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### NEWS:

County adopts \$753M budget with slight tax decrease

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# THE RAVENA

# News-Herald

Albany County's oldest continuously published weekly newspaper

Volume 147, NO. 50 [www.ravenanews.com](http://www.ravenanews.com)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021

CAPITAL REGION INDEPENDENT MEDIA

\$1.50

## Mayor wants second opinion on 'gritty dusting'

By **Melanie Lekocevic**  
Capital Region Independent Media

RAVENA — Mayor Bill Misuraca is considering getting a second opinion on what the gritty substance was that coated areas of the village in late November.

Samples were taken from Magnolia Circle after the most recent dust-

ing and state Department of Environmental Conservation laboratory testing identified the substance as salt but could not specify where the dust came from.

The mayor said he would like to get confirmation from another testing source to confirm what the substance is. The samples tested by DEC

were only collected at Magnolia Circle, but the dusting event was widespread, he said.

"This was a village-wide event as far up as northern [Route] 9W all the way down to Magnolia Circle and every neighborhood in between," Misuraca said. "Could some of it have been salt? Absolutely, clearly from the

analysis — that's what it says. In other instances, I'm not so sure. So the next time this happens, I will probably recommend that the village bring in another — and I'm not saying anything is wrong with DEC's analysis — but I would love a second opinion because this is an important issue." The health implications

are concerning, he added. "Yes, it's unfortunate that it covers our vehicles. I am more concerned about what we are breathing in," Misuraca said. "Why are we breathing in salt, or whatever this other substance may be? It's ongoing, so I just want everyone to know it is not over just because we got a letter. Be diligent, keep

your eyes open. I am still here and I am going to work on this. It is a top priority for me."

Quick notification to state or local officials would lead to faster testing and more definitive results, Misuraca said.

Both village and town

See MAYOR A2

## Auxiliary salutes military on Pearl Harbor 80th anniversary

By **Melanie Lekocevic**  
Capital Region Independent Media

RAVENA — Famously dubbed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as "a day which will live in infamy," the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in 1941 marked the United States' entry into World War II.

The day was remembered across the nation Dec. 7, on the 80th anniversary of the attack.

Members of the Unitas Memorial Veterans Post 9594 honored the day by opening the Ravenna Village Board meeting leading the Pledge of Allegiance and Auxiliary member Lisa Foronda Schmitt performed the national anthem.

Village board member and Auxiliary President Mary Ellen Rosato led a brief ceremony recalling the loss and sacrifice of troops stationed at Pearl Harbor on that fateful day.

"Today is the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor," Rosato said. "Let us always remember, honor and support our military."

Thousands of troops were killed or injured on that day, and the military suffered other losses when the Japanese struck the U.S. military base in a surprise attack.

"On Dec. 7, (1941), at 7:55 a.m., Japan attacked Hawaii, Pearl Harbor," Rosato said. "Twelve ships sank or were beached, nine were damaged. One hundred and sixty aircraft were destroyed, 150 damaged." The loss of human life was



Members of the Unitas Memorial Veterans Post 9594 Auxiliary, led by Auxiliary President Mary Ellen Rosato, perform a Pearl Harbor remembrance ceremony at the Ravenna Village Board meeting.

more devastating, with thousands killed. The U.S. Navy suffered the greatest number of deaths.

"Our military — in the Army, 218 were killed that day, 364 were wounded," Rosato said. "Marines — 109 killed, 69 wounded. The Navy — 2,008 were killed, 710 wounded. Civilians — 68 killed, 35 wounded."

The attack pushed the United States into war, which had

already been raging in Europe for two years. Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress and the nation via radio on Dec. 8, 1941.

"The Senate responded with a unanimous vote in support of war; only Montana pacifist Jeanette Rankin dissented in the House," according to the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration website. "At 4:00 p.m. that same afternoon, President Roosevelt signed the

declaration of war."

Rosato urged the community to remember the fallen and honor them.

"Let us always remember, honor and support our military," Rosato said.

Auxiliary member Helen Barber said after the ceremony this was the first time the organization held a Pearl Harbor remembrance service.

"We are a patriotic organization for our veterans," Barber

said. "We thought it would be nice to come in our patriotic shirts and uniforms and open up the village meeting with a pledge to honor the veterans and the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor."

The ceremony was personal for Barber — her daughter is a major on active duty in the U.S. Army, currently stationed in Washington, D.C.

Retired Army Reserve nurse Robin Riordan is also a member of the Auxiliary and was on hand to remember her comrades in arms.

"The past military and soldiers that served, particularly in Pearl Harbor, gave their lives so we could be here today honoring them," Riordan said. "Any veteran that served in war, to lay their life on the line for our freedom today and our rights — that is why we do this and why we remember. I think it is very important that we remember our veterans."

Auxiliary member Marion Shields has a personal connection to the war and wanted to honor those who served.

"My husband served in World War II in the South Pacific. He was a Marine," Shields said. "I am behind veterans 100%. I volunteered for six years at the VA Hospital every Monday and I enjoyed every minute of it. I can't even begin to say how important veterans and their service are — they took the chance of something happening and to me, they are my heroes."

## Hi-Tech Advisers transforms long vacant building

By **Melanie Lekocevic**  
Capital Region Independent Media

RAVENA — A Main Street home that has stood vacant for many years has been transformed into the village's newest business.

Hi-Tech Advisers moved its electronics business from Hannacroix to 22 Main St., Ravenna, with a grand opening Saturday morning.

"We have been in business for 36 years," co-owner Joyce Musso said Saturday. "We have evolved over the years and a lot of people are now coming to us for their phone setups, for their computer setups, for fixing their computer, for a new phone or computer,

and we see ourselves having more customers coming to see us, as well as we still go out and install Dish TV, Mesh networks and surveillance."

The business was formerly based out of their home in Hannacroix, but as Hi-Tech Advisers grew, Musso and her husband Paul felt they needed a storefront and looked to Ravenna.

"We sold our house on 32 acres and bought a fixer-upper and fixed it up," Musso said. "It's part business, part home for our family."

The house, built in 1900, was in need of a great deal of repair, so the Mussos rolled up their sleeves and went to work.



Hi-Tech Advisers on Saturday cut the ribbon on its new storefront location in the village of Ravenna at 22 Main St.

"It was totally gutted on the inside — there was no plumbing, no heating, no electrical, no flooring — nothing," she said. "We hired contractors to fix the inside for us, and we

did the basement and the outside. The place was a disaster in the back — we totally redid everything. The siding was new and the roof was new, but everything else had to be

redone."

Most recently a two-family home, the building has stood vacant for many years. Deputy Mayor Nancy Warner recalled when the building housed a variety store called Vasto's.

"Many of us remember when this building was a little neighborhood store with penny candy in the front and a butcher shop in the back. That was maybe in the '60s. Later on, it was a bike shop and then a private home," Warner said.

She welcomed Hi-Tech Advisers to the community.

"It's great to see another business that we never had come to Main Street,"

Warner said. "I wish them a lot of luck."

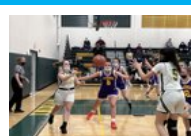
Joy Iafallo, chairwoman of the RCS Community Business Association, helped the Mussos relocate their business as well as their family home.

"They are completely invested. I am a real-estate agent, so they called me to sell their house that they had built. I thought they were never going to leave there, but they said they wanted to invest in their business on Main Street, so we started looking," Iafallo said.

They were searching for a storefront that could double as the fam-

See HI-TECH A2

### Sports :



Girls' hoops dominate Blackbirds  
See page B1

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## MAYOR from A1

officials are urging residents to contact local officials or the DEC at 518-357-2345 if a similar event takes place again. Complaints can also be emailed to DEC Region 4 Pollution Control Engineer Benjamin Potter at Benjamin.Potter@dec.ny.gov.

“Don’t call me a week after it happens, don’t stop me at True Value,” Misuraca said. “When it happens, call me, call this number because time is of the essence when this occurs. Having accurate timetables gives you a

cleaner sample, gives you a more reliable sample and also helps establish what the wind patterns were. They can correlate it with other events that may have occurred at certain industrial parts of the village.”

Timely reporting of dusting incidents is critical to identifying the source, the mayor added. “I get a lot of ‘after-the-fact,’ and it is not helping, so please call me immediately,” Misuraca said.

Town Supervisor George McHugh also addressed the issue at the town board’s Nov. 22 meeting and urged quick action in reporting future

dusting incidents so the source of the substance can be identified.

“They can’t tell where this dust came from. They are not going to be able to tell where this dust came from and they are hoping that it doesn’t happen again, but if it does happen again, for the complaints to come in a little quicker and get to DEC a little quicker,” McHugh said.

While the source of the gritty dust that settled over the village in October has not been identified, McHugh said he met in November with both DEC and representatives from the Lafarge

cement plant about the issue. DEC officials told McHugh the test results were inconclusive.

“There is nothing definitive,” McHugh said. “They blamed it on the fact that they were notified too far after the incident and that the samples that they took were very inconclusive and couldn’t really say exactly where they came from, what the origin was.”

It remains unclear where the substance originated, but Lafarge provided McHugh with a statement about the incident.

“We appreciate the cooperation we have

received from residents and state and local officials to review the origin of materials found on cars and other private property in the past several weeks,” according to the Lafarge statement.

“Based on our continuous emissions monitoring system at the Lafarge Ravenna plant, there have been no irregular operations or permit exceedances that correspond with the state report to us so far. It is our understanding that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has collected and tested the material recorded in the Ravenna area. We

are cooperating fully with their investigation and we hope the results will help shed light on the type of material and its possible source. By all accounts this situation is different from past events.”

In a letter from Lafarge Plant Manager Dave MacLauchlin to McHugh, the company states the complaint process has been fine tuned.

Anyone looking to file a complaint about the plant should visit [lafargeravennaconnect.com](http://lafargeravennaconnect.com) or email [Ravenna@lafargeholcim.com](mailto:Ravenna@lafargeholcim.com), according to the letter. You can also call the company at 518-756-5026 or 1-844-332-3267.

## HI-TECH from A1

ily’s home and wanted a central location to be as accessible to their customers as possible, Iafallo said.

“Their business was

evolving and changing, so they decided they needed a storefront,” Iafallo said. “I love seeing them all in — as community members, as small business owners, as a generational family in the business. It’s just awesome to me.”

Hi-Tech Advisers is the latest in a string of new businesses calling Main Street and the village home.

“This is rapid fire and it’s awesome,” Mayor Bill Misuraca said of the new businesses opening their

doors locally. “As many as we have, there’s more coming and it’s a really great time to be here in Ravenna and I think we are seeing quite a bump, quite a push. These people are the best at what they do and I am behind them

100%.”

Village Trustee Linda Muller welcomed the business to the community and said more are on the way.

“For me, this is so exciting, particularly what they said about being a family

business, being a bright spot in our community,” Muller said after Saturday’s ribbon-cutting ceremony. “Our residents are loving this. And I am so excited because we know there is more coming.”

## Advocates: Have compassion for lonely elders

By John Grimaldi  
For Capital Region Independent Media

One man’s agony: “I am 77 years old. I was happily married for 55 years but I lost my wife a year and a half ago. No, she didn’t die. In fact, she is in great physical health — except for her Alzheimer’s disease. She is in a memory care facility. I see her a couple of times each week. Her confinement and my isolation have left me devastated. I love her and wake up each and every morning sad and abandoned.”

It’s not easy growing old and alone, no matter the circumstances. And while that man’s situa-

tion is particularly difficult, a growing number of seniors will be condemned to spend the winter of life in solitude in the coming years.

The Association of Mature American Citizens cites a report produced by the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, which reports: “By 2038, there will be 17.5 million households in their 80s and over, more than double the 8.1 million in 2018. These households will also constitute an increasingly larger share of all US households, doubling from 6% in 2018 to 12% in 2038. As we

note in our recent report, Housing America’s Older Adults 2019, the majority of these households will be made up of just a single person.”

And, according to the association, a growing number of those “singles” will be senior citizens.

“Seniors who live alone in America are increasing with each passing year and, currently, nearly a third of men and women 65 years of age or older live alone. The Census Bureau reports that more than 12 million aging seniors live alone — more than 28% of folks over 65 years. And, interestingly, they do so because they

want it that way.”

The Merck Manual, a comprehensive medical resource for the past 122 years, states that “Almost 90% of older people living alone express a keen desire to maintain their independence. Many fear being too dependent on others and, despite the loneliness, want to continue to live alone.”

Nonetheless, the Manual points out that in order to remain independent, they need to live healthy lives and engage in social activities.

But the reality is that not only has isolation impacted their quality of life, 12% of seniors who

live by themselves say they have difficulty making ends meet, and do not have enough money to deal with basic expenses. And their loneliness, in too many cases, has been increased by the COVID pandemic and is poised to become especially painful during the holiday season.

