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Hastings High School
students reflect on drills
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On the ballot
Irvington School District
floats \$3.95 million plan
p 12

Vol 1. Issue 28.

March 28, 2025

RIVERTOWNS Dispatch

Local News,
Locally Sourced
~

\$2⁵⁰

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ARDSLEY — DOBBS FERRY — HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON — IRVINGTON



Top of the State

Iva Corluka holds up the state championship plaque as the Ardsley High School varsity girls' basketball team celebrates their 39-28 victory against Wantagh at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy on Saturday, March 22. For a story about the Panthers' title, plus additional photos, turn to page 17. Photo by Rob DiAntonio

School board stresses need for proposed bond projects

BY AMY BOCHNER

HASTINGS — The Hastings Board of Education addressed concerns and criticisms regarding the district's proposed capital bond at their March 25 meeting.

In October 2024, the board first presented the bond, which encompasses improvements to the Farragut Complex (home to the middle and high school), the Burke Estate athletic fields, and Hillside Elementary School. The budget recommendation provided at the Feb. 11 meeting is \$38.4 million, but the final cost will depend on the projects included. The board expects to finalize the scope of the bond during their meeting on April 8.

The March 25 presentation began with board president Alexander Dal Piaz clarifying what is proposed in the bond: at the Farragut Complex, a new entryway, a cafeteria addition in the central courtyard, and the renovation of the old cafeteria into new classroom space; two synthetic turf fields at the Burke Estate; and mechanical, engineering, and plumbing (MEP) work at Farragut Middle School and

Continued on page 4

Throng of volunteers gives back in bulk

Annual Cares Day benefits more than Ardsley

BY AMY BOCHNER

ARDSLEY — More than 300 community members, from Girl Scouts to firefighters, participated in a day of giving back at Ardsley High School on March 22.

Every year since 2008, with the exception of 2020, the Ardsley Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) has organized Ardsley Cares Day, an all-ages volunteer event to provide goods and services to charities and organizations across Westchester. Roohi Majli, one of the co-presidents of the PTSA along with Jaya Iyer, described the goal of the initiative to the Dispatch.

"Ardsley Cares Day is [meant] to foster a sense of community and to establish a day where we can truly give back and encourage the spirit of kindness and empathy," Majli said.

The school cafeteria was transformed into a do-good marketplace, with stations dedicated to different organizations. At a table covered in boxes of cake mix and party hats, volunteers put together "birthdays in a box" for the Dobbs Ferry Food Pantry. A station supporting the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital in Valhalla featured various toys, art supplies, and books to make up sibling activity kits. Another table was surrounded by children and Girl Scouts preparing 500 dog biscuits for the Yonkers Animal Shelter.

Ardsley Community Enrichment PTO hosted a station where more than 400 snack bags were

put together for Midnight Run in Dobbs Ferry. Other activities included creating toiletry kits for The Sharing Shelf, an organization combatting clothing insecurity, and snack packs for Lifting Up Westchester, which helps those experiencing homelessness and poverty. By the end of the day, the volunteers had assembled more than 1,200 bags of food, toiletries, and activity kits.

Outside the cafeteria was an ever-growing pile of sporting goods, which would be donated to local organizations such as Let's Play It Forward. About a mile away, volunteers cleared invasive vines and collected hundreds of pounds of trash at V.E. Macy Park. In addition, representatives from the volunteer fire department, the Ardsley-Secor Volunteer Ambulance Corps (ASVAC), and Ards-

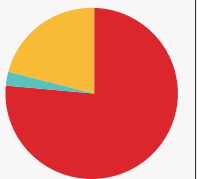
Continued on page 16

— You Answered —

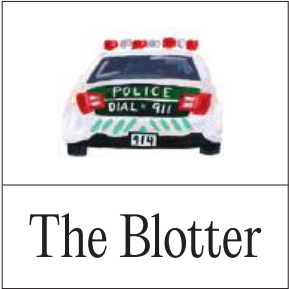
What do you think of the proposed ConEd rate hikes of 10-20% for electricity and natural gas, to take effect next year?

As answered by 157 readers of the Rivertowns Dispatch

- 76% More regulation needed, lower rate increases
- 3% Increases covering costs are to be expected
- 21% Need more information



Vote at rivertownsdispatch.com/the-weekly-poll



The Blotter

ARDSLEY

Holy caller: An Ardsley resident reported that he received multiple phone calls from an unidentified woman reading scripture on Thursday, March 20.

Hit and run: An Amazon driver using a personal vehicle backed into a parked 2023 Mazda on Louis Pascone Lane and then fled on the evening of Saturday, March 22. The hit-and-run incident was recorded by a security camera.

DOBBS FERRY

Ulta arrest: A 45-year-old Bronx resident was arrested for shoplifting \$986 worth of items from the Ulta Beauty at Rivertowns Square on the evening of Monday, March 17.

She was charged with petit larceny and criminal possession of an anti-security item, both misdemeanors. Officers Brad Scala and Denis Bruciani made the arrest.

Walgreens arrests: Three arrests for shoplifting from Walgreens, 11 Ashford Ave., were made between March 18-23.

On March 18, a 36-year-old homeless man was charged with petit larceny and criminal possession of stolen property in the fifth degree, both misdemeanors. Officers Steve Coradin and Michael Marron made the arrest.

On March 19, a 60-year-old Yonkers resident was charged with petit larceny, criminal possession of stolen property in the fifth degree, and criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree, all misdemeanors. The controlled substance was crack in a pipe. Officers Jairo Hidalgo and Jonathan Sordellini made the arrest.

On March 23, a 46-year-old Yonkers resident was charged with petit larceny, a misdemeanor. Officers Denis Bruciani and Julius Derevanik made the arrest.

ciani and Julius Derevanik made the arrest.

Theft of plates: The license plates were stolen from a vehicle parked on Ashford Avenue between Thursday, March 20, and Friday, March 21. The plates were found on a 2025 Honda Pilot parked in the 42nd Precinct in the Bronx on the afternoon of March 21, after the vehicle had been used during a home invasion robbery in Eastchester that morning.

HASTINGS

Unauthorized account: On March 17, a Hastings resident reported that an unauthorized Chime Financial account had been opened in his name and that he had received a debit card on March 14.

Mischief to Chevy: The driver's-side window of a 2017 Chevrolet Bolt parked on Pleasant Avenue was damaged between Monday, March 17, and Tuesday, March 18.

Leafblower violation: A Croton-on-Hudson landscaper was issued a summons for using a gas leaf blower on Southgate Avenue on the morning of Wednesday, March 19. Hastings Village Code only allows the use of gas leaf blowers from Oct. 15 to Dec. 31. The landscaper was told of that regulation at around 10:15 a.m., and then cited at around 11 a.m.

ing a gas leaf blower on Southgate Avenue on the morning of Wednesday, March 19. Hastings Village Code only allows the use of gas leaf blowers from Oct. 15 to Dec. 31. The landscaper was told of that regulation at around 10:15 a.m., and then cited at around 11 a.m.

Assault arrest: A 17-year-old Ardsley resident was arrested for punching a Hastings police officer in the back of the head on Edgewood Avenue on the evening of Saturday, March 15, as police dispersed hundreds of youths from Hillside Woods. The teen was charged with assault in the second degree, a felony.

Man slaps woman: On March 21, a woman reported that an unidentified man slapped her buttocks after he asked to brush an insect off of her on Broadway near Edgars Lane, on the morning of Monday, March 17. He then jogged north on Broadway. Similar incidents occurred on March 10 — on Broadway at Oak Street in Dobbs Ferry and on the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail at West
Continued on page 16

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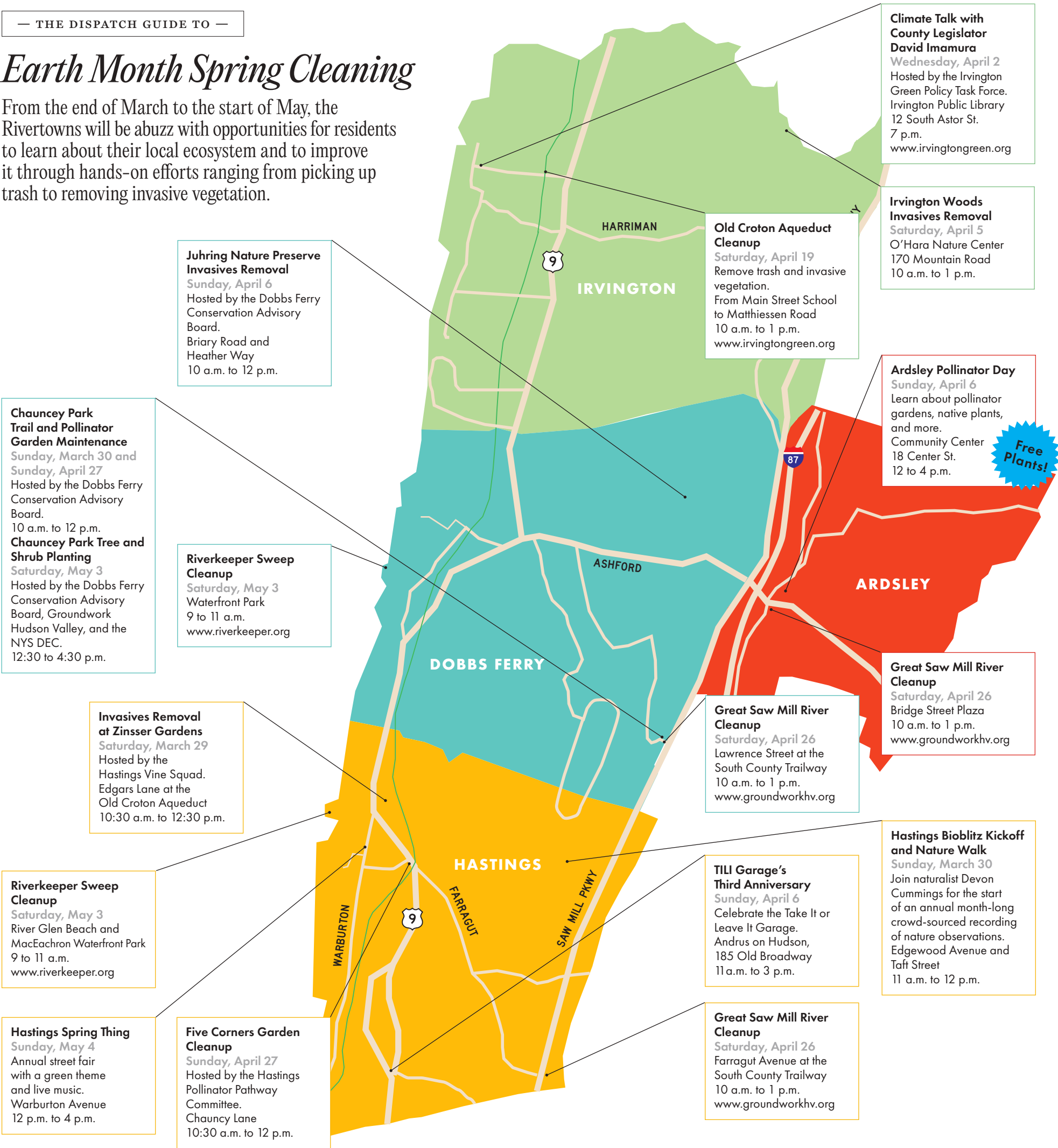
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Local Curiosities

— THE DISPATCH GUIDE TO —

Earth Month Spring Cleaning

From the end of March to the start of May, the Rivertowns will be abuzz with opportunities for residents to learn about their local ecosystem and to improve it through hands-on efforts ranging from picking up trash to removing invasive vegetation.



