

ONE STEP FORWARD

SULLIVAN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS PREPARE FOR SAFE FALL REOPENING

MONTICELLO -- With New York Governor Andrew Cuomo having given the green light, Sullivan County's school districts are preparing to reopen, and Sullivan County Public Health Services has been providing guidance and input for the past few months through remote meetings, calls and email communication with superintendents and school officials.

"My staff, who have been on the front lines of coronavirus response since March, are working closely with Sullivan County BOCES and our public schools to ensure a safe and coordinated reopening," Public Health Director Nancy McGraw said. "We've developed communication, assessment and contact tracing protocols; discussed screening and testing resources; and provided information about the latest information and resources locally, State-wide and Federally."

Public Health has been particularly aided in this effort by BOCES, including a conference call BOCES coordinated with local school superintendents.

"BOCES and its component districts have spent many weeks planning for this important reopening," BOCES District Superintendent Robert Dufour said. "And our work will not end with the start of the school year. We will continue to partner with the County and State to give our children as safe and complete an education as the circumstances allow."

All 8 school districts based in the County --

Eldred, Fallsburg, Liberty, Livingston Manor, Monticello, Roscoe, Sullivan West and Tri-Valley -- are working on plans to open for the new school year, some in September, others in October, and Public Health Services will assist as needed. (Four districts that serve Sullivan County but are based in neighboring areas -- Ellenville, Minisink Valley, Pine Bush and Port Jervis -- are under the jurisdiction of their respective health departments, with whom Sullivan County will coordinate.)

"We have a team of nurses and public health experts who have worked hard to keep our COVID-19 numbers low, and we will make every effort to ensure a coordinated response for any suspect case should it occur. As schools prepare to reopen we are stressing the importance of preventive and protective measures that work to prevent transmission of the novel coronavirus, which is hand-washing, mask wearing and social distancing. We know that it works," Ms. McGraw said.

"Sullivan County will stand behind its hard-working teachers, students, faculty and staff," she added. "We believe there will inevitably be bumps and concerns along the way as children and staff get used to social distancing and wearing masks in the school setting, but we are confident that we have set up a protocol and communication plan that will ensure an immediate and timely response to any concerns."

FALLSBURG SCHOOLS TO OPEN REMOTELY

FALLSBURG -- Fallsburg Central School District Superintendent Dr. Ivan Katz said last week that the school has changed its plans about how it will resume classes this month.

In a letter to the parents of the district, Dr. Katz wrote that the decision to begin the school year using a "remote learning model" was made by the Board of Education and District Administrators with input from other "stakeholders."

The District had previously announced at the end of July that it was planning to start the fall semester using a hybrid model of instruction that featured a mix of in-person classes and remote learning experiences. But that announce-

ment had also contained the caveat that the hybrid model "can be easily adapted to a fully remote learning model should circumstances call for that."

Dr. Katz noted that the many ongoing challenges of reopening amid the pandemic contributed to the change in plans.

Fallsburg is set to begin its school year on September 14. The remote instruction is expected to continue for at least the first ten weeks of the school year.

Here is the full text of Dr. Katz's letter:

PHOTO PROVIDED
Fallsburg Central School
District Superintendent
Dr. Ivan Katz.



Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am writing to let you know that after very considerable deliberation, and input from parents and other stakeholders, I and the Board of Education have decided to alter our reopening plans.

We will be opening the school year remotely for all students and staff. In the remote learning model, student instruction takes place at home. The school year for students will still begin on September 14 and will be fully remote for the first ten weeks of the school year. Student instruction will take place, district-wide, from 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

This decision was made with the health, safety and welfare of students and staff as our number one priority. It came down to balancing the equally important concerns of providing each and every child with the very best education possible given the resources and conditions at our disposal. This balance required us to provide a safe and healthy environment for students, staff and their families at home.

The clear conclusion from the lessons we learned in the spring, is that students learn best when they are in school and have full, daily, in-person contact with their teachers and other support staff. To that end, we are planning to duplicate that experience, as much as possible, in a remote format.

To achieve an educational model that closely resembles live, in-person instruction, all faculty and staff who provide services to students will provide live instruction through the Google Meet platform.

I would like to apologize for any inconvenience that this decision may cause our parents, students and families. Careful consideration of all of your feedback along with the many challenges we are facing, guided us toward this decision.

We will send updates to you and we will plan for informational sessions to support our instructional efforts.

Thank you.
Dr. Katz

Should there be any updates on the school district's plans, they will be available on the district's website: <http://www.fallsburgcsd.net/home>.



PHOTO PROVIDED
SUNY Sullivan President Jay Quaintance

SUNY Sullivan Reopens Hybrid Learning Format In Place

LOCH SHELDRAKE -- Four months after SUNY Sullivan moved all instruction to a distance-based format the college has announcing a hybrid reopening for the fall semester. The majority of courses will be offered remotely, with classes that meet at specific times and feature real-time interaction through distance learning platforms. Students will also be able to stay on track with flexible study options.

Certain classes will be conducted in a hybrid environment with a combination of in-person and distance learning instruction. And student support activities, such as tutoring, advising, counseling, and club activities, all of which help provide the full college experience, will take place in virtually networked communities.

"The SUNY Sullivan working groups have produced a plan that is designed to balance the desire to open against the risk of COVID-19 outbreak," said SUNY Sullivan President Jay Quaintance. "The college has opted for a moderate course that ensures access to high quality pro-

gramming without sacrificing safety concerns."

Courses that do not require specialized equipment will be taught at a distance, limiting both faculty and student traffic on campus and further reducing the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Classes that involve laboratory experiences or clinical experiences, including nursing, respiratory care, medical assisting, culinary arts and pastry arts lab classes, and theater will include in-person instruction. This will help facilitate social distancing as the on-campus programs will have virtually unlimited space, and address social distancing issues in hallways and classrooms. These programs will front-load experiences to minimize disruption if there is a general campus shutdown, and most on-campus instruction should conclude by Thanksgiving week. The semester will continue via distance learning instruction through Friday, December 18.

Given the circumstances of the current environment, all plans are subject to change due to new information, guidance, or direction from the state.

Suny Sullivan Closes Residence Halls For Fall Semester

LOCH SHELDRAKE -- In the interest of the safety of students and the entire college campus community, SUNY Sullivan has announced that campus residence halls will not be opened for the fall semester.

Facing complex issues regarding facilities design, population density, and other related challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, college leadership and the SUNY Sullivan Dormitory Board made the decision in late August to keep the Lazarus I. Levine Residence Hall closed through the end of the year and continue planning for opening the Hall for the spring semester.

"While the country continues to be in the grips of the COVID 19 pandemic, our goal at SUNY Sullivan remains as it always has been:

to provide our students with the highest quality educational experience possible," said SUNY Sullivan President Jay Quaintance. "After seeing what has happened across the country at other colleges, we believe that we would not be able to accomplish that goal with students in the residence hall due to the increased risk to their health and safety and the stress and anxiety that would accompany living in close quarters. We are confident that all our students will have a fulfilling, supported semester under the current plan."