But friends, family and caring neighbors can help alleviate their pain, according to the National Council on Aging. Here’s how:

- During the holiday season, it’s easy for older people to feel even more alone than at other times. So, get them involved, help them to make celebration

preparations. Keep them encouraged and hopeful by conversing with them in person and/or on the phone to make them feel that you care.

- Offer to help them to get out and about and go with them for moral and engaging support.

- Encourage them to socialize, perhaps convincing them to take adult education classes or to take up a hobby. It’s never too late in life for such activities.

And, by all means, keep them on your list of people to call and/or visit on a regular basis and help them feel wanted.

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**NEWS FROM THE PAST/  
As compiled by  
HARRY A. STURGES**

News Herald—December 16, 1921 - F.E. Bleezarde, Publisher

**Coeymans:**

The ice companies along the Hudson River are hoping for a brisk cold winter this season so as to be able to harvest a good crop of ice. All of the Hudson River ice houses are empty, and there are 5 million tons needed to fill the houses. In past years the annual crop was 10 million tons, but in recent years ice houses have been torn down or destroyed by fire and not replaced.

The Young Women's Service League has sent a Xmas box to the Mission at Colony, Oklahoma, which contained 26 gifts for the leaders and workers of the mission.

There is considerable floating ice in the river and there is ice on the flats back of the dikes, but at this writing navigation is still open. Should the river freeze over now there is prospect of a lot of work as the ice houses in this locality are entirely empty.

The same cast of characters that presented the drama "Sewing for the Heathen" in the Methodist Church here will go to Coeymans Hollow this Friday evening to present it in the M.E. Church.

The Coeymans High School has sent to the State Department \$3.50 for the French Restoration fund to help

build two high schools in the devastated region of France.

**Ravena:**

The final results of the D. of A. fair were very gratifying to the members of the local council as they cleared \$797.

The Park Hotel has passed under new management during the past week and the local hotel which has been a popular stopping place for travelers for several years past is now under the management of Samuel Karch.

Tony Carricola has been ill for the past week with rheumatism.

Willis Brazee of Catskill has been added to Grover Gedney's force of mechanics this week.

Skating has been enjoyed on the Ravena Lumber Company pond west of the village since last Friday.

As Christmas comes on Sunday there will be as usual a big consignment of mail on hand at the post office and in order to prevent a blockade, the office will be open on Christmas Day to receive and dispatch mail at 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

A rifle bullet entered the residence of John L. Hannay on McCulloch Avenue that went through the side of the house and dropped near a bookcase. One hunter claimed this bullet might have been shot from a rifle a couple miles

away.

A dance will be held tonight in Community Hall for the purpose of raising funds to continue the basketball games. The last two weeks the receipts have not been sufficient to pay the expenses of the basketball game, so the games for this evening were canceled. Games will be resumed next Friday evening.

**Coeymans Herald - December 15, 1886 - S.H. & E.J. Sherman, Proprietors**

Warm spell and rains have deprived us of our sleighing.

Now is the time to look up your old clothes, if you have any, and give them to the poor.

Two hayseed youths who had imbibed freely of aged apple juice got up quite an excitement on Westerlo Street on Saturday evening.

The crisp new \$2 silver certificate will be along in time for Christmas presents. A very pretty present a bundle of them will make.

On Thursday last, while the men engaged in clearing up and enlarging the brickyard lot of Sutton and Sudderly, just north of the village, in excavating, they threw out a lot of bones. On examination they proved to be human, but whether of a male or female could not be told, as the skull was all that was in any way perfect. In all probability, it is that of an Indian and has lain there many years.

**County adopts \$753M budget with slight tax decrease**

By Melanie Lekocevic  
Capital Region Independent Media

ALBANY — The Albany County Legislature last week adopted the proposed \$753 million county budget.

The executive budget was unveiled Oct. 12 by Albany County Executive Daniel McCoy and was adopted by the Legislature with minor alterations Dec. 6.

The 2022 spending plan focuses on enhancing youth programming, encouraging economic development and modernizing the county workforce, along with providing for safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, McCoy said.

Albany County Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce said the budget meets the needs of the community.

"Our priorities of continuing to keep our county safe during the pandemic, making key investments in our future through youth and community development programming and unleashing Albany County's job creation and economic development potential are all here in this spending plan," Joyce said.

Between the proposed budget's unveiling in October and the Legislature's final approval last week, county lawmakers worked with agencies, departments and other stakeholders to tweak the budget with alterations.

The budget includes a tax levy of \$99,752,250 and results in a tax rate of \$3.45 for every \$1,000 of

the property's equalized value. Property owners will see a slight decrease in their 2022 taxes compared to this year, according to McCoy's office.

Among the adjustments made to the budget by the Legislature was an additional \$15,000 allocated to the Department of Recreation to provide county youth with more recreational opportunities, as well as after-school programming, workforce development programs and other public health and safety initiatives, according to McCoy's office.

With the county's continued recovery efforts from the economic impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the budget allocates \$250,000 to the county's economic development budget to support the Advance Albany County Alliance Local Development Corporation and other initiatives to boost economic recovery.

An additional \$75,000 was allotted to the Legislative Task Force aimed at a variety of efforts including providing resources for small businesses, tackling blight in communities, ensuring minority health equity and more.

The adopted budget includes resources for the county's key areas of interest, Audit and Finance Chairwoman Wanda Willingham said.

"I am proud of the 2022 financial plan, which ensures that we continue to improve our support programs across all areas of the county so our

residents are getting the resources and services where they need it the most," Willingham said. "I want to thank my colleagues in the Legislature for their support on a comprehensive budget which creates more youth programming to keep our children safe, addresses health and wellness in our minority communities amid the pandemic and promotes economic development in all our communities. Our residents must be a priority and I think this budget enforces that."

There are no cuts to county services or programs under the adopted budget. Anticipated revenues from sales tax collections are predicted to offset spending increases, and there will be a slight reduction in property taxes, McCoy's office said.

The budget addresses the challenges facing the county, particularly those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Legislature Majority Leader Dennis Feeny said.

"In our second fiscal year impacted by COVID-19, we have provided a budget that both addresses those challenges and further meets the needs of the people of Albany County," Feeny said. "The budget maintains the high levels of services the people have come to expect and rely on from county government, while also rewarding our county workforce for their hard work and years of dedicated services."

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I wanted to thank everyone within the Ravena / Coeymans / Selkirk communities for their continued support over the last year. It has been difficult at times but we have managed to get through it and provide a helpful community service. We are back to regular business hours Mon - Fri 10am - 5pm / Sat 10am - 3pm / Closed on Sundays

Currently, with the volume of bottles and cans we are only taking drop offs - bring in your empties, place them in a designated area, we take your name and then give you the earliest time frame to come back or any time thereafter to collect your money. Since opening in July 2018, we have helped raise approximately \$52,500, which is almost 924,000 bottles/cans for 50 different organizations which anyone can donate to.

We look forward to servicing the community in the future. If you have any questions regarding operation, donations or fundraisers please reach out....

Shane DeCrescenzo  
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## RCS SCHOOL MENUS

### RCS Elementary School Menu Dec. 20 to Dec. 24

**Breakfast Menu**  
 Monday: Whole-grain doughnut, peaches, pears, skim or 1% milk.  
 Tuesday: EScrambled eggs, whole-wheat English muffin, mixed fruit, skim or 1% milk.  
 Wednesday: Waffles, banana, apple, skim or 1% milk.  
 Thursday: Whole-grain bagel, fresh fruit, peaches, skim or 1% milk.  
 Friday: Holiday recess. No school.  
**Lunch Menu**  
 Monday: Egg sandwich or chicken nuggets with whole-grain bread, spinach, sweet potatoes, fruit salad, skim or 1% milk.  
 Tuesday: Turkey sandwich or nachos with

beef, cheese sauce, corn, brown rice, beans, skim or 1% milk.  
 Wednesday: Ham sandwich or Buffalo chicken wrap, beans and rice, broccoli, peaches, skim or 1% milk.  
 Thursday: Roast turkey, mashed potatoes, butternut squash, apple sauce, mixed fruit, skim or 1% milk.  
 Friday: Holiday recess. No school.  
**RCS Middle & High School Menu Dec. 20 to Dec. 24**  
**Breakfast Menu**  
 Monday: Whole-grain doughnut, peaches, pears, skim or 1% milk.  
 Tuesday: Scrambled eggs, whole-wheat English muffin, mixed fruit, skim or 1% milk.  
 Wednesday: Waffles, banana, apple, skim or 1% milk.

Thursday: Whole-grain bagel, fresh fruit, peaches, skim or 1% milk.  
 Friday: Holiday recess. No school.  
**Lunch Menu**  
 Monday: Egg sandwich or chicken nuggets with whole-grain bread, spinach, sweet potatoes, fruit salad, skim or 1% milk.  
 Tuesday: Turkey sandwich or nachos with beef and cheese sauce, corn, brown rice with beans, skim or 1% milk.  
 Wednesday: Ham sandwich or Buffalo chicken wrap, chips, broccoli, peaches, skim or 1% milk.  
 Thursday: Roast turkey, mashed potatoes, butternut squash, apple sauce, mixed fruit, skim or 1% milk.  
 Friday: Holiday recess. No school.

## SENIOR PROJECTS

Senior Projects of Ravenna reopened to the public July 12 for the first time in more than a year after being closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Dinner is being offered every weekday at 4 p.m. Call 518-756-8593 for

information and the menu. Exercise classes are also being offered. The Meals on Wheels program and the transportation program are still available, according to the organization's Face-

book page. Bingo has been cancelled until further notice. If there is a senior who needs assistance or you are concerned about a senior, please call Senior Projects at 518-756-8593.



## RCS COMMUNITY LIBRARY

"Sleep is good," he said. "And books are better." — George R. R. Martin

**TAKE AND MAKE TUESDAY**  
 Make a beaded snowflake this week. It's an easy holiday craft little kids can be a part of and it's great for fine motor skills as well as the sense of accomplishment when the project is complete. Pick up your Take and Make kit beginning at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 21.

**CRITTER CORNER BOOKMARK**  
 Drop-in on Saturday, Dec. 18, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
 Make a friendly pal to save your book page when you drop by the library on Saturday, Dec. 18, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. No need to register!

**HOLIDAY HOURS**  
 The library will be closed Dec. 24 and 25 for the Christmas holiday and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 for the New Year. Visit the library between the holidays — and, of course, you

can access books, music and movies at Hoopla and books and magazines on Overdrive. They're always open!

**SCHOOL VACATION WEEK AT THE LIBRARY**  
 Bored over school vacation? Not at the library! There will be a program for kids each day of school vacation. Registration is required, so sign up today under "Events" on the library website.

**SHAKY SCIENCE**  
 Monday, Dec. 27 at 2 p.m.  
 Make a mini earthquake and find out what happens to buildings built on sand. This fun and simple earthquake experiment is a great geology activity for kids ages 5 and up.

**BOTTLE CAP SHOOTER**  
 Tuesday, Dec. 28 at 2 p.m.  
 Kids 8 and up will design, build and decorate a rubber band powered bottle-cap shooter out of cardboard, glue, paper and awesomeness\*.

provide craft supplies; children must provide their own awesomeness.

**MORSE CODE BRACELETS**  
 Wednesday, Dec. 29 at 2 p.m.  
 Spell out your name or a secret message when you make a secret Morse code bracelet or necklace in just a few easy steps! Ages 8 and up. The craft involves use of a sharp beading needle. Adults are welcome to help with the beading if their kid is not comfortable using a needle.

**PLASTIC CANVAS CREATIONS**  
 Thursday, Dec. 30 from 2-3:30 p.m.  
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# Hochul: Indoor mask mandate returns



Courtesy of Gov. Kathy Hochul's Office  
 Gov. Kathy Hochul, pictured, on Friday announced the return of the indoor mask mandate for indoor public spaces that do not have a vaccine requirement. The mandate took effect Dec. 13 and will be reevaluated in January.

**By Melanie Lekocevic**  
 Capital Region Independent Media

ALBANY — The state's indoor mask mandate is back, Gov. Kathy Hochul announced Friday.

Face coverings are required in all indoor public places unless the business or venue has implemented a vaccine requirement. The mandate was put back in place in an effort to stem a rising tide of COVID-19 infections, particularly during the holiday season.

The mandate went into effect Dec. 13 and will remain in place until Jan. 15, when it will be reevaluated, Hochul said. "As governor, my two top priorities are to protect the health of New Yorkers and to protect the health of our economy," Hochul said. "The temporary measures I am taking today will help accomplish this through the holiday season. We shouldn't have reached the point where we are confronted with a winter surge, especially with the vaccine at our disposal, and I share many New Yorkers' frustration that we are not past this pandemic yet."

The change was made amid a rising surge of COVID-19 infections. Since Thanksgiving, the statewide seven-day average of positive test results increased by 43% and hospitalizations went up by 29%, according to Hochul's office. The number of vaccinations against the virus rose 2% since Thanksgiving, but Hochul said the increase has not been enough to check the spread of the virus, particularly in areas with low vaccination rates.