Juhring Nature Preserve Invasives Removal
Sunday, April 6
Hosted by the Dobbs Ferry Conservation Advisory Board.
Briary Road and Heather Way
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Chauncey Park Trail and Pollinator Garden Maintenance
Sunday, March 30 and Sunday, April 27
Hosted by the Dobbs Ferry Conservation Advisory Board.
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Chauncey Park Tree and Shrub Planting
Saturday, May 3
Hosted by the Dobbs Ferry Conservation Advisory Board, Groundwork Hudson Valley, and the NYS DEC.
12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Riverkeeper Sweep Cleanup
Saturday, May 3
Waterfront Park
9 to 11 a.m.
www.riverkeeper.org

Invasives Removal at Zinsser Gardens
Saturday, March 29
Hosted by the Hastings Vine Squad.
Edgars Lane at the Old Croton Aqueduct
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Riverkeeper Sweep Cleanup
Saturday, May 3
River Glen Beach and MacEachron Waterfront Park
9 to 11 a.m.
www.riverkeeper.org

Hastings Spring Thing
Sunday, May 4
Annual street fair with a green theme and live music.
Warburton Avenue
12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Five Corners Garden Cleanup
Sunday, April 27
Hosted by the Hastings Pollinator Pathway Committee.
Chauncy Lane
10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Old Croton Aqueduct Cleanup
Saturday, April 19
Remove trash and invasive vegetation.
From Main Street School to Matthiessen Road
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
www.irvingtongreen.org

Climate Talk with County Legislator David Imamura
Wednesday, April 2
Hosted by the Irvington Green Policy Task Force.
Irvington Public Library
12 South Astor St.
7 p.m.
www.irvingtongreen.org

Irvington Woods Invasives Removal
Saturday, April 5
O'Hara Nature Center
170 Mountain Road
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Ardsley Pollinator Day
Sunday, April 6
Learn about pollinator gardens, native plants, and more.
Community Center
18 Center St.
12 to 4 p.m.

Free Plants!

Great Saw Mill River Cleanup
Saturday, April 26
Lawrence Street at the South County Trailway
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
www.groundworkhv.org

Great Saw Mill River Cleanup
Saturday, April 26
Bridge Street Plaza
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
www.groundworkhv.org

TILI Garage's Third Anniversary
Sunday, April 6
Celebrate the Take It or Leave It Garage.
Andrus on Hudson,
185 Old Broadway
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Hastings Bioblitz Kickoff and Nature Walk
Sunday, March 30
Join naturalist Devon Cummings for the start of an annual month-long crowd-sourced recording of nature observations.
Edgewood Avenue and Taft Street
11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Great Saw Mill River Cleanup
Saturday, April 26
Farragut Avenue at the South County Trailway
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
www.groundworkhv.org

Hastings school bond
Continued from page 1

Hillside Elementary.

He explained that a major reason for the bond is issues arising from the middle school having 40% less space than the high school, despite having an almost equal number of students.

The Farragut Complex, Dal Piaz said, used to have more and better allocated educational space. That changed in the 1990s when total district enrollment in the three schools reached a low point of just over 1,000 students, leading to the decision to move the district offices from a house on the Burke Estate into the middle school. The cafeteria, which was where the current library is now, was moved to the basement, followed by a move into what was classroom space, where it remains today.

The current building population at the middle and high school is over 1,100 students and adults. According to Dal Piaz, the school no longer has “the space to accommodate the level of programs and services that New York State requires and what a modern school generally supports.” One way the bond proposes to address this issue is through creating a new cafeteria, and converting the current cafeteria space back into classrooms. This aspect of the bond will be supported by state aid, meaning that the State is dollar matching Hastings’ input.

A point of contention from some residents is that the proposed cafeteria would be made of glass. According to Dal Piaz, the board’s architects determined that glass would be the most cost-effective material for this project.

“It’s not an inherently expensive material, even

though, for some reason, people focus on it as though it is. We are enclosing an unused courtyard, closing in windows that are currently exterior windows, windows of classrooms. We need a glass front in order to let light... pass through,” he said. “More to the point, the State Historic Preservation Office has a preference they call complementary, but contrasting, designs. Our architects and engineers have worked very hard to design something that meets SHPO’s requirements, meets the building’s requirements, and does it at a reasonable cost.”

Hastings currently receives a building aid reimbursement rate from the state Education Department of 47%. However, the board predicts that this rate will be lowered in the near future, meaning that currently considered projects would cost more. School board trustee Theresa McCaffrey emphasized the need to do these projects now, to avoid increased costs down the line.

“The building aid... it’s almost half of the bond. Some community members are doing the math and not incorporating that into the equation, so our numbers aren’t making sense to them in terms of breakdown,” she said. “We are practically getting half of this back, and the timing is tough. The country feels precarious economically, but we still have significant infrastructure needs, and this is the year to lock in the 47% rate.”

The board sought to clarify other misconceptions related to the bond, including the notion that Hastings has passed many bonds in recent years. From 1997-2017, the district invested \$18.15 million into capital projects. From 2017-2024, Hastings passed a \$18.4 mil-

lion bond. While the 2018 bond was largely focused on Hillside School, it also addressed MEP repairs and the building envelope at FMS. Apart from the auditorium and music suite, the bond did not create or repurpose any educational space at FMS.

As a result of the under-utilization of capital bonding, the deteriorating condition of the Farragut Complex has put pressure on the district’s budget and reserves, according to the board. Over the summer, a ceiling failure in two classrooms cost the district \$30,000. In December, a sprinkler system rupture flooded the Farragut Wing, damaging 17 middle school classrooms. Those classes were relocated to other parts of the Farragut Complex. Over the weekend of March 22-23, a stairwell ceiling failed by Lloyd Library, which will cost the district \$100,000. The deteriorating building conditions, along with the risk of losing the 47% building aid reimbursement rate, creates an incentive for the district to act now, according to trustee Maureen Lennon-Santana.

“This is the culmination of where needs meet timing... When we delay projects, they only get more expensive and you suffer from emergencies and your budgets [suffer] as a result,” she said. “The timing is the 47% because that really has a risk next year. We realize that there’s other expenses, and people have concerns about the cost, but it’s not going to get better. It’s only going to get worse, so we’re trying to take advantage of the moment.”

Another issue with the Farragut Complex is that it is not up to state standards regarding accessibility and security. The bond proposes a new, ADA-compliant entryway with a security

vestibule, Dal Piaz explained.

“This goes back to the notion of trying to provide what other schools have had for decades — an entryway that all kids can enter into, a classroom space that the kids fit into,” he said.

The board referred to other misconceptions, including the idea that residents would be hit with taxes for this bond next year. The bond debt repayment would start in 2029. They also explained that just because the bond term is 20 years and the Education Department payback will take 15, that doesn’t mean that the district won’t get fully reimbursed.

“If we borrowed \$1 from New York State they would reimburse us in 15 installments, over 15 years,” Dal Piaz said. “By changing the term of the bond, we’re not foregoing any reimbursement from New York State.”

Another aspect of the bond that received pushback from the community is the inclusion of two synthetic turf fields at the Burke Estate. According to Dal Piaz, field availability has been a consistent problem, whether it be due to overuse of the fields or inclement weather, leading to the district often needing to modify or cancel practices and turn home games into away games. Because of this, the district has been spending at least \$30,000 a year on additional busing.

Dal Piaz urged the community to consider the value of this bond, which will be on the ballot on June 11.

“It’s not about having the fanciest school, not about having the most modern one,” he said. “It’s [about] not having half your school shut down for half a year. It’s not constantly being in crisis mode.”

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ARDSLEY

— Coming Up This Week —

Architectural Review Board Meeting

Tuesday, April 1, 8 p.m.

Village Hall

Agenda available at ardsleyvillage.gov.

Rivertown Parents: Middle School Bystander Intervention Workshop

Tuesday, April 1, 6:30-8 p.m.

Middle school library

Free pizza for student participants.

RSVP at tinyurl.com/RTBAMS

Annual Heritage Night

Friday, April 4, 6-9 p.m.

Ardsley High School

Celebrate different traditions, values, and cultures with free food, activities, and performances.

Cookies and Critics Book Group

Friday, April 4, 4 p.m.

Ardsley Public Library

Third- and fourth-graders discuss "An Elephant in the Garden" by Michael Morpurgo.

Register at ardsleypubliclibrary.org.

Ardsley Pollinator Day: Free Native Plant Giveaway and Garden Consultations

Sunday, April 6, Noon-4 p.m.

Ardsley Community Center, 18 Center St.

Visit ardsleypollinatorpathway.org for more information.

Virtual Lecture: Strategies for Dealing with Deer

Wednesday, April 9, 7:30 p.m.

Register for the Zoom link at ardsleypollinatorpathway.org.

AHS Sophomore Fundraiser: Egg My Yard

Saturday, April 19; sign up by April 9

Plastic eggs filled with toys will be delivered and hidden on your front lawn.

Sign up at eggmyyard2027.cheddarup.com:

\$30 for 25 eggs, \$45 for 50.

Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 19, 11 a.m.

Pascone Park softball field

Bring your own basket.

Got news?

Email staff writer Amy Bochner at amy@rivertownsdispatch.com

Teens who mean business win state titles

Cruz and Naresh earn honors at DECA conference

BY AMY BOCHNER

Ninth-grader Naumika Naresh and 12th-grader Jake Cruz are at opposite ends of their Ardsley High School careers, but both walked away from this year's State Career Conference as champions.

AHS's DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) chapter, which prepares students for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management, attended the conference in Rochester from March 5-7. Twenty-five students received medals for their individual events, and 12 students qualified for the International Career Development Conference (ICDC), which will be held in Orlando from April 26-29.

Cruz, who envisions himself becoming a diplomat, is the twice-elected vice president of finance for the New York DECA executive officer team. This is his third time earning a state championship title.

"I remember after the trip [this year], calling my mom and just saying, 'Wow. I won.' I couldn't believe it," Cruz said. "For the three times, it's never got any more real. It's always been such a shock. I've always tried to go out and do all the prep I can and give the best presentation I can. It's definitely one of the things in my high school experience that I'm most proud of."

The competitive events at the conference included prepared presentations and projects, as well as online simulations, such as a stock market game. There were also role plays, in which participants have 10 minutes to prepare and 10 minutes to present on a topic related to business.

Naresh, who has been interested in investing and how money works since she was a child, recalled how she prepared for her first time participating in the State Career Conference.

"I took a lot of practice tests... going over



Naumika Naresh

the material that we had to know, and correcting my mistakes," she said. "At Ardsley, we had a practice role-play night. Doing practice role plays with my dad really helped me a lot, to get comfortable with the setting I would be in at states.

In addition to the competitive events, the conference included workshops. A highlight for Naresh and her friends was a workshop that emulated the TV show "Shark Tank," in which they presented their idea for a rap AI.

For Cruz, he appreciated the chance to bond with his fellow DECA members.

"You meet a variety of people who are from different backgrounds and different walks of life, and it's really valuable to me to meet these people and just hear about their experiences, hear about what it meant for them to be able to qualify for this conference," he said. "This year, [the AHS DECA chapter] is really tightly knit, and so I found that this conference was just a great opportunity to bring us all together more and learn different things about each other. Getting closer with that group of individuals was really rewarding for me."

