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NEWS

No Regents

NYSED is preparing for an end-of-year without Regents Exams.

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Student poet

BC senior earns a spot in state poetry contest.

Story on Page 3



New on the force

Bethlehem police welcomes aboard two new officers.

Story on Page 4



TOP STORY

NIMBY — for now

Developer awaits reversal of court's decision halting Costco, apartment complex

By **MICHAEL HALLISEY**

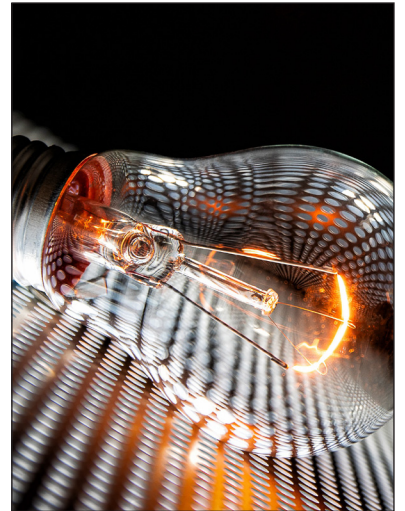
halliseym@spotlightnews.com

GUILDERLAND — Pyramid Management Group broke ground on one project as another is mired in litigation; all of which is a part of a long-term plan to introduce a “live/work/play” destination for its portfolio of shopping centers.

Pyramid, describing itself as “one of the largest private real estate developers in the Northeast” in a recent press release, broke ground on a 282-unit residential development in Kingston, Massachusetts. The project falls adjacent to the Kingston Collection, a mixed-use complex it owns and manages. When completed, the new residential complex is anticipated to bring market-rate rental housing units to the area, while bringing a flood of foot traffic to its shopping mall.

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THE SPOT 518



Keeping the lights on

RPI develops simulator that can prevent what happened in Texas.

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SPORTS



Wrestling is here

Wrestling season began in the Suburban Council last week.

Story on Page 9



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From page 1 ... NIMBY — for now

Pyramid said it plans to replicate the strategy throughout its property portfolio as the popularity of “live/work/play” destinations continues to increase among the U.S. population, and especially within the Millennial and Empty Nester demographics. It follows a similar diversification strategy that brought the addition of hospitality to its Destiny USA flagship property in Syracuse, New York, and Crossgates Mall in Albany.

“The development of a residential complex at our Kingston Collection is really just the beginning of a much broader, portfolio-wide diversification strategy to bring popular, exciting new uses, such as residential, into the mix with our existing assets. We are pleased to be moving forward with other residential projects across our portfolio,” said Stephen J. Congel, CEO of Pyramid Management Group. “Staying ahead of the curve is the key to our success and

resilience as a company.”

Data from the International Council of Shopping Centers confirms that retail destinations located near densely-populated residential buildings tend to benefit from higher levels of foot traffic and sales per square foot. Industry analysts also expect that the addition of new residential developments to existing retail destinations such as open-air, enclosed and strip malls will increase over the next few years.

Crossgates

Pyramid had set the plan in motion locally several years ago, and up until recently, it appeared to be under way. After garnering support from the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, welcoming additional business to the area, Town Hall approved plans for a 160,000-square-foot Costco retail store and an accompanying 222-unit apartment complex spread over five buildings along Rapp Road.



A rendering of Pyramid's upcoming Kingston Collection 282-unit residential property in Massachusetts is an example of what the development group plans throughout its portfolio of malls, including Crossgates Mall. Local opponents contend that will threaten both the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and Rapp Road Community Historic District.

Left: Pyramid Management Group
Bottom: Spotlight file photo

Those plans, however, were thwarted after a group of residents successfully sued in state Supreme Court last November. The court's decision by Judge Peter Lynch, criticized Pyramid for first hiding plans to build a Costco, and found problems with the town's Planning Board and how it assessed the project under the state Environmental Quality Review Act.

Opponents to Pyramid's proposal said the mixed-use property would bring increased traffic, threatening the nearby Albany Pine Bush Preserve



and Rapp Road Historic District.

The origins of the Rapp Road Historic District traces back to the early 1930s, during the Great Migration, to escape racial segregation, the Jim Crow laws. It is the only one of its kind in Albany.

Both the town and Pyramid have submitted rebuttals to the November ruling. The town states the project's proposed location is suitable under the town's comprehensive plan. Both seek to have the decision reversed.

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EDUCATION

State Ed seeks waivers on testing

Albany, teachers both balk at Washington's mandate requiring standardized tests this academic year

By MICHAEL HALLISEY
halliseym@spotlightnews.com

ALBANY — The U.S. Department of Education said it wants states to administer standardized tests to students, and New York is seeking ways to get out of doing that.

In a Feb. 22 letter to state school officials, acting Assistant Education Secretary Ian Rosenblum wrote that the Biden administration will not consider "blanket waivers of assessments" this year. President Joe Biden previously said he wants to see students return to classrooms so a comprehensive assessment can be done to quantify the pandemic's effects on education.

"We must ... specifically be prepared to address the educational inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, including by using student learning

"While we are disappointed by this decision, we are examining all possible options. Further, USDE made the right call in affirming that no child should be made to come to school to take a state assessment. In addition, USDE agreed to uncouple state assessments from ESSA accountability requirements so that results solely will be used as a measure of student learning."

— Betty A. Rosa,
New York State
Education
Commissioner

data to enable states, school districts, and schools to target resources and supports to the students with the greatest needs," Rosenblum stated.

Standardized testing, including state Regent exams, have been on hold since last March. Schools

across the state have slowly progressed since going fully remote at the end of the previous school year. After a mandate from Gov. Andrew Cuomo, school districts presented plans to safely reopen classrooms just prior to the start of the current academic year. In those plans, districts provided a hybrid solution for parents still wary of sending their children back to school.

Federal law requires each state to facilitate standardized tests in

reading, math and other subjects between third and eighth grades, and once again in high school. Results from those exams trickle down to assessing districts and individual teaching to apply improvement measures.

Classrooms in the 2020-21 academic year have been all but standard, argues educators.

"In a year that has been anything but standard, mandating that students take standardized tests just

doesn't make sense," shared New York State United Teachers President Andy Pallotta in an emailed statement on Tuesday, Feb. 23. "As the educators in the classroom, we have always known that standardized tests are not the best way to measure a child's development, and they are especially unreliable right now. We need to ensure that our students who have been hit hardest during the pandemic receive the support they need.

Sizing up students with inequitable and stressful exams is not the solution."

NYSUT previously encouraged the state to request a federal waiver of grades 3-8 and high school testing requirements. Thousands of comments were submitted to the state by educators demanding a waiver of testing requirements this year.

The federal mandate was issued less than two

Continues on 12

BC senior earns spot in poetry contest

Ask most people and they might say poetry is having a moment. The inspirational poems written and recited by Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman at the presidential inauguration in January and at this month's Super Bowl have garnered well-deserved attention and new fans of what feels like a fresh take on an old literary genre.

But if you were to ask Nya Santeliz, a Bethlehem senior who has just earned a place at this year's New York State Poetry Out Loud Recitation Contest, she might say that everyone else is just late to the party.

That's because Nya caught the poetry bug early.

"When I was younger I used to read Shel Silverstein all the time," said Santeliz. "When I was in sixth grade, my English teacher, Mr. Helm, had us recite poems in front of the class. From there, my love for poetry deepened after reading old poetry books I had around

my house and I started reading a lot of classic poetry."

When she got to high school, Santeliz says, she was introduced to Poetry Out Loud by English teacher Alicia Sharp. She participated that year and every year since.

