

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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Aymar-Blair to be sworn in as Dutchess County Comptroller on January 4



Dan Aymar-Blair

-Courtesy photo

By Kristine Coulter

Dan Aymar-Blair resigned from his elected position as representative for Ward 4 on the Beacon City Council. He was elected to the Dutchess County Comptroller position in the November election, against incumbent A. Gregg Pulver. Aymar-Blair will be sworn in on Saturday, Jan. 4 at Tymor Park in Union Vale at 3 p.m. New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli is expected to be in attendance.

Aymar-Blair has “made a career in finance and operations, two decades of that experience in government finance and operations.” He noted while running for Comptroller, “I’ve even overseen a budget bigger than Dutchess County’s.”

Aymar-Blair told Beacon Free Press, “There is a lot of planning and pre-work happening right now because we need to hit the ground running for Dutchess County taxpayers. I’m excited to share that I’ve hired back former Deputy Comptroller Brian Kelly, who also happens to be a former Mayor’s Assistant in Beacon, serving both Steve Gold and Randy Casale. What I’m most looking forward to now is meeting the team in the Comptroller’s office; I’ve heard so many great things about their work ethic and acumen. Together, we’re all going to accomplish a lot this year.”

Aymar-Blair stated during the campaign on his website: “I currently manage business operations in New York City Public Schools’ special education program and have extensive experience in reviewing multi-million-dollar contracts, civil service hiring, legal compliance, and managing capital projects.” He resigned from that position last month.

Continued on page 3

Takes from municipal leaders on what is anticipated in 2025

By Kristine Coulter

While no one can know what 2025 will bring, local municipal leaders offered their takes on what is planned for each of their municipalities in the year ahead. The responses from officials follow in alphabetical order of the municipality.

In Beacon, Mayor Lee Kyriacou replied that one of the goals for this year is advancing the Beacon-Hopewell Rail Trail, “a transformational project to convert an abandoned rail line into a hiking/biking trail from the waterfront to Main Street, to Cold Spring and beyond on the 700-mile Empire State Trail system. Dutchess County is currently completing an engineering feasibility study, and we hope to begin engineering design and help secure funding commitments for this top priority.”

Another priority is regarding the “almost \$10 million for the next phase of water and sewer capital improvements; these include replacing the dewatering system at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, rehabilitating the Melzingah Reservoir Dam, constructing a new water storage tank at Mt. Beacon, and replacing water/sewer mains on Route 52,” said the mayor. He added, “In addition to the water/sewer projects cited previously, we look forward to successfully completing the upgrade of Fishkill/Teller Avenues, which is 100% funded by State and federal grant funding.”

Kyriacou also mentioned, “Metro-North Railroad has issued a Request for Proposals for “Transit-Oriented Development” (TOD) on the Beacon Train Station lot north of West Main Street, which is consistent with the



Municipal leaders in Southern Dutchess County remark on plans for each of their municipalities in 2025. Clockwise from top left: Town of East Fishkill Supervisor Nick D'Alessandro, Town of Fishkill Supervisor Ozy Albra, Town of Poughkeepsie Supervisor Rebecca Edwards and Town of Wappinger Supervisor Joseph Cavaccini.

-Courtesy photos

City’s zoning updates and could bring new housing and vitality on top of unsightly blacktop parking lots.”

In East Fishkill this year, Supervisor Nick D'Alessandro said, “We definitely want to break ground at our new

Veteran Memorial Park.” The park will be located on Route 376 almost directly across the street from the East Fishkill Town Hall.

Continued on page 3

A new year -- a new name for Marist

By Kate Goldsmith

Marist College recently announced it will change its name to Marist University at the end of January. In a press release on the institution’s website it stated the name change would “better reflect the comprehensive, global institution of higher education it has become...”

The change will be effective Jan. 29.

“Marist has achieved remarkable success over the past several decades, transforming from a small regional college into a nationally and internationally renowned leader in higher education,” President Dr. Kevin C. Weinman said. “Marist University better describes the breadth of opportunities we offer to students today and the vision we have for Marist’s next century.”

According to the release, this transition signals Marist’s continued momentum as it nears its centennial in 2029 and follows a unanimous vote by the Board of Trustees in support and subsequent approval of university designation from the New York State Board of Regents.



Marist College will change to Marist University. The name change is scheduled to take place on Jan. 29th.

-Courtesy photo Marist College Facebook

Continued on page 2

\$600,000 commitment from Helen's Hope Foundation expands community health programs at Vassar Brothers Medical Center

The Helen's Hope foundation has committed a generous \$600,000 to support two vital Vassar Brothers Medical Center (VBMC) initiatives: the Food As Medicine (FAM) Program and the Community Care Team (CCT). This gift will bolster VBMC's efforts to address social drivers of health through community-based, collaborative approaches to care.

"This incredible gift reflects Helen's Hope Foundation's commitment to the well-being of our community," said Susan Browning, president of VBMC. "It enables us to build on our efforts to address complex health needs through collaboration, compassion and community-centered care. We are honored to partner with the Helen's Hope Foundation in this important work."

Helen's Hope Foundation — established by Stephanie Karl to honor the legacy of resilience and compassion of her mother, Helen Grasso — is committed to supporting underserved communities. With this gift, the foundation aims to empower vulnerable populations with resources that improve health outcomes, nutrition access and chronic disease management.

"Helen's Hope Foundation was founded on the values of resilience, compassion and a commitment to lifting up those who face challenging circumstances," said Stephanie Karl, founder and president.

"Supporting the Food As Medicine Program and the Community Care Team at Vassar Brothers Medical Center allows us to honor my mother's legacy by ensuring more individuals have access to the essential resources they need to build healthy, hopeful futures. We are proud to be part of this vital work and to contribute to a healthier Hudson Valley community."

The Food As Medicine Program, launched in April 2024, serves primarily Medicaid patients in the Poughkeepsie area and is a partnership with Dutchess Outreach, the Culinary Institute of America and the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANY). The program provides participants with essential support, including twice-monthly groceries, cooking classes and personalized coaching to help them make healthier food choices and manage chronic conditions such as hypertension.

"Helen's Hope Foundation's gift will help us continue building a robust model of care that addresses food insecurity as a root cause of many health issues," said Dr. Brenda Ayers, who oversees the Food As Medicine Program and is Nuvance Health's medical director for Health Equity. "With these resources, we can provide critical support to families striving to improve their health and well-being."

The Community Care Team, established in 2021, coordinates wrap-around care for at-risk individuals to address



From left, Registered Dietitian Anne Rabbitt, Michelle Kuklinski, Hollie Saborido (Helen's Hope Foundation) and Dr. Brenda Ayers.

-Courtesy photo from Nuvance Health

social determinants of health. The team works with community partners to reduce emergency department visits, enhance social support and foster economic stability, housing and access to care.

"We are deeply grateful for Helen's Hope Foundation's commitment to

community health," said Grace Linhard, chief development officer for Nuvance Health. "This support will allow us to expand our reach, helping more individuals to access the nutritional resources and health navigation they need to lead healthier, fuller lives."

A new year -- a new name for Marist

Continued from cover

Marist has long combined the resources of a large university with the personal attention of a small college, creating a unique and rich residential learning experience. The institution expects that the name change will help introduce Marist to an even wider audience and further enhance the learning environment.

"Our founding values and distinctive strengths will continue to shape our future as we define what university means to us, one aspiring to new heights while preserving the intimate, student-focused elements of a college," Dr. Weinman said.

The power of a university

Since its founding in 1929, Marist has grown into an expansive global institution, now educating more than 5,000 undergraduates and nearly 1,000 graduate students across its main campus in Poughkeepsie, branch campus in Florence, Italy, and through a variety of online graduate programs.

This has powered Marist's signature educational approach, which is grounded in the principle of "and, not or."

For example:

- Students explore a wide-ranging curriculum, blending liberal arts and strong pre-pro-

fessional programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

- With 23 Division I athletic teams, Marist student-athletes hold the most all-time conference titles and have led in academic honor roll selections for 23 consecutive years in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference.

- Students benefit from extensive research and experiential learning opportunities in and out of the classroom, such as the nationally ranked Marist Poll, the Center for Sports Communication, and the IBM Joint Study Program.

- Marist's study abroad programs are ranked No. 1 among peer institutions by a 2024 U.S. Department of State-sponsored report, reflecting a commitment to bring Marist to the world and the world to Marist.

"I'm inspired about our future because Marist University will continue to dream big, while always feeling small," said Dr. Weinman. "This has long been one of Marist's greatest strengths, occupying a sweet spot exemplified by small classes taught by faculty who are both mentors and educators, and a community that thrives on mutual care and respect."

Attracting international, graduate, and faculty talent

The shift to Marist University also will

enhance the institution's global appeal, clearly articulating Marist's identity to international students and student-athletes, and strengthening its ability to attract top faculty from around the world.