Preparing for the International Career Development Conference in April, accord-



Jake Cruz

ing to Cruz, requires even more studying and practice.

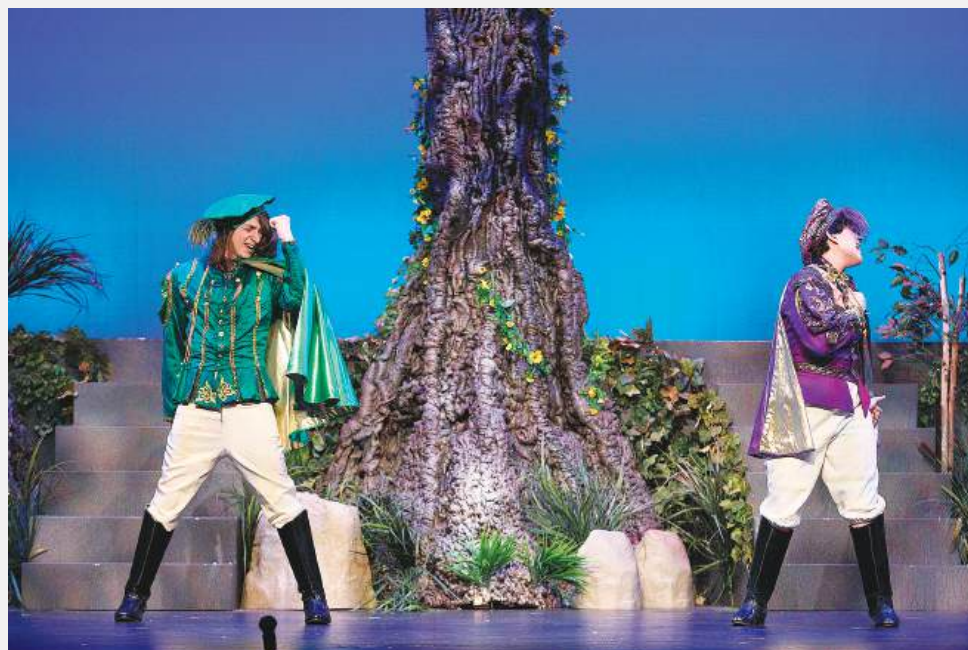
"There are different tests for the state, regional, and international level," he said. "As you progress on to the next conferences, they get a little more difficult. It's really important to expand your knowledge."

Cruz will attend George Washington University in the fall. He plans to major in international affairs, which he hopes will open the door to fields in international trade, national security, global environmental policy and more. He brings with him the state champion titles and the skills he learned from DECA.

"The DECA experience has really shaped me and helped me focus. I remember going into this club really being all over the place, and it's just helped me refine myself, professionally speaking," he said. "Having the opportunity to practice those skills in the high school environment is such a big deal. That's what I'm looking forward to using and utilizing when I'm at college."

Meanwhile, Naresh is excited to kick off her DECA career "on a high note," she said.

"It just gives me hope that, if I can achieve this much already while I'm in the first year of DECA, how much can I achieve in the future?"



Back to the Woods

Matt Allen and Sydney Levitan rehearse last week for the Ardsley High School Drama Club's production of "Into the Woods," which was staged once on Friday, March 21 and twice on Saturday, March 22. Steve Loftus directed the show, with musical direction by Kyle Banks. "Into the Woods" intertwines stories of various Brothers Grimm characters with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and a book by James Lapine.

ARDSLEY

Board awards \$1.7M contract for Pascone Park

BY AMY BOCHNER

The Ardsley Board of Trustees made decisions about Pascone Park and smart growth zoning during their meeting on March 17. They also welcomed a new youth advocate and scheduled a public hearing about a proposal for a gas station to operate 24 hours a day.

Pascone Park

The board awarded a \$1.7 million contract for improvements to Louis Pascone Memorial Park to Tony Casale, Inc. of Yonkers for \$1,737,500. The Village received six bids for the project.

The upgrades will include a new path around the center lawn, a new stage with a bandshell in place of the gazebo, a new playground, a shade sail with a seating area, and picnic tables. Other refurbishments include new benches, bike racks, light poles, trash receptacles, pathway lighting, and game tables.

According to Village Manager Joe Cerretani, the Village is finalizing more bid documents related to Pascone Park that “should be out by the end of the month.” He added that the Village executed a \$250,000 grant contract to be used for the playground, as well as a \$250,000 grant contract to be used for the rehabilitation of the restrooms. The

Village, he added, is working with the New York State Dormitory Authority to execute a contract for a \$150,000 grant for the stage and bandshell.

“We will be keeping the community informed as the project develops, but the main front area at Pascone Park will be under substantial construction throughout most of the spring and summer, and likely into the early fall months,” Cerretani said. “Please stay tuned with the Village’s email blast and social media for important information and updates.”

Smart Growth Zoning Project

In December, the Village requested proposals for professional consulting services related to the Smart Growth Zoning Grant, which is awarded to communities to enable them to develop or update local and countywide comprehensive plans, area plans, or zoning codes that emphasize and integrate Smart Growth principles. The services would be used to prepare zoning amendments to implement the Village’s Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Revitalization Implementation Strategy for the Smart Growth Zoning Project.

The Village received two proposals for professional consulting services and, based

on the recommendation of the Zoning Advisory Committee, awarded the contract to KSCJ (Kellard Sessions Cermele Johannesen Consulting) of Armonk for \$135,000 on March 17.

24-hour gas station

On Feb. 24, the board of trustees received an application for amended site plan approval to operate the Shell gas station and convenience store at 730 Saw Mill River Road (Route 9A) 24 hours a day, seven days a week. On March 17, the board declared itself the lead agency for site plan review and scheduled a public hearing for Monday, April 7, at 7:30 p.m. at Village Hall.

New youth advocate


Ardsley’s new part-time youth advocate, Bella Radoncic, introduced herself during the board meeting on March 17. Radoncic is working toward a master’s degree in social work at Hunter College and is interning for Student Assistance Services Corp. (SAS), which placed her with the Village. On March 3, the board authorized the village manager to sign an agreement with SAS to provide a part-time youth advocate to work seven hours per week, from March 1 through June 30.

National Merit Finalists

Ardsley High School seniors Leo Blank, Aarjav Brahmabhatt, and Anhad Kataria have been named finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program. To become finalists, each semifinalist and a high school official had to submit a scholarship application that includes information about the semifinalist’s academic record, school and community activities, leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards. The semifinalists were also selected based upon essays and either SAT or ACT scores. Finalists will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit \$2,500 Scholarships to---- be announced from April to July.

Science Bowl team places third


Ardsley High School’s National Science Bowl team placed third at the regional competition at Hunter College High School on March 8. The team advanced through multiple rounds before defeating the A and B squads from Brooklyn Technical High School in the final rounds. Hosted by the U.S. Department of Energy, the event featured 20 schools from across New York State and New York City, vying for a spot in the national competition. The Ardsley team consisted of juniors Khushi Karthikeyan, Matthew Kraytman, Ananya Shukla, and Dana Tikhonov, along with sophomore Avery Xu. The team is coached by Sage Kim.



Rivertowns

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Sundays through April 13 (except March 30),
9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Mercy University, 555 Broadway, Victory Hall,
Room 100

To schedule an appointment, dial “211”
(within Westchester County) or 1-800-899-
1479, then select menu option 8 to reach
tax assistance personnel.

Public Workshop:

Village Comprehensive Plan

Saturday, March 29, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Embassy Community Center, 60 Palisade St.

Anime Streaming Party for Teens

Saturday, March 29, 2-4:30 p.m.
Dobbs Ferry Public Library

Pollinator Garden and Trail Maintenance

Sunday, March 30, 10 a.m.-noon
Chauncey Park

Volunteer to help the Conservation Advisory
Board with weeding, planting, and spreading
wood chips. To sign up, visit eventbrite.com
and search for the Dobbs Ferry Conservation
Advisory Board.

Human Rights and Diversity Committee: Listening Circle

Sunday, March 30, 10 a.m.-noon

Location to be determined

Sign up at tinyurl.com/DobbsMarchCircles

Cultural Movement and Co-working

Tuesday, April 1, 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m.;

dance and wellness class, 5:30

HudCo, 145 Palisade St., Suite 200

Tickets (includes class): \$55 for a day pass, \$22
for the last hour; members save 25%. Register at
hudco.eventbrite.com.

Virtual Comedy Open Mic

Tuesday, April 1, 8 p.m.; sign-up starts at 7:30

Hosted on Zoom by the

Dobbs Ferry Public Library

Email tdeery@dobbsferrylibrary.org to register.

For ages 18 and up.

Got news?

Email staff writer Julian Caldwell at
julian@rivertownsdispatch.com



Francis O'Shea, Monique Johnson, Ken Slentz, and Frieda Belasco

Panel weighs in on phone ban for schools

NYS proposal met with cross-section of opinions

BY JULIAN MICHAEL CALDWELL

With a potential statewide bell-to-bell
ban on smartphones for students in kin-
dergarten through high school looming, the

Rivertowns Dispatch
held a panel discus-
sion — its first ever —
about that hot-button
topic on Wednesday,
March 26 at the Hud-
Co co-working space

in Dobbs Ferry.

The discussion was guided by Hastings
resident and Dispatch writer Janine Annett.
She was joined by Hastings High School
senior Frieda Belasco, Dobbs Ferry Schools
Superintendent Ken Slentz, Ardsley High
School social worker Monique Johnson, and
Irvington parent Francis O'Shea. O'Shea,
who is the father of a 7-year-old who attends
Dows Lane Elementary School and 10-year-
old at Main Street School, since 2019 has
been a member of HeadsUp Rivertowns, an
advocacy group that encourages a “screen-
smart community” and provides support
for parents looking to hold off on various
technologies for their children.

In January, New York Gov. Kathy Ho-
chul introduced the proposed ban of smart-
phones, smartwatches, and tablets as part of
the executive budget proposal. If approved,
the rules would go into effect for the 2025-
26 school year.

The Dispatch event, which was attended
by more than 50 parents and educators, pro-
vided for a spirited forum with panelists and

audience members voicing both support for
and opposition to the proposed measure.

“A ban is a blunt instrument,” Slentz stat-
ed. “Our children walk off campus and they
are right back on the phones. We feel we
have an obligation to at least think deeply
about how we leverage this as a moment
of education in the first instance and not
as just a ban.”

Currently in the Rivertowns, all four
school districts prohibit smartphone use
for the entire school day for students up
to eighth grade. All four high schools gen-
erally prohibit cellphone use in class, but
allow students to use their phones between
classes and during lunch period, which Ho-
chul's proposal would prohibit.

Belasco noted that while Hastings High
School requires students to place their
phones in pouches at the front of class-
rooms, teachers vary on how strictly they
enforce the rule — until a student is caught
using a phone. She believes that's been
enough to generally discourage students
from abusing the policy. Belasco made it
clear that while she agrees that social me-
dia and technology have detrimental men-
tal health effects, she doesn't believe a bell-
to-bell ban is necessary, or would mitigate
those negative impacts.

“Most parents don't know that during lunch
and between classes we're not just sitting
there hunched over our phone scrolling Tik-
Tok,” Belasco explained. “Most of these down-
sides with social media come from spending
hours in the dark scrolling, and that's not hap-
pening in school. You're engaged with your
peers, you're having conversations.”