On March 13, she will take her skills to the statewide competition after being named first runner-up at the Capital District Poetry Out Loud contest held last weekend.

Poetry Out Loud encourages students to develop an appreciation of poetry and learn more about poets and their works through memorization and recitation. The program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literary history and contemporary life.

Continues on Page 12

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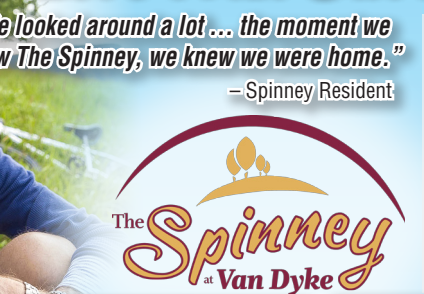

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TOWN GOVERNMENT



Cameron C. Apple and Corey J. Watts stand together as Bethlehem Police Department's newest police officers. The appointment of a third officer was approved but is still pending upon the results of an agility test.

Bethlehem Police Department

New hires for BPD

Board unanimously approves appointment of three police officers

By **MICHAEL HALLISEY**
halliseym@spotlightnews.com

DELMAR — Amid recent scrutiny over the topic of appointing new hires, the Town Board unanimously accepted Bethlehem Police Chief Gina Cocchiara's recommendation for three new police officers.

The board accepted appointments of Cameron C. Apple, Corey J. Watts and Alexander Hazelton as the police agency's three newest patrol officers on Wednesday, Feb. 24. They each join a squad hampered by recent retirements that have depleted the staff from 40 officers last year to just 34.

The drop is significant enough to concern local lawmakers over the prospect of overtime and mandatory double shifts to ensure its police department can cover the town's nearly 50 square miles.

"This is too few patrol officers to cover all shifts at all times in all days," said Town Supervisor David VanLuvan.

Three weeks ago, Town Board Members Maureen Cunningham and Joyce Becker each voiced separate concerns regarding hiring. Where Becker suggested a comprehensive look at staffing needs, Cunningham said she felt hiring new officers could conflict with budgetary suggestions being made in the upcoming Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan.

"Although we have not yet completed the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan, we feel it is imperative to move forward with the three police hires that we have on the docket tonight," VanLuvan said prior to the board's vote.

Cunningham's stance was specifically targeted by one resident who spoke during the board's public comment section to

"I am in agreement that these hires are necessary to fill a void and to avoid paying overtime right now. And, I think it's the right thing to move forward. I will say I also looked at the resumes and I really enjoyed looking through the background materials. . . . I'm happy to move forward with this."

— Maureen Cunningham,
Town Board Member

open the meeting. He described her point as nothing more than a political move. Prior to the board's consideration of the three hires, she explained herself.

"I am in agreement that these hires are necessary to fill a void and to avoid paying overtime right now," she said. The board member's concerns were quelled after speaking with both VanLuvan and Cocchiara. "And, I think it's the right thing to move forward. I will say I also looked at the resumes and I really enjoyed looking through the background materials. . . . I'm happy to move forward with this."

With three positions remaining, and anticipated retirements, VanLuvan said that, "these three hires will not limit the department's ability to move forward with recommendations from the final Police Reform and Collaborative Plan."

Both Apple and Watts join the agency having previously served with the Albany County Sheriff's Department. Hazelton was expected to join the force, contingent on a physical, after serving as a part-time patrol officer for the Town of Coeymans' Police Department.

"I thank the board for your understanding and support for our police department," Cocchiara said, afterwards.

Each new officer is to be hired effective March 1 at an annual salary of \$56,439.

■ TOWN GOVERNMENT

Entry level hire gets through board

Proposal involving domestic partner of Republican board member is revised before 3-0 vote

By **MICHAEL HALLISEY**
halliseym@spotlightnews.com

DELMAR — Joyce Becker wanted a comprehensive look at the town's employment structure before she voted on the appointment of an entry-level hire three weeks ago. Last week, she received a revised proposal for the same appointment.

It was enough to change the town board member's mind as the board passed the appointment by a 3-0 vote on Wednesday, Feb. 24.

Three weeks ago, the town board was in the unusual position of a stalemate over the appointment of Katelyn Berger as a personnel assistant within the town's human resources department. It just so happens Berger is the domestic partner of Town Board Member Jim Foster, its lone Republican.

Becker, a Democrat, had said her issue over the appointment was not over the candidate's relationship with Foster. She initially raised concerns because she thought the town was under a hiring freeze. When the human resources department informed her that approved positions were still permitted to be filled, she nonetheless abstained after suggesting the town reassess staffing needs.

Berger's appointment was added to the agenda again, immediately following the appointment of three officers to the town's police department. Each was accepted unanimously. Berger's appointment however had been modified since it was first presented.

Instead of solely working under the human resource's department, she would split time in a hybrid position under the comptroller's supervision and shared with

human resources. Becker praised the solution as "forward thinking" before announcing she would vote yes.

"I refer to this position as a first in a robust, in-nature, change in future planning. In other words, a strong and healthier approach to filling the needs in the event of retirement or illnesses of employees in either of the mentioned departments," Becker said.

Becker's vote proved to be the linchpin securing approval of Berger's appointment. It came to be from a suggestion by Town Comptroller Michael Cohen.

"After the last meeting, it was evident that members of the town board were interested in reevaluating the organizational structure of town administration," Cohen stated in his memo to the board. "The hybrid position would enable

cross training between the two departments' responsibilities, notably accounts payable, cash receipts, payroll, and benefits administration. This cross-training would make the two departments more resilient and robust and will enable us to make an effective decision on staffing at budget time."

The revised proposal chipped enough away from the previous stalemate created by three abstentions.

Foster continued to recuse himself based on his relationship with Berger. Without further explanation, Cunningham continued to abstain. She had previously expressed varying concerns ranging from nepotism to security. She said she worried over having someone related to a board member having access to sensitive employee information.

Berger's position

will fall under the town comptroller's supervision. Her workspace, however, will be in the human resources department.

Bethlehem IDA wants you

DELMAR — The Bethlehem Town Board will consider candidates for appointment to the Bethlehem Industrial Development Agency board.

The IDA is an independent agency authorized under state law, and its board members serve without compensation and at the pleasure of the Town Board.

Candidates must be Town residents and should have or develop general knowledge of Bethlehem's development patterns and economic development goals. General qualifications would include personal and professional integrity,

good independent business judgement, demonstrated commitment to the community, and relevant experience and skills which will enable the agency to carry out its mission of enhancing economic development.

Further information on the Bethlehem IDA is available on their web site

<http://www.bethlehemida.com/>. Information on the Comprehensive Plan is available on the Town website.

Please email cover letter and resume to Robin Nagengast, Town Supervisor's Office at: RNagengast@townofbethlehem.org.

Town GOP names candidates

DELMAR — The Bethlehem Republican Committee announced on Monday, March 1 that it will have five names on the ballot for November.

Paul Heiser heads the Republican slate as the party's town supervisor candidate. He is joined by incumbent Jim Foster and returning challenger Jim Carriero, who both seek a seat on the town board.

Tiger Anastasi, who last ran for town highway superintendent as a member of the Independence Party, now runs as a member of the Republican Party.

Colin Dwyer will again run for town justice.

The announcement assures Nanci Moquin will not see her bid contested by local Republicans as she seeks her seventh term as town clerk.