"As we expand our global reach, the name Marist University provides important clarity to prospective international students, who typically associate the word 'college' with secondary education, while also highlighting the strength of our graduate programs," said Dr. Catherine Gunther Kodat, Provost and Dean of Faculty. "University designation will ensure every person fully appreciates the range of our degree and certificate programs, along with the rich array of academic and co-curricular experiences we offer our students."

January transition

The decision comes after an extensive assessment of insights and input from Marist's entire community - students, faculty, staff, alumni, and Trustees - as well as prospective students and their families, and secondary school counselors worldwide.

Tony Lorello '86, President of the Marist Alumni Association, ex officio member of the Board of Trustees, and a proud Marist parent, described the university transition as an exciting time for the institution.

"To me, becoming Marist University gives us the best of both worlds: preserving the personal attention of the college we all grew up with over the last 95 years while signaling the depth of opportunities and leadership role Marist can play as a global university," he said.

A community-wide celebration and unveiling of a new storytelling campaign to reflect Marist's elevated profile is planned for Jan. 29 when students return for the spring semester, at which time Marist will officially become Marist University.

State Senator Rob Rolison (39th District) commented on the name change.

"This is exciting news for the Marist community, Poughkeepsie, and our greater Hudson Valley region," he said. "As a former student and current state senator who is committed to empowering New Yorkers through learning and higher education, I am thrilled to see Marist's designation evolve, reflecting the school's range of course offerings and its leading position within the global marketplace of ideas. I am eager to join the university at events for its official name change on January 29, and I look forward to continuing our collaboration and partnership with Marist faculty and students for years to come."

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Takes from municipal leaders on what is anticipated in 2025

Continued from cover

"We want to expand our shared services with other municipalities in Dutchess County, which assists us all with our finances. We would like to get some of our traffic improvement plans to get the funding needed to actually get them started. This type of infrastructure is very expensive and without the partnership of NYS or the Federal Government, we cannot get these fixes done. So, I will be pushing hard on my fellow elected officials in NYS and the federal government," he stated.

D'Alessandro also anticipates completing the new Comprehensive Master Plan. The Town Board will then start to hold public hearings to adopt the plan.

"Many of our residents and town professionals have worked very hard on this and we are very excited for the completion of the plan," noted the supervisor.

Water and Sewer infrastructure projects to areas of Town that are needed will also be a goal for the coming year, he added.

Town of Fishkill Supervisor Ozzy Albra said his main goal for 2025 is to complete the last major project in the town – a \$1 million Glenham Water pump project.

"Once this project is completed. The town will have NO MORE major capital projects remaining. We do have nine smaller, less expensive stations that may need to be upgraded in the future, but none are as expensive," said the supervisor.

"We are down to budgeting for HVAC and carpet replacement with [Town of Fishkill] Judge Raymond Raiche securing a grant for the Justice Court saving taxpayers money for that portion of the building," Albra noted.

"I also will focus on the 3rd and

final Hometown Hero Banners celebration while we shift to the town celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The town will highlight the great Revolutionary War history our town is blessed with," he remarked.

Albra also mentioned a debate will begin on expanding the town board from 4 to 6 members while creating a Ward System in which less than 20 of 933 towns in NYS have.

"I think this is a serious concern that needs to be debated. People have stated that this helps incumbents. They are right, but in Fishkill we are one of the less than 20 towns in NYS that have term limits. You cannot have more than two 4-year terms total. This will also result in more of a grassroots government that will allow the average citizen to run for office without being beholden to political parties and special interests. I will ask for this to be a Special Election and not on the November ballot as this needs to be debated fairly and not politicized," explained Albra.

In the Town of Poughkeepsie, 2025 will see the need for new 'homes' for the police and courts.

Town of Poughkeepsie Supervisor Rebecca Edwards said, "We have been working toward a new home for our Police and courts which is urgently needed, and will continue to be a top priority. We are conducting an audit of town parks to identify needed upgrades and expect to have more good news on several fronts, in the coming months. The town has a great deal of deferred maintenance and other financial challenges, and it is a high priority to resolve those while protecting taxpayers."

Town of Wappinger Supervisor Joseph Cavaccini said about 2025, "Our administration is looking forward to continuing to draft and adopt legisla-



City of Beacon Mayor Lee Kyriacou makes remarks in Nov. 2024 during the open house of the central fire station.



Village of Wappingers Falls Mayor Kevin Huber

tion as well as Comprehensive Plan updates to protect our quality of life, consider our rural-suburban lifestyle, and strategically plan our Town. We are also looking forward to more infrastructure improvements such as building a brand-new live performance stage at Brexel-Schlathaus Park utilizing ARPA funds and being able to utilize Carnwath Farms Historic Site & Park for Town and resident-led events and activities."

A new fire truck – that is one of the goals for Village of Fishkill Mayor Kathy Martin.

"Two goals that I have for the new year are to pave Merritt Blvd., and work with our fire department to purchase a new fire truck," she said

about 2025.

Village of Wappingers Falls Mayor Kevin Huber said, "As we look ahead, our 2025 budget will focus on maintaining and enhancing services without overburdening taxpayers while reducing the Village's debt. Significant projects are on the horizon, from improving water production to complying with environmental standards and expanding recreational opportunities."

He added: "The accomplishments of 2024 reflect the collective effort of the Village Board, staff, and community members, all working together to create a stronger and more vibrant Village. We look forward to continuing this momentum into the coming year."

County awards \$57,868 in composting grants to Wappinger, Red Hook

Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino has announced two grants, totaling \$57,868, have been awarded to the Town of Wappinger and the Village of Red Hook as part of the County's Composting Grant program. The goal of the grant program is to promote composting and the diversion of organic waste out of the waste stream, and further the County's sustainability and waste-reduction initiatives.

Serino said, "Protecting the environment for our children and future generations is a top priority. Dutchess County was proud to establish the Composting Grant Program to encourage composting and reduce food waste. I thank the leadership in the Town of Wappinger and the Village of Red Hook for taking advantage of this County grant opportunity and for joining us in recognizing the importance of preserv-

ing our planet."

Announced earlier this year, the grant program offered local municipalities and school districts a 50-percent County match of municipalities' funds to install and operate an in-vessel aerobic composter for residents' use or up to \$20,000 to institute a community-wide food waste drop-off program.

The Town of Wappinger has been awarded \$50,000 to purchase and install an in-vessel composting machine at the Town's recycle center and transfer station, making it easy for residents to access it as they drop off bulk materials, brush, recyclables or garbage. This advanced system will allow for efficient and large-scale composting of organic materials, significantly reducing the town's carbon footprint while producing nutrient-rich compost to benefit local agriculture and landscaping projects. Site preparation is aimed to begin in early 2025.

The Village of Red Hook will receive \$7,868 to cover start-up costs to set up and implement a food waste drop-off program to promote community engagement in composting, offering residents a convenient drop-off site, centrally located in the Village center and accessible 24 hours a day. The program is estimated to be available for residents by spring 2025, and the Village's Climate Smart Communities task force will oversee delivery of finished compost.

As per grant requirements, both projects must be completed and operational by Dec. 31, 2026.

Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Solid Waste Management Kerry Russell said, "Food waste comprises between 20 to 30 percent of all municipal waste. By composting, we divert waste out of the waste stream, reduce greenhouse gases, produce nutrient rich soil and reduce the need for chemical fertilizers. The Division of

Solid Waste Management is excited to partner with the Village of Red Hook and the Town of Wappinger to advance food waste diversion programming in our local communities."

To learn more about composting, including taking advantage of purchasing a discounted composting bin for home use, visit the Division of Solid Waste Management's composting webpage.

The Composting Grant Program is one of the several County initiatives in its continuing efforts to preserve a vibrant environment for future generations. In September, for example, Dutchess County earned New York State's highest Climate Smart Community distinction, Silver Certification, for the County's continued climate action and environmental efforts. Learn more about Dutchess County's ongoing environmental initiatives on the Dutchess County Department of Planning & Development's website.

Aymar-Blair to be sworn in as Dutchess County Comptroller

Continued from cover

"The two biggest accomplishments of the Beacon City Council in the last five years have been the consolidation of our fire department into a new state-of-the-art facility and the investments we are making in our public parks. Improving safety and our parks are core responsibilities of any local government and we've risen to the challenge. While not necessarily big, I also think it was an important accomplishment to get a stop sign at East Main and Washington because so many school kids pass through that dangerous intersection," Aymar-Blair told Beacon Free Press about what he considers the two biggest accomplishments when he was on the council.

When he was running for the position of Comptroller, on his campaign website, Aymar-Blair stated, "Originally from Saratoga Springs, I am a sixth-generation New Yorker who learned the values of hard work and compassion from my father, a Hudson River tugboat captain and my mother, a nurse. I worked two jobs while earning my BA from George Washington University."