O'Shea supports the ban and recalled con-
versations with middle school parents who

asserted that students are on their phones
despite the rules. O'Shea, whose older child
will start at Irvington Middle School in the
fall, argued that smartphones take a toll on
mental health and social development, and
that tech companies are trying to get chil-
dren to spend more time on their phones.

“These smartphones are highly addictive
and are changing society, and we simply
don't know what it's going to do to our kids
long-term,” O'Shea said. “I just don't under-
stand what the substitute is for a hard and
fast [ban that sends a message that] this is
no good for our kids; you [tech companies]
are not permitted to continue to take our
children's brains from them.”

Both O'Shea and Johnson, who has
worked at Ardsley High School for 28 years,
explained that in addition to social media
fixation, much of the interaction children
have on their cellphones during the school
day is with their parents.

“So often we do see that kids are jump-
ing to the parent before they come to one
of us,” Johnson explained. “We're not em-
powering them to develop their own skills.
We're micromanaging their life all the time
through the phone, and they've become so
dependent on it.”

Belasco shared that high school students
need to be able to use smartphones to ac-
commodate extracurricular activities. She
believes that pressures to appeal to colleges
push students to take on a rigorous workload
that can't be managed solely outside of school,
and require students to use their smartphones
between classes to communicate.

During the Q&A portion of the program,
audience member and Dobbs Ferry resident

Continued on page 15

DOBBS FERRY

Dobbs Ferry sets concern for human rights and diversity in stone

BY JULIAN MICHAEL CALDWELL

The Village of Dobbs Ferry reinforced its commitment to promoting diversity by making the ad hoc Human Rights and Diversity Committee a permanent entity. During a public meeting on Feb. 25, the board of trustees voted unanimously in favor of the measure, meaning that the committee can't be dismantled without a resolution and a vote from the board.

Mayor Vincent Rossillo established the ad hoc committee — without the need for a resolution — in October 2020, after a Black Lives Matter rally at Waterfront Park. Rossillo wanted to address the concerns of residents who stated that at times they did not feel welcome in the village.

"People spoke about their experiences and how they felt in Dobbs Ferry and it was shocking to me, to be honest," Rossillo told the Dispatch. "I was having a totally different experience, and other people in my bubble world were having the same experience as I was. But when I hear people of color say that when they went into the store, they felt people were watching or following them, it was eye-opening. So I spoke to some of those people, and they were very open, and I thought it was necessary that we raise the level of awareness within the village."

The Feb. 25 resolution was approved about a month after President Donald Trump issued an executive order removing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility mandates, policies, and programs



Mayor Vincent Rossillo and Betty Lynch, chair of the Human Rights and Diversity Committee

in the federal government. Human Rights and Diversity Committee chair Betty Lynch, a resident of Dobbs Ferry for 43 years, said that while members were aware of the moves been made on a national scale, the group was motivated to change its status because Rossillo is not seeking re-election.

"An ad hoc committee serves at the pleasure of the mayor, and since Mayor Rossillo is not running again, we thought maybe this would be a good time to become a more permanent committee, so that we wouldn't have to be convincing a

new mayor all over again that this was a valuable committee," Lynch told the Dispatch.

The committee consists of six members in addition to Officer Victor Wilson, who is the police department liaison, and Trustee Shari Rosen Ascher, the village liaison. Since forming in 2020, the committee has collaborated with others, such as the Nominating Committee, to ensure that membership is diverse on the other committees and boards that cover a variety of concerns, from development to traffic to sustain-

ability. The group also advises Rossillo to ensure that he considers the impact of board decisions on the inclusivity felt by village residents, business owners, and visitors.

One of the most visible initiatives promoted by the Human Rights and Diversity Committee was the Pride crosswalk painted on Cedar Street last spring in support of the LGBTQ community. When a longtime village resident expressed his displeasure with the Pride walkway at a public meeting, members of the committee sought out the resident to have a conversation with him.

"We want Dobbs Ferry to be a welcoming community," Rossillo said. "There have been some incidents with residents who felt that they were being singled out or treated unfairly, and I think the Human Rights Committee helped mediate that."

Lynch emphasized that the point of the group isn't to dictate and drown out differing opinions, but to make sure all perspectives are heard. In 2023, the committee issued an online survey to paint a broad view of Dobbs Ferry's inclusivity. The responses included comments from residents who expressed not feeling welcome or feeling worried about their children being bullied because of their race.

The survey results led the committee to organize listening circles, which are 2-hour gatherings of eight to 10 people discussing their experiences in Dobbs Ferry, and ways to make the community more welcoming. Participants need to pre-regis-

Continued on page 13

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HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON

— Coming Up This Week —

PTSA Used Book Fair

Friday, March 28, 5-8 p.m.
Saturday, March 29, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Hillside School

Kids' Night Out

Friday, March 28, 6-9 p.m.
James Harmon Community Center
Drop off ages 5-12 for entertainment and activities with Hastings High School students and adult supervisors. Suggested donation: \$60 per family, plus \$5 per child for pizza. Visit hohny.gov for the link to the registration form.

Mobile Shredder

Saturday, March 29, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Chemka Pool parking lot

Vine Squad Volunteer Opportunity

Saturday, March 29, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Zinsser Park
Park on Edgars Lane near the intersection with the Aqueduct.
Training and equipment for lopping invasive vines will be provided. No prior experience necessary.

"John Singer Sargent: His Art, His Life, His Muse"

Sunday, March 30, 2-4 p.m.
Hastings Public Library
Hastings resident and author Gil Reavill discusses the famed portrait painter.

Library Giving Day

Tuesday, April 1, 9:30 a.m.-7 p.m.
Hastings Public Library
Stop by for free coffee, sweet treats, and a coupon for any book from the Barkin Corner Bookshop, located inside the library, as a token of appreciation for support of the library.

Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, April 1, 7 p.m.
Village Hall
Agenda available at hohny.gov.

Rivertown Parents: Middle School Bystander Intervention Workshop

Tuesday, April 1, 6:30-8 p.m.
Ardsley Middle School Library
Free pizza for student participants.
RSVP at tinyurl.com/RTBAMS

Got news?

Email staff writer Amy Bochner at amy@rivertownsdispatch.com

End-of-life expert to talk 'Exit Strategies'

Senior Council to host event at community center on April 6

BY RITA WALTON

Discussions about death and dying may be uncomfortable, but Dr. Cynthia X. Pan wants that to change. Pan, an expert in hospice and palliative care, encourages candid and sincere discussions about end-of-life options.

Her approach will be the subject of a presentation — "Exit Strategies: The Power of Humor and Openness in End-of-Life Conversations" — on Sunday, April 6, at the James Harmon Community Center in Hastings.

Pan is the chief of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Care Medicine at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in Queens. She is also the author of the book "Exit Strategies: Living Lessons from Dying People." She has practiced medicine for over 30 years and lives in Great Neck, Long Island.

The Hastings event came about when Dr. Patrica Bloom, a member of the Hastings Senior Council who specialized in geriatrics, learned about Pan's book.

"A few years ago, before I retired, I worked with Dr. Pan, and when I found out about the book, I bought it, and thought it was great," Bloom told the Dispatch. "I thought we should have an event, so I threw it out there to the Senior Council and they said we should do it." "It's a very important topic," Bloom continued. "Although the title of the book and the subject of end-of-life planning sound grim to most people, Cynthia is an extremely engaging, warm, and funny speaker who tries to help people understand that it doesn't have to be so heavy, that there can be a lot of humor and lightness involved."

After Pan's presentation, Iris Dudman of Hastings, a member of the Senior Council, will talk about the New York State Medical Aid in Dying Act. There will then be a question-and-answer period, followed by a workshop to help attendees understand and complete a New York State Health Care Proxy and other advance directives.



Dr. Cynthia X. Pan and her book

An advance directive — sometimes known as a "living will" — is a written statement detailing a person's desires regarding their medical treatment should they be unable to communicate.

"Young people should do this, too," Dudman told the Dispatch. "You don't have to think about this all the time and it doesn't have to be difficult, but just do the paperwork."

In her book, Pan wrote that she wants to help provide peace of mind for those facing end-of-life care, and to normalize discussions around that issue. The book has chapters titled "Food," "Religion," "Making a Bucket List," "Celebrations, and "Sex."

"I wrote this book to start a conversation about a pretty taboo topic," Pan said. "We have an aging society and a lot of medical interventions that maybe don't apply. Death has been medicalized so much in our society."

Pan said she "wanted to take a light-hearted approach, but also give information. I have seen patients and their families struggle from not knowing how to talk about end-of-life wishes."

The professional turns personal in the book. "I use the example of my father," Pan continued. "When I first discussed the idea of an advanced care directive with him, he left the

Exit Strategies

LIVING LESSONS from DYING PEOPLE



CYNTHIA X. PAN, MD
EXPERT IN HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

room! I used an incremental approach, bit by bit, and he eventually was able to say what he wanted. And my family and I were able to provide that at the end of his life."

In addition to Pan's efforts, a group called the Death Café works to make end-of-life conversations more accessible. Death Cafés took place in Yonkers in November 2024 and in Beacon earlier this month.

In Irvington, the Westchester Meditation Center invites residents to discuss the topic from a Buddhist perspective. It offers a class called "Aging for Beginners" that uses the book "Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully" by Frank Ostaseski.

In her book, Pan states, "The end of life is still part of life, and we can still find humor and meaning."

"Exit Strategies" will take place on Sunday, April 6, from 2-3 p.m., at the James Harmon Community Center, 44 Main St. To RSVP, email senioroutreach@hohny.gov or call Anne Russak at 914-478-2380 ext. 2.



Helping hands

Jack Rockafellow of Dobbs Ferry (right) fixes a stool that Tom Kenney of Hastings (left) brought to the Hastings Repair Café held at the James Harmon Community Center on Saturday, March 22. Rockafellow was one of 22 volunteer repair coaches who worked on items for free for 117 attendees. Lindsey Jeanne Taylor and Ariella Gastel of Hastings produced the event. For information about upcoming repair cafes, visit www.repaircafehvh.org.

HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON

Hastings High School students reflect on living with lockdown drills

BY FRIEDA BELASCO

The following story resulted from a mentorship program between professional and student journalists facilitated by the Rivertowns Dispatch. The writer is the co-editor of Hastings High School's newspaper, The Buzzer, which will also publish this story.

"Lockdown, lockdown," the stern, eerie recording repeats over the school's loudspeaker.

Students, who were warned about the drill ahead of time, move to a corner, out of sight of the classroom door, and sit on the floor. The teacher turns the lights off and covers the windows before joining them. Everyone is silent. Some play on their phones, while others read books or complete homework. After about 20 minutes, an administrator unlocks the door and declares the drill is over.

The experience is not out of the ordinary for the students. They have engaged in lockdown drills since kindergarten. About 95% of K-12 public schools nationwide use lockdown drills to prepare students for a live-shooter situation. Since 2016, New York has required every school to conduct at least four drills a year, in which hallways

are cleared, doors are locked or barricaded, and students and staff "hide from view, and remain silent while readying a plan of evacuation as a last resort," according to the New York State government website.

A survey of 132 Hastings High School (HHS) students conducted by The Buzzer found most give the school high marks for safety. Over 85% of respondents gave the school either a four or five out of five.

In interviews, however, students expressed a range of opinions on the effectiveness of the drills, including concerns and doubts. Meanwhile, due to a lack of research, there is no consensus among experts that the drills make students safer. A federal government report on the subject is set to be released this summer.