— Michael Hallisey

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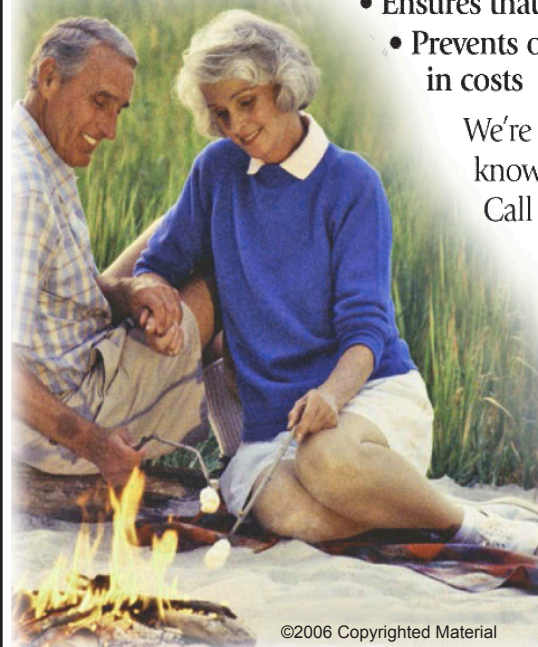
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SCHOLASTIC SPORTS

Wrestling season kicks off

LATHAM — Wrestlers from Shaker and Guilderland squared off for the first time during this abbreviated winter sports season on Tuesday, Feb. 23.

There was not a team score kept, and most wrestlers, JV and varsity, got two chances to compete during the 19 matches.

Shaker High had a pretty slick operation going to prevent the spread of COVID. There were two mats set up in the big gym down the hall from where wrestling usually competes.

After one match,

students would spray the mat down with COVID-killing bug juice while the coaches and ref moved to the other mat. By the time competition finished on one mat was finished, the other mat was disinfected and ready for wrestlers.

There is no regional or state matches this year but a number of schools in the Suburban Council are wrestling amongst themselves with the hopes of having a conference championship of some sort at the end of the season.

The abbreviated "high risk" winter athletic season

will run through March 13. Fall II, for sports that were not allowed to play in the fall of 2020, will run from March 7 to May 1. The spring season is slated for May 3 to June 25.

The results from Tuesday's match are:

126: Caleb Juman (S) over White Myles (G): 6-3

126: Sameer Abbaszadeh over White Miles (G): pin

138: Brian Rezek (S) over Ethan White (G): 16-1

145: Zac Hagen (G) over Antonio Rezek (S): pin



145: Vincenzo Federici (S) over Aniella Kennedy (G): pin

145: Daniel Ralston (G) over Thomas Kita (S): pin

152: Konnor Dott (G) over Thomas Kita (S): 4-3

172: Ahmad Sameer (S) over Andrew Daigler (G): pin

172: Yohan Garcia (S) over Kenny DeGrocco (G): pin

172: Yohan Garcia (S) over Danny Gibney (G): pin

172: Dillon Blanchard (G) over Ahmad Sameer (S): 8-1

189: Tobias Wasserman (S) over Aidan McCarthy (G): pin

189: Jack Hladio (G) over Tobias Wasserman

(S): pin
285: Zack Harrison (G) over A'Dante Bianchiano (S): 8-1

285: Antonio Cipollo (G) over Mahab Ashad (S): pin

285: Rocco Szemplinski (S) over Jack Hall (G): 4-0

285: Ahmad Farzah (S) over Zack Harrison (G): pin

285: Ryan Stein (S) over Justin Lamb (G): pin

285: Rocco Szemplinski (S) over John Gagan (G): pin

Check out our website for more photos of the match.

— Jim Franco

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LIBRARIES

Grab & Go Storytime Kits at GPL

Every other Monday, we have a storytime kit available for pre-schoolers containing suggestions for books, rhymes, and songs to share together, plus one or more fun activities. These kits are distributed on a first come, first served basis. On Monday, March 8, a friendship-themed kit will be available for curbside pickup starting at 10 a.m.

Night Owls Online

Alex Trebek's autobiography, *The Answer is...Reflections on My Life*, is the subject of our next Night Owls Online book discussion group on Monday, March 8, at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome! Please register on the Events tab of our website to participate.

OTC Meds with Your Pharmacist

This virtual program on Tuesday, March 9, at 1:30, presented in conjunction with Albany Guardian Society, covers how to get the most out



of your relationship with your pharmacist. Daniel Malone, PharmD, will review common over-the-counter medications and supplements, plus guidelines on general usage. Please register on the Events tab of our website; Albany Guardian Society will email the link to all registrants in advance.

1634 Journey into Mohawk Country

Imagine trudging into the unknown winter wilderness, encountering wild animals and native people who may or may not be friendly, all while wondering about your next meal or where you might sleep. On Wednesday, March 10, at 6:30 p.m., immerse yourself in the fascinating 1634 journal of an intrepid West India Company employee who journeyed from Fort Orange (Albany) into

Central New York with two brave companions to investigate the beaver trade and negotiate with Mohawk and Oneida tribespeople. Please register on the Events tab of our website to receive the Zoom link.

Phone Number Update

Our general / reference phone number (518-285-0050), and circulation / curbside phone number (518-285-0671) will be in use through Tuesday, March 9. Beginning Wednesday, March 10, we will use our main phone number only: 518-456-2400. Please use this number to contact GPL. Any calls to other numbers will be forwarded.

Let it Grow Kit for T(w)eens

We're welcoming spring and the growing season! This kit for grades 6-12 includes materials and



directions to grow your own crystal and make seed planting paper. Please register on the Events tab of our website, then pick up your kit during curbside hours beginning Fri. March 12.

GPL wants you

The Guilderland Public Library Board of Trustees has four vacancies. For more information, please see: <https://bit.ly/GPLBoardCandidates>. Interested parties who are

U.S. citizens residing within the Guilderland School District and at least 18 years old are encouraged to email pio@guilderlandlibrary.org or call 518-456-2400, ext. 112 to obtain an information packet. All candidate nomination forms are due to the Guilderland Central School District clerk by Monday April 19 for the Tues. May 18 vote.

Tax Help

We have compiled a list of handy resources at:

Resources and programs for job seekers are available at Guilderland Public Library, including a "Power Your Job Search with Google Tools," virtual program on Thursday, March 18, at 7 p.m.

<https://bit.ly/GPLtaxes>. Federal and state tax forms and instructions are available for pick up during curbside hours inside our Normanskill Room. Please follow the signs and use the side entrance.

Printing On Demand

We can print a document up to 20 black-and-white pages or 10 color pages at no cost.

— Luanne Nicholson

Let's Talk About Fish with Cornell Cooperative

Presented by Karen Roberts Mort, of Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Library will host a virtual program on fishing in New York State. The NYS Department of Health issues fishing advisories and detailed maps. Join us at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, March 11, as we learn how to put this DOH



information to use. There may even be some healthy and delicious cooking tips.

Candy Dioramas

Students in grades 5 through 9 are invited to create a favorite book scene,

using Peeps. You can pick up a small bag of mixed candy from the Library after 11 a.m., Friday, March 19. That will get you started as you add more supplies from your own pantry. Build a backdrop from recycled cardboard, use small toys as props, and get out the art supplies to bring your book scene to life! Email us a photo of your creation to

be entered into our virtual exhibit in April.

Music and Movement

Come join Ms. Lisa's Musik, at 10 a.m., Saturday, March 13, to welcome spring with a morning of song and dance. For ages 18 months to 5 years, with parent/caregiver, please

register online to receive the Zoom link.

