -- mentoring youth, supporting fellow veterans in need and stepping up wherever a helping hand is required. Their courage, dedication and loyalty continue to be an inspiration to us all."

Attendees heard from 30-year army veteran and local entrepreneur Rosa Ramirez, who shared her inspirational story of rising through the ranks of the military, earning three masters' degrees and becoming an entrepreneur.

Ramirez said: "Today, let us honor our veterans not only with gratitude, but with action. Let us build lives, businesses and communities that reflect their courage. Let us remember that the legacy we inherit is not just to remember, it is to rise."

Westchester County and White Plains Youth Bureaus Host First High School Youth Passion Project Fair

Westchester County Youth Bureau launched its first High School Youth Passion Project Fair, a youth-led, County-wide initiative in collaboration with the White Plains Youth Bureau. Held at the County Center, the event was an opportunity to recognize the creativity, civic engagement and social innovation of youth in high school from across the region.

Spearheaded by Rhea Narayanan, a 2025 summer intern with the County Executive's Office and White Plains Social Justice Youth Court member, the fair aimed to amplify youth voices and recognize their leadership in tackling important social issues. 33 presenters from Hartsdale, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Port Chester, Rye, Scarsdale, White Plains, Yonkers and Yorktown Heights showcased 19 passion projects across public health, education, social justice and sustainability in an interactive fair format. Attendees were able to circulate and engage directly with youth presenters—creating opportunities for dialogue, learning and inspiration.

Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins said: "The Youth Passion Project Fair exemplifies Westchester County's continued investment in youth empowerment, civic engagement, and community-building. In providing youth a stage to share not just ideas—but the real, measurable impacts of their work—this initiative promises to inspire attendees and future collaborations. Kudos to Rhea for her vision and to all the students who participated."

White Plains Mayor Tom Roach said: "The Passion Project Fair exceeded all of my expectations. I was very impressed with the quality of the presentations and the depth of the projects themselves. I really enjoyed chatting with the presenters about their projects and left feeling optimistic about our future."

Westchester County Youth Bureau Executive Director Ernest McFadden said: "This is more than a youth showcase—it's a celebration of the vision, ingenuity and social commitment of Westchester's youth. It demonstrates a wide spectrum of passion-driven solutions and underscores the importance of elevating young voices in community development."

White Plains Youth Bureau Executive Director Frank Williams said: "The Passion Project Fair is a reflection of what happens when we invest in our young