"They are as effective as they can be," HHS senior Tyler Levan said. "But realistically, in times of actual danger, it is very hard to be rational and orderly. It is hard to prepare for the intensity and fear that a real intruder situation would evoke."

HHS sophomore Hazel Kuniholm said the fact the drills are conducted so often means students and staff do not always follow procedures as carefully as needed.

"We have lockdowns so frequently that they aren't really treated like a serious situation," Kuniholm said.

Last year, the New York State Board of Regents issued new rules that bar the use of methods that make the drills seem true to life. The new rules also require that staff and students be notified in advance of a drill, and that drills be conducted "in a trauma-informed, developmentally and age-appropriate manner."

Another HHS student, who asked to remain anonymous, said telling students about the drills in advance undercuts their effectiveness.

"Although it alleviates any anxiety that a student may experience, it doesn't foster a realistic experience in terms of knowing how to act in a stressful situation, which defeats the purpose of a drill," the student explained.

But another HHS student noted that drills could go wrong if conducted without a warning.

"It freaks me out when they don't warn us or the teacher," the student said, referring to drills done before the new regulations. "Once, I had a [substitute teacher] who had no idea what was going on, and the entire class thought it was real."

Maureen Caraballo, the treasurer and business official for the Hastings School District, said the drills aim to focus on "creating muscle memory," so that students and staff are more likely to respond effectively should an active-shooter situation arise. The district works with a private security firm, Altaris Consulting Group, to ensure it is following state regulations and best practices.

There is also an emphasis on protecting students' mental health. The drills aim "to prepare, not to scare," said Frank Chibbaro, the district's safety and security coordinator.

"Our teachers and mental health support folks are critical members of our district-wide security team," Chibbaro added. "They are there to represent the student voice."

The administration also works on ensuring that staff are attentive to students upset by lockdown drills, especially younger students, according to Chibbaro.

Justin Heinze, the co-director of the National Center for School Safety at the University of Michigan, said that, because of a lack of useful data, most of the current research does not focus on the effectiveness of drills, but rather on whether they make students *feel* more prepared, or create fear.

Continued on page 16

BIRDS IN ART 2024



Kimberly Beck, United States: Downtime, 2024, oil on linen mounted on gator board.

Birds in Art is an annual juried exhibition curated by the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, WI. The 60 works displayed were culled from over 1,000 entries presented by artists from all over the world. The exhibition, generously lent by Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, meets the Foundation's goal of presenting beautiful representational art, in keeping with the spirit of Jasper Cropsey and the Hudson River School.

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IRVINGTON

— Coming Up This Week —

Special Planning Board Work Session

Monday, March 31, 7 p.m.

Village Hall

To attend via Zoom, visit irvingtonny.gov for the link.

Rivertown Parents: Middle School Bystander Intervention Workshop

Tuesday, April 1, 6:30-8 p.m.

Ardley Middle School Library

Free pizza for student participants.

RSVP at tinyurl.com/RTBAMS

Planning Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 2, 7 p.m.

Village Hall

To attend via Zoom, visit irvingtonny.gov for the link.

Climate Talk: Local Environmental Legislation with David Imamura

Wednesday, April 2, 7 p.m.

Irvington Public Library

Invasives Cleanup

Saturday, April 5, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

O'Hara Nature Center, 170 Mountain Road

Volunteer to remove Japanese barberry from Irvington Woods Park and at the same time learn best practices for identification, removal, and tool usage.

Registration required at

register.capturepoint.com/villageofirvington.

4 in the Forest

Sunday, April 6, 9 a.m.; registration fee (\$45) increases on April 4.

The 4-mile run on the Peter K. Oley trails starts and ends at Irvington High School.

Visit tinyurl.com/3e7er7ut to register.

Rivertowns Crop Hunger Walk

Sunday, April 6, 2 p.m.

Irvington Presbyterian Church, 25 N. Broadway
"Pre-walk Palooza" features raffles and pizza.

The walk will benefit Church World Service, Feeding Westchester, and the Dobbs Ferry Food Pantry.

Sign up or donate at events.crophungerwalk.org.

Blood Drive

Saturday, April 12, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Irvington Presbyterian Church, 25 N. Broadway

Walk-ins are welcome, or schedule an appointment at redcrossblood.org.

Got news?

Email staff writer Julian Caldwell at

julian@rivertownsdispatch.com



Thomas Fonseca, Camila González, Kai Dirksen, Anabelle Shotton, Romy Files, Luke Weidner, Sasha Marciano, Omar Mansouri, and Sara Swires

'Hello Girls' intertwines history and song

Musical tells story of WWI telephone operators

BY JULIAN MICHAEL CALDWELL

High school students from throughout Westchester are bringing to life the true story of the women who served as telephone switchboard operators on the frontlines for the U.S. Army during World War I.

From March 28-30, the Broadway Training Center, located in Hastings, will stage three performances of "The Hello Girls" at the Irvington Theater, which will be the first production of that musical in Westchester. "The Hello Girls" debuted off-Broadway at the 59E59 Theater in Manhattan in 2018, exactly 100 years after the actual events took place.

The show focuses on the women who enlisted in 1918, during World War I, and are recognized as the first women to join the U.S. Army. After trying to teach soldiers how to run the switchboard, the Army decided to break precedent and invite women who had experience working for telephone companies and could connect important calls faster than soldiers. The Army also required the women to speak French as well as English, to communicate with U.S. and French soldiers.

"We're talking about orders and strategy changes that are going to affect the people at the front immediately," BTC co-director Fiona Santos told the Dispatch. "When they got back home though, the women discovered that even though they had Army uniforms and they had taken the Army oath of service and were subject to all the military rules, the U.S. government said, 'Oh you weren't really soldiers, you were civilian contractors.' So then they spent the next 60 years fighting for their veterans rights."

Grace Banker, portrayed in the BTC production by Dobbs Ferry High School senior Anabelle Shotton, was chief operator of the group and received a Distinguished Service Award from the Army at the end of the war. Despite the honor, Banker and her colleagues didn't receive veteran status and rights until 1977, after she and many of her peers had passed away. Banker, a resident of Scarsdale, died in 1960 at age 67.

"The message of the show is about women's rights and how for so long, even if women are able to do the same jobs, they're perceived in a different way," Shotton said. "And they're not always allowed to do the same things even if they're capable, because they're seen as more fragile."

One of the more famous characters in "Hello Girls" is U.S. Army General John J. Pershing, who is played by Sleepy Hollow High School senior Luke Weidner. Weidner researched the general's speeches and personal life, discovering that the death of Pershing's two daughters and wife in a fire before the war contributed to his hesitation to put the women switchboard operators on the front line.

"When you're learning in school, there's a lot more focus on the facts and the events and less on who the person was on a deeper level," Weidner noted.

All of the high school seniors in the play admit the musical was their first introduction to the real-life history it's based on.

"I feel like a lot of them have done a really deep dive into learning about this history," Santos added. "Almost every person who is referenced in the musical is an actual person who lived in U.S. history, and the kids have really done their research to find out what they can about people."

The student actors are also connecting with cast members from the original 2018 production who

have ties to the Rivertowns and BTC. Lili Thomas, who was in the debut production, is a Hastings native and Dobbs Ferry resident who is performing on Broadway in a revival of "Gypsy." She plans to visit the students after their "Hello Girls" run, when Thomas has time off from her show.

During rehearsals, original cast member Skyler Volpe, who took classes at BTC as a teen about 15 years ago, visited the 17-person cast and talked about her experience and challenges as one of the first actors in "Hello Girls." Volpe played the role of Suzanne Prevot, portrayed for the BTC production by Sleepy Hollow High School senior Sasha Marciano.

"It was so special getting to perform for someone who originated the part that I'm taking on now," Marciano said. "Being at BTC, we get such amazing opportunities, like being in contact with original cast members. That's not something we take for granted."

As the Westchester premiere, BTC's production is potentially providing an introduction to a story unfamiliar to audience members. It's a responsibility that students like Hastings High School senior Kai Dirksen, who plays Captain Joseph Riser, don't take lightly.

"It feels like quite an honor to be able to tell all of their true stories through our characters and through the show that we're putting on," Dirksen said. "I feel lucky to be able to present what I consider such an important part of our history as a nation to people who really haven't known it, as such young people."

"The Hello Girls" will be performed at the Irvington Theater, 85 Main St., on Friday, March 28 at 7 p.m., on Saturday, March 29 at 7 p.m., and on Sunday, March 30 at 3 p.m. Admission is \$27 for adults; \$23 for students and seniors. Tickets are available at irvingtontheater.com.

IRVINGTON

School district floats \$3.95 million ballot proposition for May 20

BY JULIAN MICHAEL CALDWELL

The Irvington School District is proposing to spend \$3,950,000 from its capital reserve on projects that include the replacement of the Meszaros Turf Field, resurfacing the Peter Oley Track around the field, and adding field lights so that sporting events can be hosted there at night. Irvington residents will have the chance to weigh in on the proposal on May 20, concurrent with the school budget vote and school board election.

The plan calls for using nearly all of the \$4,034,571 that's currently available in the capital reserve. The voter-approved capital reserve was established in 2015 in anticipation of replacing the synthetic turf field and track, which were installed in 2016 with an expected life span of eight to 10 years. Since then, funds have been added whenever the district ended the year with a surplus. The reserve, which accrues interest, allows the district to fund projects without borrowing money.

The Irvington Board of Education presented the spending proposition during a public meeting on Tuesday, March 25. In addition to the upgrades to the field and track, the plans include paving the Dows Lane and middle school basketball courts, refurbishing Dows Lane's "Peaceful Play" area, repairing concrete districtwide, removing outdated cabinets in high school classrooms, renovating a high school girls' bathroom, and replacing windows at the middle school.

"One of the reasons that the board of educa-



The artificial turf at Meszaros Field

tion would decide to do this kind of work is it's a little too costly for the regular budget, but it's not big enough for a full-on bond project, which typically is a much larger project," Schools Superintendent Mara Ratesic told the Dispatch. "So the replacement of concrete [on courts and elsewhere in the district] is an item that would fall into that category, and in addition to it just being unsightly and in need of repair, it will create a lot more play spaces for our children and usability of things like the basketball court."

The district estimates that, if approved, the proposed work would begin in the summer

of 2026. If the actual costs were to exceed the estimates, bringing the overall cost beyond \$3,950,000, it's possible that all of the proposed work wouldn't be completed. The anticipated cost of repairs to the turf field and track, which is the most expensive element of the proposition, is \$1,420,000. Installing the field lights is expected to cost about \$985,000, which includes the necessary electrical work.

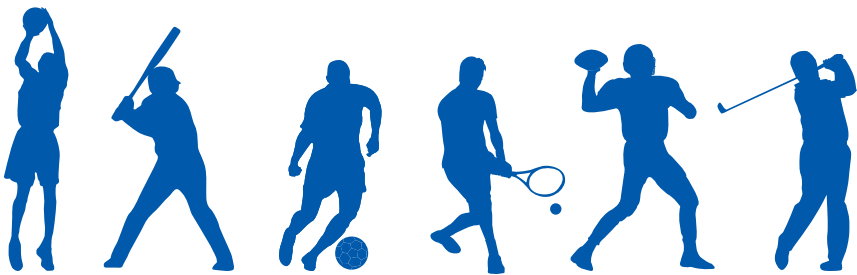
In the proposition, four 80-foot LED light poles would be used to illuminate the track and field from August through November and March through May. The school board emphasized that

lights would be used primarily for district athletic events, though Irvington recreation and youth sports would be able to apply to use the lights. The district has not yet ruled out the possibility of other entities being able to rent the field at night, which would be subject to policy set by the school board.