Remote instruction modalities will remain the same as previously planned. Courses that do not require specialized equipment will be taught at a distance, limiting both faculty and stu-



PHOTO PROVIDED

SUNY Sullivan has announced that its dorms will not be open this fall.

dent traffic on campus and further reducing the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Classes that involve laboratory experiences or clinical experiences, including nursing, respiratory care, medical assisting, culinary arts and theater arts lab classes, and theater will include in-person instruction. This will

help facilitate social distancing as the on-campus programs will have virtually unlimited space, and will reduce traffic in hallways and classrooms. The administration has implemented mask mandates, installed plexiglass barriers in communal areas, increased cleaning and sanitizing intervals, and

placed hand-sanitizing stations throughout the campus.

The majority of courses will be offered remotely, with classes that meet at specific times and feature real-time interaction through distance learning platforms. Students will also be able to stay on track with flex-

ible study options. Certain classes will be conducted in a hybrid environment with a combination of in-person and distance learning instruction. And student support activities, such as tutoring, advising, counseling, and club activities, all of which help provide the full college experience, will take place in virtually networked communities.

These programs will front-load experiences to minimize disruption if there is a general campus shutdown, and most on-campus instruction should conclude by Thanksgiving week. The semester will continue via distance learning instruction through Friday, December 18.

In-person and online instruction began at the college on August 31.



PHOTO PROVIDED

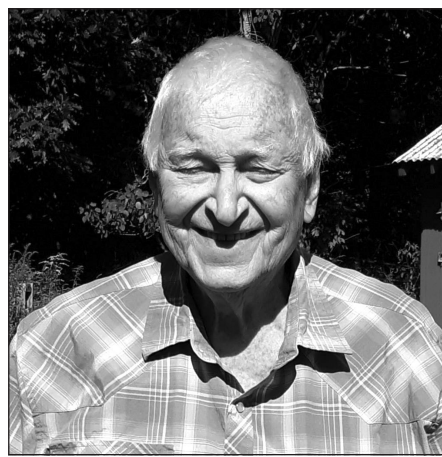
Sullivan County Public Health Director Nancy McGraw

The Inquiring Photographer

by Kathleen Sullivan



Q. "What's been getting you through the pandemic?"



LEE BERGER

It's not too much of a lifestyle-changing hardship for me. I don't work. Instead of going to the store 5 times a day I go 2 times a week at 6:00 a.m. when the seniors go. I do understand the hardship so many people are going through, and I feel badly for them.



JIM SULLIVAN

I retired.

ANONYMOUS

I get through by reading every article in every edition of The Hurleyville Sentinel and then waiting impatiently for the next edition.



FROM THE WEATHER CENTER

by John Simon



THE FALL EQUINOX

The fall (autumnal) equinox falls on September 22, 2020 in the Northern hemisphere, and it is the date on which day and night are approximately (but not exactly) the same length because the sun is directly above the equator. This doesn't last for an entire day, and is in reality just a moment in time every year.

Temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere start out hot or warm and then slowly get cooler as the days go on. This is also a signal to the animals to go into hibernation or deep

sleep, and the plants and trees die or go to sleep.

Many cultures and religions, including the ancient Mayans, celebrate holidays and festivals around the equinox. In Greek mythology, the fall equinox was closely linked to the goddess of the harvest, Demeter, but that is a story for another time.

The fall equinox reminds us to slowly get ready for winter. Here's hoping that this winter will be warm, and with not much snow, as well.

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Hamlet Happenings

by Kathleen Sullivan

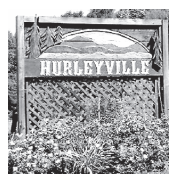


PHOTO PROVIDED

The entrance to Congregation Anschei-Hurleyville Cemetery.

seum on Facebook.

Please email Suzanne Cecil at scecil@hvc.rr.com if you have any questions.

Columbia Hill Neighborhood Alliance (CHNA)

As reported in the August edition, the agenda of the Town of Thompson Planning Board's meeting on July 8, 2020 included a scoping session for Gan Eden Estates...a proposed mega-development of 534 units in 89 buildings on Columbia Hill. The scoping session was an opportunity for public comments on the draft scoping document submitted to the board by the developer of the project.

The following letter was submitted by Stuart Wizwer on behalf of the Congregation Anschei-Hurleyville Cemetery for insertion in the minutes of the session.

To the Town of Thompson Planning Board:

This response is directed to the Environmental Review for Gan Eden Estates proposed at the top of Columbia Hill, C.R. 104 & 107, Hurleyville.

I am communicating as Treasurer and Manager of Congregation Anschei-Hurleyville Cemetery located on Cemetery Road off Mongaup Road in Hurleyville.

There are two major concerns that we have for our cemetery, which is over 100 years old.

First is the rain run off that will increase because of the change in the topography if Gan Eden Estates is built and because of the continued expansion of housing units beyond the stated size and scope as proposed.

There is a stream that is located behind the cemetery that the property line butts up against. With the additional water that will travel down the hill and into the watershed, that will swell the stream to the point of overflow and thereby raising the ground water level to the point of "floating" the caskets placed into the ground hampering the proper "religious"

The Sullivan County Museum & Historical Society

The Sullivan County Museum is open for volunteer staff only right now. They are working on the research requests that have been sent to the Sullivan County Historical Society since the museum was closed due to the pandemic.

Go to www.scnyhistory.org for more information on the Sullivan County Historical Society and the Sullivan County Museum. You can also visit the Sullivan County Historical Society and Mu-

DRAMATIC WORKSHOP ANNOUNCES VIRTUAL PROGRAM

SOUTH FALLSBURG – The lights of the Rivoli Theatre stage are once again dimmed.

The Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop, acting with an abundance of caution, postponed until further notice their "Rivoli Vaudeville Live" show, which was to play August 14-16 & 21-23. Vaudeville thrives on live audience responses to achieve their special effects. Meanwhile, SCDW is



very excited to announce September's show, "Hate Mail," which will be viewed through virtual programing! "Hate Mail" is a two-person comedy full of surprises at every turn! Directors Bunny Wolo-

burial of our loved ones. We have had one case where the family exhumed their beloved member to be moved because of this issue. This took place in the springtime and it was not a particularly unusual winter.

We are afraid that this will occur on a much more frequent basis that will not be able to be mitigated once the project comes to fruition. The area surrounding the cemetery on some wet rainy days has very poor drainage. The additional rainwater will only multiply and exacerbate the conditions to the point of eliminating any further burials there.

Our second concern is a possible sewer run off from a potential treatment plant failure and/or abandonment of proper maintenance by the management. That has in fact happened several times in the Town of Thompson by the management of private enterprises just "walking away" from the responsibility of operating the plant. This runoff would SURELY end up in the stream behind our cemetery.