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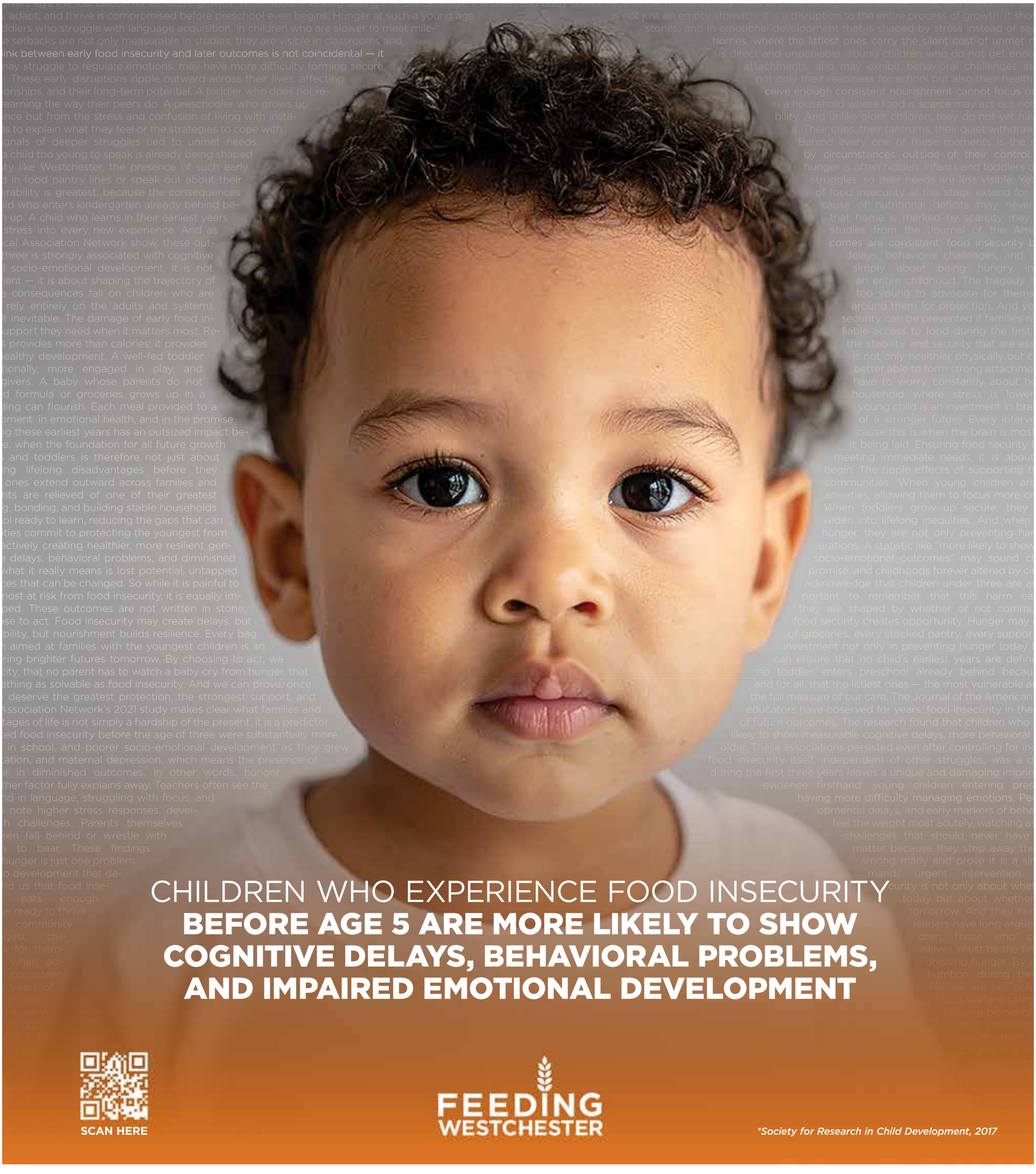
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AND IMPAIRED EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
SCAN HERE
FEEDING WESTCHESTER
*Society for Research in Child Development, 2017

Celebrate Sleepy Hollow Holidays with Dickens, Tea, Victorian Cheer

continued from page 4

ety of festive experiences. The season begins on Saturday, Dec. 6 with an Advanced Paper Snowflake Workshop, where participants can create intricate paper designs. On Saturday, Dec. 13, visitors can enjoy a special Holiday Tea in the greenhouse at Philipsburg Manor. The celebrations conclude with Victorian Christmas at Washington Irving's Sunnyside on Saturday, Dec. 20, featuring a festive tour of the home decorated in holiday finery, along with hands-on crafts and seasonal treats.

Visitors to the region will also be able to enjoy tours of Washington Irving's Sunnyside, Philipsburg Manor, and Union Church of Pocantico Hills on weekends in December.

The Museum Shops at Philipsburg Manor and Washington Irving's Sunnyside will be open on Saturdays and Sundays through Dec. 21. Holiday shoppers are invited to browse local wares and support Historic Hudson Valley's educational programs while checking off their entire gift list. Stocked with Hudson Valley-inspired and holiday-themed merchandise—including artisan foods, books about the region, exclusive candles, and handcrafted jewelry—the shelves are full of unique items for everyone that can't be found anywhere else.

Tickets to all events and tours can be purchased online in advance at hudsonvalley.org.

Details: Dickens's 'Christmas Carol'

Performances take place at the Old Dutch Church in Sleepy Hollow on Dec. 13-14, 20-21 at 2, 3:30, and 5pm.

Capacity is limited for Dickens's 'Christmas Carol' and tickets should be purchased in advance at www.hudsonvalley.org or by calling 914-366-6900. Ticket prices are $47 for adults and $42 for children under 18. Historic Hudson Valley recommends the event for ages 10 and up. Members of Historic Hudson Valley receive a 15% per ticket discount.

Details: Advanced Paper Snowflake Workshop

The Workshop takes place at Philipsburg Manor on Saturday, Dec. 6 at noon. Participants will learn techniques to create five intricate paper snowflakes, including one to display in the site's greenhouse, while enjoying a complimentary hot beverage and donut.

The workshop is two hours in length and recommended for ages 12 and up. Tickets are $10 per person and free for members of Historic Hudson Valley.