"I have warned for weeks that additional steps could be necessary, and now we are at that point based upon three metrics: increasing cases, reduced hospital capacity and insufficient vaccination rates in certain areas," Hochul said. Those found not in compliance with the

mandate face a maximum fine of \$1,000 for each violation, Hochul said. Local health departments are tasked with enforcing the mandate.

Businesses that require proof of vaccination against COVID are exempt from the mask mandate.

Acting Health Commissioner Mary Bassett, M.D., said steps need to be taken particularly to address the new virus variants.

"Community spread requires a community-minded solution, as the omicron variant emerges and the overwhelmingly dominant delta variant continues to circulate," Bassett said. "We have the tools we need to protect against the virus — and now we must ensure we use them. There are tools each individual can use, and there are actions we can take as government. Getting vaccinated protects you, and wearing a mask is how we will better protect each other. Both vaccination and mask-wearing are needed to slow this COVID-19 winter surge."

Albany County Executive Daniel McCoy supported reimposition of the mandates.

"I have continually said that any kind of mask or vaccine requirement would only be truly effective if it's done at least on a regional basis," McCoy said Friday. "As we see new daily cases of COVID spike here in Albany County, and across the Capital Region and the state, and as the omicron variant spreads, I applaud Gov. Hochul for demonstrating leadership in the face of a pandemic that has forced all of us to make difficult decisions that prioritize the health and safety of our people. This statewide policy will help us stem the tide of new infections, which will prevent more hospitalizations and deaths as we approach the winter months."

Not everyone is happy

with the new mandate. Assemblyman Chris Tague, R-102, came out against the state requirement.

"Enough is enough. With vaccines and boosters readily available to those who want them, and contact tracing technology and testing being more accessible than ever, we do not need a statewide mandate to protect people's health," Tague said. "More than that, it is despicable that Gov. Hochul has decided to threaten our people and businesses with a \$1,000 fine for any incidents of noncompliance. This mandate will be disastrous for our small businesses, which have had this mandate suddenly thrown into their laps during the critical holiday sales period and will stifle our collective recovery as a state. Protecting public health should be a priority for us all, but it can be done without implementing a statewide mandate that in no way takes into account the unique circumstances of the communities it affects."

Greg Biryła, Sr., state director of the National Federation of Independent Business/New York, a small business advocacy group, called the mandate "troubling," particularly as businesses try to rebound from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

"As small businesses continue to grapple with record inflation, workforce shortages and supply chain dysfunction, today's announcement that employers and employees will be put in the position of enforcing and regulating public health mandates is troubling," Biryła said. "This holiday season is a crucial time for small businesses holding out hope for 2022 after unprecedented economic disruption of the past two years; NFIB continues to ask all New Yorkers to find new ways to support small business and sustain local commerce."

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# Christmas wishes

December 2014

Dear Santa,

It's me again, Little Dicky Brooks from Cold Spring Road.

I've tried to be faithful about writing to you on a yearly basis so here's Letter #68. It certainly doesn't seem that long. I still feel a little guilty about all the "gimme" letters in the beginning. I have been better about the last dozen or so, haven't I?

It's been a pretty good year for our family. A few health problems, but they're pretty much gone now. The Queen's mother and my Mom both left us last year so this is our first Christmas without them and they are missed. But Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without the memories of Christmas past, so they really haven't left.

My boys are fine, no incarcerations so far, and The Princess continues to fill the world with her music. We are so proud of them all.

How are things with Ms. Claus and the elves? I heard that she was looking good. "Weight Watchers" helped? The Queen has worked hard and really looks nice also.

Maybe it's time for us to think about shedding a few pounds, too. We both have about the same body type — round — and neither of us is getting any younger. I'll do what I can, but it'll be easier if I know you're trying, too. Misery loves company.

I hope you're taking care of yourself. I know how cold weather makes me feel and I'm a lot younger than you are. Did you get your flu shot this year?

Maybe you could start deliveries the day before Christmas so you wouldn't be so rushed. Most children wouldn't mind their presents a day early, at least I know I wouldn't have minded that at all.

I will leave you a couple of packages of hand warmers that I've found to work well. I'll leave them next to the plate of

WHITTLING AWAY



DICK BROOKS

cookies and the eggnog with our special sweetener in it.

Well, enough of the chit chat, time to get down to business, business being what I want for Christmas this year.

How about a new Corvette? I knew that would give you a chuckle, I've been asking for one since 1954, so I couldn't let this year go by without continuing the tradition. I still have the model of one that you put in my stocking so long ago and I thank you for it. One of my reader friends sent me one last year, so now I have two.

It's getting tougher and tougher to figure out what I want for Christmas. There's little that I want and even less that I need. I know I'm driving my wife crazy because I can't

come up with a list for her to shop with. Here's the best I could come up with:

- Good health and happiness for all that I know.
  - A big can of kindness to rub on the hurts of those who are lonely and have no one to share the holidays with.
  - Shelter for those without any.
  - Love to thaw the hearts of those who hate.
  - Tender treatment for all things that are small and helpless.
  - The intelligence to see my blessings daily.
- That should about do it. I know they're not easy to find or get, but I know you'll try your best. I'll try my best to help out, maybe I can find them on my own.

Well, old friend, take care. Travel safely, remember you can leave some of the cookies. Give Ms. Claus and the reindeer a hug for me.

Should you ever have a need for an old whittler to help with making the toys, give me a call, I'd love to help. If all goes well, I'll write again next year.

God bless.

Love you Santa, Dick

Reach Dick Brooks at [whittlingaway@yahoo.com](mailto:whittlingaway@yahoo.com).

# Firewood, Part 1: The good side

GARDENING TIPS



BOB BEYFUSS

the wood, not its volume. A pound of dry wood provides about 8,000 BTUs, regardless of what species it is. A full cord, which is defined as a pile that is 4-foot tall by 4-feet wide by 8-feet long (128 cubic feet) of hickory or oak may weigh as much as 4,000 pounds, yielding more than twice as much heat as a full cord of pine, willow, basswood or aspen (poplar), which weigh as little as 1,800 pounds. That weight per volume is based on the wood having about 20% moisture content. Freshly cut wood can weigh more than twice that amount.

Firewood will never dry down to less than 20% moisture content when stored outdoors. Only kiln-dried wood can be dried to less than 5% moisture. That makes leftover two by fours excellent fire starters!

It is wise to learn a bit about what species of wood you are burning. There is more to heating your home with wood than just BTUs, however.

Almost every species of wood has its own burning characteristics and long-term wood burners enjoy the "art" of using just the right wood for a specific purpose. If you want a quick, hot fire that will warm the stove and house in a hurry, you might burn some very well-seasoned pine, spruce or hemlock (or two by fours, if you can

afford them), but these species do not burn for long and they also do not produce long lasting coals.

If the temperature outside is not really cold, perhaps in the 40s, you can get by just fine burning ash, black cherry, birch, red (soft) maple, butternut, basswood and even partly rotted beech. Sycamore is commonly found growing along creeks and the wood is very heavy, difficult to split (used to make butcher's blocks) and contains lot of water.

If it gets really cold, then hop hornbeam (aka ironwood), hickory and my favorite firewood, sugar maple, are much preferred. All three of these species burn very hot and make excellent, long-lasting coals. Oak is also excellent firewood, but only when well-seasoned.

Oak firewood also has a fragrance that I don't particularly like. I also do not particularly like the smell of willow, dogwood, black locust and aspen. Most people don't notice the smell of wood until they have a thousand pounds of it sitting in the living room!

Apple wood is very dense, burns very hot with great coals and has a wonderful fragrance, as do pear and other fruit trees. Apple trees are generally pretty gnarly though with lots of internal rot and it is also tough to split. Paper birch has bark that burns with a dense, black smoke. It is good for starting fires, as the bark will burn even if soaking wet, but not much else.

It sure does look nice stacked near a fireplace, however! If firewood was sold by appearance, paper birch would be a best seller.

Next week I will discuss the downsides.

Reach Bob Beyfuss at [rlb14@cornell.edu](mailto:rlb14@cornell.edu).

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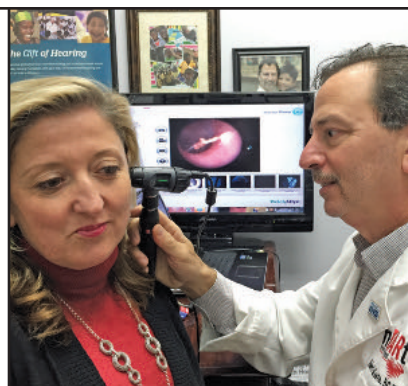
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# Change yourself to change your situation

We've all experienced times when things were going well, we were moving towards a goal, and suddenly things began to sour. A new manager may be putting negative pressure on you, or maybe a family member is constantly angry with you — no matter what you say or do, it's wrong.

Situations like this are most challenging. It's hard to move forward. We lose the spring in our step, we let our heads droop down, we wonder why everything has to be so bad. We go home at night and we dread the next day. We wonder how it will be possible to make it through.

You say your prayers and beg for a change; you confide in your loved ones. They try to help, but nothing they

**Positively Speaking**



**Toby Moore**

say seems to make a difference.

The positive thoughts become few and far between. You try to be positive, but with a bad attitude, you think to yourself, "I just have to keep putting one foot in front of the other."

The fact is, things don't always go the way we plan. We plan for great things, and then not-so-great things can happen. We have great

expectations, but sometimes those expectations are crushed.

When life becomes like this, it's easy to get negative. It's easy to get stuck. It's easy to think things will always be like this.

I used to believe that when life gives you lemons, you should squirt your enemies in the eye, but is that the best way?

Years ago, I had a job where everything was running smoothly; it was all under control. Suddenly a new manager was hired and life became very different. Initially, I was OK with the pressure, but it became too much. I couldn't stand to be at work, and I was distraught. It was a good job and I didn't want to leave, but I didn't feel like I could deal with it any longer. I prayed, and

I read, seeking a solution. I tried to change my manager, but nothing seemed to work. I lost my cool.

After some time, I realized I wasn't going to change the situation, nor was I going to change my manager, but instead, I was the one who needed changing.

Sometimes to overcome a problem, it isn't about changing the other person; it's about changing yourself. Often our reaction to what's happening is the problem. We have a choice.

I've had family members get angry at me, and my reaction only made things worse. I'd try to show them the error of their ways, I'd complain to other family members, I'd think of ways to change them, but it never worked. The

only time things became peaceful again was when I changed myself, when I changed my reaction.

The other person may change, but it usually won't happen according to our time frame. When you can't change the situation, it might be because it's time to change your attitude and feel about it.

They say everything in life is only for a season. Is that true?

Oddly enough, when I finally adjusted my attitude and gave up trying to change my manager and the situation, when I accepted that I was the one that needed changing and I took steps to let go and become flexible, my manager was fired.

After reading that, I know some of you are going to change real fast! Don't get your hopes up!

Ha-ha!

When he was gone, I missed him. I realized how much he had changed me and what valuable life lessons I learned in the process.

Everything in life is only for a season; whatever you're going through won't last forever. Soon, you'll be in a new season with new challenges. Make the most of each season. Allow the season to change you; it will prepare you for the next season.

Gandhi said, "...as a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him..." Is that true?

Try it and see.

*Toby Moore is a columnist, the star of Emmy-nominated "A Separate Peace," and CEO of CubeStream Inc.*

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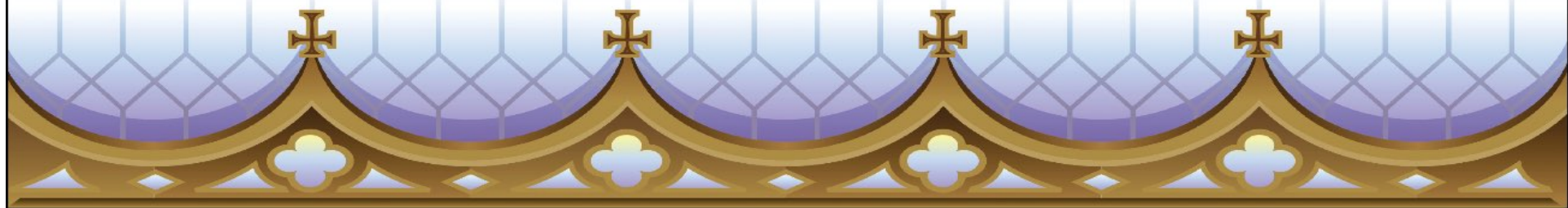
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# OP-ED: A do-or-die moment for our small farmers

By Assemblyman Chris Tague  
For Capital Region Independent Media

For many farmers in New York state, the winter months are a time to unwind from the stresses of a challenging and demanding growing season. This year, however, our farmers remain with a great deal of apprehension as we await a decision that could threaten their future viability.