Aymar-Blair and his wife, Monika, moved to Beacon in 2013. The couple have two children, Leo and Henry.

"Since I was first elected to Beacon City Council in 2019, I have fought to make Beacon work for everyone: using tax dollars for sidewalks, bike lanes, park improvements, and critical infrastructure. This year, I am fighting to ensure the Fishkill Creek watershed area is protected and developed in a way that benefits the entire community," Aymar-Blair previously stated.

As for his hopes for the City of Beacon, Aymar-Blair said, "I hope the city can make progress staffing up the police department. I also hope that the city will require more public benefits from new building projects. Despite all my efforts, I still feel like we aren't asking more of these new projects. While new development is good for the tax rolls and helps us accomplish big projects like the fire house without increasing tax rates, we don't have to sacrifice things that are important to us like views of the mountain or the creek."

Aymar-Blair was honored for his service during the council meeting on Dec. 16.

Beacon City Administrator Chris White said Beacon Mayor Lee Kyriacou "is planning to appoint someone. Whomever is appointed would then need to run for the next election since they would only be in for the remainder of Dan's term."

Sheriff's Office warns of increasing scams

The Dutchess County Sheriff's Office warns the residents of Dutchess County and surrounding areas about scams that once again seem to be on the rise.

Scams are ways in which criminals will attempt to get money from people by contacting them and making up elaborate stories. In some cases the perpetrators have tried, sometimes successfully, to use the victim's emotions about a loved one in trouble to get money. It's common for the perpetrators of these scams to try to get money by telling people that one of their relatives has been seriously hurt or is in jail, and that they need money right away. In many cases they will pose as a law enforcement official or another relative to try and convince the victim that it's legitimate.

Lately there have been two major scams circulating. In the first scam, victims receive an email notification from Microsoft claiming that their computer has been hacked and to contact a call center to remedy this. The victims contact a fake call center, at which time they are told to provide gift card serial numbers and allow the perpetrators remote access to their computer. The perpetrators steal the gift cards via the serial numbers, and then once they have remote computer access they use it to steal money from the victim's accounts.

As if this wasn't enough, the victims are contacted yet again from someone now posing as law enforcement – in some cases the Secret Service or the Sheriff – who informs them that child pornography has been found on their computer and there's a warrant for their arrest, but they can satisfy the warrant by paying money. The victims are instructed to not tell anyone about being contacted, and when impersonating law enforcement the suspects will utilize "spoofed" caller ID identifiers and use specific law enforcement agency names that appear to be generated from a legitimate agency.

The second scam is similar to the first one in which the perpetrators tell the victim that there's child pornography on their computer, but instead of asking for money they instruct the victim to buy gold coins and bars. Once the victim has the gold they are instructed to send a picture of it to the perpetrators, and after that the victim is told to meet with a courier to give them the gold. The gold is never seen again, and in one case the victim lost over \$250,000 as a result of this scam.

The Sheriff's Office would like to offer the following tips to help people avoid these scams:

- If you receive correspondence from someone that you don't know asking for money but instructing you to keep the matter confidential and not inform anyone about it, it's most likely a scam.

- Legitimate law enforcement would not attempt to satisfy a warrant or make promises to avoid prosecution by soliciting money.

- If you receive an email about an order you didn't place or asking you to send

money call the company using a legitimate number, DO NOT follow the instructions in the email, click on any links in the email, or call the number provided in the email.

- If someone asks you to purchase merchandise, transfer money, provide bank information, provide remote computer access or enter a code given to you by them, use caution as it is likely a scam.

- Do not meet up with someone that you don't know; if you're asked to do this it is surely a scam, and it is very dangerous as well.

- If you're contacted by someone you don't know asking for money, for any reason, that's a signal that it's most likely a scam.

- If someone calls you and tells you that a relative has been hurt or is in jail, confirm it first before sending any money. Call other relatives or a legitimate law enforcement agency for confirmation before any money is sent. If they're posing as a relative, try and contact that relative for confirmation.

- Sending money overseas is especially risky; use extreme caution.

- Ask the person for their call back number and ask to speak to their supervisor to confirm the info; if it's a scam they will most likely hang up at this point and the number they give you will be bogus.

- If the person is telling you that a loved one is in the hospital or jail, find out which one and contact the institution yourself to confirm.

- If a loved one has recently passed away, be wary; in some cases perpetrators have even preyed on victims by searching through the obituaries and calling surviving loved ones. If you get calls from people you don't know soon after someone passes away, be careful and confirm it before you send any money.

- In some cases someone will call and tell the victim that they've won money, but to "process the claim" they need to first send money. Beware this is most definitely a scam and don't send any money – you should never have to pay money to claim a prize. If it seems too good to be true, it most likely is.

- If there's any doubt about a phone call/email/letter you've received, contact the Sheriff's Office before sending any money.

- Scams tend to increase during the holiday season, so be especially alert for them during those times.

It is very important to not send any money to anyone that you don't know until you've confirmed the situation through an independent source and feel comfortable with it. If it's a scam, once the money is sent it's very difficult, and most times impossible, to get it back.

If anyone thinks they may have been the victim of a scam, they are encouraged to contact the Sheriff's Office at 845-486-3800 or via the tipline at 845-605-CLUE or dcsotips@gmail.com.

VA launches outreach campaign to enroll Veterans in health care

VA is launching a new outreach campaign to encourage all eligible Veterans to enroll in VA health care – including approximately 1 million unenrolled Veterans who served in Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This campaign will include text messages and emails directly to Veterans, public service announcements, paid advertising, and events.

VA is launching this campaign after reports of concerns from Veterans about health issues – including mental health challenges and thoughts of suicide – potentially related to repeated blasts and head trauma (low-level artillery blasts, IEDs, missile launches, heavy fire, and more). Since the first reporting about these concerns, VA researchers have been urgently studying this matter to learn more about the potential health impacts of blast exposure on Veterans.

Veterans enrolled in VA can access specialty screenings and services to address any health issues related to blast exposure. Importantly, Veterans who served in Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and other specific locations are eligible for VA health care based on their deployments – they do not need to have any health conditions specifically associated with their service in order to be eligible for care.

While VA continues to urgently conduct research into the impact of blast exposure, VA and the entire Biden-Harris Administration encourage these Veterans – and all eligible Veterans – to apply for VA care today. Veterans who use VA health care have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, VA hospitals are dramatically outperforming non-VA hospitals, and VA health care is often more affordable than non-VA health care for Veterans. Additionally, 92% of Veteran patients currently report trusting VA outpatient health care – an all-time high.

"We take Veteran concerns about repeated blast exposure very seriously, and we are studying this matter urgently to learn more about potential health impacts," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "While we do that, we don't want Veterans to wait – they should enroll in VA health care today to get full access to primary care, mental health care, regu-

lar screenings, specialty care, and more. That's what this outreach effort is all about: getting Veterans in our care, because Veterans who come to VA are proven to do better."

"VA aims to be the best, most accessible, and most affordable health system in America for Veterans, and we are constantly looking for ways to improve that care as science and research tells us about new concerns," said VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. "The more Veterans who enroll, the more we can learn about the impact of blast exposure – and the better care we can ultimately provide those who served."

Earlier this year, VA made all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards (and meet basic requirements) eligible to enroll directly in VA health care – years earlier than called for by the PACT Act. This included all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11. Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States are also eligible to enroll. Additionally, Veterans who do not meet any of the above criteria can often still access VA health care by receiving VA disability benefits or based on income.

This new outreach effort is a part of the largest outreach campaign in VA history, which began when President Biden signed the PACT Act into law in 2022 and continues to this day. As a result of this campaign, more than 835,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care (a 37% increase over the previous period); more than 900,000 Veterans have upgraded their priority groups, making them eligible for health care with fewer copays (an all-time record); and more than 4.4 million Veterans and survivors have applied for disability compensation benefits (another all-time record). The campaign has been focused on bringing new Veterans to VA by sending millions of texts and emails, hosting thousands of events nationwide, launching new paid advertising campaigns, working with influencers and companies, and more.

Eligible Veterans can enroll today by visiting our website or calling 833-577-5646.

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Albert Osten, President

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- Letters appearing on the Viewpoints page are the views of the writers alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Beacon Free Press.



DCHS emerges bigger and better!



Above: We are grateful to library specialist Carolyn Cook, who has been leading DCHS into the digital access age by working with special library “apps.” We expect to be able to launch these services in the New Year.

By Bill Jeffway Executive Director

We are proud to report a banner year on all fronts at Dutchess County Historical Society (DCHS). Our first full year in our new location has raised our visibility and improved access to the entire dynamic and varied “society” of our members, donors, business sponsors, collections donors, and growing paid staff and volunteers.

Regarding finances and the \$103,000 operating budget for 2024, we expect our 2024 break-even operating expense goal will be met on December 31. We do tend to have some very last-minute gifts which can make all the difference!