Details: Holiday Tea

The Holiday Tea takes place in the greenhouse at Philipsburg Manor on Saturday, Dec. 13, with seatings at noon, 1, 2, and 3pm. Visitors can enjoy a seasonal grazing box with cheese, crackers, and fruit, along with a tray of holiday cookies and a selection of Harney & Sons teas, coffee, cocoa, and water.

The experience lasts approximately 45 minutes and is recommended for all ages. Tickets are $35 per person. Members of Historic Hudson Valley receive a 15% per ticket discount.

Details: Victorian Christmas

Victorian Christmas takes place at Washington Irving's Sunnyside in Sleepy Hollow on Saturday Dec. 20. Visitors can enjoy a holiday-themed tour of the cottage, create seasonal paper decorations, and receive a complimentary hot beverage and donut.

The program lasts approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes and is recommended for all ages. Tickets are $30 for adults and $28 for children. Members of Historic Hudson Valley receive a 15% per ticket discount.

About Historic Hudson Valley

Historic Hudson Valley, Westchester County's largest cultural organization, educates and entertains more than hundreds of thousands of visitors a year through school programs, tours of five National Historic Landmarks, and large-scale events like The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze.

From its lower Hudson Valley base of operations, the organization focuses on delivering quality educational and entertaining experiences, striking a balance between tradition and vision, from preserving the past, to contextualizing it for 21st-century audiences.

Historic Hudson Valley operates tours and public programming at Kykuit, the Rockefeller estate, Philipsburg Manor, Union Church of Pocantico Hills, Washington Irving's Sunnyside, and Van Cortlandt Manor. These sites help us make meaning for visitors in a variety of settings, including traditional house and landscape tours, formal educational programs for school children, popular on-site special events, and digital media.

Westchester County and White Plains Youth Bureaus Host First High School Youth Passion Project Fair

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people—not just as youth, but as leaders and changemakers. These students are identifying real needs in their communities and taking initiative to address them. That kind of leadership deserves to be cultivated."

White Plains Youth Bureau Deputy Director Elizabeth Almonte said: "Our youth are not waiting to be asked to lead—they are already leaders. This fair offers a platform to recognize their efforts, amplify their voices and show that age is no barrier to impact."

Narayanan said: "This event isn't just about showcasing projects—it is about celebrating what happens when young people care deeply about the world around them. For me, Hyper Local Edu was the first step in realizing how powerful youth-driven change can be, and seeing so many students bring that same energy to this fair proves that passion and purpose can start anywhere."

Westchester Chamber Music Society Presents The Ivalas Quartet in Concert on December 7