This possibility would then cause our cemetery to become a "leaching field" if you will. This is NOT ACCEPTABLE for our loved ones. WOULD IT BE FOR YOURS?

We object to the current size and scope of this project and the historic future unplanned and unapproved expansion of this project.

After it is built and these issues become a reality, what would be able to be done to correct and mediate the aforementioned concerns that we have expressed here?

Thank you.

Stuart S. Wizwer

Treasurer And Manager

Congregation Anschei-Hurleyville Cemetery

Visit Columbia Hill Neighborhood Alliance at www.columbiahill.org or on Facebook to learn how you can help to protect your environment and your community.

The Scene

Music and Entertainment in and around Hurleyville



by Jane Harrison

On August 3, I lost a friend. Guitar master and Hurleyville resident AL DEFINO passed on.

I met him for the first time when he started playing at the old NADIAS on Main Street in Hurleyville. His mastery of his instrument was undeniable. But beyond that, I met a very personable, charming, soft spoken man with a quick smile and thousands of wonderful stories of his life.

We spoke a great deal about his time in Belgium and, although it was not one of the European countries I had visited, the similarities to the countries I had, found us both wistfully reminiscing. Most particularly of the cafes and the bars with live music and the civility of the people "over there." He spoke a few different languages and regularly Skyped with his friends abroad.

We spoke a great deal, too about his time spent, with his guitar, with The Rat Pack and the time he spent touring with SAMMY DAVIS JR. There was a sort of kinship developed there, founded on of all things, racism. He would never go into great detail; instead he would lower his eyes and shake his head saying how much he disliked playing the gigs with Sammy in this country because of the way Sammy was treated because of the color of his skin. About how they couldn't all go out for breakfast after a sold out show at a major venue because he wouldn't be allowed in the restaurant. Sometimes even if it was a restaurant in the casino or hotel where they had just performed. It made no sense to Al, then or now.

But then he would perk up and talk about touring with Sammy in Japan and elsewhere and how he was treated with the respect for his talent and treated as a human being. And that Al loved touring abroad with him. I always got the feeling that Al saw something of his own personal experiences, being Jewish, in all of this.

We spoke of his decades

of teaching at the esteemed Berkley College of Music in Boston. We spoke of the pitfalls of love and marriage. We spoke of smoking cigarettes and the difficulty of quitting. We spoke of so very many things.

The one thing that surprised me about him is that he LOVED people to come to his home. I don't think I have ever met anyone who was so overjoyed to invite someone in. He was still teaching anyone who wanted to learn. And though I couldn't play a guitar if my life depended on it, I did help him solve some minor computer problems from time to time, and maybe it was his Italian heritage but he was always trying to feed me! He always made his own "sauce" every week, a fact that most people didn't know. And it was quite good!

Al was not without his struggles, which is something most people DO know. It made him difficult to be around sometimes. In the last few years, though, it was a different kind of struggle for him. A battle with throat cancer. Then, with the CoVid pandemic, and what is still the enforced separation of people, this hit him harder than most.

I will miss Al. His passing has left a large hole in the musical community but also in the hearts of many, students, friends, family.

We all take solace in the fact that he is now at peace; his struggles are over.

He would be pleased that the live music venues are continuing to offer music in outdoor venues. It's difficult in these times to do anything indoors. I, for one, have only once been to anything indoors. Still with the cooler weather coming on, these venues are reluctant to post schedules because everything is weather related. The three I have visited the most, because of their adherence to safety measures outdoors are CABERNET FRANK'S in Parksville (every night except Monday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m.), RAFTERS TAVERN in Callicoon (on occasion Friday and Saturday nights with a stellar Open Mic Sundays at 3 p.m.), and THE DISTILLERY next to the DANCING CAT in Bethel (every Saturday at 4 p.m.).

For those in the Neversink area, although it does not offer live music, the BBQ shack at the NEVERSINK GENERAL STORE has added beer from the independent brewery UPWARD and a sparkling Portuge wine to their menu of outstanding food. So, if you're just looking for a place to have a leisurely lunch, check it out.

Stay well, stay strong
Until next time.....

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ANTICIPATING THE NEW NORMAL

THINC Works Toward Reopening

by Denise Sullivan

HURLEYVILLE — As businesses and municipal services around the county continue to reopen while observing state and health department guidelines, schools have been working to do the same in anticipation of the start of the new school year.

All 8 districts based in the County are working on plans to open for the new school year, some in September, others in October, and public health services will assist as needed. Most will be offering a hybrid weekly schedule that includes some days of in-person instruction with limited student numbers combined with some days of remote learning at home. Like every other public building, continuous cleaning is on the schedule, and new signage and floor markings to designate workspaces and traffic patterns are being installed.

Protocols for daily temperature screenings, including for visitors and vendors, must be put into place. Students will be grouped with the intention that each cohort will stay together throughout the day, minimizing larger group expo-



PHOTO PROVIDED

Building planters at THINC

sure. Preventive and protective measures that work to prevent transmission of the novel coronavirus, namely hand-washing, mask wearing and social distancing, will be implemented everywhere in all phase four establishments.

At the Technology Hub and Incubator (THINC) at The Center for Discovery

(TCFD), access to the building is still limited to TCFD employees. However, a cohort of adult residents has begun to spend time at THINC for day habilitation, a program that provides vocational opportunities that focus on reinforcing basic life skills, fostering social experiences and building a vocational foundation.

Otherwise known as the “Main Street Men,” this delightful group of gentlemen have been watering the outdoor mini-gardens, creating art, working in the accessible workshop, and making videos. Sam Rose, Director of Recreation, planned and organized workshop activities for the residents — rebuilding an outdoor vertical

planter, assembling outdoor benches, and building roll-up tables, which are nifty portable wooden tables that resemble a tambour desk cover. The tabletop is made from linked wooden slats that roll out onto a base, creating a small but useful utility table. When rolled up, the table can easily be carried using an attached shoulder

strap, making it a must-have for patios and socially distant picnics.

Julie Palmer, Digital Media Lab Project Coordinator at THINC, got the group together to brainstorm ideas for fun pictures and videos. She has been helping them create transformation photos and videos, where each resident decides where they “want to go” by choosing the setting or background that is inserted into their photos through the magic of green screen editing. THINC is helping these gentlemen access the creative arts, agricultural care, and safely limited community participation, enriching their daily lives.

Lastly at THINC, the universally designed FlexTable is popping up in new colors and sizes. Over the last year, THINC took a deep dive into TCFD’s flagship product in an effort to offer greater functionality, streamline in-house production and make the product more easily accessible for purchase. Please visit flextable.org to see what all the buzz is about, and follow THINC Technology Hub and Incubator on Facebook and Instagram.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Out Divine Corners Way

by Jonathan Shimkin

Though I was born under the sign of Leo, I’ve never actually seen the Lion in the night sky.