We have nearly doubled our income from endowments. Through the generosity and leadership of Rob and Sue Doyle, and those they inspired to give, DCHS has almost doubled the amount of income we can rely on annually from endowments. The Doyle Endowment Fund, totaling more than \$200,000 at the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley, now supports DCHS in addition to the longstanding Denise M. Lawlor Fund, also at the Community Foundations.

Our online auction, in its third year, broke prior records by generating more than

\$25,000 after expenses. This is roughly double what we had come to expect from our annual gala dinners before COVID. Through the generosity of item donors (there were 155 lots) 124 bidders turned into 64 winners. We are grateful for the generosity of AAR Auctions who donate their platform, time, expertise and buyer’s fees.

Our spring Historic Preservation Celebration and Awards income broke any prior event income by a factor of two. Over 150 tickets were sold, and a record number of businesses were sponsors. Above all, we had the opportunity to celebrate and thank three generations of the Hill family who continue to support DCHS, and who hosted us at their extraordinarily historic home.

Among our most visible work this year has been telling the stories of those involved in the essential service of firefighting. Prompted by a significant collections gift from the Rhinebeck Fire Department, combined with existing collections, and a great deal of interest from the local DCHS Vice Presidents representing the cities and towns of the county, firefighting is the topic of the forum section of the DCHS 2024 Yearbook (expected to be published in March 2025).

We developed the traveling exhibition, “Firefighting in Dutchess County: A

Council authorizes possible \$5,000 signing bonus as part of recruiting officers

The City of Beacon and the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association of Beacon (PBA) agreed to a Collective Bargaining Agreement covering the period January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2025. The resolution, that was passed last month at a meeting of the City Council, notes that the City recognizes that recruiting police officers with previous experience and/or field training prior to employment with the City is a benefit and the City seeks to provide an incentive to recruit such applicants. The City discussed various ways such recruitment can be accomplished with the PBA; and now memorialized those discussions regarding the recruitment of applicants, the resolution stated.

“This is a proposed memorandum of an agreement for a signing bonus,” said City Administrator Chris White. He added that the City is not reinstating people who have worked for the City previously, “that is just a word civil service uses when an officer transfers to another department.”

The resolution calls for:
- A pilot recruitment plan that will be effective upon full execution of this Agreement.
- The terms of the pilot recruitment plan

are as follows: Any new reinstatement to the ranks of the City’s Police Department must be a New York State certified police officer and be immediately ready, upon employment with the City, to enter field training, shall be eligible for a one-time incentive payment in the amount of \$5,000 after the execution of this Agreement. This incentive is not available to employees who the City hires through canvassing the Dutchess County Civil Service Police Officer list. The person has to stay for six months and be in good standing before they get the money for the referral or sign on bonus, it was noted.

“We have 8 vacancies,” said White regarding police officers. Two officers are on long-term injury, he said. An officer is in the academy and another is leaving for a new job later this year, said the city administrator.

The resolution includes that “Any current PBA member who refers a successful reinstatement candidate who meets the requirements... shall be eligible for a one-time referral incentive payment of \$5,000.”

The current PBA member has to be in good standing, it is noted. A request for comment from the PBA was not



Above left to right: Aidan Chisamore, Collections & Archives Manager, is responsible for the care, preservation, and management of collections. Cosette Veeder-Shave volunteers in collections data entry and management. Charlotte Hampton, Vassar ’25 (Art History), is a volunteer this semester through Vassar’s Office of Community Engaged Learning which has grown into a reliable and important source of talent for DCHS.

Greater Calling,” in partnership with the Rhinebeck Fire Department and the Firefighting Museum of Dutchess County. The exhibition was featured at the inaugural opening of the museum at the Dutchess County Fair in Rhinebeck. Please let us know if you would like to borrow the exhibition for a school, library, firehouse, or other public space.

Another high-profile exhibition and series of programs was related to the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Revolutionary War Major General Lafayette’s local visit. In 1824, as the United States approached its 50th anniversary (the way we approach the 250th anniversary today) Lafayette’s progressive views on the abolition of slavery, the role of women in society, and attitudes toward Indigenous peoples and the impoverished, among other views, gave us the chance to use Lafayette as a kind of litmus test of progress of the realization of American ideals. This turned into our coming to understand the extraordinary story of local persons, like the free Black couple Tom & Jane Williams of the Town of Washington. They named their son, Lafayette Williams, shortly after the visit in 1827. The Bard College playwright, DN Bashir, turned this story into a short play performed at the FDR Presidential Library & Museum in September.

In addition to the background talk given at the FDR Presidential Library & Museum, the narrative, “Why Lafayette Endures,” was presented as four classes at both Bard and Vassar College Lifetime Learning Institutes.

DCHS Trustee and Civil War specialist Dr. Michael Boden continued his series of Civil War talks, “A Long & Fatiguing Campaign: The 150th New York Regiment in the Atlanta Campaign.”

DCHS Trustee David Turner drew from his own vast image collection to present “How the Automobile Changed the Hudson Valley Landscape through Vintage Postcards.”

The Executive Director’s series for Black history month continued with Free Black Communities and Maritime Adventure Before the Civil War.

Videos of all these programs can be found at www.dchsny.org/virtual-event-space.

There is nothing as fundamental as our responsibility to be stewards of thousands of important documents, photographs, clothing and textiles, and objects. Our new location

with its open, bigger and environmentally controlled space, has allowed for better management and access.

The greatest contribution comes from the appointment of Collections & Archives Manager Aidan Chisamore, who will move to a full-time position in the New Year.

In terms of items themselves, some highlights of new acquisitions include a DeLaval separator, a new-found Caroline Clowes painting, photos of Poughkeepsie in the 1888 blizzard, and a 1706 deed important to the settlement of Rhinebeck.

We expect to publish the DCHS 2024 Yearbook in March of 2025 and continue to expand print on demand through Amazon books. We are grateful to the Northern/Southern Dutchess News / Beacon Free Press which hosts our “Decoding Dutchess Past” every two weeks in their newspapers.

Our focus in library services has been and continues to be the creation of easy to use, online catalogues for both the Butts Research Library and the Kelly Library. We are grateful to library specialist Caroline Cook, who has been leading DCHS into the digital access age by working with special library “apps.” We expect to be able to launch these services in the New Year.

Our membership now exceeds 200 for the first time in many years. We are grateful for this important means of support.

Going into 2025, the celebration of the 250th anniversary of our country’s 1776 founding is becoming an increasingly large part of our focus. We do this work in partnership with the Dutchess County (Gov’t) Historian, Will Tatum, and DCHS “local” Vice Presidents.

One of the most exciting discoveries and gifts to DCHS in the New Year we are engaging highly specialized services to convert the recent gift of local movies from 1919 to 1921 of local scenes. We have not been able to view much given the delicate condition of the movies. Again, watch for progress on this in the New Year!



Bill Jeffway is the Executive Director of the Dutchess County Historical Society and can be reached at bill.jeffway@dchsny.org or 845-293-7711.

immediately answered.

“This would go into effect Jan.1,” said

White. He later noted, this agreement sunsets at the end of 2025.

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Beacon students recognized for BHS PRIDE

The following Beacon High School students were recognized for showing Beacon PRIDE - Positivity - Respect - Integrity - Determination - Engagement for the first quarter of the 2024-25 school year.

The students are:

Mark Aakjar III
 Madison Abrahamson
 Mikayla Acevedo
 Jacqueline Albra
 Nicholas Albra
 Macy Alencastro
 Maayan Alon
 Beckett Anderson
 Molly-Rose Archer
 Anabelle Arginsky
 Ashland Assael
 Emanuele Bagala
 Caden Balfour
 Jahcier Ballard
 Atlas Baltz
 Kekoa Baysa
 Taryn Beardsley
 Caroline Bell
 Jude Betancourt
 Charlotte Bowen
 Daniel Bridges
 Ella Brill
 Aniyah Brown
 Gavin Bruno
 Piper Bruno
 Serenity Bunn
 Lila Burke
 Devin Byrne
 Isabella Cable
 Engel Cabrejo
 Mackenzie Campbell
 Allen Canada
 Christine Chen
 Emily Coldrick
 Zamaya Cone
 Naomi Conklin
 Lia Cosentino
 Tyzeer Cox
 Gabreil Cuello
 Eleanor Culler
 Avery Davis
 Angeleah Decker
 Zoey Dedring
 Magdalena del Puerto-Vitti
 Evelyn DePalma
 Caroline Diaz