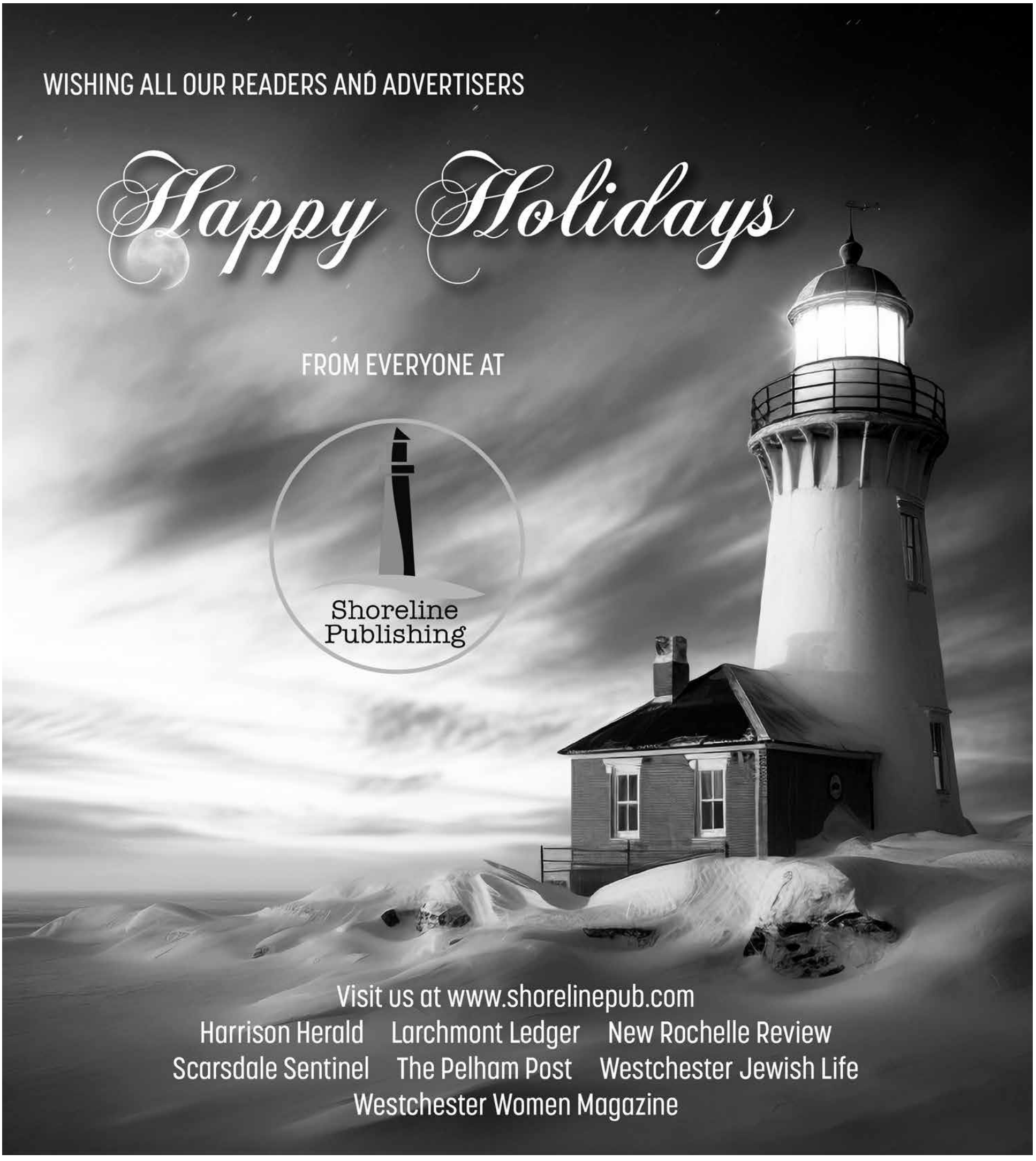
The acclaimed Ivalas Quartet will perform for the Westchester Chamber Music Society (WCMS) on Sunday, December 7, 2025, at 4:00 PM, at Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester (2125 Westchester Avenue, Rye, NY). The program will include pieces by Haydn, Joji Yuasa, Coleridge-Taylor, and Debussy. The concert will be followed by a wine & cheese reception with the musicians.

Formed with a shared passion for promoting diverse voices in classical music, the Ivalas Quartet has quickly earned a reputation for its expressive artistry, technical mastery, and commitment to representing composers of color in the canon of chamber music. The ensemble features Reuben Kebede and Tiani Butts, violins; Marcus Stevenson, viola; and Pedro Sánchez, cello.

"We're delighted to welcome the Ivalas Quartet as part of our 75th season," said Shelley Lotter, President of WCMS. "Their artistry, energy, and mission align with our commitment to present inspiring pieces from the traditional repertoire and bring fresh voices to our audiences."

This special concert is part of the Westchester Chamber Music Society's Diamond Jubilee, celebrating 75 seasons of bringing world-class chamber music to the community. Ticket Information: First-time attendees: $25 (special discount rate); General Admission: $45 online / $50 at the door; Remote Viewing: $30 (livestream option); Students & Children: Free. For tickets and more information, visit www.WestchesterChamberMusicSociety.com

The Ivalas Quartet, praised for their "expressive intimacy and fearless commitment to musical storytelling," has performed on premier stages across the United States, including Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The ensemble was recently named a Graduate Quartet-in-Residence at Juilliard, where they studied with members of the Juilliard String Quartet. Dedicated to expanding representation in classical music, the Ivalas champions works by underrepresented composers, performing them alongside the standard repertoire to create powerful, inclusive programs that reflect the richness of the world today. For more information on the Ivalas Quartet, visit www.ivalasquartet.com.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The Harrison Herald is published monthly by Shoreline Publishing, Inc., 629 Fifth Avenue, Suite 213, Pelham, NY 10803. 914-738-7869.

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Estate Planning for Tangible Property

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

When people think about estate planning, they often focus on major assets like real estate, investment accounts, and life insurance policies. However, tangible personal property—items such as jewelry, artwork, collectibles, furniture, vehicles, and family heirlooms—can carry both emotional and financial value. Planning for how these possessions will be distributed after death is an important yet often overlooked part of a comprehensive estate plan.