During the March 25 meeting, the board described the lights as providing a means for all outdoor sports to have an equal opportunity to be seen by allowing the teams to play their games later in the day, at a time when other students and parents aren't occupied by work and other activities. The proposition states that lights would be on no later than 9:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

"The technology is far more advanced, so that we feel we can do this for our students and for our community and remain good neighbors to those who live near the campus," Ratesic said. "The lighting has much less spillage, and the lights really are focused down, and they light the field and don't extend very far out into the neighborhood."

Earlier this month the district hosted a dinner for residents who live adjacent to the field and heard their concerns about the light spillage, noise, and traffic up and down Heritage Hill Road during night events. The board is continuing to update its plans with those concerns in mind. The proposition will be included on the ballot on May 20.



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Opinion

The Dispatch welcomes letters to the editor about subjects related to the Rivertowns. Letters must be no more than 300 words, submitted by Monday at noon for that week's issue, and include the names, home addresses, and phone numbers of their writers. No letter is guaranteed publication. To submit a letter, visit rivertownsendispatch.com/contact-us.

Urge members of the New York State Assembly to support the NY HEAT Act

To the Editor:

The Dispatch surveyed reactions to Con Edison's proposed rate hikes. My answer supports New York State lawmakers in their attempts to provide cleaner heat and lower bills.

New York's laws currently require the utilities to keep expanding the fracked gas system and replacing expensive gas pipes even when it's often less expensive to invest in building electrification instead. The Public Service Commission (PSC), the New York State agency that regulates ConEd and

approves rate hikes, is hamstrung by these laws. It's the billions of dollars ConEd and other utilities are spending on the gas system, not the cost of the gas commodity, that is causing our bills to soar.

The New York State Home Energy Affordable Transition Act (NY HEAT for short) (S.4158/A.4870A) would amend the stranglehold on PSC regulations and curb future rate hikes. It would also put a plan in place to limit home energy bills to 6% of household income. Rising energy costs are a source of

grumbling to some of us, but a life-changing hazard to neighbors trying to manage food, health, transportation, and home heating bills. When one in four households pays more than 6% of their income on energy costs and one in seven is two months or more behind on their energy bills, we have an affordability crisis. This should change.

I have been working with colleagues from RAC-NY (Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in New York State) to convince Albany lawmakers to pass the NY

HEAT Act. The state Senate put this bill into its budget proposal, while the Assembly drags its feet. Re-introduced by Sen. Liz Krueger and Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon and championed by local Assemblymember MaryJane Shinsky, the HEAT Act still needs a louder voice from the people. Call and email your New York Assembly representatives with a clear, strong message to pass NY HEAT in the budget.

LINDA MOOT
Dobbs Ferry

Rivertowns Hunger Walk aims to bridge gap caused by cuts in federal aid

To the Editor:

Thank you for supporting the Rivertowns Hunger Walk. We've looked forward to hosting this worthy fundraiser in our beautiful community for 25 years now. As of today, it's crunch time. We have a few critical days remaining to fundraise. If you are walking, please take some extra time to invite others to walk with you or sponsor you today. You can sponsor a Girl Scout, Boy

Scout, Dobbs Ferry Food Pantry, and others by going to bit.ly/rivertownswalk and scroll down to find groups and individuals.

This year's humanitarian needs seem somehow more dire and daunting than ever. We're walking to "bridge the gap" of massive U.S. federal cutbacks. We're symbolically marching north from Irvington Presbyterian to the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge. We're walking to feed the most

vulnerable left behind by the shuttering of US-AID humanitarian programs and others; plus walking to stock pantry shelves for those facing hardship in our villages through the Dobbs Ferry Food Pantry and Feeding Westchester.

Everyone, even if you aren't walking, is invited to the "Pre-walk Palooza" with guest speakers, raffles, free pizza, snacks, and prayer at Irvington Presbyterian on Sunday, April 6, at 2 p.m.

The youth are collecting "Change for Change," so please bring your big ole jar of loose change. The walk is to follow.

Please know that we appreciate you. Together we can make a bigger impact. Thank you for supporting.

MELISSA BROWN
Hunger Walk chair
Irvington Presbyterian Church

Human Rights and Diversity

Continued from page 8

ter, and the prompts that participants answer in the circle are tailored to each group. Each has a pair of facilitators who also take notes to share with participants after the fact. Since November, Dobbs Ferry has hosted five listening circles, with the sixth scheduled to take place this Saturday, March 29, at the Children's Village.

June Wai, who has been a resident of Dobbs Ferry for 11 years and a member of the Human Rights and Diversity Committee since its inception, describes the circles as a unique and "transformative" way for residents to interact with their neighbors.

"Most of my communications with people, unless they're close family or friends, are transactional, and my guess is the nature of a lot of the com-


munication that most people have is transactional," Wai told the Dispatch. "And in these listening circles, there's an opportunity for people to engage in communications that go beyond transactional."

In May, the Human Rights and Diversity Committee will make its debut presentation to the board of trustees, drawing from feedback from its survey, listening circles, and conversations with residents over the past four years.

"We're by no means done, there's so much more to do," Wai said. "And by ensuring that we have deeper roots in Dobbs Ferry so that we can continue to do the hard work regardless of who becomes mayor, or who is on the board, or who makes up our demographics now or in the future, we are here to continue the good work."

To register for a future listening circle, e-mail DobbsHRD16@gmail.com.

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The Agenda

SAT
29

Live Music: Might and the Weeviles

ARDSLEY

9 p.m. / \$10 cover charge. Saw Mill Tavern, 925 Saw Mill River Road. The female-fronted band plays classic rock. Reservations encouraged. smtavern.com

Tree-to-Table Pancake Breakfast

DOBBS FERRY

9-11 a.m. / \$10. South Church, 343 Broadway. Enjoy pancakes with maple syrup made from the sap tapped from trees on South Church's campus. Reservations required. rivertowncommunitygardens.com

"The Hello Girls"

IRVINGTON

7 p.m. / \$27, \$23 for students and seniors. Irvington Theater, 85 Main St. Broadway Training Center presents this new musical about female telephone operators during World War I. Also Sunday at 3 p.m. irvingtontheater.com

Women's History Month Author Talk

YONKERS

3 p.m. / \$30, \$25 for members (includes complimentary signed book). Hudson River Museum, 511 Warburton Ave. Irvington author Allison Gilbert and Mary Calvi discuss "The Joy of Connections: 100 Ways to Beat Loneliness and Live a Happier and More Meaningful Life," co-authored by Gilbert with the late Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer. hrm.org

Nature Program: Pollinator Pathways

YONKERS

1 p.m. / Free. Lenoir Nature Preserve, 19 Dudley St. facebook.com/LenoirPreserve

Live Jazz: David Janeway Quintet

TARRYTOWN

7 and 9:30 p.m. / \$35, \$30 for students. Jazz Forum Club, 1 Dixon Lane. The pianist and longtime Hastings resident performs with Billy Hart, Cameron Brown, Freddie Hendrix, and Craig Handy. jazzforumarts.org

Rivertown Dance Academy Festival

TARRYTOWN

1 p.m. / \$31. Tarrytown Music Hall, 13 Main St. Students showcase ballet, jazz, modern dance, theater jazz, tap, and hip-hop. Also Sunday. tarrytownmusicall.org

Kidlit Open Mic

SLEEPY HOLLOW

3-5 p.m. / \$10 for readers, free for listeners. Philipse Manor Station, 300 Riverside Drive. Registration required. writerscenter.org

"Women's Writes" 24-Hour Playfest

OSSINING

6 and 8 p.m. / \$25, \$20 for students and seniors. Bethany Arts Community, 40



Broadway Training Center presents "The Hello Girls," a new musical about female telephone operators during World War I, March 28-30 at Irvington Theater.

Somerstown Road. Local actors perform short plays written by women from scratch in just 24 hours. Presented by River's Edge Theatre Company. Recommended for teens and adults. Ten percent of ticket sales go to Hope's Door. bethanyarts.org

Box Spring: A Festival of One-Act Plays

OSSINING

2 and 8 p.m. / \$25, \$20 for members and students. Westchester Collaborative Theater, 23 Water St. Also Sundays, March 30 and April 6, 3 p.m.; Friday, April 4, 8 p.m.; and Saturday, April 5, 2 and 8 p.m. wctheater.org

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct: Weir Tour

OSSINING

10 a.m. / Free. Joseph Caputo Center, 95 Broadway. Guided exploration of the original 1842 brick water tunnel. Registration required. aqueduct.org

SUN
30

Szabó Chamber Music Society Concert: Gypsy Piano Trios

DOBBS FERRY

2:30 p.m. / \$20 adults, \$15

seniors, \$5 students. Sacred Heart Church, 417 Broadway. szabochoambermusicsociety.com

Artist Reception: "Fleeting Light"

DOBBS FERRY

11 a.m.-1 p.m. / Free. The Donald Gallery at South Church, 343 Broadway. Meet Neo-Luminist painter Rachel Weatherford at the opening of her exhibit. On view through May 11. southpres.org

Yoga For ALS Research

DOBBS FERRY

4-6 p.m. / \$75. HudCo, 145 Palisade St., Suite 200. Honor former Hastings resident Sarah Knox and her ALS journey with an hour of gentle yoga, light bites, cash bar, and online auction. For tickets or to donate, visit donate.projectals.org/a/yoga-als-research.

"John Singer Sargent: His Art, His Life, His Muse"

HASTINGS

2-4 p.m. / Free. Hastings Public Library, 7 Maple Ave. Hastings resident and author Gil Reavill discusses the famed portrait painter. hastingslibrary.org

New Exhibits

HASTINGS

2-5 p.m. / Free. Upstream Gallery, 8 Main St. Opening reception for Sondra Gold's "Some of My Favorite Things" and the New Member Showcase. On view through April 20. Hours: Thursday-Sunday, 12:30-5:30 p.m. upstreamgallery.com

Coffee and Crafting: Shrinky Dink Pendants and Pins

HASTINGS

10 a.m.-noon / \$15, \$10 for members. The Maker Hive, 416 Warburton Ave. makerhive.space

Spring Bird Walk

YONKERS

8:30-10 a.m. / \$20. Untermyer Park and Gardens, 945 N. Broadway. Register online. untermyergardens.org

"Rodgers: An Afternoon of Song and Story"

TARRYTOWN

3-5 p.m. / \$60, \$50 for members. The Ark at the Shames JCC, 371 S. Broadway. Broadway producer Jack Viertel discusses Richard Rodgers' musical masterpieces while a quartet of professional singers, accompanied by a live orchestra, performs favorites. Purchase tickets online. shamesjcc.org

Brazilian Singer Fabiana Masili

TARRYTOWN

4 and 6 p.m. / \$25, \$20 for students. Jazz Forum Club, 1 Dixon Lane. jazzforumarts.org

Friends of Music Concerts: Classical Duo

SLEEPY HOLLOW

3 p.m. / \$40. Sleepy Hollow High School, 210 N. Broadway. Mezzo-soprano Megan Moore and pianist Francesco Barfoed perform works by Rachmaninoff, Mahler, Rossini, and Sibelius. friendsofmusicconcerts.org

TUES

1

Cultural Movement and Co-working

DOBBS FERRY

9 a.m.-6:30 p.m.; dance and wellness class, 5:30 / \$55 for a day pass, \$22 for the last

hour; members save 25%. HudCo, 145 Palisade St., Suite 200. Register online. hudco.eventbrite.com

Virtual Comedy Open Mic

DOBBS FERRY

8 p.m.; sign-up starts at 7:30 / Free. Hosted on Zoom by the Dobbs Ferry Public Library. Email ideery@dobbsferrylibrary.org to register. For ages 18 and up.