Victoria Diaz
 Evelina Diebboll
 Joseph Echevarria
 Tye Elias
 Abilena Eriksmoen
 Jonah Sebastian Espinosa
 Kyle Fairbanks
 Saoirse Fehilly
 Tayler Finley
 Brandon Fremer
 Anthony Fryar
 Isabella Galbo
 Christa George
 Justin Gerardes
 Adam Getter
 AvaMaria Gianna
 Gabriel Godbee
 Ja'mes Gorden
 Arianna Gowie
 Maliah Graham
 Brianna Green
 Tania Griffin
 Emilio Guerra
 Javier Gutierrez Jr.
 Mackenzie Harman
 Sa'yon Harrison
 Troi Harvey Semple
 Alejandro Herrera
 Eliana Herrera
 Grace Hockler
 Ayden Hooten
 Lee Humphreys
 Sarah Lynn Jaafar
 Jeannae Jean-Francois
 Ernesto Jenkins
 Vincent Joao Jr.
 Alina Joseph
 Angel Jurado
 Leon Kaliquani
 Gabrielle Khalil
 Charlie Klein
 Wenang Edward Kobarsih
 Savana Kush
 Rory LaDue
 Carlos Lampon III
 Reilly Landisi
 Ava Lassiter
 Aron Li
 Jayshon Lopez
 Markus Louis
 Lily Mack
 Erin Maignan

Josephine Mallon
 Nora Marshall
 Josue Martell
 Victoria Maruggi
 Louise Mauks
 Endrit Mavraj
 Paige McCredo
 Allen McKay
 Aril McKee
 Oscar McKible
 Shyanne McNair
 Emma Merola
 Oliver Meyer
 Zechia Mickler
 Addison Miller
 Braelyn Milligan
 Elijah Mitchell
 Jaylen Mitchell
 Genan Mohammed Murtada
 Uswah Mohammed Murtada
 Darryl Montgomery Jr.
 Brandon Morales Rivera
 Ronan Moran
 Evelyn Moreno
 John Morocho Llivipuma
 Maddox Morrow
 Rory Mowen
 David Moyer Jr.
 Ismael Munoz
 Emily Nivicela Jarama
 Ray Noble IV
 Carmelo Osuba
 Amelia Padilla
 Giovanni Pagan
 Levi Partlow
 Thyler Patino Albarracin
 Amaya Paulin
 Lindsay Pedersen
 Madelyn Pellerin
 Gabriel Peluso
 Lilly Pendley
 Geordan Penn
 Brianna Perez-Sample
 Caleb Pftzing
 Josue Pintado
 Albion Qelaj
 Gabriel Quinones
 Mohammad Rahman
 Caleb Ramirez
 Sarah Ramkalawon
 Savannah Ray
 Jalaysia Robinson

Daveya Rodriguez
 Marciano Rodriguez
 Thalia Rodriguez
 Trevi Romanelli
 Mikaela Sanchez
 Alexi Santana
 Anastasia Santise
 Evangeline Santise
 Zachary Schetter
 Zion Segarra
 Kayli Shand
 Stella Sheehy
 Chloe Sheffield
 Jacob Signorelli
 Finn Simons
 Wilmer Sinchi Jimbo
 Serenity Smith
 Jaliyah Soto
 Jamir Spence
 Travis Spencer
 Declan Sprague
 Januario Stageman
 Serena Stampleman
 Gannon Statini-Perez
 Clive Stewart
 Harper Strang
 Adryanah Sweat
 Anthony Talbot
 Mika-Gisselle Tates
 Rayana Taylor
 Amya Thompson
 Michai Thompson
 Kiarra Tice
 Brody Timm
 Caellum Tripaldi
 Sortia Tripaldi
 Sharod Tuggle
 Matthew Tumidaj
 Connor Varricchio
 Olivia Viola
 Brayden Vlasaty
 George Walker
 Caleb Wells-McGurk
 Lila Welsh
 Parker White
 Jude Williams
 Malcolm Wilson
 Saniyah Wiltshire
 Zachari Wood
 Piper Yewchuck
 Alexander Young
 Charles Zellinger
 Francis Zezza.

Beacon Elks Lodge recognizes Haldane Students of the Month

Right: Beacon Elks Lodge #1493 recognized the Haldane Middle School Students of the Month (October 2024) during a November 13 certificate ceremony.

Students recognized and Elks' representatives are (from l-r): Cathy Oken, Youth Activities Chair, Amy Paute (6th Grade), Olive Allebrand (7th Grade), Caelan McDermott (8th Grade), and Sharon Haviland, Esteemed Loyal Knight.

Students that are recognized as 'Elks Student(s) of the Month' are nominated by their teacher(s) based on participation, leadership, and academics in school and, in some cases, their achievements while overcoming obstacles.

"Our Student of the Month program recognizes hard work and dedication by the student, with the overall goal of encouraging students to continue their great work," said Michael Zanzarella, Exalted Ruler, Beacon Elks Lodge #1493.

Student of the Month recipients receive a 'Certificate of Achievement' and a gift certificate to a local business. Thanks to Cold Spring Pizza for sponsoring this month's students of the month.

-Courtesy photo



Tompkins Financial Advisors promotes William Lyons to financial planner

Tompkins Financial Advisors (Tompkins) has promoted William "Will" Lyons to financial planner, serving clients in Western, Central, and the Hudson Valley New York; Wyomissing and Blue Bell, Pennsylvania and Delray Beach, Florida. Lyons supports the firm's financial planning efforts across client-facing services and expertise in this new role. His promotion reflects his dedication to delivering expert, personalized, strategic financial solutions to clients and their growth.

"Will has been an exceptional part of our financial planning efforts thus far," said Geoffrey Blyth, senior vice president, chief investment officer. "He is extremely committed to ensuring success and growth for our clients and interested in continuing to learn, enhancing his professional credentials and helping us expand services. We're

thrilled to celebrate Will and this well-deserved accomplishment and support his future growth."

Lyons brings over two years of experience in the banking and financial industry, focused on empowering clients with customized financial strategies, including cash-flow management, retirement planning, scenario-based decision-making and estate tax strategies. His approach prioritizes building long-term financial security and confidence for individuals and families.

Lyons holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from St. Lawrence University, is a Financial Paraplanner Qualified Professional (FPQP) and has embarked on a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) program. Based in Pittsford, New York, Lyons serves clients throughout the region with the utmost dedication and professionalism.

Dance at the Elks Lodge on Jan. 4

Get On Down at the Elks Lounge Dance Night on Saturday, Jan. 4 at 7 p.m., at 900 Wolcott Avenue (Rt. 9D), Beacon. Song requests are welcome. These dances are informal and even if one comes alone, one can always find a friendly partner on the

dance floor. Admission is \$15, includes a variety of delicious complimentary snacks, and a full cash bar is available. For more information, call 845-765-0667 or email rhodaja@optonline.net.

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Obituaries

Joan M. Cleary



Joan M. Cleary, born January 14, 1938, passed away peacefully with her loving family by her side on December 18, 2024.

Mom was the daughter of Hugh and Alice Eagan, who predeceased her on April 24, 1977 and December 17, 1987, respectively.

Mom married her special angel, Robert E. Cleary, on May 11, 1958. Dad predeceased Mom on June 11, 2016 after 58 years of marriage.

Together mom and dad had four children, Debi and Jim Skapetis; Bill and Lisa Cleary, Donna and Steve Feller and Karen and Steve Albrecht. They also had four grandchildren, Chrissy and Scott Gallagher, Michael and Kerry Skapetis, Tyler and Katlynd Albrecht and Keri and Gary Van Tassel.

They also had 11 great grandchildren, Brooke Skapetis, Xavier Gallagher, Connor Skapetis, Leighla Gallagher, Colten Skapetis, Robert Gallagher, Chase Albrecht, Carter Skapetis, Cole Albrecht, Cannon Skapetis and Addy Van Tassel.

Mom was predeceased by her only sibling, Russell Eagan.

Mom worked at Texaco in Beacon prior to her marriage. She then stayed at home to raise us. We will always remember our special Sunday dinners and how mom and dad always made our holidays so special for us. Family was everything.

After raising all of us, mom went back to work at Mid-Hudson Multiple Lising and Weichert Reality until the age of 70.

Mom was a very independent person who never asked for anything. She loved to bowl and was on a bowling league for many years and loved to play Solitaire, which we thought she might make it into the Guinness Book of World Records for the amount of games she played.

We will forever hold her in our hearts and continue the gift of love she and mom dad instilled in each and every one of us.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Hospice and specifically Susan, who was our guardian angel when mom passed.

Visitation was held on Sunday, December 22, 2024 at Delahanty Funeral Home, 64 East Main St. Wappingers Falls, New York. A mass of Christian burial was held at St. Mary's Church, 11 Clinton St. Wappingers Falls, NY 12590. Burial will be private for family only.

Donations may be made to Hospice of Dutchess County, 374 Violet Ave, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601. <https://www.hvhospice.org/donate-now/#Donate>.

Catherine Mary Hamilton



Catherine Mary Hamilton, 81, was born March 11, 1943. She passed away on December 12, 2024, at her home as she wished.