These items may or may not have high monetary value, but they frequently hold deep sentimental significance. Disputes over tangible items are common among heirs because personal meaning can outweigh market worth. A grandmother's wedding ring, for instance, might cause more tension than a bank account because of its emotional connection.

One way to handle tangible assets is through a personal property memorandum. This document, referenced in your will or trust, allows you to list specific items and designate who should receive them. Unlike a will, which typically requires formal execution to make changes, a memorandum can usually be updated more easily without legal formalities. This flexibility makes it ideal for items that may change hands, be sold, or be newly acquired over time. However, it is important to note that in New York a personal property memorandum is not legally binding, and it simply shows the Decedent's wishes regarding their tangible personal property.

Another option is to distribute tangible personal property through specific bequests in a will or trust. A specific bequest names a particular item and the individual who should receive it. For example:

"I give my diamond engagement ring to my daughter, Jane Doe."

"I give my antique piano to my nephew, John Doe."

By including language like this, you remove ambiguity and give your executor clear legal instructions. These specific bequests are binding and enforceable under your will or trust, ensuring that your wishes are carried out as you intend.

It's important to describe each item clearly to prevent confusion or disputes. Include identifying details—such as brand names, serial numbers, or distinguishing features—especially for valuable or similar-looking property. If you later sell or give away an item that you've listed in your will, your estate plan should be updated to reflect that change. Photographs are another excellent way to clearly illustrate which tangible personal property you are describing.

Tangible personal property should be coordinated with the rest of your estate plan. For example, if valuable items are part of a trust, ownership may need to be formally transferred to the trust to avoid probate. Additionally, specific items left in a will should align with the terms of any trust or beneficiary designations to prevent contradictions. Items with significant value—such as rare collectibles—should be documented carefully for estate valuation purposes.

Tangible personal property estate planning is more than just deciding who gets what—it's about preserving family relationships and honoring sentimental ties. By creating a detailed memorandum, communicating clearly with loved ones, and integrating personal property decisions into your estate plan, you can reduce the risk of disputes and ensure your possessions end up exactly where you intend.

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.

Table Hopping with Morris Gut: Sparkling Holiday Dining & Events

The 5th annual New Rochelle Holiday Market 2025 at New Roc City, 29 LeCount Place, will run Nov. 28 through Dec.14th., 4-8 pm weekdays, and 12-8 pm weekends. There are holiday vendors and fun for all. For info: www.newrochelleny.gov/1842/NRNY-Holiday-Market

The White Plains Holiday Market brought to us by White Plains BID, returns December 6th through the 17th with 40 regional craft and food vendors. It takes place on Court St. between Main & Martine St. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday thru Wednesday; to 7 p.m. Thursday-Sunday. For info: https://wpbid.com/events/holiday-market/

If all this makes you hungry, here are some nearby dining suggestions for everyone in the family...

ALEX'S BAR & GRILLE, NORTH WHITE PLAINS

The handsome dining room is split into cozy sections with Mediterranean clay-colored banquets and plush beige curtained windows. Proprietor Alex Ahmetaj offers big cuts of aged steaks and chops along with generously served Northern Italian/Continental fare. Check out such specialties as: Pan Fried Calamari with hot cherry peppers, Linguini alle Vongole, a delicious fresh Branzino prepared tableside, classic Veal Parmigiana, grilled Filet Mignon, NY Sirloin Steak, a hefty Rib Eye, or the Pork Chops. Alex's Bar & Grille, 577 N. Broadway, N. White Plains. 914-358-1444 www.alex577.com

BEECHMONT TAVERN, NEW ROCHELLE

I like vintage pubs and taverns. I recently got back to the Beechmont Tavern, across from IONA University in New Rochelle. It has been around since 1928, they say, and proprietor Rob Hayes keeps the place warm and buzzing. We ordered their popular traditional chicken wings, a Gael burger and fries, and a summery goat cheese and pear salad. We shared. All were great. A special shout out to the staff. They were friendly and on the spot. We will be back. Beechmont Tavern, 750 North Ave., New Rochelle. Open 7 days. 914-636-9533 www.beechmonttavern.com