Library Giving Day

HASTINGS

9:30 a.m.-7 p.m. / Free. Hastings Public Library, 7 Maple Ave. Stop by for free coffee, sweet treats, and the chance to choose a book from the Barkin Corner Bookshop, located inside the library, as a token of appreciation for support of the library. hastingslibrary.org

Spring Opening of Lyndhurst

TARRYTOWN

9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. / \$10. Lyndhurst, 635 S. Broadway. Purchase a Grounds Pass for entry to the property through Nov. 2. lyndhurst.org

WED
2

Climate Talk: Local Environmental Legislation with David Imamura

IRVINGTON

7 p.m. / Free. Irvington Public Library, 12 S. Astor St.

irvingtongreen.org/events

THURS
3

Outdoor Live Music: Milton

DOBBS FERRY

6-9 p.m. / No cover charge. Hudson Social, 11 Station Plaza. hudsonsocial.com

"Mamma Mia"

HASTINGS

7 p.m. / \$10, \$5 for students and seniors.

Hastings High School, 1 Mount Hope Blvd. The musical featuring ABBA's hits is presented by the Hastings Drama Club. Also 7 p.m. April 4 and 1 p.m. April 5. hastingstheatre.com

The Jazz Jam: Open Jam Session

HASTINGS

7-10 p.m. / \$5 to play, \$10 to listen. The Good Witch Coffee Bar, 134 Southside Ave. DestinationHastings.org

Comedy in One Act: "No Substitutes"

TARRYTOWN

7 p.m. / Free. Tarrytown Music Hall, 13 Main St. Features The Music Hall Academy's middle school student performers. Also Sunday, April 6, 11 a.m. tarrytownmusic hall.org

FRI
4

Annual Heritage Night

ARDSLEY

6-9 p.m. / Free. Ardsley High School, 300 Farm Road. Celebrate different traditions, values, and cultures with food, activities, and performances. ardsleyschools.org

Fosse Workshop

HASTINGS

6-7:15 p.m. / \$30. Amanda Kupillas Dance, 44 Main St. Broadway's Stephane Duret teaches some of the repertoire from "Chicago" and other shows choreographed by Bob Fosse. Register online. amandakupillas.com

Lunch & Learn: How to Connect with Your Target Audience on Social Media

DOBBS FERRY

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. / \$29.99, \$22.99 for members. HudCo, 145 Palisade St., Suite 200. Led by Lelia Jimenez, owner of Lelia Kaye Consulting. Purchase tickets at hudco.eventbrite.com.

Late Night Fridays with DJ Serg

DOBBS FERRY

9 p.m.-1 a.m. / Free admission and parking. Hudson Social, 11 Station Plaza. hudsonsocial.com

The ReelAbilities Film Festival

TARRYTOWN

6-8 p.m. / \$5-\$8. Shames JCC, 371 S. Broadway. Showcase of cinema by and about people with disabilities. Also April 6, 2:30 p.m. Purchase tickets online. shamesjcc.org

The Magnetic Fields

TARRYTOWN

8 p.m. / \$54-\$74. Tarrytown Music Hall, 13 Main St. The band plays their 69 love songs. Also on April 5. tarrytownmusic hall.org

Live Jazz: Salute to Freddie Hubbard and Cannonball Adderly

TARRYTOWN

7 and 9:30 p.m. / \$35, \$30 for students. Jazz Forum Club, 1 Dixon Lane. Also on April 5. jazzforumarts.org

Cell phone panel

Continued from page 7

Julie Civala said that as a member of Head-sUp Rivertowns, she's talked to parents who shared stories of students watching Netflix on their phones in class and filming TikTok videos in the bathroom.

"Developing educational models takes time and I do not believe that we have time," said Civala, who has two children in Springhurst Elementary School, and one in Dobbs Ferry Middle School. "I know that teachers and administrators have said they walk around and everything looks good and there is the occasional infraction. That is not what the parents are seeing."


Slentz acknowledged that in the middle school, administrators temporarily confiscate phones from students caught using them in between or during classes, but have a three-strike rule before disciplining students further. The superintendent also explained that while Hochul's proposal would set aside \$13.5 million for all schools to share in purchasing smartphone storage, the local school districts would be on their own.

"Every one of the Rivertowns districts in the eyes of New York State is considered wealthy — we won't get that money, so that has to come from us," Slentz said. "We're going to spend x number of thousands of dollars to store cellphones and that means we're giving up on something else."

The deadline for legislators to decide on the executive budget proposal, including the proposed ban, is April 1.

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ARK

Lockdown drills

Continued from page 10

“It’s important to start answering the efficacy question,” acknowledged Heinze, a member of an expert committee created by the United States Department of Education and the National Academies of Sciences to probe the effectiveness issue. The panel is scheduled to release a report this summer.

Efforts to address the question to date appear to offer contrasting results. A few studies

found evidence that lockdown drills, through repetition, may make students better at taking the steps that might keep them safer during a real-life shooter event.

A 2023 study published in the Journal of School Violence suggests that practicing lockdown drills can improve readiness. It found that over a four-year period, there was improvement in how well classrooms perform in a lockdown, which includes turning off lights, remaining out of sight from potential intruders, and not opening the door. The study also found that schools that

went through a shooter incident and implemented lockdown policies had 59% fewer casualties.

“Among multiple possible harm-reduction strategies,” the report concluded, “lockdowns were the most consistent and significant protective factor in reducing casualties.”

But other studies have been less positive. One, published in the Journal of Adolescent Health in 2020, found that over 60% of youth participants in the research reported feeling “unsafe, scared, helpless, or sad” after a lockdown drill.

Pauline Moore, the lead researcher on a 2023

RAND Corporation study of lockdown drills, told Education Week that the drills are “not really making [teachers] feel more prepared or safer to the extent that we might hope, given their frequency and their ubiquity at schools across the country.”

According to Caraballo, much of the Hastings School District’s efforts aim to avert campus gun violence by boosting mental health resources and stationing security guards at entrances.

Caraballo asked, “How do we prevent tragedies, rather than react to them?”

Ardley Cares Day

Continued from page 1

ley’s stormwater management program attended the event at the high school. The fire department provided the volunteers with a pancake breakfast, while the other two hosted outreach tables.

Stormwater Management’s Lorraine Kuhn shared information on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s clean water program. ASVAC volunteers offered items to make a first aid kit, as well as demonstrations of CPR and “Stop the Bleed” techniques, as ASVAC First Lt. Nisha Nambiar explained.

“This event is a good way to connect with the community. We get to see folks from all ages, from little kids to adults,” she said. “It’s a good way for us to showcase CPR skills, and... educate little kids and parents, if there is a bleed, you have a cut somewhere, how do you stop that? As a child, if you are alone, what do you do? If it is a large laceration, how do you stop it until help arrives?”

According to volunteers, such as AHS freshman Clara Finkelstein, the collaborative effort to



Jennifer Brown and her 7-year-old son, Maxwell, prepare dog biscuits for the Yonkers Animal Shelter.

see and meet need was a success.

“It’s about the outreach, taking time to help others,” she said. “We could be spending our Saturday sleeping in, watching TV at home, but people are coming here for a good cause.”

PTSA co-president Iyer believes Ardsley Cares Day represents the village at its best.

“Ardsley as a community has always been fantastic about supporting initiatives like this,” she said. “The goal is to spread the word.”

Police

Continued from page 2

Clinton Avenue in Irvington.

Suspended registration: A 37-year-old Yonkers resident was arrested for a suspended vehicle registration, a misdemeanor, on Broadway on the evening of Saturday, March 22.

IRVINGTON

Mischief arrest: A 27-year-old pedestrian from Yonkers was arrested for damaging the driver’s side of a 2014 Audi Q5 during a dispute with a motorist on Hudson Road West at the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail on the afternoon of Saturday, March 22. He was charged with criminal mischief in the third degree, a felony.

Hudson burglary: An unoccupied home on Hudson Avenue was entered between Wednesday, March 5, and Sunday, March 23. Nothing was stolen.



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Sports

EDITED BY ROB DIANTONIO

Ardsley defeats Wantagh to secure state title

BY ROB DIANTONIO

Ardsley coach Nick Resavy sensed he had something special on his hands when he started coaching the current group of Panthers when they were in elementary school, playing travel basketball.

Special enough to win a state championship?

"I knew when they were in fourth and fifth grade that I was taking the job because this team could do it," Resavy said.

Ardsley captured the Class A state championship with a 39-28 win over Section 8's Wantagh on March 22 at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy.

"I envisioned this since I was a little kid," senior Joie Levy said. "Ever since we won the section, I knew we were going to win states too. This means the world to me. It's the best feeling I've ever felt in my life."

It was the second girls' team state championship in Ardsley history; the first was in 2019 when the softball team won states. Ardsley's baseball team has four state championships, making the girls' title win the sixth overall for the Panthers.

"It meant everything to me to win the state title," senior Iva Corluka said. "It was the last goal I needed to reach to complete what I wanted my high school career to be. I've been thinking about winning states for years and for it to finally happen is such an unreal feeling."

Co-captains Corluka and Levy led the way with 15 and 10 points, respectively. Corluka added nine rebounds and three blocks. Levy tallied eight rebounds and three steals. Junior starters Madison Bortstein (eight points), Dylan Paley (three points, five rebounds, two steals), and Leah Burriss (three points) contributed to the win.

"We're a team," Resavy said. "We do it together. The biggest thing for our team is that we don't care about individual stats. We care about each other and celebrate each other's successes more than our own."

The Panthers led 16-14 at halftime but opened up a lead in the second half. Levy drained a three-pointer, sending the Ardsley crowd into a frenzy and giving the Panthers a 20-17 lead with 4:55 left in the third quarter. Levy passed ahead to Corluka, who converted a three-point play to stretch the lead to six points. A Bortstein drive and finish capped off a 9-0 run to put the Panthers up 26-17 heading into the final quarter.

Corluka finished at the rim and Bortstein nailed a three from the right wing to put Ardsley up 31-21 with 4:15 to play. Corluka hit two free throws and scored inside to stretch the lead to 35-23 with just under 3 minutes left to seal the victory.

Following a 50-32 road loss to Hendrick
Continued on page 18



(Above) Ardsley celebrates winning the Class A state title moments after the final buzzer. (Below left) Ardsley's Morgan Macri, Ava Santavicca, Elise O'Brien, and Lily Tiernan cheer during the state final. (Below right) Ardsley senior Iva Corluka battles for a loose ball in the state final. Photos by Rob DiAntonio.



State champs

Continued from page 17

Hudson back on Feb. 7, Ardsley was on a mission. The Panthers won 10-straight games on their way to a state title and finished the season 24-3.

Resavy capped off his sixth season as head coach, and the team has a 90-34 overall record under the former Syracuse University walk-on. Prior to this season, Ardsley had not made it past the section semifinals under Resavy, but the pieces all fell into place during the 2024-25 campaign.

"We're a family," Resavy said. "The girls did it for each other and they bought in. If you care about the girl to your left and right, you'll be willing to do anything. These girls love each other and I love them. That's why we were able to win this."