She is predeceased by her parents: Robert J. and Theresa (Cservak) Hamilton; her brother: Robert; her sisters: Joan and Shirley.

She is survived by her cousin, Peggy Roberts, her lifelong friend Jean Van Tassel, and several nieces and nephews in California.

Cathy graduated from Wappingers Central High School and continued her education at Kings Count Hospital School of Nursing. She then obtained a Bachelor of Science in nursing. Cathy's nursing career was spent at Lenix Hill Hospital NYC and Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, NY.

Cathy was a US Army reservist, obtaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel before retir-

ing. She was a life member and past president of the Hughsonville Fire Company

She was a lover of animals and took in every stray cat or dog she found. She raised many rescue dogs.

A Mass of Christian burial was held on Monday, December 23rd, at St. Mary's Church in Wappingers Falls, NY. Followed by a burial at St. Mary's Cemetery in Wappingers Falls, NY.

Memorial donations can be made in Cathy's name to the Hughsonville Fire Company, 88 Old Hopewell Rd, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590 or the ASPCA, 612 Violet Avenue, Hyde Park, NY 12538. For more information, please contact Delahanty Funeral Home.

Board of Health meetings set for 2025

The Dutchess County Board of Health meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month except for the month of July.

Board of Health Meetings for 2025

- January 16
- February 20
- March 20
- April 17
- May 15

HOLIDAY - NO JULY MEETING

- August 21
- September 18
- October 16
- November 20
- December 18.

The public is welcome to attend. For more information, contact 845-486-3432.

Joseph D. Hamel



Joseph D. Hamel, 44, a lifelong area resident, passed away unexpectedly on December 14, 2024, at his home. Born in Poughkeepsie on December 27, 1979, he was the son of Harvey and Anne (DesRochers) Hamel.

Joe was employed at the Gap Distribution Center in Fishkill. He enjoyed spending time with family and friends, watching movies, and cheering on his favorite teams—the NY Giants, NY Rangers, and University of Michigan Wolverines. A true people person, Joe had an incredible gift for connecting with others. Whether chatting with an old friend or striking up a conversation with a stranger, he made everyone feel seen, heard, and special. His warm smile, quick wit, and kind heart left a lasting impression on all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

More than anything in the world, Joe loved his daughters and took immense pride

in supporting them. He was a constant presence at their sporting events, whether at home or traveling for tournaments.

Joe shared a special bond with his oldest daughter, Alexis, whose independence and accomplishments filled him with pride. He treasured every call, visit, and moment they shared, and watching her grow into the remarkable person she is brought him endless joy and fulfillment.

Joe was Peyton's biggest fan on the softball field, cheering her on through every pitch, swing, catch, and slide. He celebrated her successes and encouraged her to keep pushing forward, no matter the outcome.

For Kasidy, Joe was a proud and dedicated supporter on the soccer field, cheering with excitement and pride as she gave her all in every game. He admired her determination and loved being part of her journey, watching her grow as both an athlete and a person.

Joe was also incredibly fortunate to work from home, which gave him the opportunity to spend precious time with his youngest daughter, Oaklyn. He cherished their days together—sharing lunch, watching her play, and simply enjoying the sound of her laughter filling the house. Those moments, though ordinary to some, were treasures to him.

On June 28, 2008, in Wappingers Falls, Joseph married the love of his life, Michelle Hilderbrand, who survives at home. Joe and Michelle shared a deep and inseparable bond, spending countless hours together and creating cherished memories on their many road trips. Whether it was long drives or quiet moments at home, they filled the silence with laughter, conversation, and love. Rarely was one seen without the other, a testament to the beautiful life and companionship they built together.

In addition to his wife and parents, he is survived by his daughters, Alexis, Peyton, Kasidy, and Oaklyn; his siblings and their spouses, Harvey and Nicole Hamel, Phyllis and Frank Danza, Sheryl Hamel and Ray Lewis, and Vincent and Mary Hamel; his brother-in-law Jason and Laura Hilderbrand and Goddaughter Olivia; as well as many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, and friends.

Calling hours were held at the McHoul Funeral Home, Inc., 895 Route 82, Hopewell Junction. A funeral service took place at the funeral home, followed by interment at Fishkill Rural Cemetery.

To honor Joe's memory during calling hours, his daughters invite everyone to wear their favorite sports shirts and hats, celebrating his love for sports and the joy he found in bringing people together.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to assist Joe's daughters in the days to come through the GoFundMe page set up in his memory.

Gofundme Link: <https://gofund.me/0b0614b2>.

Sheila A. Conforti



Sheila A. Conforti passed away peacefully at home on Friday, December 13, 2024, in the company of her warm and attentive caregiver.

Born in the Bronx, Sheila was the beloved daughter of the late Gregory and Mary "Mae" Irwin Coleman. She attended St. Francis of Rome Elementary School and St. Barnabas High School. She later earned her RN from Bellevue Nursing School, a BA from Hunter College, and an MPH from Columbia University.

Sheila spent many joyful summers on Block Island, where she worked at the Star Department Store. Her nursing career began as a Psychiatric Nurse, and she was proud to contribute to pioneering work in the first Hyperbaric Oxygenation Chamber. Over the years, she expanded her expertise to include surgical and

supervisory roles.

After moving her family from Manhattan to Catskill, Sheila continued her service as the Employee Health Nurse at Catskill Memorial Hospital. She ultimately retired after a distinguished career as Greene County's Public Health Director.

A woman of deep faith, Sheila was a parishioner of St. Patrick's Church in Catskill and St. Martin de Porres Parish in Poughkeepsie. She was also an active member of several organizations, including the Third Order Franciscans, the Catskill Rotary Club, the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, and St. Patrick's Church Rosary Altar Society.

In retirement, Sheila dedicated her time to caring for her mother and volunteering with organizations such as the ALIGHT Center in Hudson and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Her commitment to service was a testament to her kind and generous spirit. For the past two years, Sheila resided in Poughkeepsie, where she was cared for by her devoted daughter, Christine.

Sheila will be remembered as an extraordinarily loving and compassionate woman who profoundly touched the lives of all who knew her.

She is survived by her daughter, Christine Conforti Wahlers, and her treasured grandson, Kai. She is also survived by her brother, John Coleman (Liz) of Nevada; niece, Patricia; nephews, John and Michael Coleman; and numerous cousins and dear friends.

Calling hours were held at Millspaugh Camerato Funeral Home, 139 Jefferson Heights, Catskill. A Funeral Mass was celebrated at Sacred Heart Church in Cairo, followed by interment at St. Patrick's Cemetery in Catskill.

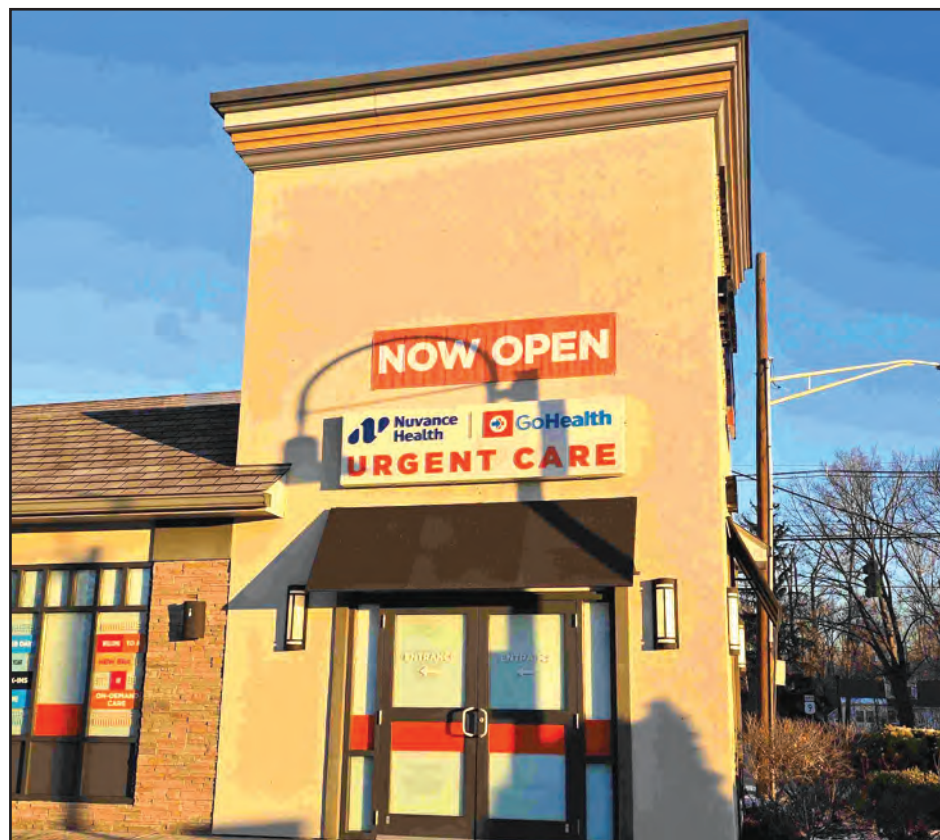
In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Sheila's name may be made to Catholic Charities, 431 East Allen Street, Hudson, NY 12534.