I lack fluency in reading the stars; they seem a cosmic Rorschach of lights, both sublime and illegible. How the stable figures of the zodiac were derived from that sprawling density is a mystery to me (the Big Dipper, which has the virtue of looking very like a ladle, excepted). Yet a lion has been sighted among the stars with remarkable consistency, as far back as 4000 BCE. The Sumerians saw him there, as did the Persians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and Greeks; they all saw Regulus, the brightest star in the constellation, as a sign of the Lion’s heart, and Denebola, next brightest, as marking the tail.

Draw a line between Regulus and Denebola and you’ve got the foundation upon which Leo rises, a lion couchant, up through the crook of mane and head formed by an arc of stars called the Sickle. Plot the stars on a piece of paper, connect the dots, and you get a schematic figure that looks, to my eye, less like a lion and more like Roadrunner in full “beep-beep” mode. Perhaps it’s time to acquaint myself with Leo, in his full majesty, with an actual sighting.

And so I set forth one August night, with cellphone and a stellar app in hand, to pay a visit to my natal house. The app contains a 360-degree sky map, which identifies by name every object across the hemispheres. As a bonus, the totems of the zodiac — crab and bear and lion — are depicted hovering, cloud-like, behind their constellated shapes. Point the phone skywards and the screen identifies exactly what you are seeing. I’m armed and ready! Standing out in our driveway at 3 a.m., the only objects I recognize up there are the moon and a red dot that I suspect, and the app confirms,

to be Mars. The rest is a blur. I begin a methodical scan — up and down, left and right — twirling like a dervish around the phone I hold high overhead. The panorama scrolling across the tiny screen has all my attention, unfolding to my circular motions, until finally I discover a dotted line that marks the sun’s ecliptic — its incremental journey through the houses of the zodiac — and follow the line directly to Regulus, the heart of the Lion. I let the phone down to my side and gaze in the direction it’s pointing and find I’m looking directly at the rear bumper of my car. Leo, alas, is below the horizon. August, I learn later from EarthSky.org, is actually the least likely time of year to see him, the Lion “fading into the sunset, not to return to the eastern predawn sky until late September or October.” Bad timing!

Still, the exercise was salutary, a spot of time in which I was given over to the contemplation of immensities beyond the travails of our beleaguered planet, and reminded that we have our place in a vaster scheme of things. The human mind seems to require a perspective larger than itself for the sake of its health, in order to feel truly at ease in its own skin, so to speak.

Without an occasional starry reminder, a touch of the sublime, the mind’s sharp reflexive edge tends to turn against itself. Perhaps that’s why, millennia ago, the Sumerians studied the night sky and found there, in the scattered stars, the figures of the constellations, the human mind making meaning and imposing an order to which it could relate, time and again, for solace and renewal.

“If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years,” wrote Emerson, in “Nature,” “how would men believe and adore.” The invitation is extended not just one night in a thousand, but every night; all we need do is step outside and look up.

CENSUS CONTINUES TO ADAPT

WASHINGTON, DC — As the U.S. Census Bureau continues to monitor the impacts COVID-19 has on 2020 Census operations, changes to operations are being deployed to ensure the safety of staff and the public while maximizing the number of households that respond on their own to the 2020 Census.

“We are taking steps and adapting our operations to make sure everyone is counted, while keeping everyone safe,” Census Bureau Director Dr. Steven Dillingham said in August. “Our commitment to a complete and accurate 2020 Census is absolute. In this challenging environment, we are deploying these tactics to make sure we reach every household in every community. If you haven’t responded, the time to respond is now! Responding to the 2020 Census online,



on paper, by phone, or in person with a census taker, helps secure vital resources for your community.”

As of the middle of August, more than 63.5% of households have responded to the 2020 Census. People can still respond online, over the phone or by mail — all without having to meet a census taker.

Meanwhile, census takers have begun following up with households nationwide. Census takers will continue to follow up with nonresponding households in person, and will fol-

low CDC and local public health guidelines when they visit.

If no one is home when the census taker visits, the census taker will leave a “Notice of Visit” with information about how to respond online, by phone or by mail, to encourage response. During Census Bureau tests, the “Notice of Visit” proved successful in encouraging people to respond on their own to the census.

The Census Bureau has also announced that households in low-responding areas would be receiving emails to encourage response. The emails will go to all households that the Census Bureau has contact information for in census block groups with a response rate lower than 50%. This will include households who may have already responded.

Chamber Pride Awards Nominations Open

Deadline is September 15

MONTICELLO — The Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce has been honoring businesses and individuals for over 26 years with our Pride Awards Gala and, despite the pandemic, will continue this year in a somewhat different way. The Pride Awards Gala honors five individuals from throughout Sullivan County for their community involvement and their contributions to the economic development in the county.

The five winners selected are: Business Person of the Year, Distinguished Service to the County, Distinguished Achievement in the County, Young Emerging Leader and one Township Award; all to be honored at this prestigious ceremony that will take place in November of this year.

What makes someone eligible? Or what criteria should be considered?

• Business Person of the Year is recognized for their dedication to the residents and businesses of our County and community. They continuously go

above beyond to impact the entire County in many aspects. They show true business influence, leadership style, and strategic initiatives that they share throughout their community. These are true efforts toward the betterment & improvement of Sullivan County.

• Distinguished Achievement Award is recognized for their tireless effort and dedication to the betterment of Sullivan County. They show leadership and extensive contributions to our community. They have accomplished significant impact on their surroundings and the people of Sullivan County.

• Distinguished Service Award is to recognize an individual’s act of helpful activity, help or extraordinary service and dedication to their community. Their leadership and tireless efforts are an example for others to follow. They have made outstanding service contributions to the community.

• Young Emerging Leader recognizes an individual for

their outstanding dedication in the Sullivan County Community. They clearly serve as a role model for young and seasoned professionals. They tirelessly work as examples of leadership, integrity, professionalism and creativity.

• Township Award is a rotating township award to recognize a business or an individual for dedication, commitment and effort in promoting and contributing to their community. It is designed to recognize and reward entrepreneurial engagement in townships while building confidence in township-based businesses.

A committee of past business-persons of the year and Chamber Board Members carefully review all nominations. This is a distinguished group of individuals from across Sullivan County and a diverse range of businesses and backgrounds.

Nominations are open to ALL and are being accepted NOW! DEADLINE TO SUBMIT A NOMINATION IS SEPTEMBER 15. Please submit a formal nomination letter identifying nominee (with their contact information) and why they should be considered for one of the five awards to Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, 196 Bridgeville Road, Suite 7, Monticello, NY 12701

For more information contact Jaime Schmeiser, President/CEO at president@catskills.com or call the office at 845-791-4200 X4.

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Friday 11:30-9:30
Saturday 11:30-9:30
Sunday 11:30-9:00

Kitchen closed from 4-5 daily
Bar stays open

From the Firehouse

by Jack Halchak, Past Chief H.F.D.