TRATTORIA VIVOLO, HARRISON

Cited by Forbes Magazine, Chef-owner and personable host Dean Vivolo serves his robust regional Italian cuisine out of a vintage diner just across from Harrison's Metro-North station. Sit at the counter, tuck into a booth, or take a table in the rear greenhouse and enjoy the surprising contemporary and traditional flavors emanating from his kitchen: tasty thin-crusted pizza; Crostino di Polenta topped with wild mushrooms, gorgonzola, and tomato sauce; Linguini Nere with bay scallops; Grilled Lamb Chops; Lasagna Bolognese al Forno; and wonderful Spaghetti a la Vongole. Fine wine list. Sparkling lights in the evenings. Seasonal outdoor patio. Free parking. Trattoria Vivolo, 301 Halstead Ave., Harrison. 914-835-6199 www.trattoriavivolo.com

JACK'S BAR & RESTAURANT, EASTCHESTER

Owner Shane Clifford and his friendly crew serve delicious finger foods and generously plated specialties. Chef/partner Brandan Donohoe's modern Irish American kitchen come great burgers, decadent Short Rib Mac N' Cheese, crusty pizzas out of their wood-fired oven; freshly made salads; Buttermilk Chicken Sandwich; Berkshire Pork Chops; Jack's Lamb Shank. Their full Irish Breakfast at brunch is a winner. Sticky Toffee Pudding for dessert is a must! The same group own Jill's in Mamaroneck. Jack's Bar, 219 Main St., Eastchester. 914-652-7650 www.jackseastchester.com

TORCELLO RISTORANTE, LARCHMONT

Imer Rraci and his veteran team reimagined the former La Riserva into a lovely setting for the Italian classics. Named after an island off the coast of Venice, this kitchen turns out such winning dishes as: colorful Mozzarella Caprice; Risotto Di Funghi with porcini; Linguine alle Vongole; Veal Chop Parmigiana; classic Rack of Lamb; and delicious Pollo Torcello, topped with applewood bacon and melted fresh mozzarella in a light bourbon mushroom sauce. Rraci had spent years working for the former Giambelli in Manhattan, and Valbella in Old Greenwich, CT. Open 7 days for dinner starting at 3:30 p.m. Bar/cocktails. Happy hours Wed. through Fri. 3:30-6 pm. Outdoor patio. Free parking. Torcello, 2382 Boston Post Road, Larchmont. 914-833-1118 www.torcellolarchmont.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. Email: gutreactions@optonline.net*)

Calendar of Events

Kids Baking: Gingerbread Friend Decorating
Wednesday, December 10, 2025
4:00pm - 5:00pm
Harrison Public Library, Halperin Building - Community Room
Ages 7-12. Decorate a Gingerbread friend. 20 Tickets will be given out, first come, first serve to participate.

Holiday Wreath Craft
Thursday, December 11, 2025
4:00pm - 5:00pm
Harrison Public Library, Learning Center
Ages 5-7. 20 tickets will be given out. First come, first serve.

Marbled Holiday Bulbs
Friday, December 12, 2025
3:00pm - 4:30pm
Harrison Public Library, Halperin Building - Conference Room, Learning Center
Adults | Teens | Art | Workshop
Registration required. Please sign up below. Join our volunteer Elizabeth Bardwill and create some holiday bulbs using a marbling technique, paints and holiday embellishments. Please register. Limited to 15 participants.

Sinterklaas—annual St. Nicholas Day Celebration
Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site, 29 Warburton Avenue, Yonkers
Saturday, December 6, 2025, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Join us for a visit from St. Nicholas himself, historical games, ornament crafts, gingerbread decorating, live music, and more! Featuring live music and stories with storyteller April Armstrong, accompanied by Mario Sprouse on piano. See the full schedule at https://www.philipsemanorhall.com/programs-and-events/st-nicholas-day-celebration-2025. All crafts, gingerbread decorating, and admission are free and open to everyone, sponsored by the Friends of Philipse Manor Hall. Pre-registration is not required, but all children must be accompanied by an adult.

Holiday Lights at Crawford Park
December 6, 2025 at 3:30pm - 6:30pm.
Come enjoy the family-friendly warmth and holiday cheer you've come to expect from this joyful community event. Tree lighting at 5:00pm. Selfies with Santa, great food and holiday snacks, craft activities and amazing live holiday music are just a few reasons why you don't want to miss out.

West Harrison 20th Annual Tree Lighting and Holiday Celebration
Friday, December 5, 2025 at 7pm.
West Harrison Village Green
Refreshments will be served and enjoy holiday entertainment. Visit with Santa and Frosty.