Messages of condolence can be shared at [MillspaughCamerato.com](https://www.millspaughcamerato.com).

New Nuvance Health-Go Health Urgent Care opens in Fishkill



Nuvance Health-GoHealth Urgent Care opened its first center in Fishkill on Dec. 23. -Courtesy photos by Nuvance Health



Nuvance Health-GoHealth Urgent Care opened in Fishkill. The facility is open every day, including holidays, with regular hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week.

Nuvance Health-GoHealth Urgent Care opened its first center in Fishkill on Dec. 23, expanding access to high-quality care in Dutchess County. The new center is located at 703 Route 9, between NBT Bank and Izla of Fishkill.

“Having convenient access to health-care close to home helps communities thrive,” said Dr. Reed Idriss, medical director of Nuvance Health-GoHealth Urgent Care. “Our new Fishkill location offers affordable, high-quality care and a seamless connection to Nuvance Health.

We are honored to provide patients the support they need when they need it, especially during the holidays.”

The Fishkill center is the eleventh Nuvance Health-GoHealth center in the growing urgent care network, and the fourth to serve Dutchess County. This new center follows the opening of two centers last month in Fairfield County, Conn. Nuvance Health-GoHealth plans to open additional centers in 2025.

About the Fishkill center

The center features an award-winning

design that includes bold colors, wood accents and an open floor plan to foster a comfortable patient experience. The center’s warm color palette and lighting also help to ensure that patients feel a sense of ease and healing at every stage of their visit.

The new location provides care for the whole family, offering patients aged 6 months and older a wide array of services for conditions including flu, fever, ear-aches, insect bites, sprains, simple fractures and eye injuries, as well as cuts requiring stitches. It is open every day, including holidays, with regular hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week.

Affordable, quality and connected care

The new Fishkill center provides the community with a more affordable option for high-quality and efficient care outside of higher-cost settings such as emergency departments. It also provides a direct connection to Nuvance Health’s robust care network, which is nationally recognized for quality and safety.

Patients can walk into any Nuvance Health-GoHealth center or use its online “save-a-spot” tool to save time by securing their spot in line, checking in and completing registration before arriving.

For details about all Nuvance Health-GoHealth locations, visit gohealthuc.com/nuvancehealth.

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Legal Notices

LEGAL NOTICE OF ESTOPPEL

The following entitled bond resolution, a summary of which is published herewith, has been adopted on December 18, 2024, and the validity of the obligations authorized by such resolution may be hereafter contested only if such obligations were authorized for an object or purpose for which the County of Dutchess, New York, is not authorized to expend money, or if the provisions of law which should have been complied with as of the date of publication of this notice were not substantially complied with, and an action, suit or proceeding contesting such validity is commenced within twenty days after the date of publication of this notice, or such obligations were authorized in violation of the provisions of the Constitution. A complete copy of the resolution summarized herewith is each available for public inspection during regular business hours at the Office of the Clerk of the Legislature for a period of twenty days from the date of publication of this Notice. Dated: Poughkeepsie, New York, December 23, 2024.

Legal Notices

RESOLUTION NO. 2024216 BOND RESOLUTION DATED DECEMBER 18, 2024. A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY’S SHARE OF CERTAIN PRELIMINARY PLANNING AND DESIGN EXPENSES IN CONNECTION WITH THE CENTER FOR BUSINESS INDUSTRY (CBI) INTERIOR RESTACK AND REPROGRAMMING PROJECT OF DUTCHESS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF DUTCHESS, NEW YORK, AT A MAXIMUM ESTIMATED COST OF \$1,975,000 AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$987,500 BONDS OF SAID COUNTY TO PAY A PORTION OF THE COST THEREOF. **Specific object or purpose:** Preliminary planning and design expenses in connection with CBI interior restack-reprogramming of DCCC (County’s share) **Period of probable usefulness:**

Legal Notices

5 years **Maximum estimated cost:** \$1,975,000 **Amount of bonds to be issued:** \$987,500 bonds **State grants-in-aid:** \$987,500 **SEQRA status:** Type II Action **LEGAL NOTICE – Dutchess County Executive’s Office NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that a public hearing will be held by the County Attorney of Dutchess County in the County Office Building, County Attorney’s Conference Room, 5th Floor, 22 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, New York, on the **6th day of January 2025 at 10:00 am**, on the following local law: A LOCAL LAW AMENDING LOCAL LAW NO. 11 OF 1983 INCREASING THE TAX ON THE OCCUPANCY OF HOTEL ROOMS FROM FOUR PERCENT TO FIVE PERCENT. At said time and place, all parties interested will be heard. Dated: December 20, 2024 Susan J. Serino Poughkeepsie, New York Dutchess County Executive

Legal Notices

NOTICE TO BIDDERS - RFB - DCH-2025-01 NAME OF PROJECT: Replacement of Bridge L-29 Town of Lagrange, Dutchess County, New York. Project Description: Replacement of a single-span (38 ft.) jack-arch bridge with a 58 ft. span bridge comprised of adjacent precast concrete box beams, with a cast-in-place concrete deck, supported by integral abutments. The County of Dutchess official bid documents for this project are obtained from the Empire State Purchasing Group’s Regional Bid Notification System at www.bidnetdirect.com/new-york/county-of-dutchess. Copies of bidding documents obtained from any other source are not considered official copies. It is incumbent upon all potential bidders to view all posted addenda prior to the bid close date. You may obtain an official copy by registering on the Empire State Regional Bid Notification System at www.bidnetdirect.com/new-york/county-of-dutchess or by using the link provided at www.dutchessny.gov.

Legal Notices

gov, selecting “Government” then selecting “Bidding and RFP Opportunities.” For those without Internet access, you may obtain an electronic copy of bidding documents by contacting the Dutchess County Department of Public Works at dpwcontracts@dutchessny.gov, or in person, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4 pm: Dutchess County DPW, Business Office, 1st Floor, 626 Dutchess Turnpike, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603. Upon request, all interested parties may review the hard copy of the Bid Specifications and Drawings by visiting the above referenced address. All Addenda will be posted on Bid-Net Direct (aka Empire State Purchasing Group) site. Bids for the above project will be received by: Christopher Sterbenz, Contract Specialist, Dutchess County Department of Public Works (DPW) 626 Dutchess Turnpike-1st Floor, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603 on or before 11:00 AM Friday, January 24, 2025, and at that time publicly opened and read aloud. Bids received after that time will not be accepted.

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All interested parties are invited to attend. The bid opening for this solicitation may also be attended through Microsoft Teams Audio Conferencing. Anyone who wishes to hear bids read aloud via Teams, will need to call into the phone number listed below. We ask that you call in at least three minutes prior to bid due/time to ensure you are connected properly. All call-ins will be asked to identify themselves by name and organization. Join Microsoft Teams Meeting +1 516-268-4602 United States, Hempstead (Toll) Conference ID: 247 203 702 818# Each bid shall be submitted as one paper original and one electronic flash drive copy and be accompanied by Bid Security (bid bond, certified check, official bank check) or a Letter of Credit (in a form agreeable to Dutchess County) in the amount of 10% of the bid amount. Bidders’ security will be retained until the successful bidder has signed the Owner-Contractor Agreement and the County has finalized the Agreement. Each bid with Bid Security shall be enclosed in a

Legal Notices

sealed envelope bearing the name of the Project, Name of the Bidder, and the date and hour of the bid opening, which must be visible upon delivery. Questions will be accepted by the close of business Friday January 17, 2025 and emailed to Christopher Sterbenz at dpwcontracts@dutchessny.gov with the County’s response published in Addenda prior to 48 hours before the bid opening date. The anticipated start of construction is March 15, 2025; the anticipated substantial completion date is September 5, 2025. Failure to meet these dates may result in liquidated damages. This project may be subject to NYS Department of Labor Prevailing Wage Rates PRC #: 2024015336 Starting December 30, 2024: NYSDOL Contractor and Subcontractor registry requirements. View Bid Specifications regarding APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM, if applicable. The County reserves the right to waive irregularities in bids and in bidding and to reject any or all proposals.