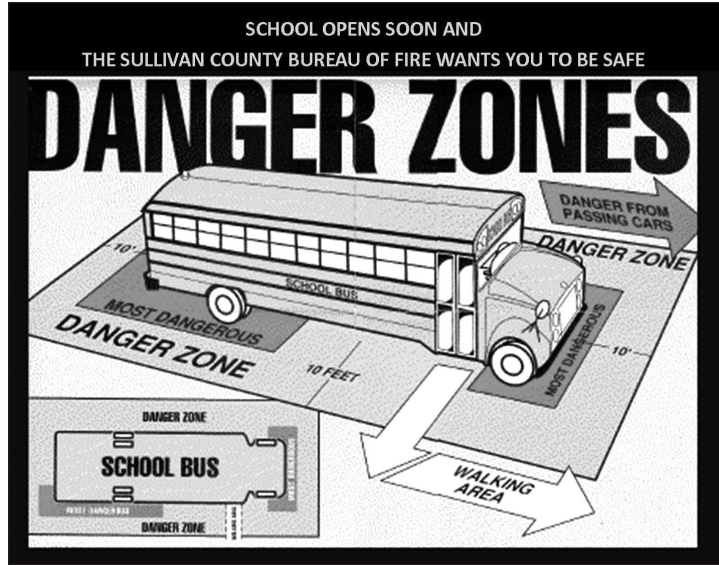


The Hurleyville Fire Department is always looking for help, to fight fire or support those that do. We even supply all of the gear and provide all of the training needed, for free. We can always use help to support those on the front lines. Stop by any Monday night and find out how you can help.

The firehouse is still closed to the public, but we have had a couple of drills. We have answered all calls like we always do.

It is now official: The Annual Sullivan County Volunteer Firefighter's Parade in White Lake hosted by the White Lake Fire Department is cancelled. The parade committees in the county and the surrounding counties have all cancelled their parades for this year. Next year, the Sullivan County Parade will be in Grahamsville, and in 2022 White Lake will get another chance to host it.

Call volume remains up. There are still a lot of bee sting calls. As I stated in a previous column, it is unusual for the amount of bee sting calls that we are having. Motor vehicle accidents are up, and some have been serious with loss of life. We



GRAPHIC PROVIDED

also continue to have more searches for lost hikers and rescues for injured hikers. Also up is the number of people getting hit walking and riding bikes. There have also been a number of structure fires. One recent one that I was at in Liberty displaced thirteen families, and another burned down the "Old Poppins" in Fallsburg.

It seems that lost and or injured hikers are becoming a weekly incident. When you are going to go on a hike you need to be prepared. Get a map of the area that you will be hiking, let someone know where you are going and when you will be back, and how about you bring a compass? Make sure that you

hydrate before you leave and take plenty of water with you. Wear a good pair of hiking boots, not flip-flops like I have seen. How long are you going for? Are you bringing lunch or energy bars? Remember there may not be cell phone service where you are hiking. If you do get lost, stay put. Are you prepared to spend the night in the woods if you do get lost, did you bring any matches or a fire starter? Use some common sense when hiking. Take a couple of short ones before you try a full day hike.

Hurricane season is upon us. Our area has already been hit by one storm with a loss of power. Some parts of the county were without power for a couple of days.

Will you be okay without power for a couple of days? It is not too late to get prepared. How is that flashlight doing? When is the last time you checked it? Did you ever invest in a hand crank radio/ flashlight? Do you have enough medication? You may have power, but how about your pharmacy, what do you do if they are closed? If you rely on a well for water; it will not work without power. Have some bottled water handy.

In the event of a severe storm do you have a network set up to let other family members know that you are okay? Have a plan that family members know about if you have to leave your home. Where are you going to go?

Now is the time to plan for an emergency situation when you are dry, warm and comfortable, not when there is thunder and lightning, two feet of snow, and torrential downpours.

Schools are opening to some extent, so the buses will be out picking the students up. Be careful around the school buses. NEVER pass a stopped school bus.

SEPTEMBER 11 is fast approaching. **NEVER FORGET.**

FROM THE FILES OF...

THE HURLEYVILLE SENTINEL.

The Only Newspaper Published in the Town of Fallsburgh

COMPILED BY **Sullivan County Historian John Conway**

September 13, 1916

Electricity is Here

Clarence Baker is preparing to open an electrical supply house in Hurleyville and is prepared to install Western Electric stationary lighting plants. Now that we have electricity, Hurleyville is in need of just such a man as Mr. Baker, who can always be found and can be relied upon to do the right thing and we trust that the people will give him the patronage that such a business needs for support.

Fire Destroys Barn and Contents

Yesterday afternoon about two o'clock the barn of Charles Spitzer's farm near Divine Corners caught fire and was completely destroyed with about 40 tons of hay and farming implements, involving a total loss of \$2,000, there being but \$600 insurance on the building. It is not known how the fire started as there was no one in the building and Mr. Spitzer had just gone to Divine Corners and was on his return when he saw the smoke. It was with difficulty that the home was saved although there was plenty of water.

September 27, 1916

New Newspaper in Town

Centerville Station is to be the scene of the first Jewish newspaper to be published in this section if not this side of New York. We wish the new venture success.

Notice

The 1917 Chevrolet is now



SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

Ernest Feinstein's bar and grill on Main Street is now the Pickled Owl.

ready for delivery. Many improvements, among them being a heavier model cone clutch, full honeycomb radiator, electric lights and starter complete for \$525 delivered, including speedometer. The cheapest electrically equipped car in the world.

- I. T. McNally, Hurleyville, agent.

September 10, 1937

\$700 Stolen from Local Pharmacy

Early Tuesday morning, thieves broke into the Hurleyville Pharmacy and stole about \$700 in cash from a box in the prescription room. The store, owned by Max Berman and Al Sakofsky, was closed by Berman about two o'clock Tuesday morning. The theft was discovered by a clerk, Max Rosenstein, when the store was re-opened in the morning. It is believed that the thieves gained entrance through a side window. Nothing else in the store was disturbed and several checks and money orders left with the money were untouched.

State Police, headed by Sergeant Thomas Mangan, have been investigating and

are checking fingerprints taken from a filing cabinet in an effort to apprehend the guilty persons.

Fire on former Seidlin Property

Fire which broke out shortly before noon on Wednesday destroyed a barn on the former Seidlin property opposite the New York Telephone Company building in Hurleyville, damaged a summer kitchen of the house and at one time threatened to burn the house. The present owner is Murray Goldman.

Hurleyville and Loch Sheldrake firemen quickly responded to the alarm and prevented the spread of the fire to nearby homes. Traffic was held up for about twenty minutes.

Quietest Labor Day for Sullivan County

The quietest Labor Day holiday ever to occur since Sullivan County became famous as a summer resort was experienced over the past weekend. Although several opinions were heard as to the date of the last concurrence of the Jewish New Year and Labor Day, all were agreed that it was before the present century.