Sinterklaas—annual St. Nicholas Day Celebration
Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site, 29 Warburton Avenue, Yonkers
Saturday, December 6, 2025, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Join us for a visit from St. Nicholas himself, historical games, ornament crafts, gingerbread decorating, live music, and more! Featuring live music and stories with storyteller April Armstrong, accompanied by Mario Sprouse on piano. See the full schedule at https://www.philipsemanorhall.com/programs-and-events/st-nicholas-day-celebration-2025. All crafts, gingerbread decorating, and admission are free and open to everyone, sponsored by the Friends of Philipse Manor Hall. Pre-registration is not required, but all children must be accompanied by an adult.

Impact: The End of the Age of Dinosaurs
American Museum of Natural History
200 Central Park West, NY, NY
Explore the before-and-after story of the asteroid impact that led to the extinction of non-bird dinosaurs and the majority of animal and plant species on the planet in Impact: The End of the Age of Dinosaurs. Step back in time to experience the planet as it was during the Cretaceous Period, when dinosaurs walked the Earth, pterosaurs flew in the skies, and massive marine reptiles—such as mosasaurs and plesiosaurs—ruled the oceans. Visit https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/impact

The Met's Christmas Tree and Neapolitan Baroque Crèche—a beloved holiday tradition—is on view in the Medieval Sculpture Hall (Gallery 305) through January 6, 2026. The towering 20-foot blue spruce is adorned with a host of cherubs and angels. More than 70 additional figures at the base represent the three elements of Nativity scenes that were traditional to 18th-century Naples: adoring shepherds and their flocks, the procession of the three Magi, and spirited peasants and townspeople. Enhancing the display are nearly 50 charming animals and background elements—such as the ruins of a Roman temple, several quaint houses, and a typical Italian fountain—that create a dramatic setting for the Nativity.

In honor of Hanukkah, a magnificent silver menorah made in 1866–72 is on view in The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Galleries (Floor 1, European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, Gallery 556) through January 6, 2026. Created for the Great Synagogue in Lviv (present-day Ukraine), the ceremonial lamp—which is cast, chased, and engraved with elaborate motifs—is one of the largest silver Hanukkah lamps known. The menorah is on loan from The Moldovan Family Collection. The eight-branched Hanukkah menorah commemorates an important moment in Jewish history: the triumphant Maccabean revolt against the oppressing Seleucid Empire and the reconsecration of the Jewish Holy Temple in 165 BC. The lamp's eight branches refer to the miracle in which the last vessel of oil, which should have lasted only one day, kept the temple menorah lit for eight days to allow for the Temple's reconsecration.
The Met Fifth Avenue, 1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY.
https://www.metmuseum.org/

ModernMedieval Voices
A Midwinter Feast: An Enchanting Journey Through Eight Centuries of Holiday Music
Thursday, December 18, 2025, 7:30 pm
Church of St. Luke in the Fields,
487 Hudson Street, NY, NY
A program promising to be a moving and luminous holiday experience — a perfect antidote to the winter doldrums and a cherished tradition for lovers of early and new music alike. Tickets purchase online: https://gemsny.org/event/modernmedieval-voices/. A holiday program of music from the British Isles, featuring beloved English medieval and Renaissance carols, including Angelus ad Virginum, Good People All, and Green Groweth the Holly. Also included are new arrangements of some traditional favorites including In the Bleak Midwinter, The Coventry Carol, and The Holly and the Ivy. More info at www.modernmedieval.org.

The magic of the holidays returns as Lumina – A Magical Light Experience once again transforms Harvest Moon Farm & Orchard into a dazzling winter wonderland. Now celebrating its fifth season, Lumina features over half a million glowing lights in an immersive, walk-through display where families can continue the cherished tradition of returning year after year to celebrate the spirit of the season. More information and ticket information can be found here www.luminahm.com Guests can indulge in seasonal favorites including fresh apple cider donuts, toasty s'mores, hot cider, and festive holiday drinks and treats while taking in the sights and sounds of this one-of-a-kind experience, perfect for family outings, date nights, and holiday celebrations alike. Lumina – A Magical Light Experience runs through December 30, welcoming guests from 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM on weekends and select weekday evenings. Tickets are available online at luminahm.com

Warm Holiday Wishes To You!

With heartfelt gratitude for our Harrison community.

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