In the coming days, the Farm Laborers Wage Board will reconvene to consider reducing the overtime threshold for farmworkers in New York state to below 60 hours. Such a change would have drastic impacts on farm labor costs. A recent report estimates, when combined with scheduled minimum wage increases, a 42% increase in workforce expenses for these small businesses.

While there are attempts to portray the issue of overtime pay for farmworkers as a simple matter of wage equality, a lower overtime threshold, without considering the realities of farming, will translate into smaller paychecks for laborers, or even jobs lost. In the end, hurting the very workers the policy is intended to help.

The operation of a farm is unpredictable and relies upon crop-, animal- and weather-dependent work schedules that are oftentimes incompatible with an 8-hour workday. Farmworkers are used to laboring long hours, well over 40 hours per week, and have grown accustomed to the resulting pay. However, in the two years since the implementation of a 60-hour workweek, many of these workers have had their hours drastically reduced by their employers who cannot afford to



ASSEMBLYMAN CHRIS TAGUE

pay overtime rates. This has resulted in farmworkers earning less, with some ultimately deciding to leave the industry. Migrant workers, relied upon by farms that struggle to find local help, have declined to return to New York state, opting instead to work where they can earn more. This exodus of labor will no doubt be more profound with further overtime reductions.

In New York, the agricultural industry is overwhelmingly composed of small, family-owned operations that are lucky to turn a profit and cannot absorb higher labor costs, nor maintain production with reduced staff. These modest farms compete in a global economy and have little to no control over the value of their goods, regardless of the actual cost to make. New York farms, already dealing with comparatively high production costs that are not accounted for in worldwide markets, find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

For example, despite the strong presence of local agriculture here, many of our schools import milk, and some procure apples from as far away as Washington state, even though New York is recognized as the second-largest apple producing state in the country.

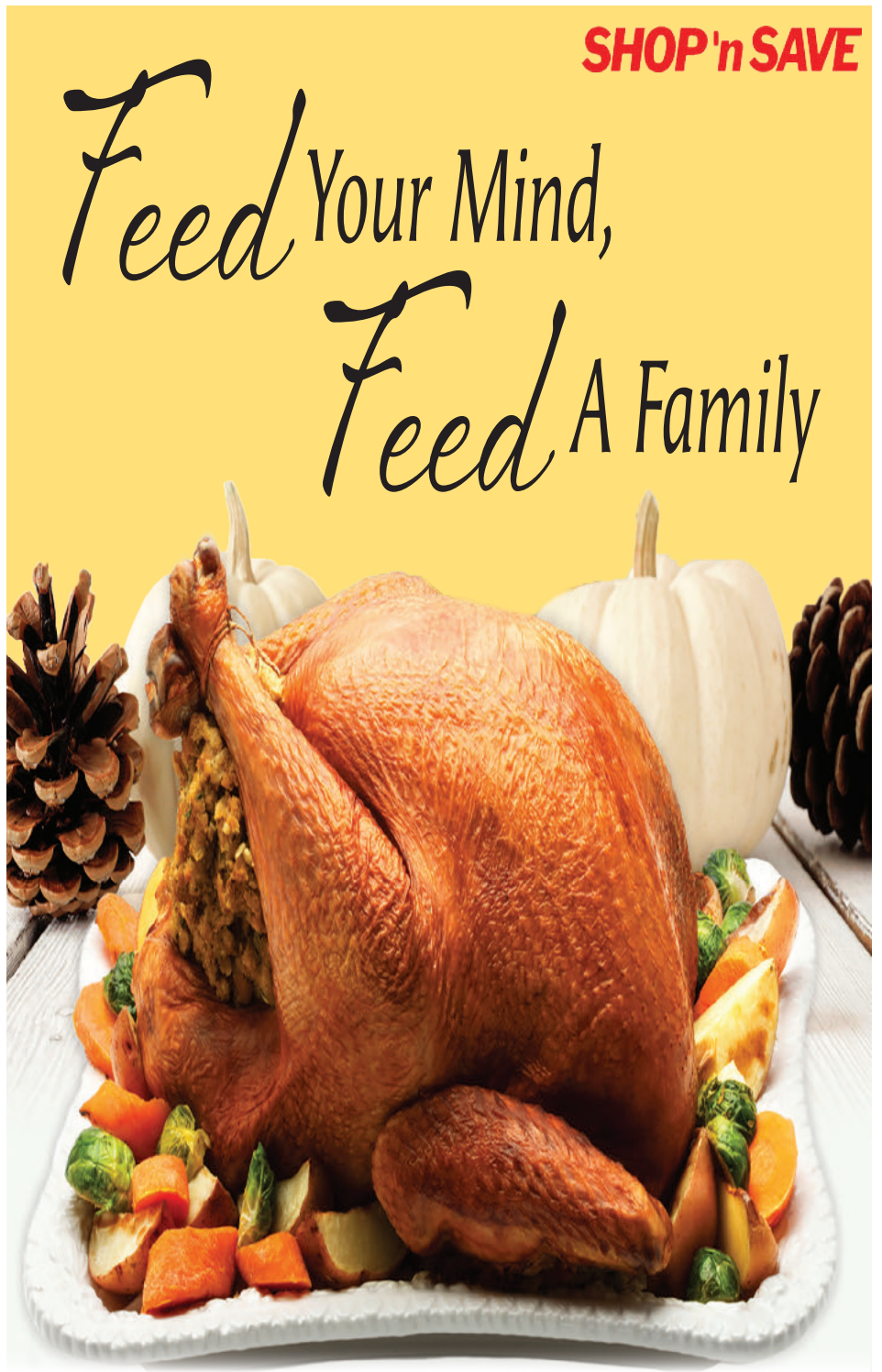
While the consequences of further reductions to the overtime threshold will be

disastrous for farmers, the impacts will ultimately be felt in the wallets of all New Yorkers. We continue to endure a prolonged food supply chain crisis that has left store shelves empty and led to dramatic increases in grocery bills. As farmers are forced to produce less labor-intensive crops or, worse yet, cease their operations, we not only lose out on fresh, locally grown foods, but we become heavily reliant on imported goods, making us more vulnerable to market volatility.

Farming is an industry unlike any other in our modern economy and by implementing a policy that fails to recognize the unique challenges faced by those who feed us, we jeopardize the future of agriculture in New York state. Our farmworkers do an essential job, and I appreciate those who are advocating for their rights. However, the imposition of a burdensome overtime threshold will end this way of life as we know it and diminish all opportunity for farmworkers in New York.

I am calling on Gov. Hochul, Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon and members of the Farm Laborers Wage Board to do the right thing and oppose any measures to further reduce the overtime threshold below its current 60 hours per week. I would also encourage others to reach out to them and make their voices heard. If we have no farms, we have no food. So let's stop biting the hand that feeds us.

*Assemblyman Chris Tague represents the 102nd Assembly District, which includes Greene and Schoharie counties, and parts of Albany, Columbia, Otsego, Delaware and Ulster counties.*



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- 1 in 6 children in New York are facing hunger every day.
- 32.4% of households receiving SNAP benefits have children
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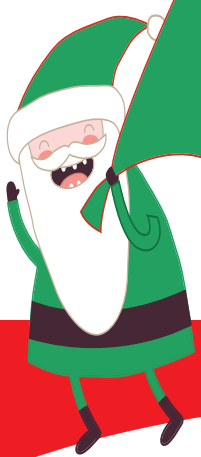
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## Charge into the holidays

The holidays are right around the corner, and with the holidays come gift-giving, many of which require batteries. This year, rather than purchasing single-use batteries, think about investing in rechargeable batteries that can be used again and again, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

There are many reasons to choose rechargeable batteries:

- **Waste reduction** – Since rechargeable batteries can be used over and over, there is less waste going to the landfill.

- **Save money** – Purchasing single-use batteries can be expensive. While it is true that rechargeable batteries cost more upfront, over their lifetime you will save lots of money. Remember, it is always a good idea to unplug your rechargeable batteries once they have a full charge and to check that your devices can use rechargeable batteries.

- **Resource reduction** – Using rechargeable batteries saves resources and energy versus single-use batteries. Not only

are rechargeable batteries able to be used hundreds of times, but it also takes less energy to recharge them than it does to produce single-use batteries.

- **Recyclability** – Did you know that rechargeable batteries are recyclable and that in New York state they must be recycled? It is illegal to dispose of rechargeable batteries in the trash and they should never be put in your home recycling bin. Properly recycling these batteries saves precious resources and lessens the need for virgin materials. Your old batteries can be recycled into pots and pans, utensils, and even new batteries.

- **Recycle right** - When a rechargeable battery has reached the end of its useful life, find a collection location using Call 2 Recycle by visiting <https://www.call2recycle.org/locator/>. There, you can find collection locations near you to recycle your used rechargeable batteries safely and responsibly. Remember, batteries should never go in your home recycling bin.

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# Community Calendar

## RAVENA Community Bulletin Board

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Scheduled events may be canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Please call ahead to confirm.*

### December 2021

- 16 - A.W. Becker Elementary School 2nd and 4th Grade Concert, 7 p.m., 1146 Route 9W, Selkirk.
- 20 - RCS High School Band and Chorus Winter Concert, 7 p.m., 2025 Route 9W, Coeymans.
- 21 - Ravenna Village Board meeting, 6 p.m., Village Hall, 15 Mountain Road, Ravenna.
- 22 - Coeymans Planning/Zoning Board of Appeals meeting, 7 p.m., Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravenna.
- 23 - Coeymans Town Board meeting, 6:30 p.m., Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravenna.
- 24 - Coeymans town offices closed for Christmas Day (observed).
- 24-31 - RCS schools closed for holiday recess.

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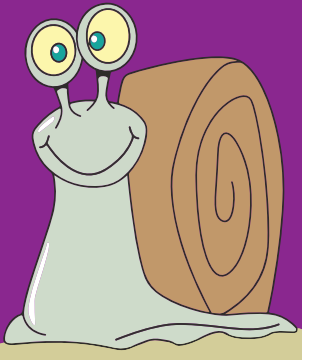
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**Kid Scoop Together:**

**Zott or Nott?**

Circle all the aliens from the planet Zott using these clues: Aliens from Zott each have at least three eyes, but no more than six. They have antennas, but never curly or wavy ones. Their clothes have stripes, but only vertical ones.

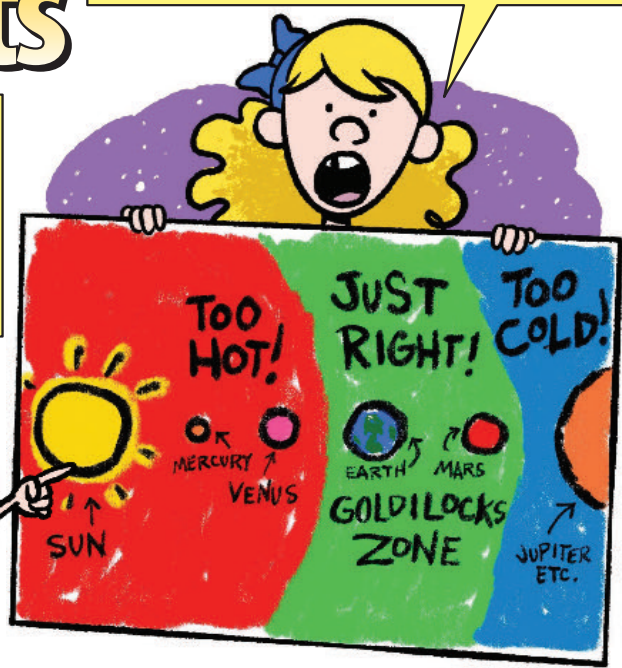
**The Search For Goldilocks Planets**

**Hey there! I'm Goldilocks!** You probably have heard my story: I went into the home of the Three Bears and found a bowl of porridge that was not too hot, not too cold, but **just right!**

Because of my well-known story, scientists use the name Goldilocks to describe a planet that is **just right** for life as we know it on Earth!

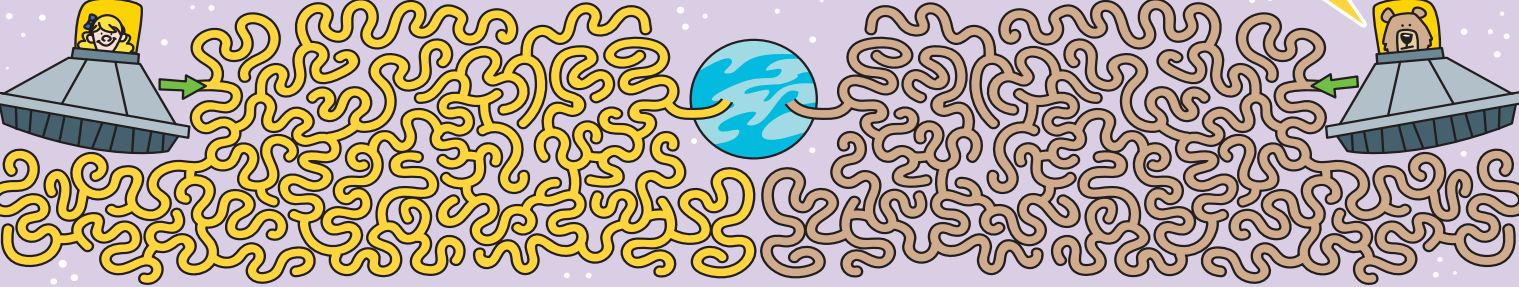
If a planet is **too close** to its sun, it's too hot for life. But if a planet is **too far away** from its sun, everything is frozen. Around many stars there's a **Goldilocks Zone** where there is the potential for water on a planet's surface.