Take & Make

Students in grades K through 4 are invited to join Miss Lisa for a play with, and then eat, your food program. Miss Lisa will post a short video to get you going on this project, which will be available virtually

starting 11 a.m., March 15. When you're finished making your funny face food, be sure to send us a picture before you dig in!

Curbside appointments are available. Please call Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call 518-765-2791 to schedule your curbside pickup.

— Lynn Kobler

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LIBRARIES

Tools for savvy investors

This year's GameStop stock-buying surge has sparked a renewed interest in day trading, with phrases like "short sell" and "hedge fund" becoming part of our everyday conversation. If you're a would-be investor inspired to hunt for the next big thing, we've got the tools to help. For Bethlehem cardholders, investment resources like Morningstar and Value Line provide analysis and let you follow market ups and downs as you look for that profitable pattern. Find Morningstar and Value Line on our Research webpage: webapps.bethlehempubliclibrary.org/research.asp.

We also have a broad selection of digital magazines in our collection dedicated to finance and investing, including Kiplinger's Personal Finance, Forbes



and more. Check them out in OverDrive (www.bethlehempubliclibrary.org/borrow/overdrive) and see where your newfound investing savvy takes you.

We're testing a new curbside feature

Curbside service was first rolled out this summer as a way to get books and other library materials out to people while our doors are closed. Over the past few months, it's been enthusiastically embraced by those who prefer a contact-free library experience or who simply enjoy the convenience of it.

We've worked hard to make curbside pickup

as quick and efficient as possible, and we are continuing to fine-tune it as we go, adding hours and other services. We are currently testing an option that will let you text us when you arrive for curbside pickup. We're hoping this adds one more layer of convenience for our users. So if you see the "Text Us" option next time you drop by, please give it a try. If you prefer to talk to us in person, don't worry, the phone call option is still available. Your feedback and experience will help us refine the curbside process even more!

A program for parents

Parenting during a pandemic is not easy, and sometimes it can be hard to know how to respond when your child starts acting up. In a partnership with the Cornell Cooperative

Extension of Albany, the library is offering a virtual program for caregivers designed to further develop that crucial relationship between caregiver and child. Join us on Zoom Monday, March 15, at 7 p.m. for Positive Discipline Strategies for Caregivers.

This interactive research-based program will focus on positive discipline strategies – that really work – for toddlers and preschoolers. Talk about what you do when your child is behaving well, how you can control the situation (instead of the child or their emotions), reasons why your child

may be misbehaving, and what skill or value you are teaching when you correct your child's behavior.

To sign up, visit our online calendar at bethlehem.librarycalendar.com. Children are welcome at this program.

Library hours and more

No-contact curbside pickup is now available seven days a week. Staff are also available by phone and e-mail. Please email or give our Information Desk a call at information@bethpl.org or call (518) 439-9314

and we do everything we can to get your questions answered.

Curbside hours are currently

Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

Visit our website at www.bethlehempubliclibrary.org for hours of service and building updates.

— Kristen Roberts

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From page 3 ... State Ed

weeks after the New York State Education Department submitted two waiver requests to Washington. In her letter, New York State Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa cited safety as her first concern. After last week's statement, she expressed her disappointment.

"While we are disappointed by this decision, we are examining all possible options," Rosa shared in a statement. "Further, USDE made the right call in affirming that no child should be made to come to school to take a state assessment. In addition, USDE agreed to uncouple state assessments from ESSA accountability requirements so that results solely will be used as a measure of student learning."

Rosa added that NYSED will propose a series of regulatory amendments at the March Board of Regents meeting so Regents Exams would not be required to meet

graduation requirements and to cancel any Regents Exam that is not required by USDE to be held.

The USDE did show a willingness to be flexible. Within the statement was an outline to state leaders explaining feasible exceptions, including requesting waivers. In the same process the state has already initiated, states have been invited to request waivers. If granted, states won't not be required to implement and report the results of its accountability system, including calculating progress toward long-term goals and measurements of interim progress or indicators. They'd still be required to follow through with improvements, but that would be based upon previous exam results.

Rosa's request for waivers originally drew praise from NYSUT before news of the federal mandate. With the latest news, the teacher's union balked at standardized

"We have grave concerns that standardized tests at any level can be administered in any sort of equitable way. Students deserve better. Regardless of what flexibility the federal government provides, no student should be forced to come to school in person just to take a test."

— Jolene T. DiBrango,
NYSUT Executive
Vice President

exams.

"We have grave concerns that standardized tests at any level can be administered in any sort of equitable way," NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango said. "Students deserve better. Regardless of what flexibility the federal government provides, no student should be forced to come to school in person just to take a test."

From page 3 ... Student poet

Santeliz is preparing three poems for the New York State Poetry Out Loud Recitation Contest: "A Poison Tree" by William Blake, "kitchenette building" by Gwendolyn Brooks, and "Who Said It Was Simple" by Audre Lorde.

"When I was in sixth grade, my English teacher, Mr. Helm, had us recite poems in front of the class. From there, my love for poetry deepened after reading old poetry books I had around my house and I started reading a lot of classic poetry."

— Nya Santeliz,
a Bethlehem senior

The New York State Poetry Out Loud competition will be streamed online on March 13. Information about Poetry Out Loud and where to watch the statewide contest will be posted here. Winners of each state will move on to the Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest to compete for \$50,000 in prizes.

Rickert said that similar to the National Spelling Bee, the Poetry Out Loud Recitation Contest begins at the classroom level and moves to a school level, before students can advance to regional competition with the goal of making it to the state or national level.

"We wish Nya the very best as she moves forward in the competition," said Rickert.

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Hitting the slopes

Our camera's eye caught skiers of all sizes at Willard.

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■ SCIENCE

■ INSIDE



Eddie Awards

Annual awards highlighting local music is to come back.

Page B3



Spin scaries

Spin teacher wants to dispel the horrors of indoor spinning.

Page B5



Novel idea

Shaker grad releases first book, on stands now.

Page B6

Keeping the lights on



RPI has developed a simulator that can help prevent the catastrophic power grid failure that occurred in Texas

By **KAITLIN LEMBO**
lembok@spotlightnews.com

TROY — Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Design Lab has found a way to make electric substations a bit safer and more efficient.

Continues on page B4

After the crisis in Texas late last month, where much of the state's infrastructure crumbled under unprecedented snowfall, the ability to use neural networks for training workers in substations takes on a whole new realm of possibility.



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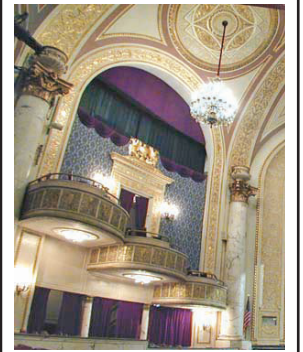
"I want children of color to understand they are valued and needed in our society. ... When people act out on you, it's a reflection of them, not you."

— E.L. Shen, author

SNOW BOUND

Still time for some cross country skiing in the Adirondacks.




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RECENTLY ANNOUNCED

Bold flavor comes to Troy

Chef Ric Orlando shares products at new marketplace

TROY — The Make It Up State Marketplace, a Sunday event featuring handmade goods and food that launched in early February, has seen steady growth in local vendors and on Sunday, February 28, started to showcase the newest chapter in local culinary celebrity Chef Ric Orlando's career.

Music and food have defined Orlando's life for over 40 years. He started playing in bands and working in kitchens in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the 80s and the parallels of the two worlds are woven consistently throughout his timeline.