Stores took a three-day holiday which started Sunday and extended until Tuesday night. Even restaurants open twenty-four hours daily were closed for the duration of the Jewish holiday. Some-what similar conditions prevailed in Monticello, South Fallsburg, Liberty and Woodridge.

Some of the large hotels engaged cantors to conduct religious services while in almost every other resort

laymen took charge. Sports and dancing were kept to a minimum, but even though these conditions had been anticipated, all hotels were liberally patronized, though perhaps not quite so heavily as on other Labor Day weekends.

October 1, 1937

Jewish Farmers Association to Hold Annual Conference

Outstanding in importance and interest is the forthcoming event which Sullivan, Ulster, and adjoining counties will witness on Sunday, October 3. This is the Annual Conference and Agricultural Exhibit held by the Jewish Farmers Associations of these sections. This year, other Jewish Societies and Organizations, in cooperation with the Jewish Agricultural Society, are sparing no effort to make this convention the most successful in the history of the "Mountains."

The affair takes place Sunday, October 3 (all day) in the Auditorium of the Mountaindale High School, Mountaindale, New York. In the forenoon, organization matters will occupy the attention of the assembled delegates, and this part of the program will be under the leadership of Dr. Gabriel Davidson, General Manager of the Jewish Agricultural Society.

After the luncheon, served by the Ladies Auxiliary, Dr. Philip R. Alstate, of the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York City, will deliver an address on "The Partition of Palestine."

2000 and more farmers are expected to attend.

Work Started on New Feinstein Building

Work has been started this week on the new building to be erected by Ernest Feinstein, local business man. The building, to be located on the lot next to the Hurleyville Pharmacy, will include a bar and grill on the first floor and hotel rooms on the second floor. It is expected that the construction work will be completed within two weeks.

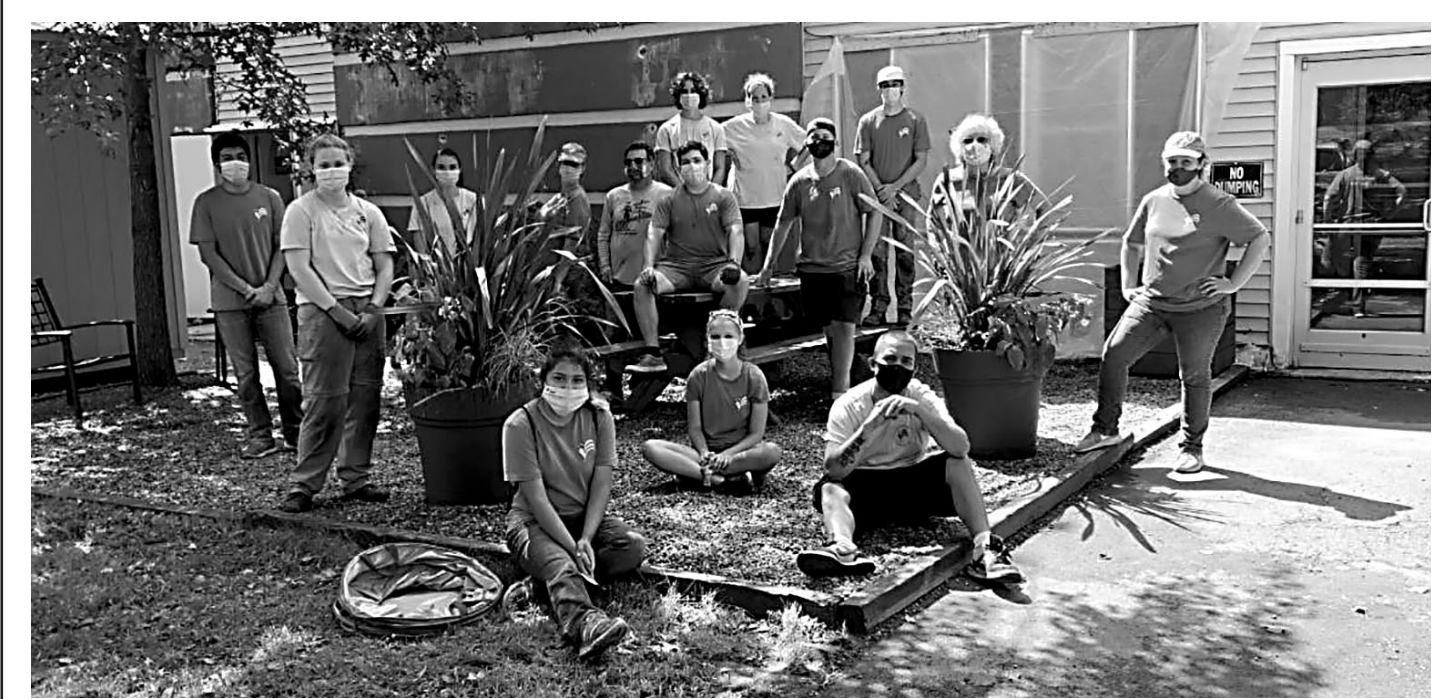


PHOTO PROVIDED

The Field Team from Sullivan Renaissance put forth an incredible effort to brighten the entrance to the Federation for the Homeless in Monticello. The staff and volunteers at the Federation were very grateful. Painting, mulching, seeding grass, moving tons of gravel, planting containers, and Hens and Chicks and sedum ... All of these efforts made the building and grounds look cared for and loved.

Sullivan County Legislature to Launch Wireless Initiative

Study Indicates at Least 60% of County Can Benefit

MONTICELLO – A week after legislators learned Sullivan County's ambitious wireless broadband project could reach up to 60% of the local population using current technology, the Sullivan County Legislature unanimously agreed to create the Broadband Access Local Development Corporation (LDC) in preparation of the project's launch.

"We did a broadband wireless predictive study [countywide]," Information Technology Services Commissioner Lorne Green told the Legislature's Management & Budget Committee on August 13. "That came up with 44,779 residential customers with potential service, which is really exciting. ... We overlaid the business locations in the County and then ran the same analysis... 1,213 of them were



covered."

Cell-based broadcast equipment is proposed to be mounted on a total of 12 towers, nine of which are County-owned and one of which is privately owned. The remaining two towers are planned to be built by next year. The study took into account the signal reach of each of the towers.

"We'll be able to broadcast up to 200 Mbps service," Mr. Green said, contrasting that with DSL service, which typically offers six to seven

Mbps. "Our biggest challenge is terrain and foliage."

Legislators, who consider this concept the County's #1 priority, authorized Mr. Green and his staff to launch a pilot project later this year in the Monticello area. Should it prove successful, the County aims to roll out the service across Sullivan, utilizing a mixture of grants and revenue from subscribers to the service. The LDC was created to accomplish such through a five-member board (Mr. Green has been

appointed, while the Legislature will choose four other members shortly), whose mandate will be to acquire, finance, dispose of, lease and/or license land, towers and broadcast equipment to provide broadband service to underserved and unserved areas of Sullivan County

"Sullivan County has long been of only mild interest to broadband providers," Legislature Chairman Robert A. Doherty said. "So we're stepping in to give the kind of Internet service our residents and businesses have to have. Without it, we will not be able to grow the County, especially in the western end. Broadband wireless offers us a way to provide high speed at low cost, and it will position us very competitively in a world that demands instant connectivity."