Earth is a "Goldilocks" planet. It's neither too hot nor too cold for liquid water, which is a key ingredient for life. Part of what makes Earth **just right** is its distance from the sun!



**Goldilocks planets have habitats that are healthy for life.**

A habitat is a place where an animal lives. It provides the animal with food, water and shelter. Different habitats are home to different animals.



Choose a spacecraft and race against a friend to see who gets to the Goldilocks planet first.

**Are we there yet?**

Which Goldilocks planet is the closest to Earth? **Proxima Centauri b** (also called Proxima b) is a planet orbiting in the "Goldilocks" zone of the red dwarf star Proxima Centauri. Discovered in 2016, it is about 4.2 light years from Earth.

Until faster ways of traveling through space are discovered, it would take you a long time to reach Proxima Centauri b from Earth using current spacecraft. How long? Circle every other letter to find the answer.

**S** V E B V U E L N F T P Y A F X  
I D V L E M T J H Y O B U N S T A  
R N V D W Y D E A A T R G S

S \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Which Goldilocks astronaut is different from all the others?

**Extra! Extra! Just Right**

Look through the newspaper for pictures and words that reflect your community. What kinds of things make your community a place that is "just right" for living there?

**Standards Link:** Students describe the physical and human geography of their local community.

**Kid Scoop Puzzler**

**Kepler-16b** is a distant planet that exists just outside a Goldilocks zone. It was first discovered in 2011.

Some scientists have given it the nickname **Tatooine**, Luke Skywalker's home planet in *Star Wars*. Why does Kepler-16b remind them of Tatooine? Use the secret code!

1=B 2=I 3=N 4=O 5=R 6=S 7=T 8=U 9=W

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

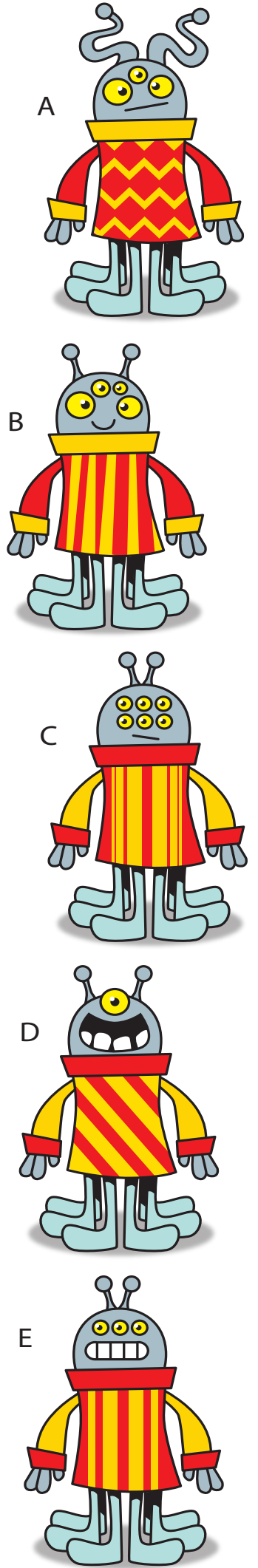
**Double Double Word Search**

- GOLDILOCKS
- POTENTIAL
- PORRIDGE
- DISTANCE
- PLANET
- EARTH
- RIGHT
- STORY
- WATER
- JUST
- ZONE
- COLD
- BOWL
- FOOD
- HOT

Find the words in the puzzle. How many of them can you find on this page?

E	S	J	P	A	R	P	F	E	S
C	C	E	U	E	R	O	A	T	A
N	C	T	T	S	O	R	O	E	C
A	E	A	O	D	T	R	F	O	R
T	W	N	O	H	Y	I	L	B	I
S	K	C	O	L	I	D	L	O	G
I	R	W	A	Z	T	G	E	W	H
D	R	P	L	A	N	E	T	L	T
S	L	A	I	T	N	E	T	O	P

**Standards Link:** Letter sequencing. Recognize identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.



**Kid Scoop VOCABULARY BUILDERS**

This week's word: **POTENTIAL**

The adjective **potential** means something that might happen someday, a possibility.

Noah had the **potential** to be a great soccer player.

Try to use the word **potential** in a sentence today when talking with your friends and family members.

**FROM THE Kid Scoop LESSON LIBRARY**

**Make It Better**

Newspapers are called watchdogs of the community, investigating and reporting on things that need changing or improving. Look for an article about something that needs to change in your community and write a letter to the editor.

**Standards Link:** Language Arts: Students write persuasive letters citing evidence.

**What kept Goldilocks awake at night?**

**ANSWER:** Night-bears.

**Write On!**

**Cold Poems**

Write a poem about the cold. What's the best part of winter weather? Do you enjoy cold weather or do you prefer the warmer days of spring?

## AG: Be aware of rights in debt collection

NEW YORK — New York Attorney General Letitia James has issued a consumer alert informing New Yorkers of their rights when contacted by a debt collector.

Consumers facing debt collection now have added protections under federal and state law. New nationwide rules adopted by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) that took effect Nov. 30 — limit how and when debt collectors are allowed to contact consumers.

These rules also require debt collectors to give consumers detailed information about the origin and history of the debt they seek to collect. Additionally, a new state law — the Consumer Credit Fairness Act, which was signed into law Nov. 8 — gives New Yorkers rights when sued in regard to consumer debt.

“New Yorkers have the right to know how much they owe without smoke and mirrors,” James said. “No consumer should be sued over a debt they do not legally owe or which a creditor has no right to collect, but as we recover financially from COVID-19, we are seeing more and more debt collectors come out of the woodwork with outrageous claims. These simple tips should help protect our state’s consumers from deceptive and abusive debt collection practices. My office will continue to take the necessary actions to protect New Yorkers’ wallets.”

For years, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) has brought dozens of enforcement actions and obtained numerous settlements against debt collectors that engaged in improper debt collection tactics. In 2019, Attorney General James partnered with the Federal Trade Commission to obtain court orders halting a scheme to distribute and collect on millions of dollars in “phantom debts” — fake debts that consumers did not owe.

Earlier, the OAG reached agreements with four of the nation’s major debt buyers, which regularly pursued untimely lawsuits against New York consumers, often obtaining default judgments when the consumers failed to respond to the lawsuits. As a result of the OAG’s actions, many companies and individuals have been permanently banned from engaging in debt collection in New York.

The OAG reminds consumers that they should be aware of their rights under federal and state law:

- **Right to Know What You Owe:** Debt collectors must provide you with key information about your debt within five days of their first communication with you. This is called a “validation notice” and typically includes the name of company or person you originally owed the debt to; the date and amount of the original debt; and an itemization of fees, interest, payments, and credits that have been added to or deducted from the original debt.

- **Right to Dispute the Debt:** You have a right to dispute the debt. The validation notice must include information on how you can dispute the debt. The CFPB also has a sample dispute letter available for use. Once you dispute a debt, the collector must stop all attempts to collect from

you until they provide information supporting their claim to the debt.

- **Debt Collectors Must Follow Limits on How and How Often They Contact You:** Limits have been put in place to avoid harassment by debt collectors. Debt collectors cannot call you more than seven times in any seven-day period; they must wait seven days before calling again after they make contact with you by phone; they cannot call you between 8 p.m. and 9 a.m. in the time zone where you are located; you have the right to tell debt collectors not to contact you by email or text message or any other means of communication, and you may tell them not to contact you at all; debt collectors generally cannot try to reach you at your work email address, through a public social media post, or through third parties, like friends, family, neighbors, or co-workers (under some circumstances, debt collectors may be allowed to contact third parties simply to obtain information about your location).

Debt collectors also cannot contact you at your workplace if your employer prohibits such contacts (for example, you are not allowed to take personal calls at works) and you can tell a debt collector you cannot take calls at work.

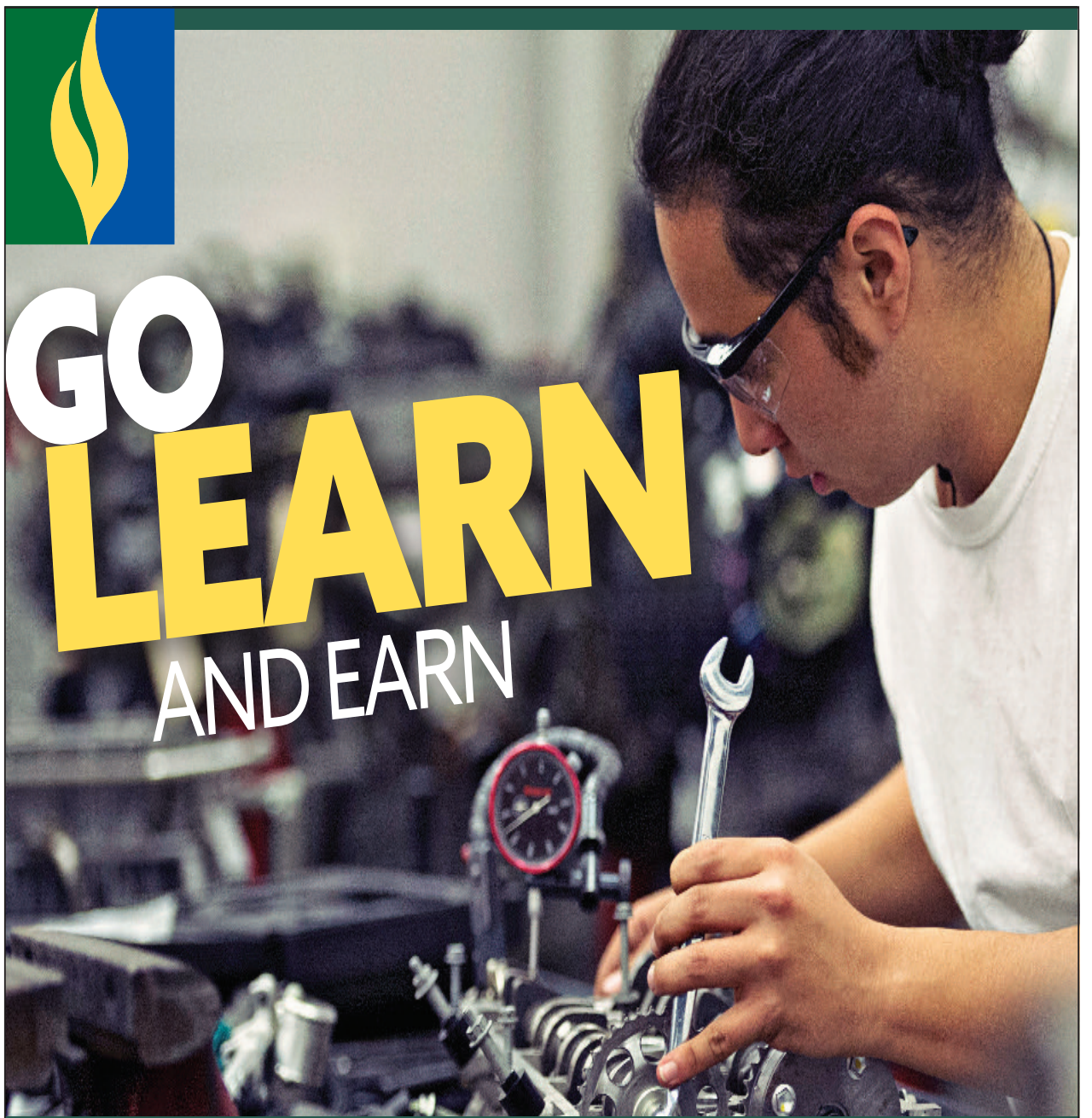
- **You Cannot Be Sued for Old Debts:** Debt collectors are required to notify you, before accepting a payment from you, if they are contacting you about a debt that is beyond the time limit for bringing a lawsuit. After April 7, 2022: Creditors cannot sue you, or threaten to sue you, on debt that is older than three years. Before April 7, 2022: Creditors cannot sue you, or threaten to sue you, on debts that are older than six years. That time limit may be even shorter if the original company or person you owed the debt to is incorporated in or has its principal place of business in a state with a shorter time limit. For example, Delaware has a three-year limit. Consumers are cautioned that until April 7, 2022, if they make a payment on a debt that is too old for a lawsuit, the payment may renew the creditor’s ability to sue them for the full amount of the old debt.