"I've always said, 'Never put technique over flavor.' It has to be so delicious that you want to keep eating it. Big, aggressive, assertive punk rock flavors," Orlando says. He recalls the kitchen in a restaurant called Harvest back in the days when printing technology meant you produced signage using dot matrix printers. He laughs. "We had a giant dot matrix

banner up against the wall that read, "it's the flavor."

Adhering to this gospel, Orlando has received several accolades throughout his career. He owned the renowned, "the O.G.," as he calls it, New World Home Cooking Company in the Woodstock area for years, and it was a destination in the middle of the rural Hudson Valley for Capital Region and New York City foodies alike. He competed against celebrity chef Bobby Flay in "Beat Bobby Flay" and also won the television culinary competition show "Chopped" twice. He is also proud of winning The Albany Times Union's Reader's Choice for Best Chef—not once but five years in a row.

After parting ways in his role as chef and consultant for the Albany based New World Bistro Bar, Orlando took a month off to "do nothing." He gardened and worked on his house and pondered his next steps. "When COVID started, I went into Mr. Fix It mode," he says. He adds that owning a restaurant

in a rural setting made him nimble and good in crisis. "Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Irene, wells going out...the show must go on." He likens his restaurant experience to his music days. "If your amp goes out, you plug into the bassist's amp."

After his month of downtime, Orlando was ready to make a move. "I looked at a folder on my desktop called 'Projects,'" he says. Filled with 25 years of ideas from television treatments, to books, to products, Orlando realized that without the busyness of restaurant life, he finally had the chance to launch one of his passion projects on a much larger scale—his flavors.

In all of his years as a chef, Orlando has established signature dishes and flavor palettes. He knew it was time to share them officially to the rest of the world. "We released the Flavor Makers spice line at the end of November 2020 and the Purple Haze line in January of 2021," says Orlando. He adds "They took off."

Orlando does all of the graphic design for the labels and reminisces about the days of making flyers using exacto knives and copy machines, saying, "I always had an obsession with it."

In true maker fashion, Orlando's life's work has come full circle. The roots of his work grew as he did, and the fruition of his labor has opened up new doors after more than four decades.

In addition to offering his products at the Make It Up State Marketplace, in partnership with the Troy Waterfront Farmers Market, on Sunday, Feb. 28 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., his products can be found at ricorlando.com.

Orlando said, Make It Up State is dedicated to supporting small businesses, promoting economic development, and reviving and preserving the arts, crafts and makers movements through educational opportunities and events. When someone supports Make It Up State's initiatives they are also helping to support their mission.

Eddie Awards back May 2

Show to highlight performances, winners in 34 categories

SARATOGA SPRINGS — The second annual Capital Region Thomas Edison Music Awards – aka the Eddies Music Awards – will be broadcast live at 7 p.m. May 2 from Universal Preservation Hall in Saratoga. The event is presented by KeyBank.

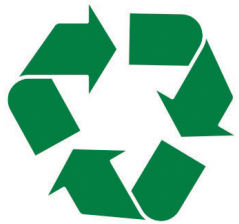
The awards show has been twice rescheduled. It was originally planned to be held in front of an audience at the Proctors MainStage last spring and then was rescheduled due to the pandemic to be broadcast in December from UPH. A surge in COVID-19 cases late in 2020 resulted in further postponement.

"The third time is the charm," said Sal Prizio, a co-producer and co-founder. "Everyone involved is excited to make this happen."

Scheduled performers and panelists will be announced in the coming weeks. "We're hoping everyone who had committed for December can return," Prizio commented.

The show is to be filmed by Chromoscope Pictures of Troy. It will be broadcast live on Collaborative Studios' Amazon Fire TV, Roku and Apple TV apps, its public access channels in Albany and Schenectady, and on YouTube and Facebook. It will be available on-demand for free after the event. Collaborative Studios and The Eddies Music Awards are initiatives of Proctors Collaborative.

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From page B1 ...

RPI

The school, which teamed up with K&A Engineering Consulting, P.C., in White Plains, completed a project where students were tasked with creating a neural network that simulates a substation in the quest to train substation workers on new techniques, emergency situations and testing.

"The idea of the project is if we can simulate equipment going into emergency overload or being damaged, a mathematical simulation such as a neural network can become the digital twin of the substation's functions and allow us to try different protocols and hopefully avoid a massive catastrophe before the accident ever happens," Manuel Pimenta, technical program manager at K&A, said.

A neural network, also known as a mathematical simulation, is "a network or circuit of neurons, or in a modern sense, an artificial neural network, composed of artificial neurons or nodes. Thus a neural network is either a biological neural network, made up of real biological neurons, or an artificial neural network, for solving artificial intelligence (AI) problems."

This type of simulator can provide useful in training for dire situations, like the one presented in Texas in late February. After a fluke snowstorm blanketed the state and affected the state's unique power grid, a total breakdown of the infrastructure took place and residents were left for days without electricity,

running water or heat. The situation escalated quickly and drastically, resulting in rolling blackouts, and by the time the state was able to reinstate power across the board, it was less than five minutes from a total blackout that would have lasted days, if not weeks.

Pimenta added the neural network simulates the substations in real time, meaning workers can simulate the breaks to each station and introduce variables for it to react to like the real station would.

"While an emergency at substations is rare, we want to keep the workforce trained for all types of scenarios so when situations present, there is a well-rehearsed solution to follow," Pimenta said.

Palmer Feinburg was one of the students in the experiment. During the 16 weeks he was working on the network, the experience provided him valuable insight into his career in engineering. He ultimately secured a spot as an intern with K&A directly.

"The interesting thing about this project was the initiative we had to take," Feinburg said. "We sent K&A an email every two weeks updating on our progress, but it was unlike many situations where you have a professor walking you through each step of the project. We had very little direction from overhead and had to follow our own theories."

This type of learning is why K&A and RPI worked so well together for the experiment. As the RPI Design Lab is running dozens of projects at any



RPI highly encourages — even mandates in most departments — that students get real-life experience in their career fields before graduation. The RPI Design Lab is one way engineering students are able to work in an open space concept, like a real lab.

RPI

given time, the real-world experience gives students both the ability and confidence to embark on their careers armed with knowledge.

"The beauty of our design lab is its open, experiential learning space where students can collaborate on projects and have the experience of working in a real lab," Kathryn Dannemann, director of RPI's Design Lab. "Our students focus on these particular topics and in time, they become the experts and are able to guide research."

While the capstone class is mandatory for engineering students, Feinburg said the experience proved valuable, as he learned a lot about neural networks and the benefits of using the technology for training and prevention.

"You don't need a ton of energy or super-advanced computers to run a neural network," Feinburg concluded. "They're faster, more effective and less expensive than a lot of simulations out there. Using this simulation will bring a significant upgrade to substations that utilize it."

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■ CULTURE

Fighting off the scaries around spin

Spin classes are not as scary as you think

By **KAITLIN LEMBO**
 lembok@spotlightnews.com

COLONIE — A spin studio can be intimidating.

You approach bikes with levers and dials that make no sense. It seems like it's going to be hard; when was the last time you rode a bike? Thoughts flood your head as you get started and you feel your quads fire up. The saddle threatens to split your sit bones, something no one told you about. Can I really sustain this for an hour, you ask yourself?

Yes, you can. Lisa Woods is sure of that.