PHOTO PROVIDED

The Monticello and Woodridge Kiwanis and their Aktion Club recently presented the Sullivan County Office for the Aging with approximately 80 handwritten cards, created by Kiwanians, Aktion Club members and Woodridge's K-Kids (third through sixth-graders at Cosor Elementary School in Fallsburg), to be distributed to local senior citizens served by the County's Meals on Wheels program. Containing messages of good will and cheer, the cards will be sent out in the days to come and carefully handled to avoid COVID-19 transmission. Office for the Aging Director Lise-Anne Deoul (left) and Nutrition Site Coordinator Jane Bozan (right) accepted the cards from Monticello Kiwanis Publicity Chair Sheila Lashinsky (second from left), Woodridge Kiwanis Board Member Sue Kasofsky (center) and Aktion Club Treasurer Lara Biella (second from right).

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PATRIOTS ARE BORN PART III

An original short story by John Conway

It is May of 1775, and our young brothers, Andrew and Morgan Worth, their big black dog, Boson, and a passenger, wealthy statesman Alexander McDougall, are set to take a raft of timber down the Delaware River to Philadelphia, where McDougall is hoping to persuade New York's representatives to the Continental Congress to vote in favor of independence. He has warned the brothers that there are men trying to stop him, but undeterred, they are about to embark on the trip...

Shortly before sunrise the next morning Morgan and I dragged the raft into the river and tied it fast to the sturdy tree we always used for mooring. McDougall had offered to carry the provisions from the cabin to the raft and Boson, as usual, was keeping a close eye on all that was going on around him.

Once everything was tied down on the raft, Morgan checked to make sure the fire was cold in the fireplace and all the candles were extinguished, while I fastened the large oars fore and aft and untied the rope. McDougall and Boson were already on board, and I carried the end of the rope through the shallow water and climbed on while Morgan came running along the river bank at top speed and

leaped on just as we got into the current. Off we went on our way to Philadelphia.

It wasn't until we were underway that I noticed that Boson had been totally focused on a spot on the far end of our clearing, not barking, but growling lowly, his eyes riveted on the dense brush marking the edge of the clearing. Asking McDougall to take over the front oar for a minute, I made my way back to Boson, who had affixed himself to the rear of the raft just to the left of where Morgan was manning the aft oar.

"What's the matter, boy?" I asked, kneeling beside him. "What do you see?"

He continued growling, and then let out a series of loud barks. I followed his eyes to the clearing and then I saw it: Three men, armed, running from the brush toward our raft. Boson was convinced they were not friendly, and that was confirmed when one of the men stopped, took aim, and fired his musket in our direction.

By this time, both Morgan and McDougall had spotted the men, and Morgan had reacted by working his oar to steer the raft sideways into the stronger current closer to the west shoreline. McDougall followed suit at the front of the raft, and let us know



ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED

Boson sprang to his feet and started barking at the darkness.

that the three were the same men who had pursued him the day before. Obviously, they had every intention of preventing him from getting to Philadelphia.

"You certainly have done something to make them angry," Morgan yelled above the roar of the current as he worked the oar in order to straighten the raft. "I don't think we've ever been shot at before."

The current propelled the raft faster and faster, and the men gradually fell behind, and we were soon out of sight.

"I think we lost them," Morgan finally said.

"I don't expect they will be giving up," McDougall said. "They'll do whatever they can to stop me from getting to Philadelphia."

"We will have a pretty good head start," I inter-

jected. "The current is swift through here for another mile or so before we hit an eddy, so they'll be a while catching up."

When we reached the first eddy—that's the part of the river where the current actually turns back on itself, creating a very slow whirlpool effect that gives the appearance of being perfectly still—we stayed close to the west bank of the river in or-

der to keep the raft moving. We made it through without incident and picked up speed again, all the while remaining alert to our surroundings. There was no sign of our pursuers.

Shortly after midday, still hugging the west bank of the river, we reached another eddy, which would normally be the place we'd stop and eat. After a brief discussion, we all agreed to forego the stop and to keep the raft moving. Boson wasn't happy, and let his displeasure be known with a barking spree, but Morgan tossed him a chicken leg and he quickly became preoccupied with that.

I think both Morgan and I were surprised at how well McDougall handled himself on the raft, and we soon felt comfortable with him taking a shift manning one of the oars. It was a big help having the extra hand on board.

As dusk approached, we decided to pass through the next eddy—which typically would have been our stopping point for the night, and

to try to keep going as late into the night as we could. As fate would have it, the moon was bright that night and we were able to continue downriver without much trouble.

As the night wore on, McDougall approached me at one point and said he had an idea.

"Assuming they are still pursuing us, chances are they are expecting us to pull off at one of the eddies," he said. "I propose that if we do pull over for the night we try to do so in a spot other than an eddy. Do you think we can manage that?"

I told McDougall how difficult that might be, but agreed it might be the safest option. He actually volunteered to get in the water when we were ready and take a rope to shore to try to pull the raft over to the bank and secure it. It wasn't an easy task, but about an hour later, we decided the time had come, and we steered the raft to shore. With McDougall's help, we secured it and scrambled up the steep embankment

to a grassy area where we stretched out, exhausted.

We agreed that it would be imprudent to start a fire, so Morgan broke out the provisions, and we all ate a cold meal in silence. Afterward, as the three of us were sprawled on the ground talking about the relative merits of declaring independence from England, Boson sprang to his feet and began barking at the darkness.

We sprang to our feet almost in unison, and watched as perhaps a dozen men advanced toward us on all sides.

"You'll do well to remain still and not make any sudden movements," one of the men said as he walked toward us. "You're surrounded."

It appears as if the journey downriver to Philadelphia with their passenger will be even more difficult than either Andrew or Morgan envisioned. Find out their fate when "Patriots Are Born" continues in the next edition of The Hurleyville Sentinel.

SOMETHING IS WATCHING...

The Wonderfully Creepy Portion of the Hurleyville Rail Trail

by Elaine Corrington

HURLEYVILLE — A shiver goes up your spine and down your arms!

You may have lived in Hurleyville long enough to have heard the stories of the early days of the railroads coming up to Sullivan County. You enjoy passing the train station and thinking about the milk going down to the big city and the guests arriving for the summer season and getting rides to the grand hotels very near, and a little farther away.

How about the many people who rode the train and found health in the Catskills during a pandemic not even as profoundly widespread or quickly contagious and deadly? With the new signage along the Trail, you can easily imagine what the

people saw, heard, and felt after the great train wreck.