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- 105 Employment Opportunity
- 106 Business Opportunity
- 107 Situations Wanted
- 120 Schools
- 121 Special Instruction
- 122 Musical Instruction
- 140 Nursery Schools
- 141 Child Care
- 142 Day Care
- 143 Baby-sitting
- 145 Adult Care
- 150 Announcements
- 151 Adoption
- 152 Novenas
- 154 Lost & Found
- 155 Personal
- 200 Services

- 201 Home Improvement
- 202 Cleaning Services
- 203 Lawn Services
- 221 Professional Services
- 222 Tax Experts
- 223 Beauty Services
- 225 Business Services
- 226 Travel & Services
- 227 Bridal Services
- 295 Financial
- 296 Mortgages
- 300 Real Estate
- 301 Townhouses & Condos
- 302 Commercial Property
- 304 Mobile Homes
- 305 Lots & Acreage
- 400 Townhomes & Condos for rent

Classified Index

- 401 Apartments for Rent
- 402 Rooms for Rent
- 403 Furnished Rooms
- 404 Furnished Apartments
- 405 Wanted to Rent
- 406 Garages for Rent
- 407 Vacation Rentals
- 408 Houses for Rent
- 420 Commercial Rentals
- 500 Musical Merchandise
- 501 Kid Stuff
- 502 Clothing
- 503 Furniture
- 504 Appliances
- 505 Free Items
- 506 Computers
- 507 Sports Equipment
- 508 Exercise Equipment

- 509 Office Equipment
- 510 Firewood
- 511 Lawn & Garden Equip.
- 512 Winter Merchandise
- 516 Misc. Merchandise
- 700 Pets & Supplies
- 701 Free Pets
- 702 Lost & Found Pets
- 703 Pets for Adoption
- 710 Garage & Yard Sale
- 711 Tag Sale
- 712 Moving sale
- 713 Rummage Sale
- 714 Flea Market
- 715 Craft Corner
- 716 Barn Sale
- 717 Estate Sale
- 718 Auctions
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O Christmas Tree: Mount Saint Mary's College celebrates the holidays with annual tree lighting



Mount Saint Mary College students, staff, and faculty got into the holiday spirit at the annual Christmas Tree Lighting on Thursday, Dec. 5. Participants sang classic Christmas carols and were wowed by the elegant tree. They also enjoyed stuffing festive plush animals, games, traditional Christmas carols, and more. Dr. Robert Gervasi, President of Mount Saint Mary College, joined in on the fun. -Photos by Lee Ferris

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503 Furniture

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get growing!

by mark adams



New Year's Eve

World travelers Mark and Sue have greeted the new year in many different places.



New Year's Eve in Bogota, Columbia – one of many different places where Mark and Sue Adams have welcomed the new year.

-Photo by Sue Adams

50 New Year's Eves together and counting ... Sue and I are remembering some of the highlights:

• **Sydney, Australia** – It's 8 a.m. in New York when Sydney sets off its New

Year's Eve fireworks display, so it gets a lot of airplay here. Sue and I had to see it for ourselves. Let's just say it's tough to find a place to stay when you arrive in Sydney on December 31 without a hotel

reservation. And nobody told us about the hills we had to drag our luggage up and down before we finally found a room at a youth hostel that was actually very nice and affordable. We wormed our way into a sold-out show at Luna Park with a fabulous view of the fireworks.

• **Honolulu** – People set off thousands of firecrackers to scare away evil spirits. The next day, we traveled to the "Big Island" to visit our friend Marvin Jones. His house was crammed with locals displaced by the eruption of Mauna Loa. It was a wild scene, as the lava was creating new territory as it streamed into the ocean. Some of Marvin's friends were venturing onto the lava as it cooled to strike claims, hoping they wouldn't break through the crust.

• **Buenos Aires** – We arrived one day after the horrendous Coromanon Night Club fire (December 30, 2004) that killed 194 people and injured 1,500. (The band members were convicted of murder). President Kirchner closed all the nightclubs, but not tango showrooms. Sue and I went to a tango show, where we sat with the dancer's family. We looked them up the next few times we were in Buenos Aires.

• **New Orleans** – I guess the party is nonstop on Bourbon Street, and New Year's Eve is just another night, even a scant five years after Hurricane Katrina. Sue and I stayed one street next door, at a haunted hotel on Royal Street. Our hotel was on the ghost tour. New Orleans has an impressive New Year's Eve fireworks display. We took a side trip to Lafayette, Louisiana, supposedly the home of authentic zydeco music, but the bands were better back in the Big Easy. On January 2nd, Sue and I took in a Saints game, with all the attendant festivities. Sue even said she had a great time, "until the game started."

• **San Agustin, Colombia** – One of our three New Year's Eves spent in our favorite South American country. The New Year's Eve "parade" in the tiny village of San Agustin, famous for its pre-Colombian statue, consisted of motorcyclists throwing flour at each other. Midnight found us sharing a bottle of Bailey's with a bunch of homeless people in the town square.

• **New York, New York** – After dropping daughter Becky at a Phish concert in Madison Square Garden, Sue and I crammed into the "Life" nightclub in the East Village to see Grace Jones. It was the mid 1990s. Early in 2001, my mom reserved a room in a fancy hotel overlooking Times Square, with an unobstructed view of the ball drop. After the horror of 9-11, all kinds of rumors were swirling about another terrorist attack on New Year's Eve. We were issued special passes to get past the barricades around Times Square. The ball dropped, with a nationwide sigh of relief.

• **Big Cypress Reservation, Florida** – New Year's Eve 1999 was special. "Y2K" was supposed to cause all computers to crash and airplanes to fall from the sky. Me, Sue, Becky and her friend Eric crammed into our Toyota Camry with our luggage, guitars and four bicycles and headed to the Phish concert in Florida's everglades. Out of 50,000 fans, I was the oldest person there. The bikes came in handy to travel to the farthest port-a-potties, away from the crowd. Don't ask about the fire ants.

• **Lalibela, Ethiopia** – A decent New Year's Eve show at the Hilton in Addis Ababa paled in comparison to the January 6 Orthodox Christian celebration in Lalibela, home to the underground Rock-hewn churches. Thousands of pilgrims arrived with their livestock. Sue and I attended mass, driven to the church in a horse drawn cart. It was heartbreaking to learn just a year later (2023) that the entire region plunged into a civil war.

• **Poughkeepsie, U.S.A.** – When we weren't celebrating New Year's Eve in Las Vegas, Honduras, Tanzania, Namibia, Panama, Pittsburgh, Myrtle Beach or Santa Fe, Sue and I stayed in Poughkeepsie, usually because my band was performing. This year's celebration involves partying with friends in Saint Augustine, Florida, before we fly to Istanbul.

Happy New Year!

Mark Adams is an agricultural advisor to the Dutchess County Executive, Dutchess County B.O.C.E.S. and Cornell University.

Mount St. Mary toy drive donates hundreds of gifts to Catholic Charities



This year, Santa Claus is getting a little help from his friends in the Hudson Valley. The Mount Saint Mary College community and generous friends of the college teamed up to make this holiday season a little brighter for families in need, to the tune of more than 700 toys.

The college's annual toy drive was spearheaded by the Dominican Sisters of Hope Campus Ministry via Fr. Gregoire Fluet, Vice President for Mission and Ministry. Also taking the lead were the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), the Student Government Association, and Mike Lowell, assistant Athletic director and head women's Lacrosse Coach.

After students and staff loaded them up, the toys collected at the college were donated in-person and to Catholic Charities of Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster counties.

-Courtesy photo

Registration for DC Parks

Winter Programs opens January 2

Residents of all ages looking for fun and educational things to do this winter can look forward to Dutchess County Parks' lineup of naturalist programming. Popular sessions will return this year, including indoor archery and painting classes for adults. Registration for all programs opens Thursday, Jan. 2 and will be available at Dutchessny.gov/parks.

Winter Naturalist Program Schedule
Weekend Public Archery sessions begin Saturday, Jan. 11, at Bowdoin Park inside the community auditorium. The program consists of five classes, held on Saturdays, with various time slots offered. The sessions, each an hour long, are designed for individuals ages 9 and up with any level of archery experience. Basic hands-on archery skills are taught, as well as bow and arrow safety. Cost is \$70 per person and includes all five classes and equipment. Limited to 12 participants per time slot.

Register at www.DutchessNY.gov/

ParksEducation.

Dates: Jan. 11, Jan. 25, Feb. 8, Feb. 22 and March 8

Time Slots: 8:30-9:30 a.m.; 10-11 a.m.; 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; 2-3 p.m.; 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Adult Park Palette Art Series is a learn-to-paint series for adults of all skill levels. Sessions will be held at Bowdoin Park's Maple Knoll Lodge from 6-7:30 p.m. and cost \$12 per class, which includes supplies. Limited to 12 participants per class and registration is required.

Dates: Tuesday, Jan. 21; Tuesday, Feb. 18; Monday, March 3;

Weekday Archery and Junior Survival sessions are also available by appointment; call 845-298-4602 for reservations. Updates on winter sledding at Bowdoin Park will be shared on the Dutchess County Parks hotline, 845-298-2607, and Facebook page.

To learn more about Dutchess County Parks, visit www.DutchessNY.gov/Parks.

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