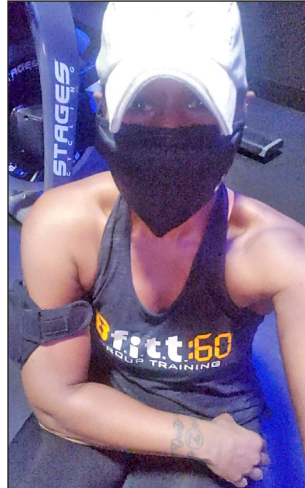
Woods is a spin teacher at Best Fitness in Westgate Plaza, right on Central Avenue. She's a wizard at her craft; her Instagram videos are small snippets

"I want people to stop listening to those stories their neighbors say... Just because your neighbor felt the saddle hurt or couldn't keep up doesn't mean anything about your ability, regardless of your fitness level."

— Lisa Woods, spin teacher

of the high-energy, low-intimidation presence she brings to her studio. While indoor spin can be hard at first, Woods knows anyone can keep up with her if they want to try their hand.

"The key to mastering indoor spinning is to ask questions and be honest with your instructor," Woods said. "If you come in and you're unsure, a good spin instructor will always



be happy to help. We can calm your nerves, help adjust your bike and get you going."

Woods has been on the other side of the fitness world. Once weighing 200 pounds, she knows what it feels like to walk into a gym and feel imposter syndrome. New spinners feel that fear of being judged by the people surrounding them, something Woods promises

isn't happening. People truly working out do not care what you're doing — if you're locked into your set, you won't notice anything short of an explosion.

"The instructor sets the tone for the class," she said. "We want things to be fun. We want you to feel comfortable. The only person you need to focus on is the instructor and yourself. You never need to look next to you."

Woods is especially fond of her studio at Best Fitness because it lacks mirrors. While larger-than-life mirrors flank the entire room of many gyms, this room doesn't have a single one. Woods knows a mirror can do more harm than good; people who are new to the gym often spend more time staring at themselves in the mirror, analyzing every flaw. With spin, you're in one place for an hour,

meaning you have a ton of time to pick yourself apart if you're already feeling self-conscious or negative. While indoor spin is considered cathartic for many, the experience will sorely disappoint if someone is too preoccupied with a perceived flaw they host.

"I want people to stop listening to those stories their neighbors say and then comparing themselves," Woods said. "Just because your neighbor felt the saddle hurt or couldn't keep up doesn't mean anything about your ability, regardless of your fitness level."

Indoor spin also presents a different set of challenges with COVID-19 guidelines, something Woods and the gym are on top of. Because close contact with the bike is inevitable, each bike is sprayed and sanitized

between customers. Masks are required for the duration of the class, and for that matter, the entire time you're in Best Fitness. Woods said she encourages riders throughout their class to take sips of water, which allows for a couple of breaths without the mask. Nonetheless, the masks and sanitization protocol has kept Best Fitness, and New York gyms in general, from becoming a superspreader destination.

Woods encourages everyone who wants to spin to give the class a shot. While stories can be daunting, finding the right instructor and having an open mind is the key to enjoying your class.

"There are people of all shapes, sizes and ages in my classes," Woods concluded. "There isn't a single reason to think anyone will ever make you feel anything but amazing about yourself."

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BOOKS

Comeback

Shaker grad writes her first novel

By **KAITLIN LEMBO**
lembok@spotlightnews.com

MANHATTAN — A 2014 Shaker High School graduate has released her first book.

E.L. Shen, who is currently living in Manhattan, released “The Comeback” on Jan. 21. The work, geared toward middle schoolers, was published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

“The Comeback” is a story of redemption and finding your place. Figure skater Maxine Chen, 12, is tasked with balancing her life as a gifted skater while dealing with the pits and perils of middle school.

As Maxine is dealing with bullying from a peer over her Chinese heritage, she’s facing another talented skater, Hollie, in the rink, whose abilities threaten Maxine’s place in her upcoming competition.

“Much of Maxine’s story was based on a very exaggerated version of my own childhood,” Shen said. “I did figure skate as a kid, but I was nowhere near as good as Maxine is. Also, I was bullied for being Asian and short. While the book is a super fictionalized version of my own journey, Maxine and I deal with some of the same hurdles.”

Shen was a short story writer before digging her heels into fiction. One of her biggest inspirations was a “comeback list” she would write as a kid; she would

write down the mean things people said to her, come up with witty comebacks and then force her friends to practice with her. Her friends eventually said the idea would make a fantastic book, as the journey of middle schoolers through bullying and the pressure to stand up to bullies can become insurmountable.

Shen added she wanted Maxine to have a full voice, as she felt many characters aimed toward middle-grade students are passive. Because Maxine is dealing with adult issues, including microaggressions over her heritage, she’s forced to take a definable stance against the people trying to tear her down.

While the talk about race relations and microaggressions couldn’t be more timely in our political climate, Shen said the recent spike in hate crimes against Asian Americans did not contribute to “The Comeback”’s storyline. Shen started working on

her book in 2018 and was putting on the final touches in 2020 when hate crimes started spiking due to the rhetoric around the coronavirus. While the release’s time turned into a very fortunate coincidence, Shen wants to convey to middle-grade students the importance of embracing diversity and weeding through adversity.

“I want children of color to understand they are valued and needed in our society,” Shen said. “I spent a lot of time plotting out Maxine’s character growth and figuring out ways to convey the message I hope people take from her story. When people act out on you, it’s a reflection of them, not you. Maxine is able to face these struggles because she has such a strong community around her; everyone has a community around them to ease their struggles, even if they don’t feel like it.”

To purchase “The Comeback,” visit elshenwrites.com.

MARCH ‘MUSIC’ MADNESS

Round 2 starts today

ALBANY — The first round of Nippertown’s “March Music Madness” witnessed more than 1,000 voters chiming in and reducing the initial field of 64 local bands and musicians by half.

There were no runaway contests as voters selected their favorite bands last week. The field was announced last Wednesday just as the polls were opened, and voting closed Saturday evening to reveal who advances to Round 2. (See bracket on Page B7.)

Round 2 voting starts at 10 a.m. (today) Wednesday, March 3, and polls close midnight on Saturday, March 6.

Bands have the opportunity to win various prizes made

available by sponsors, including up to \$250 cash and more. Prizes also include the following opportunities:

Top Winner: Three-day session at White Lake Music and Bridge Road Entertainment.

Runner-up: Four-hour recording session at Troy Saving Bank Music Hall.

Top two finalists: Live stream event hosted by High Peaks Event Production, in which bands will receive a high definition recording of the session and a copy of the multi-track recording.

Top four finalists: Streaming event hosted by the Palace Theatre in Albany after the conclusion of the tournament.