- **New Rights for Consumers Facing Debt Collection Lawsuits in New York:**

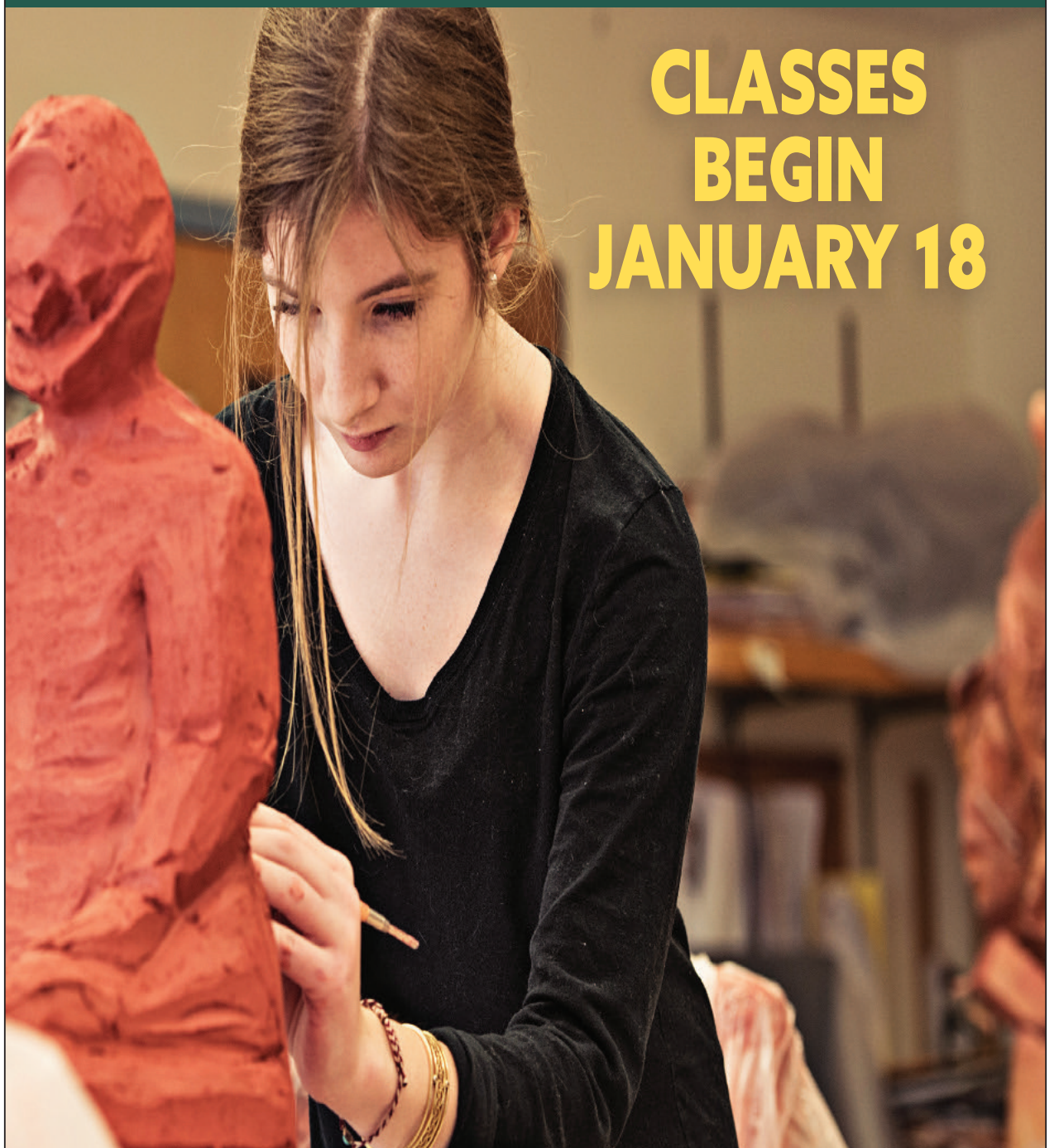
If you are sued for a debt in New York, the court clerk must mail a notice of the action to you; the court clerk must send a notice advising you of how to oppose any request by the creditor or debt collector to enter a judgment against you.

A debt collection lawsuit filed in New York must include detailed information about the debt, including: the name of the original person or company you owed the debt to; the last four digits of your account number; the date of your last payment; and an itemization of the amount sought.

James urges New Yorkers to be vigilant consumers and to report debt collectors to her office if they fail to follow the law or if they engage in conduct that is deceptive, harassing, or abusive. Consumers who are having these experiences with debt collectors are urged to file complaints with the OAG online or to call the OAG’s consumer helpline at 1-800-771-7755.



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# SPORTS

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RAVENA NEWS-HERALD CAPITAL REGION INDEPENDENT MEDIA Thursday, December 16, 2021 B1

## Girls' hoops dominate Blackbirds

By Melanie Lekocevic

Capital Region Independent Media

RAVENA - COEY - MANS-SELKIRK — The RCS Indians girls' basketball team dominated the Voorheesville Blackbirds the entire game Saturday afternoon with a final score of 52-37.

The game, played prior to the district's Hall of Fame induction ceremony, was the team's second of the season and their first council victory.

"The girls have been working hard," Head Coach Jackie Hotaling said after the game. "We played last Friday and we struggled, but the girls have been working really hard all week to get better at their skills, to get fundamentally sound and to execute plays better, and they did that today."

The Indians led from early on in the game and did not relinquish the lead. The first half ended on a basket by guard Sara Hotaling just as the buzzer went off.

Returning to the court in the third period, the Indians continued their dominance and with 5:07 left in the third, the hometown team was up 28-16. With under three minutes in the period, the Indians extended their lead to 32-18.

Guard Patricia Dorrance put the ball in the basket with 2:50 left in the quarter to give the Indians a 39-18 lead.

With just over a minute left in the third period, post Hannah Vanderzee was pushed out of bounds and went to the free throw line. Vanderzee made one of two shots, bringing the Indians to a 41-20 lead.

The team headed into the fourth period up 41-21. Vanderzee was fouled again and made her first shot but missed on the second attempt.

Vanderzee was fouled again with 6:57 left on the clock, again hitting her first free throw shot and missing the second, to bring the score to Indians 43, Blackbirds 23.

Post Lauren Reville was also fouled a couple of times in the fourth period and made one of three shot attempts to bring the score to 46-23.

Wing Kylie Whalen took a hard hit with 5:29 left in the game and headed for the sidelines.

In the waning minutes the Blackbirds tried for a late game push, scoring several points and bringing the score to 48-33 with under four minutes to go in the game.

Dorrance responded with a basket with 1:25 left on the clock for a score of Indians 50, Blackbirds 34. Voorheesville took possession of the ball and moved it downcourt to bring the score to 50-37.

Returning to the court after the timeout, Vanderzee made a basket with two seconds left in the game to end the contest at 52-37.

The Indians have a busy schedule this week.

"We have three games next week and they will be tough," Hotaling said Saturday. "We will continue working hard — I am really proud of the girls, they are doing great."

Look for a report of the RCS Hall of Fame induction ceremony in the Dec. 23 issue of the Ravena News-Herald.



Above, Sara Hotaling, second from right, put the ball in the basket as the halftime buzzer sounded to send the Indians into the locker room with a lead they would not relinquish the rest of the game Saturday.

Below left, head coach Jackie Hotaling strategizes with the team during a fourth-period timeout.

Below right, Juliana Lackie passes to ball to Hannah Vanderzee in the Indians' 52-37 victory over the Voorheesville Blackbirds on Saturday.



Below left, Lauren Reville scores a 2-pointer in Saturday's victory.



Below right, Hannah Vanderzee scores in the third period of Saturday's game against the Voorheesville Blackbirds.



Photos by Melanie Lekocevic/Capital Region Independent Media

# Daydreams and a healthy lifestyle

As a child, how often were you admonished to get your head out of the clouds and stop daydreaming?

I know I was a master daydreamer as a kid. Who knew this was the very core of creativity and the fertile ground of exploration of possibilities? As a matter of fact, those of us who partook in the world of fantasy and visualization have gone on to careers that focused on the arts, music, dance, painting, poetry, acting and writing.

To enter into a daydream, you have to willingly suspend conscious thought and step into an imagined scene that

## Body, Mind and Spirit



Pat Larsen

results in opportunities to explore something you'd desire to see happen at some point in the future.

Perhaps this is why I relate so easily to those who request a hypnosis session with me. The subconscious mind stores all

the "files" that we've created through our experiences, our daydreaming, our focus and our wish list.

Tapping into those files requires the viewer to relax into the possibilities that their questions about issues can and will find answers in the subconscious state. It's actually quite incredible guiding a participant to the place that helps them to find answers.

The very pulse of the subconscious mind is belief. If you truly believe what is uncovered, you will eventually realize a result — for instance, weight reduction, smoking cessation, overcoming

fears, landing the job. The list goes on and on.

Curiosity and belief may indeed lead you in the direction of this coming year to seek out the guidance that a trained hypnotherapist can offer. Allow yourself to consider what the freedom from carrying emotional weights might feel like.

Daydream about it... there's no one saying you can't now.

This New Year is most likely going to either continue as the past two years with "more of the same" — you add what that statement might mean for you — or a brand new way of thinking, experiencing and navigating our

lives. I see it as a choice we all have to make.

I do know that in community we heal, in isolation we fall into disease.

What will you do? How will you choose to live your best life?

Have a blessed New Year. If nothing else, 2022 is already shaping up to be interesting.

Pat Larsen is a licensed Zumba dance fitness instructor specializing in senior, active adult, baby boomer and elder health and fitness for the past 12 years. Winter sessions begin after the New Year, Mondays and Thursday mornings at Shamrock House in East

Durham. Please call or email to check on availability. Pre-registration is required; no walk-ins.

Pat Larsen is a certified hypnosis therapist for behavioral modification including pre-surgery hypnosis and behavioral modifications. Offering programs to teach acupuncture techniques and simple directive guided meditation, private readings and one-on-one sessions that will unlock your focus to help you to live your best life. There is no better time than now. Call 518-275-8686 (from 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.) or email Pelarsen5@aol.com.

## Approaching memory concerns this holiday season

By Marisa Korytko  
For Capital Region Independent Media

Last year, the pandemic caused many families to adjust holiday gatherings due to public health concerns. As we return to more in-person celebrations this year, cognitive or memory changes in an elderly loved one may be both alarming and cause deep concerns.

Visiting aging loved ones after being apart for so long might lead to the realization of some changes in behaviors, physical health, and new

### ALZHEIMER'S NOTES

experiences of memory loss or cognitive decline. When families begin noticing these changes there can be a variety of responses and moments of uncertainty. Families often do not know where to turn or what to do in these moments.

As our loved ones age, we often attribute memory loss to a normal part of aging when some

behaviors or issues of cognitive decline could potentially be a sign of something more severe.

"Alzheimer's is not a normal part of aging. It is a progressive disease where symptoms gradually worsen over time," said Beth Smith-Boivin, executive director for the Northeastern New York Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

With Alzheimer's being the fifth leading cause of death for adults who are 65 and older, Smith-Boivin wants to remind families of the following 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease:

- Memory changes that disrupt daily life, such as forgetting important events;
- Challenges in planning or solving problems, such as keeping track of monthly bills;
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks, such as driving to routine places;
- Confusion with time or place, such as the date;
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships, such as reading;
- New problems with words in speaking or writing, such as inappropriate words;
- Misplacing things and being unable

to retrace steps, such as putting ice cream in the medicine cabinet;

- Decreased or poor judgment, such as giving large sums of money to telemarketers;
- Withdrawal from work or social activities, such as forgetting how to finish a favorite hobby; and,
- Changes in mood and personality, such as becoming angry or fearful.

"The holidays revolve around traditions, things we've done for a long time, so if you are seeing a change in someone completing a familiar task, it's important to have a conversation with their health care providers," Smith-Boivin said. "Ignoring signs of cognitive impairment out of fear or denial can lead to greater heartache in the future and the possible worsening of the situation."

According to Smith-Boivin, The Alzheimer's

Association sees the number of calls to its 24-hour helpline (800-272-3900) increase during and after the holidays when people visiting with friends and family whom they haven't seen in a while become aware that something is not right.

The Association's Helpline is an ideal place to find answers and resources for additional assistance.

"Helpline calls often lead to local referrals to our Chapter for additional resources, such as free education programs and personalized family care consultations," Smith-Boivin said.

The 24-hour helpline can also provide help for caregivers, such as a listing of programs that offer care and socialization services. All calls to 800-272-3900 are free and confidential.

Marisa Korytko is the public relations director for the Alzheimer's Association Northeastern New York chapter. She can be reached at mekorytko@alz.org.