Asked how they became a team capable of claiming a state title, Corluka said the team "worked extremely hard to get to this level."

"Every day at practice we would push each other to improve," she added. "We knew that we had to be at our best performance to win, so every practice was set to be more difficult than the game would ever be. Every day we worked on our skills, conditioning, and team chemistry."

Panthers top Williamsville in semis

To reach the championship game, Ardsley defeated Section 6's Williamsville South 47-35 in the Class A state semifinals on March 21 at HVCC.

Corluka sparked the Panthers with 24 points and 12 rebounds. Burriss, who received the sportsmanship award after the game, added 10 points and nine rebounds. Levy had nine points and six rebounds. Bortstein tallied four points, four assists, and five rebounds.

Ardsley led just 21-19 at halftime but extended the lead in the third quarter. Corluka scored the first four points of the quarter. Burriss made two free throws, Levy went coast-to-coast for a basket, and Corluka sank two free throws as the Panthers started the quarter on a 10-2 run to build a 31-21 lead.

A Burriss jumper gave Ardsley a 35-25 edge heading into the final quarter.

Williamsville South cut the deficit to 35-30 with 5:36 left, but Corluka scored six straight points to give the Panthers a 41-30 lead.

Corluka fouled out with just under 3 minutes to play, but her teammates did not panic. Ardsley went six-of-eight from the free-throw line down the stretch to seal the victory.

"I was confident in my team," Corluka said. "I saw it in their eyes that we were determined to win. I knew it wasn't an issue that I had five fouls."

Burriss gave credit to junior Lily Tiernan for providing key minutes after Corluka was sidelined.

"Lily is an incredibly capable player and a great defender," she said. "She's a crucial part of this team. She came in, defended well, and did her thing. I think that helped us finish out the game. Everyone just continued to play hard and we didn't get down at all."

Defense wins championships

Through seven sectional and state playoff games, Ardsley allowed just 32.3 points per



(Above) Madison Bortstein looks to put up a floater in the state semifinals. (Below left) Leah Burriss eyes the basket in the state final. (Below right) Joie Levy shoots in the paint in the state semis. Photos by Rob DiAntonio.



game and never allowed more than 40 points in a game.

"We started this journey built on defense," Resavy said. "I've got three words as a coach: defense, energy, and communication. [The team] took it to heart. We worked on it for a very long time and they mastered it."

"It always starts with D," Burriss confirmed. "We held Johnson City to 20 points [in the regional final on March 16]. That was a great feeling for us. Defense is our pride and leads to our offense."

"Defense comes first, then offense," Levy chimed in. "It means a lot that we kept these teams down to such low points."

Corluka added that they "play defense with intensity every game" and "make sure we're on the shooters and that we're switching correctly."

Ardsley also cut down on its turnovers during the postseason. Over their final five games, the Panthers committed 9.2 turnovers per game while forcing opponents into 16.2 turnovers.

Senior salute

Senior co-captains Corluka and Levy played

a pivotal role in the championship. Both were named all-section players this season.

"I've coached them forever," Resavy said. "How they've developed as players is incredible, but the way they've developed as people and leaders is even better."

Corluka, who was always a strong rebounder and defender, developed into a dominant scorer this season. The 6-foot-1 forward averaged 16.7 points and 12.2 rebounds per game and had 19 double-doubles. In the Panthers' four state playoff games and the section final, Corluka averaged 22.2 points, 14.4 rebounds, and shot 75.8% from the foul line. Ending her high school career with 884 points and 885 rebounds, she has committed to St. Bonaventure University.

Levy, who stands at 5-4, is often one of the smallest players on the court but plays with the biggest heart and a motor that never stops. She averaged 6.9 points, 6.3 rebounds, and 1.5 steals this campaign. In their final five games she averaged 9.4 points, 5.4 rebounds, 2.4 steals, three assists, and shot 74.1% from the line.

Bortstein and Paley were named all-conference, with Corluka, Levy, Bortstein, Pa-



ley, and Burriss receiving all-league honors.

A community behind them

From a spirited sendoff at the high school to welcoming back the state champs on the morning of March 23, the Ardsley community has been behind the Panthers each step of the way.

"It feels so great to be supported," Burriss said. "It's also just very powerful in general. It empowers us to do our best. Not just for ourselves, but for the community."

Corluka said that "it's like history," adding, "It's just great that we have all of this support from our town."

And they are a team that will be long remembered at Ardsley.

"We'll be known as champions for the rest of our lives," Levy said. "These are my sisters for life. I'll be calling them every day when I'm 60 years old."

The 2024-25 Ardsley state championship roster: Iva Corluka, Joie Levy, Madison Bortstein, Leah Burriss, Dylan Paley, Lily Tiernan, Ava Santavica, Whitney Butler, Elise O'Brien, Teagan Kenny, Mia Stanton, and Morgan Macri. Coached by head coach Nick Resavy and assistant coach Danielle Scaperrotta.

Ramponi left his mark as athletic director at Ardsley

BY ROB DIANTONIO

When Mike Ramponi started as Ardsley's director of athletics in 2016, the program had some success in recent years but was not exactly considered a powerhouse.

Ramponi helped elevate the Panthers' athletic program, taking it to the next level. Championships started to pile up under Ramponi, including state titles.

His final day at Ardsley was March 14; he started his new job as Eastchester's director of athletics on March 17.

"Honestly, leaving Ardsley was definitely the hardest decision I've ever had to make," Ramponi, 45, said.

Ramponi said Eastchester had posted the director of athletics position and he inquired about it. But at the time he "wasn't really thinking about leaving Ardsley."

"After talking through it with the admin team at Eastchester, committee members, board of education members, and booster club, I just started to get a little more interested in what they were looking to do," Ramponi said. "It was a different opportunity, and I started to get more excited about it. 'The hard part,' he added, 'was all the relationships I've built at Ardsley — [that] really was the only thing holding me back. But I felt like this was an opportunity that I couldn't turn down. It's kind of like the third chapter in my career.'"

He continued, "Sometimes change is good and sometimes change is just change. I felt it was good timing for myself and the Eastchester community."

Ardsley hired an interim director of athletics, Stewart Hanson, who began on March 17 and will serve the district until June 30. Hanson has 40 years of experience in athletics administration and has had full-time roles at Harrison, Lakeland, and Middletown as athletic director. He has also had interim roles at Pearl River, Irvington, Blind Brook, and Eastchester.

The search for a permanent athletic director is in progress, with the goal of having a new AD by July 1.

"While we are sad to see Mike go, we are happy for him and grateful for his many positive contributions to our district," Ardsley Superintendent Matt Block wrote in a press release. "His leadership has made a lasting impact and we wish him nothing but success in this new opportunity."

He continued, "We are committed to spending whatever time is needed this spring to find a highly qualified and impactful professional who will lead Ardsley's athletic programs into the future."

A small school powerhouse

During Ramponi's tenure, the Ardsley athletic program captured several championships.

The varsity softball team won states in 2019 and brought home two Section 1 titles under coach Noreen Degnan. Ardsley's football squad, guided by coach Dan DiFalco, won three Section 1 titles, with the most recent title coming this past season. The



Ardsley Athletic Director Mike Ramponi with varsity girls' basketball coach Nick Resavy before a regular-season game in February. Ramponi started his new position as Eastchester AD on March 17. Photo by George Corluka.

Panthers' boys' basketball squad, coached by Sean Cappiello, won its first-ever Section 1 title in dramatic fashion on a 70-foot heave at the buzzer from Julian McGarvey. Ardsley won two Section 1 titles in volleyball, including a state finals appearance under Dave Ponterio.

Ardsley also captured a number of Section 1 titles in fencing and individual Section 1 crowns in wrestling and track and field under Ramponi's watch.

And this month, Ardsley won its first girls' basketball Section 1 title when it defeated Pelham 54-36 on March 8. The Panthers, who are coached by Nick Resavy, also went on to win the Class A state championship on March 22, just five days after Ramponi's departure.

"They had a solid foundation when I started there nine years ago," Ramponi said of the athletic program. "It was just getting the right coaches in front of the kids. We kind of all have the same message that we're going to prepare to try and win. That doesn't mean that you're going to win but the key is definitely in the coaching. If you have good coaches, you're going to have good results."

He added, "Once you get a staff that's dedicated, committed, and we're all kind of giving the kids the same message throughout the year, I think that's what leads to success. We're lucky. We had great athletes, a lot of

community support, and the coaches did a heck of a job."

Prior to Ardsley, Ramponi, a 1997 Tappan Zee graduate, worked in the Nyack School District. He was a physical education teacher at Valley Cottage Elementary School and coached the varsity football team for five seasons and was an assistant for nine. He also coached girls' and boys' varsity basketball.

High praise for Ramponi

Degnan, Ardsley's softball coach, said Ramponi was "the best athletic director" that she "ever had the pleasure to work with."

"He is a great communicator who elevated the student-athlete experience at Ardsley," Degnan said. "During his time at Ardsley he created a positive experience for the student-athlete, which brought the community together. All the coaches respected him and he always supported them. He always had all his coaches' backs and showed up to every game or match. He was able to diffuse situations and was a strong, positive leader. He instilled a winning attitude in his nine years being here."

Cappiello, who coaches boys' basketball at Ardsley, said Ramponi "was the perfect complement to what many of the coaches had started building here as part of the ath-

letic turnaround over the past 10-15 years."

"Although Mike isn't without his flaws, over his tenure it can be argued that Ardsley has been the most successful small school in Section 1 athletics over that time," Cappiello said. "What Mike brought was a sense of community, passion, and competitiveness."

"He was unafraid to compete with anyone in the section and he challenged the programs here to do the same," Cappiello noted. "He was also supremely loyal and supportive of his coaches, especially the ones who demonstrated his same willingness to compete."

Cappiello said that Ardsley's athletic program has had "many challenges over the past decade, but has been free of any major scandal or negative situation."

"That speaks to Mike's commitment to not only competing, but doing so in the proper way: with the attitude that when you wear an Ardsley jersey you are supposed to represent the community of Ardsley in the most positive light," he said. "His commitment to winning and competitive spirit will be missed."

Ramponi said he will miss the students, the coaches, and community members at Ardsley.

"We just had a ton of support and I made so many friends," Ramponi said. "The kids were always great. We never really had issues with discipline and stuff like that. They all support each other. A lot of the coaches that are there are very good friends of mine. I'm going to miss the people."

Final weekend with the Panthers

Coming off a four-win season in girls' basketball, Ramponi brought in Resavy, a walk-on for Syracuse University's men's basketball team and former assistant coach with the Brooklyn Nets, in 2019. The team turned in numerous winning seasons, culminating in a state title at the end of Ramponi's tenure.

"It's a big loss for us," Resavy said of Ramponi's departure, minutes after winning a state title. "He's a great friend of mine and he brought me in, obviously. Ardsley's won a lot of championships with him at the helm. We're going to miss him a lot."

Ramponi said he knew Resavy would bring the program to a championship level but also teach the team "how to prepare every day." He added that he was in attendance for Ardsley's girls' state championship win in Troy last weekend "as a fan."

"It meant a lot and I was emotional, for sure," Ramponi said of witnessing the girls win states. "I was emotional for a lot of reasons because I knew my time at Ardsley had come to an end. I was emotional because Nick's become a good friend of mine. But I also know I played a small role in getting Nick over there to lead the program. I knew he was the right guy for the job at the time and it's validating to know as an athletic director that you know that certain people are going to be successful. And those girls, with the combination of Nick, were just perfect."



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