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CLUES ACROSS


1. Large dung beetle
7. Representation of a plan
13. In a fervid way
14. The Book of Psalms
16. Morning
17. Exactly the same
19. About
20. Brown and basmati are two
22. Swiss river
23. Philippine island
25. Expressions of surprise
26. An ant
28. Common Japanese surname
29. Deoxyribonucleic acid
30. Car mechanics group
31. A person’s brother or sister
33. Ancient pharaoh
34. Quantitative fact
36. Vividly colored bird
38. Your home has one
40. Organic compound
41. Section at the end of a book
43. Flat tableland with steep edges
44. Criticize
45. Split pulses
47. Brief trend
48. Cool!
51. Purposes
53. Brews
55. Skin condition
56. Pops
58. American air travel company
59. Minute bug
60. Anno Domini (in the year of Our Lord)
61. One who rides in your car
64. One of the Gospels
65. City in southern Spain
67. Inquisitive
69. Jean Paul ____, author
70. Pop singer Harry


CLUES DOWN

1. An ape or monkey
2. Chemical element
3. Zodiac sign
4. Removes
5. Brew
6. Nickname
7. Architectural structures
8. Trigonometric function
9. Postmodern architectural building in Vienna
10. Henderson and Fitzgerald are two
11. Mountain (abbr.)
12. Landscaping practice
13. Capacitance unit
15. Redirect
18. Hat for women
21. In a way, dressed down
24. Granny
26. Feed
27. Endpoint
30. Indian instrument
32. Bleated
35. Cablegram (abbr.)
37. Root mean square (abbr.)
38. Jellyfishes
39. Individual TV installations
42. Talk
43. More (Spanish)
46. Leaseholder
47. Monetary units
49. Hostility
50. Work stations
52. Linguistics giant
54. Female sheep
55. Calendar month
57. Seasoning
59. Lofty nest of a bird of prey
62. Single Lens Reflex
63. A way to remove
66. Virginia
68. Old English

Answers on Pg. B9

















NIPPERTOWN'S 2021 MARCH "MUSIC" MADNESS


ROUND 2








































HOROSCOPES

March 2021 Week 1

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>ARIES - MAR 21/APR 20
Expect to be in high demand this week, Aries. You have the time and energy to give to others, so make the most of each chance to lend someone a helping hand.</p> | <p>LEO - JUL 23/AUG 23
Shift your focus to your home life, Leo. Find various ways to make things more pleasant at home so it can be the respite that it should be.</p> | <p>SAGITTARIUS - NOV 23/DEC 21
Take your foot off of the accelerator, Sagittarius. You don't have to race to the finish line; enjoy the scenery for a change. Stop as many times as you can along the way.</p> |
| <p>TAURUS - APR 21/MAY 21
Now is a good time to focus on your relationships, Taurus. There may be a close friend who can use a little more attention from a confidante and you can fill that role.</p> | <p>VIRGO - AUG 24/SEPT 22
You are usually better at focusing on the tasks at hand than most other astrological signs, Virgo. Don't be hard on yourself if you get a tad distracted in the next few days.</p> | <p>CAPRICORN - DEC 22/JAN 20
Capricorn, no matter how much time you want to devote to your personal goals, you just may find that other activities require much more attention than you anticipated.</p> |
| <p>GEMINI - MAY 22/JUN 21
There is work to be done, Gemini. If your work space is a tad chaotic, then hunker down somewhere less hectic. This can provide the right environment for focus.</p> | <p>LIBRA - SEPT 23/OCT 23
Get a firm grasp on your finances this week, Libra. Start browsing your bank accounts so you have a better idea of your spending. This way you can better plan for the future.</p> | <p>AQUARIUS - JAN 21/FEB 18
Aquarius, don't be surprised if you have your patience tested a bit this week, especially at the workplace. You'll find a way to come out shining, however.</p> |
| <p>CANCER - JUN 22/JUL 22
Cancer, make a habit of finding the silver lining to any situation. This shift in attitude can bring more positivity and sunshine into your life, particularly when you need it most.</p> | <p>SCORPIO - OCT 24/NOV 22
Normally you are very good at keeping your emotions in check, Scorpio. However, letting others see what's beneath the surface can be beneficial to you in the weeks to come.</p> | <p>PISCES - FEB 19/MAR 20
Take a big, deep breath and focus on all the good things in your life, Pisces. This will help you ride out any rough spots that crop up.</p> |

HEALTH and FITNESS

Irritable bowel syndrome, and what you need to know about it

It's natural for people to keep issues regarding their personal health private. For example, some people may be hesitant to share information about illnesses they've battled with those outside their immediate families. While that reticence is understandable, it's vital that people be as forthcoming as possible with their physicians, no matter how uncomfortable situations or symptoms may be.

Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, is one condition that people may be hesitant to discuss with someone, including a physician. IBS can be marked by symptoms such as diarrhea, constipation and changes in bowel movements. The difficulty in describing such symptoms compels some people to resist discussing them with their physicians, at least initially. But IBS is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, the International Foundation

for Gastrointestinal Disorders notes that IBS is the most common functional gastrointestinal (GI) disorder in the world, with worldwide prevalence rates in the range of 10 to 15 percent.

What is IBS?

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases notes that IBS is a group of symptoms that occur together. Repeated pain in the abdomen and changes in bowel movements, such as diarrhea and/or constipation, may be present without any visible signs of damage or disease

in the digestive tract.

What is a functional GI disorder?

IBS is a functional GI disorder, which means it is related to problems with how the brain and gut work together. The NIDDK notes that these problems can cause the gut to be more sensitive, changing how the muscles in the bowel contract and potentially leading to diarrhea, constipation or both.

What causes IBS?

The American Gastroenterological Association notes that the cause of IBS remains

unknown, though it's suspected that various factors can cause it. One such factor is dysmotility, a condition characterized by poor regulation of the muscle contracts of the GI tract. Visceral hypersensitivity, which is a greater sensitivity of the nerves attached to the GI tract, is another potential cause of IBS.

Can IBS be treated?

The good news for people with IBS is that various treatment plans have helped people with the condition feel better. The NIDDK notes that there might be some trial

and error as doctors try to determine the best course of treatment for each patient. But dietary and lifestyle changes, medicines, probiotics, and mental health therapies are examples of IBS treatments that have helped people with the condition.

IBS symptoms can be uncomfortable to discuss with a physician. But people experiencing such symptoms should know that IBS is very common and doctors have a host of treatment options at their disposal to make it easier to live with IBS.

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Sudoku Answers

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

Super Crossword Answers

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

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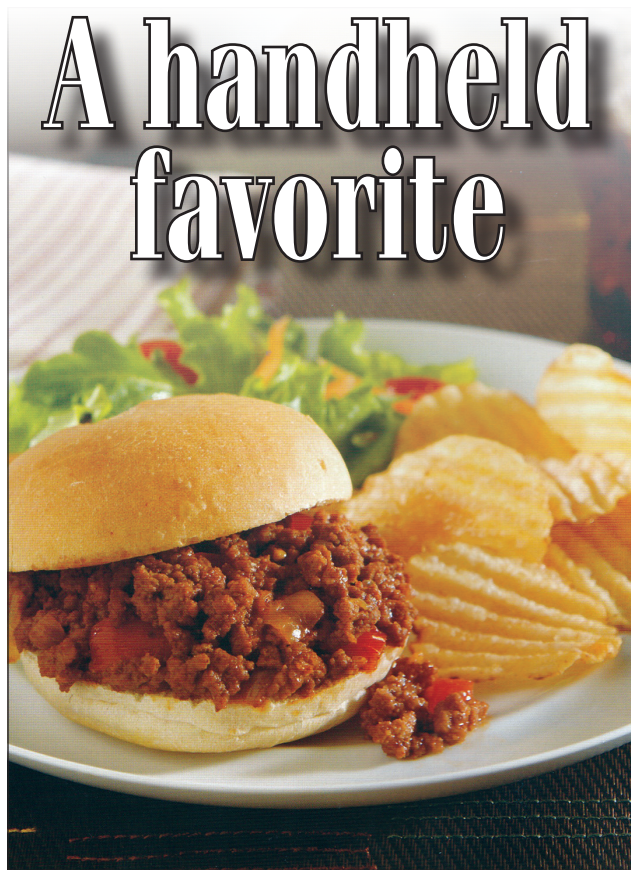
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FOOD and VINO

Slow-cooked foods seem tailor-made when the mercury is low. Stews, soups and casseroles can simmer and gain great flavor through slow-cooking methods.