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# Being prepared when it's time to stand

**By Dr. Billy Holland**  
For Capital Region Independent Media

In our modern world, we can agree there is no shortage of information. We are constantly surrounded by voices wanting to help us understand every subject under the sun.

However, in our quest for gathering accurate information, we also realize that most of what we listen to, especially political news, is sprinkled with half-truths, speculations and biased observations.

The bottom line is that we actually know very little about facts and depend heavily on outside sources to relay to us what they have heard.

Imagine what we would know if there were no television, radio, newspaper, telephone, internet, or any type of media communication. Knowing about state, national or world events would be comparable to those who

## LIVING ON PURPOSE

lived 200 years ago.

Yes, we have certain convictions about social and spiritual issues, but for the most part, our views are shaped not by what we positively know to be a fact, but rather by trusting what someone has told us.

When it comes to our spiritual perspectives, Christians have God's Word and His Spirit that speaks directly to us, along with pastors and teachers who give us their interpretations, but again we must be discerning with the knowledge we gather.

I have a friend who is in his 80s and is known for saying that he listens

to everything, but when it comes to politics and religion, he keeps his opinions to himself. He believes that political and spiritual views are deeply personal and a sure way to cause arguments, divisions, and make enemies. This is true, but I also believe especially from an evangelical perspective we should not be intimidated when God provides an opportunity to share our faith.

When it comes to divine appointments, we are reminded of St. Francis who said that we should "preach everywhere and only use words if necessary," which emphasizes the need to demonstrate

Christ instead of just talking about Him.

Christians are not secret agents, but are called to be ready and equipped to explain what we believe and why, even when it's not popular.

We are emotional beings but we cannot afford to be controlled by our emotions, and one of the most difficult challenges is to develop our spiritual discernment to the point where we know the difference between God's voice and everyone else's, including our own.

Have you noticed when you sense the Holy Spirit beckoning for you to say or do something, immediately there are resisting persuasions trying to talk you out of it?

No doubt, there are powerful forces at work attacking our thoughts and trying to distort and control our attitudes, emotions, and especially our obedience to Christ. Fear wants to manipulate,

but we have the choice to allow it to dominate us or we can resist it.

Our trust in Jesus as our Lord includes inviting Him to rule and reign within our mind and conscience. He wants to literally possess us, but without surrendering our will to Him, we are not able to walk in covenant with Him. This is why we study God's Word every day and are constantly asking the Lord for wisdom and determination to execute self-discipline. Our spiritual destiny can be accomplished, but He is not going to do it for us.

I sense we are moving into a time where the Christian can no longer use immaturity as an excuse to live in sin. I'm not just talking about blatant wickedness, but rather the subtle apathy of neglecting to walk with God. The sins of omission are refusing to do what God is saying and there are many who are hiding

in the shadows as they refuse to learn and ask God for the courage to represent His truth.

How can anyone say they love Him if they do not invest their time into knowing Him? How can we live in the light of His love if we are choosing to serve the darkness? We cannot dwell in the life of His truth if we are absorbing sin, which are the wages of death.

Our flesh will argue we are too busy to concentrate on our relationship with the Lord, but we always make time for what we love. For those who are satisfied with living in lukewarmness, they will suffer great loss, but for the ones who are dedicated to abiding in the secret place of the most high, they will stand when it comes time to stand.

Read more about the Christian life at [billyholandministries.com](http://billyholandministries.com).

## Tonko: Addiction treatment bill clears key milestone

WASHINGTON, DC — U.S. Rep. Paul D. Tonko recently announced that the

Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment (MAT) Act — reintroduced in February this year — has garnered the official support of the majority of members in the House of Representatives with more than 218 representatives co-sponsoring the legislation.

This bipartisan bill would expand lifesaving addiction treatment by removing a requirement called the "x-waiver" that is blocking health professionals from prescribing the treatment

buprenorphine to their patients.

This news comes at a time when America's opioid epidemic is deadlier than ever, with the nation surpassing 100,000 deaths by drug overdose for the first time ever in a 12-month period.

"As our nation's opioid crisis reaches scary new heights, buprenorphine stands as a tried-and-true medication that would help millions struggling with the disease of addiction, yet

deployment of this safe, proven treatment continues to be hampered by unnecessary red tape," Tonko said. "For years I have pushed to eliminate the outdated x-waiver and open the doors of access to this lifesaving drug with my Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act, and I am deeply gratified to receive strong support from my colleagues both in the House and the Senate on this endeavor. This expansive, bipartisan support speaks to

the incredible need of our communities. I urge Congress to move forward to advance this legislation immediately and bring hope and a path forward to those who need it most."

After France took similar action to make buprenorphine available without a specialized waiver, opioid overdose deaths declined by 79% over a four-year period, according to Tonko's office.

The MAT Act at press time had 225 co-sponsors. Original House co-sponsors of the bill are U.S. Reps. Michael Turner, R-OH; Antonio Delgado, D-NY; and Anthony Gonzalez, R-OH; with partner legislation introduced in the Senate by Sens. Maggie Hassan, D-NH, and Lisa Murkowski, R-AK.

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Perhaps you are a kinship care provider, or know someone who is. If you are, you do it for all the right reasons. **Because you care.** But there's good news. St. Catherine's Center for Children has launched a new program to support kinship caregivers in Albany, Schenectady, Greene and Ulster Counties. The program connects caregivers like you to a variety of community and public support services, providing you with the tools you need to succeed. Want to learn more? Call us at the number below, or email [kinshipcare@st-cath.org](mailto:kinshipcare@st-cath.org)

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# Should I take my widower benefit now?

**Dear Rusty:** I lost my wife seven years ago. I was told that I could possibly collect 30% to 35% of her benefit as a widower benefit when I turned 60. I will be 61 soon. Would it make sense to pursue this if it is true?

I am still working full time. Would this affect my ability to collect Social Security on my own account once I retire?

**Signed: Working Survivor**

**Dear Working:** Survivor benefits for a widower can be paid as early as age 60 if you have not remarried prior to that. But collecting a survivor benefit before you have reached your full retirement age (your "FRA," which is age 67) creates some other considerations you should be aware of:

- Your survivor benefit will be based upon the SS benefit your wife was entitled to at her death. Taken at your FRA, you'd get 100% of the SS amount your wife was entitled to at her death, but if taken any earlier than your FRA the survivor benefit will be reduced.

- Taken before your FRA, your survivor benefit will be actuarially reduced according to the number of months prior to your FRA it is claimed. The reduction amount is 4.75% less per full year earlier than your FRA, and that is a permanent reduction. If you take your survivor benefit at age 61, you'll get 71.5% of the SS benefit your wife had earned up to her death.

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- Since you're not yet receiving your own SS retirement benefit, you can take your survivor benefit first and allow your personal SS retirement benefit to grow. Assuming your personal SS retirement benefit will be more than your survivor benefit, you can switch from your survivor benefit to your SS retirement benefit at any time after you are age-eligible to do so (age 62). You can also, if you wish, choose to continue your survivor benefit up until your personal SS retirement benefit reaches maximum at age 70. At age 70 your own benefit will be 24% more than your FRA benefit amount.

- If you claim the survivor benefit before your FRA and you are still working, you'll be subject to Social Security's "earnings test," which limits how much you can earn before SS takes away some of your benefit. The earnings limit for 2021 is \$18,960 (the 2022 limit is \$19,560) and if your earn-

ings from work exceed that amount, SS will take back benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit.

So, although you can claim a survivor benefit from your deceased wife now (and allow your own SS benefit to grow), practically speaking you may not be able to get a survivor benefit if you are working full-time and earning considerably more than the annual earnings limit. In other words, the penalty for exceeding the earnings limit may entirely offset the survivor benefit you

are entitled to.

If you're over the earnings limit by only a small amount, you'll only lose benefits for the number of months needed to repay what you owe.

And for clarity, in the year you attain FRA the earnings limit goes up by about 2.5 times and the penalty is less (\$1 for every \$3 you are over the limit), and once you reach your full retirement age there is no longer a limit to how much you can earn.

To avoid the earnings test, you could also choose to wait until your

FRA to maximize your survivor benefit and then wait until age 70 to claim your maximum SS retirement benefit.

Regardless of when you claim your survivor benefit, your own SS retirement benefit won't be affected. Your SS retirement benefit, which will replace your smaller survivor benefit, will be based solely on your lifetime earnings history and the age at which you claim it.

*This article is intended for information purposes only and does not rep-*

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# Microwave ovens: A hot issue

For over 40 years, microwave ovens have been one of the most popular kitchen appliances because they're fast, convenient and affordable. But cooking with a microwave may not be the healthiest option.

Today's post explores the pros and cons of using this popular cooking appliance.

Before moving on, I would like to clarify what a microwave is. A microwave is a form of non-ionizing radiation that changes the electromagnetic nature of atoms. In other words, your food is being zapped by high frequency waves of heat.

Interestingly enough, some experts like Dr. Hans Hertel argue that this radiation can increase cholesterol levels, decrease red and white blood cell counts, and decrease hemoglobin.

A 1991 study conducted by Dr. Hertel explored how microwaves change the molecular structure of food and the effects it has on your body. His study concluded that when consumed, microwaved milk and vegetables decrease HDL (good) cholesterol and reduce red and white blood cells.

Here's another concerning issue — carcinogenic toxins.

The packaging of common microwavable food products such as pizza, chips and corn contain carcinogenic toxins including terphthalate and dioxins. According to nutritionist Rick Hay, "The carcinogenic toxins leak out of the containers and end up in your food and then into your digestive and immune system, which can affect fertility, hormone balance, blood pressure, mood, libido and cardiovascular health."

However, the Slow Food Movement founded in 1986 by Carlo Petrini has left a growing number of microwaves dormant. This global initiative is focused on encouraging people to stop eating fast food and instead to take time to prepare and eat whole, locally sourced foods.

For many, this movement has sparked an interest in where and how our food is grown or raised. And that awareness is one of the reasons farmers markets are so popular. By giving consumers access to locally grown farm-fresh produce and enabling farmers to devel-

CONCEPTS IN FITNESS



MARY SCHOEPE

op a personal relationship with their customers, farmers markets create an important link between farms and cities.

In addition to the growth of the Slow Food Movement, the organic foods movement is also growing at a rapid pace, making it a \$52.5 billion a year industry.

Foods with the USDA Organic seal guarantees that fruits and vegetables are completely GMO free. These strict standards

also apply to livestock and prohibit antibiotics or growth hormones in livestock.

Living in upstate New York we are fortunate to have many local farms including Scribner Hollow Farms, East Durham Farms, Heather Ridge Farms, Hudson Farmers Market, Story's Farm, Sugar Maples Farm, the Fromer Farm and many more.

Many of these farms offer locally produced fruits and vegetables (and in some cases pesticide-free produce), along with pasture-raised meats and eggs. I know that once you introduce real whole foods to your family, you'll kick your microwave to the curb!

If you're interested in how you can be a part of the Slow Food Movement, visit their website at [www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org).



The Lafarge Ravena plant is launching a new initiative to better engage with members of the public. This is part of an ongoing effort by plant officials to strengthen ties with the Ravena-Coeymans community and facilitate an open dialogue about facility operations.

Since its opening in 1962, the Ravena plant has been proud to serve as the largest employer in Southern Albany County. We appreciate the local support we have received, and we strive to be a good neighbor by investing time and resources in community projects and programs.

We take all concerns and complains about the plant very seriously and aim to operate in a manner that causes zero harm to employees, contractors, customers, and most of all, local residents, in keeping with the core values of our parent company, LafargeHolcim US.

To meet that goal, it is critical that we are able to respond to any issues in a timely manner. Our ability to do that relies on you.

Going forward, we ask that anyone who wishes to contact the plant in connection with a problem, question, or complaint email us directly at: [Ravena@lafargeholcim.com](mailto:Ravena@lafargeholcim.com). That includes any occurrences of materials that may appear on vehicles or other private property.

The plant will be working with the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to collect data on the type and source of these materials. To aid in that effort, we may request that impacted individuals fill out the Complaint Report Form, which can be found on our website [www.lafargeravenaconnect.com](http://www.lafargeravenaconnect.com), to provide as much information as possible to guide an appropriate response and remediation, if necessary.

Lafarge Ravena leaders welcome input from the community, and we hope that this new approach will help us improve communications moving forward.



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# Coeymans Hollow Volunteer Fire Corporation news

## SANTA IS COMING TO COEYMANS HOLLOW:

Chief Bill Kapusta has received a special message from the North Pole. Santa Claus has a little extra time before his big day. This Saturday, Dec. 18, Santa will be visiting Coeymans Hollow. Santa has requested to be taken on a tour of the district in one of the fire trucks. The Corporation would love to make it through the entire fire district, but they are not sure just how much time Santa will have. If

you would like to contact Michelle Kapusta with your address for a drive-by visit, you can call or text her at 518-424-1467. Requests for a visit are due no later than today, Thursday, Dec. 16, so Santa will be able to direct the fire truck driver to the right houses. Everyone is looking forward to Santa's visit and he is looking forward to meeting all boys and girls who live in the Coeymans Hollow Fire District.