Rely on a slow cooker for potluck dinners or when you have to feed a crowd. "Suzie's Sloppy Joes" is a reinvented take on the traditional Sloppy Joe, and can feed the soccer team after practice or a busy family that has been on the go all day. This recipe, courtesy of "Crock•Pot® 365 Year-Round Recipes" (Publications International, Ltd.) from the Crock•Pot Kitchens, simmers for several hours and dishes up delectable flavor for an easy comfort meal.

Suzie's Sloppy Joes

Ingredients: Makes 8 servings

- 3 pounds 95 percent lean ground beef
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/4 cups ketchup
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons prepared mustard

- 3 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- Toasted hamburger buns

Instructions

1. Cook and stir ground beef, onion and garlic in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until beef is browned and onion is tender. Drain and discard fat.
2. Combine ketchup, bell pepper, Worcestershire sauce, brown sugar, mustard, vinegar and chili powder in a slow cooker. Stir in beef mixture. Cover; cook on low 6 to 8 hours. To serve, spoon mixture onto hamburger buns.

Did you know? Many recipes include Worcestershire sauce to add a tangy bite to the dish known as unami, or the savory fifth flavor. Worcestershire sauce contains vinegars, molasses anchovies, and tamarind extract to give it that specialty flavor. This fermented liquid condiment was created in the city of Worcester in Worcestershire, England during the first half of the 19th century. Creators John Wheeley Lea and William Henry Perrins were chemists, and they would later go on to form the food company Lea & Perrins. Because Worcestershire sauce contains anchovies, it is not suitable for those who have fish allergies.

Tip: To make Sloppy Joes slightly less sloppy, serve on bite-sized slider rolls.

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Jette McIntyre / The Spot 518

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TECHNOLOGY

Tips to master a video job interview

The adage “there’s a first time for everything” has certainly rang true throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Life as the world knew it changed during the pandemic, and as a result many people found themselves in unfamiliar positions and settings.

One unfamiliar position that job seekers had to grow accustomed to during the pandemic was interviewing via video conferencing apps

like Zoom. Interviewing for a new job has long been considered a nerve-racking experience, even for seasoned professionals. That anxiety did not necessarily disappear during the pandemic, but it may have taken on a new form as applicants were forced to present the best, albeit virtual, version of themselves when interviewing.

Video interviews may become integral parts of the interviewing process in the future, as companies recognize how efficient video interviews can be. As a result, it can benefit professionals to polish up on their video interviewing skills.

• Dress the part. Dressing for success still matters. Though in person interviews may not be in job seekers’ immediate futures, appropriate attire still sends the right message. Dress the part from head to toe, even if you expect to only be seen from the waist up. This saves you the embarrassment of being seen in sweat pants or other inappropriate attire should you unexpectedly need to stand up during the interview.

• Beware of the background. Make sure the background behind you during the interview is clean and appropriate.

Zoom offers a curated list of virtual backgrounds that can help job seekers make a strong first impression. If an existing space is fine serving as a background, clean the area prior to the interview. This creates the impression that you are organized and attentive to detail.

• Use a laptop or computer. Smartphones have video conferencing capabilities, but it’s best to use a laptop or desktop computer when interviewing via video. Laptops and desktops are heavier and less likely to move during the interview and their screens are larger, giving job seekers a better

view of the person they’re speaking with. If you must use a smartphone, keep the phone still throughout the interview.

• Sit in a brightly lit, quiet room. A dark room may make it hard for interviewers to see applicants, and that can create a bad first impression. Find a well-lit, quiet room, ideally one that is away from the hustle and bustle of the household.

• Use the mute button. One of the more common issues to arise from the Zoom boom has been some users’ failure to realize their microphones are not muted. When interviewing for a job via

video, remember to mute your microphone when you are not speaking. This ensures that no ambient noise from your home will affect the interview. Such noise could adversely affect an interviewer’s opinion of you.

Interviewing via video conferencing apps is uncharted territory for many professionals. But a few tricks of the trade can help job seekers create strong first impressions.

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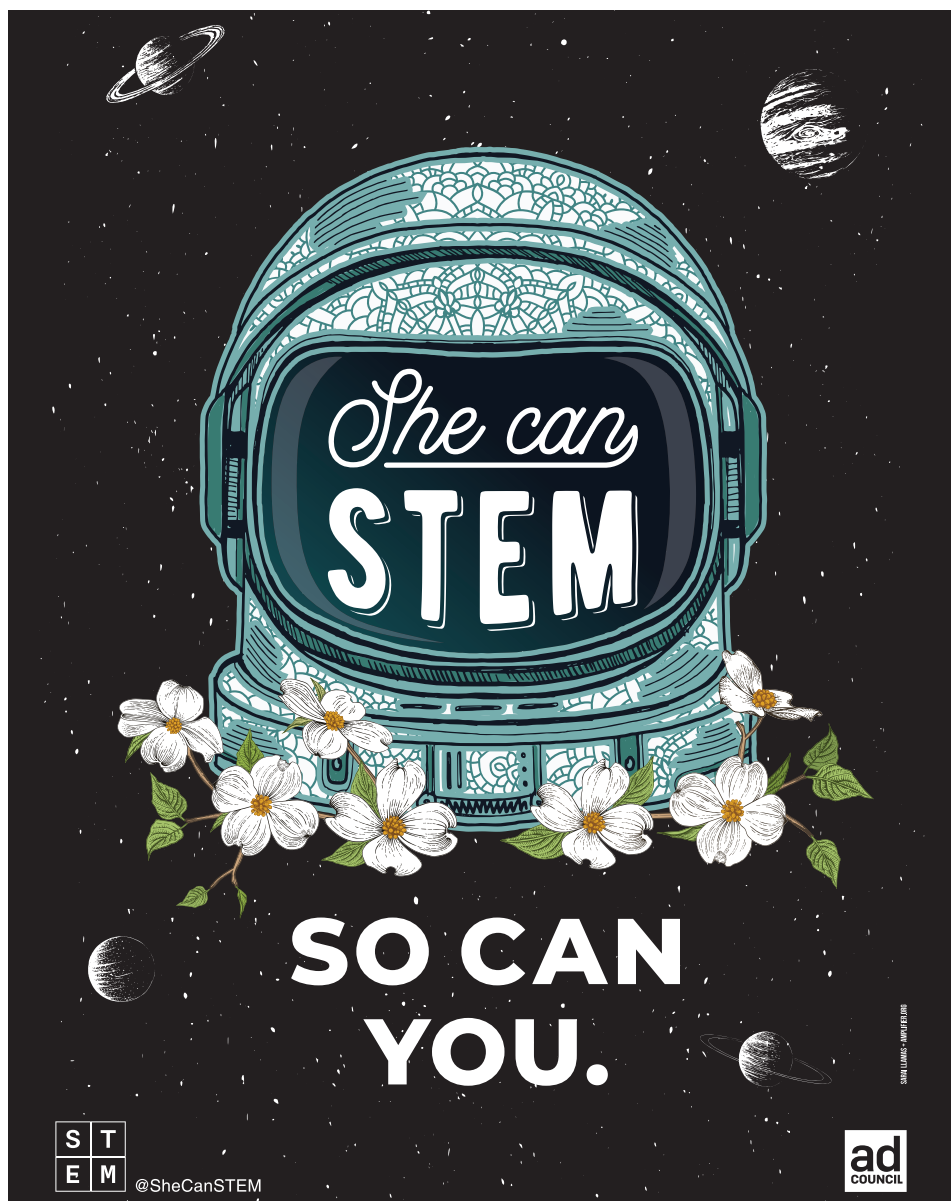
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