## CALENDAR DRIVE DONATION

## ENVELOPES CONTINUE TO BE COLLECTED:

The Coeymans Hollow Volunteer Fire Corporation continues to collect your donation envelopes. If you haven't donated to the calendar drive yet, just remember your donations are tax deductible. As always, your support of emergency personnel is greatly appreciated.

## DRILL SCHEDULED:

Dan Haight, Coeymans Hollow training officer, has announced the drill scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 21, will

be the annual holiday drill. The drill will begin at 7 p.m. and all Coeymans Hollow firefighters and EMS personnel are encouraged to attend.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION:

New volunteers are needed to help protect the community. Active interior and exterior firefighters, EMS personnel, fire police, ladies' auxiliary members and associate members are needed to assist with many committees. These are volunteers here to protect

lives and property in the Coeymans Hollow Fire District. They will provide all the equipment and training for you to become a volunteer firefighter and a member of the Coeymans Hollow Volunteer Fire Corporation. Think about it — if you don't volunteer, who will? For more information or to obtain an application, give them a call at 518-756-6310 or stop by and check it out.

## SAFETY TIP:

Remember, this is the middle of hunting season.

If you go into the woods to look for a Christmas tree or just hiking, please wear ORANGE CLOTHING OR A VEST so you can be seen by hunters. If you are a hunter or you go out on your own into the woods, make sure you tell someone where you are going and approximate time you will be returning. Be safe.

## FIRE AND EMS REPORT:

The Coeymans Hollow Volunteer Fire Corporation responded to three fire calls and four EMS calls in the past week.

# NYS Agroforestry Awareness and Adoption Survey

In response to a rising interest in agroforestry over the years, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene County announces that Cornell has created an extension program along with tools and resources to help farmers and land stewards combine production and conservation utilizing trees and forests.

Agroforestry is the intentional combination of agriculture and forestry to create productive and sustainable land use practices. These practices take advantage of the interactive benefits from growing trees and shrubs together with crops and/or livestock.

Agroforestry has its roots in tropical food production systems and indigenous agricultural methods. In regions with

more temperate climates, such as New York, agroforestry is separated into five distinct but related practices. The five practices are: windbreaks, riparian forest buffers, alley cropping, silvopasture and forest farming.

In an effort to improve research and education efforts, the team has developed a New York State Agroforestry Awareness and Adoption Survey. This survey is for anyone working with lands in New York state who is interested in agroforestry in any capacity.

In addition to understanding current agroforestry adopted practices, the organization would like to be aware of obstacles or limitations that may be preventing agroforestry adoption to better meet the needs

of farmers, landowners, and managers. Knowledge about local concerns, challenges and needs is vital to effective extension programs and to obtain grant funding to support these efforts.

Complete the survey by the end of 2021 and be entered in a raffle for free maple syrup from the Cornell Maple Program! It should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

The survey link is [https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2aU8w34aNwn40PI](https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2aU8w34aNwn40PI)

For further information on Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia & Greene Counties and its programs, please visit [ceecolumbiagreene.org](http://ceecolumbiagreene.org). Cornell Agroforestry resources can be found at [cornellagroforestry.org](http://cornellagroforestry.org).



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# Greener maintenance: The silent landscaper

## BE A BETTER GARDNER

By Thomas Christopher  
For Capital Region Independent Media

There's a story that has been getting a lot of attention from the media. In October, the state of California passed a law that, barring any unforeseen political or legal roadblocks, will phase out the use of gasoline-powered landscape equipment statewide by 2024.

And yet – that puts the famously progressive state six years, I calculate, behind Matthew Benzie.

Matthew is the proprietor of "Indigenous Ingenuities," a landscape design, build and maintenance firm in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

Matt grew up, he says, loving the outdoors. When he graduated with his landscape architecture degree from the University of Massachusetts, he decided that his professional endeavors should further his personal ideals.

He returned to Doylestown, a picturesque town in scenic Bucks County where he had passed his teenage years. Doylestown wasn't as self-consciously progressive as some of the communities where Matthew had lived since, such as Northampton, Massachusetts, or Asheville, North Carolina, but he felt he could make an impact there. So, it was there that Matthew founded Indigenous Ingenuities in 2013.

Matt's goal was to earn a living, of course, but also to reinforce the connection between residents and their environment while also creating wildlife habitat and helping to heal the local environment.

This involved some scrutiny of the profession he was entering. In fact, the so-called "green industry" isn't always so green.

We have traditionally relied on non-native plants that don't serve pollinators or other local wildlife, and we have arranged these for visual display, too often without consulting how such a practice affects relationships within the landscape or between the landscape and the surrounding ecosystem.

In addition, of course, this purely aesthetic approach to design commonly results in high-maintenance landscapes, arrangements that won't survive without lots of labor and environmentally unsustainable inputs of resources.

Matthew and his team at Indigenous Ingenuities have responded by planning landscapes that rely on a backbone of native plants, and plants that are as much as possible sourced from local growers. Matthew minimizes lawn areas in his designs. He includes areas of turf with a purpose, such as

play space for children, but doesn't use lawn as the default landscape treatment. Moreover, where he does plant turf he prefers to use mixtures of fine fescues that require far less mowing than the traditional Kentucky bluegrass.

Good design is a foundation, but without appropriate maintenance, any landscape soon falls apart. Accordingly, Matthew included a maintenance crew in the staff of his company. He equipped this crew in keeping with his greener mission. Gasoline-powered landscape maintenance equipment is disproportionately polluting. Operating a 2-stroke backpack blower, according to a 2011 study, emits 23 times as much CO<sub>2</sub> as driving a full-sized pickup truck for a similar length of time, and more than 300 times as much smog-producing, non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC).

Gasoline-powered lawn mowers are bad, too. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a new gasoline-powered lawn mower produces volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides emissions air pollution in in in one hour of operation as 11 new cars each being driven for one hour.

Matthew wasn't going to subject his employees to the hazards of operating such equipment, either. The noise from a leaf blower, which can be louder than a plane taking off, is likely to cause



Contributed photo  
When environmental landscaper Matthew Benzie plants turf, he prefers to use mixtures of fine fescues, pictured, which require far less mowing than the traditional Kentucky bluegrass.

permanent damage to the operator's hearing, and the unburned fuel that is spewed out in the blower's exhaust exposes him or her to compounds identified as probable carcinogens.

In light of all this, Matthew opted for battery-powered mowers and blowers. Less powerful than their gasoline-powered equivalent, they were nevertheless adequate for the modest lawns he designed. To transport the new equipment, he bought a child carrier and had it converted into a customized aluminum cart that his employees could pull from job to job around the neighborhood with a bicycle.

Matthew's employees have appreciated his con-

sideration for their health. His customers call his crew the "Ninja lawn service" because their work is so relatively silent. Of course, the whole neighborhood benefits from that.

To hear additional tips about environmentally friendly, low-input landscape maintenance, listen to the Berkshire Botanical Garden's Growing Greener podcast at [thomaschristophergardens.com/podcast](https://www.thomaschristophergardens.com/podcast).

*Be-a-Better-Gardener* is a community service of Berkshire Botanical Garden, located in Stockbridge, MA. Its mission, to provide knowledge of gardening and the environment through a diverse range of classes and programs, informs and

inspires thousands of students and visitors each year. Thomas Christopher is a volunteer at Berkshire Botanical Garden and is the author or co-author of more than a dozen books, including *Nature into Art* and *The Gardens of Wave Hill* (Timber Press, 2019). He is the 2021 Garden Club of America's National Medalist for Literature, a distinction reserved to recognize those who have left a profound and lasting impact on issues that are most important to the GCA. Tom's companion broadcast to this column, *Growing Greener*, streams on WESUFM.org, Pacifica Radio and NPR and is available at his website, <https://www.thomaschristophergardens.com/podcast>.



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## THE MAGIC BALL TRILOGY

written by Steve Trout, former Yankee player

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**READ THE FIRST PART OF THIS AMAZING TRILOGY!**

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“ Billy was excited, but also a little nervous. He thought, “If only my dad could be here.” His father has been away for almost a year serving in the military overseas... ”

ADVERTORIAL



# TCI NY committed to community every day

Investing in Coeymans, creating new jobs, and helping those with need



By Mark Westcott  
November 18, 2021, Coeymans, NY

During the height of the Covid pandemic last summer, TCI NY was deemed an essential industry for New York state and was allowed to stay open. Their customers are the power companies and utilities that keep our lights on. This little-known company located right here in our back yard is making a big impact.

“We were fortunate to remain open, but it was a challenging time for everyone not knowing the outcome of the pandemic and working to keep people safe,” says Brian Hemlock, President TCI NY. “We decided to continue moving forward expanding our business and increasing efforts in the community to help people with need.”

### Investing in Coeymans and Creating New Jobs

TCI’s first plant in Coeymans opened on September 14, 2014, and the company hasn’t looked back since. Last August TCI built a new expansion facility a 35,000 square foot, state of the art addition that added new capability to the existing plant. New jobs were created. Jobs that used to go out of state were brought to Coeymans.

“When we came to Coeymans, we only had 10 employees. Now we have 40 and as far as we are concerned, this is only the beginning,” said Mr. Hemlock. “We have a philosophy to promote from within. This shows our people they can move up through hard work.”

Brett Margiasso came to TCI through the Albany BOCES program affiliated with RCS High School. He interned two years ago, was hired full time and now is responsible for offloading all the trucks containing transformers.

“It’s a huge responsibility,” says John Barr, Operations Manager. “Brett inspects the product and determines what can be salvaged and repurposed. It can be very demanding. He is twenty years old.”

“The expansion shows when local government and industry work together, there is nothing we cannot achieve,” said George McHugh, Coeymans’ Town Supervisor. “The result of this collaboration is good paying jobs with benefits to employees, many of whom are Coeymans residents.”

Tom Bronchetti, TCI’s Controller says, “Our operation is beneficial to the regional economy through our employment, tax payments and spending with other local businesses. TCI pays a living wage with strong benefits.”

Providing jobs in the community promotes growth and stability for all of those who live in the area. The company pays approximately \$75,000 per year in local taxes, and spends more than \$250,000 annually with local businesses, from grocery stores and diners to gas stations and hardware stores.

### Recycling and the Environment

“We strongly believe in our obligations to our neighbors and to our community,” says Mr. Hemlock. “We are committed to operating our business in a manner that is safe, unobtrusive to our neighbors and protective of the environment.”

Today, 99% of all the materials from transformers are recycled, re-purposed or refurbished. It used to all go into landfills. It is a true American success story. One that has benefitted many lives and protects the environment.

### Hard Hat meets Textbook

TCI works with RCS High School to create good paying internships

that can lead to full time jobs upon graduating from high school. The company awards scholarships to RCS High School Seniors, supports the school’s drama and athletic programs.

“We decided to pay students because they do a great job and deserve to be compensated,” Mr. Hemlock says. “We require the students to keep their grades up while working here.”

Lisa Patierne, Principal at RCS, said, “It’s a great partnership and a great opportunity for students who elect not to go to college. TCI gives these students worked based learning opportunities through internships that can lead to a promising career.”

### Committed to Community

During the challenging summer months last year, TCI stepped up to sponsor the Kindness for Kids Summer lunch program, which provides thousands of lunches to kids with need. TCI and its employees also work with the Hope Full Life Center Blessing Bags, Helping Harvest, VFW Post 9594, RCS Library, Ravenna Rescue Squad, Historical Society, and the Ravenna Friendship Festival.

Every year TCI assists the Riverview Baptist Church annual Block party, youth programs and summer camp. The campers learned how TCI built its state-of-the-art facilities and how electrical transformers are recycled. They meet administration and operations staff, some of whom are family members and neighbors of the campers.

Pastor Roxanne Booth said, “It’s important for our kids to see what’s on display at TCI. It is a national company proud to be in Coeymans and a successful, growing business operation. Plus, the folks at TCI make it a fun excursion.”



### Training Center

TCI goes to the utilities with specialized trailers to pick up transformers and then off loads them at the plant where they go onto highly modernized production lines to separate the materials. The process requires highly skilled workers who are trained and educated. There needs to be strict attention to detail. It has been challenging finding people to fill the slots.

“Many businesses including ours are struggling to find the workers to run our operations,” says Mr. Hemlock. “I felt we needed to do something drastic and decided a training center was essential to creating a sustainable pipeline of workers for our businesses.”

Mr. Hemlock approach Carver Laraway from Carver Companies to partner on a new initiative. The Joint Training and Certification Center is now in the development stage to provide training and job opportunities to underserved communities in the region.

“What will make the JTC Center unique is the combination of paid internships, multiple certifications and upon successful completion of the program a guaranteed job offer,” said Mr. Hemlock.

The company is committed to Coeymans and will continue to invest in the community with further expansion plans in the works.













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