But no... there is something else. What is it? As beautiful as the trail cut through the mountains and looking out towards large ponds full of lilies and other plants looks- there is a creepy feeling that comes over you as you exercise for health, relaxation, thought, and joy- even in one of the most beautiful spots in Sullivan County. You remember the huge drainage tube between ponds that you used to have to climb over before the trail was paved? It might have been even taller than you are, and it was certainly slippery! But no, not that either. The old boats that had somehow sunk into the ponds? Nope. The hundreds of tires that had been rudely left along the sides of the trail nearer

the back road were totally gross- but not creepy in the same way. There is something eerier.

As you get farther away from Main Street on the trail, your thoughts slow down, and if you have a companion on your walk, your conversation slows down and gets quieter. It is not because you are tired. It is that place you have just entered where the railroad company cut through the tall rocky hillside so that the train could go through the area swiftly and safely. You can imagine the train passing between these dramatic and uneven cuts so closely that it seems like you might be able to touch them. The stone is gray, shiny, often with water coming down the sides- bright green moss covering large areas and trees growing above and

out through the sides (how do they not fall?).

The creepy feeling becomes profound. And all of a sudden, you notice that all of the slices in the rock are faces! Faces visible from every angle at every height. Monstrous, joyous, humanoid faces created by nature- and shouting without sound at those who pass through.

They are forgiving though. As you study them over time and in all seasons, you begin to appreciate the wild and creepy mural created by mother nature... and you can't wait to share it with somebody else- for good or evil. With Halloween coming and the uncertainty of the healthy celebrating of this holiday in the usual ways- you might like to take a masked walk (socially distanced) with children who would remember



PHOTO BY CORINNE BROOKS

Several of the rock formations in the Smith Hill Cut can give the strong impression that someone...or something... is watching.

this Halloween forever. You even have time to create a costume or doll of your favorite eerie rock face- or a new form of Bingo using

photos of the shivery faces for your kids.

Go to it- the creepy stone residents deserve some fame!

FROM THE FALLSBURG LIBRARY

by Kelly Wells & Amanda Letohich



Normally, this time of year we talk about back to school plans and National Library Card Sign Up month (which, if you don't have a library card yet, what are you waiting for?! Contact the library in the school district you reside in, and they'll be happy to assist you). However, this year has proven to be FAR from "normal" so instead, we'll update you on some continuing changes here at the Library.

On August 10, we began to offer limited, by appointment only, in-building services, in addition to continuing the curbside services we have been offering since June. You can call 845-436-6067 or email fbr@rcsl.org to schedule an appointment to browse our collection or use a computer. In-building use is currently limited to once per day per person for 30 minutes. We ask that you properly wear a face covering (nose and mouth fully covered) the entire time you are in the Library, and please, if you are sick or have been directly exposed to someone displaying COVID symptoms or is known to have COVID - do not come in.

Although we are open for browsing, please note that most of our DVD covers have been placed behind the circulation desk in an effort to decrease touch points. We have several new/newly returned covers on display, and the staff will be happy to look for other movies for you!

As a reminder, your library card gives you access

to thousands of e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines, and e-videos through the OverDrive and/or Libby apps. Contact us today for assistance in getting access to this great collection - all without leaving your home!

Although we do not yet have plans for resuming in person programming, we will be offering monthly "craft kits" for adults and bi-weekly "craft kits" for children starting the end of September. We'll supply you with most of what you need and Miss Amanda will post a tutorial on our Facebook page to give step-by-step instructions for how to complete each craft. If you aren't following us on Facebook yet, be sure to start now! We are also working on scheduling some guest speakers to provide programs online starting in October - so be sure to keep an eye on our Facebook page for more information as we get closer.

Our Facebook page and our website, www.fallsburglibrary.org are the best ways to stay up to date on the latest Library schedule and offerings.

We know how frustrating all of these changes can be, and we get frustrated too that we can't go back to the way things were before the pandemic, but we ask for and greatly appreciate your continued support, patience, and understanding as we continue to adapt to these changing times. We're far from perfect, though we try our best, but our priority has to be the health and safety of our staff and our community. Be well!

WORK CONTINUES AT MONTICELLO HIGH SCHOOL

Classroom 2020 Project Moving Along

MONTICELLO — Travelers passing by Monticello High School and the district's bus garage on Forestburgh Road have undoubtedly noticed a flurry of construction underway since June. It's all part of the major renovations scheduled for Task 2 of the Classroom 2020 project, and by the time it's completed, the drive down Forestburgh Road will look decidedly different and the 100/200 wing of the high school will be unrecognizable.

After the abatement was completed in mid-August, Chris Ladanyi of Clark Paterson Lee architectural firm led district representatives through the now hollowed-out hallways and classrooms in the high school, pointing out how the new spaces will look and function once the work

is finished. Aging HVAC systems will be replaced with rooftop air conditioning units. An increase in natural lighting will transform dark and cramped classrooms and hallways into brighter, open spaces. The classrooms, originally built in the 1960's, will be transformed into collaborative, flexible, spaces suitable for educating students in the 2020s and beyond. The science classrooms will lead to an outdoor learning space, complete with amphitheater seating.

By the time Task 2 is expected to be complete in September, 2021, 58% of the high school's classroom space will have seen renovations, and the bus garage will be replaced with a new transportation center. The project will maximize the amount



PHOTO PROVIDED

Capital improvement work continues at Monticello High School.

of instructional space and replace aged boilers, lighting and control systems with energy-efficient models — cost-savings strategies that increase state building aid eligibility, while decreasing energy costs.

Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Matthew Evans, viewing the spaces for the first time since assuming his role in July, called the project's progress, which is both on time and under budget, "impressive."

"These will be very special learning spaces, with

refreshing areas for learning and meeting, for years to come," he said. "I am extremely grateful to the public for allowing us to make these transformations."

Residents authorized the Classroom 2020 capital improvement project in November of 2018 to address some of the necessary structural repairs at all five school buildings. Capital improvement projects enable school districts to utilize capital bonds and state aid to finance facilities work outside the scope of general maintenance. These projects are subject to a complex set of state laws and regulations. Once a proposed capital improvement project is approved by voters, the funds can only be used for the capital work outlined in the proposal and cannot be used

for any other purpose. Because the district was able to replace an expiring bond with the Classroom 2020 bond, these projects are being completed with no impact to the tax levy.

Task 3 of the Classroom 2020 project will be the construction of tennis courts at the high school, partially financed by a capital bond approved by voters in the 2014-15 school year. The courts will be located in the triangle between the high school's gymnasium entrance and Breakey Avenue. Task 3A will address the remaining elementary school repairs and Task 4 will address the remaining high school and middle school repairs. Task 1, the roofing repair at the elementary and middle schools, is already complete.

SENTINEL SPORTS



TURNING TO THE OUTDOORS

NATIONWIDE RAIL TRAIL USAGE SURGES

WASHINGTON, DC — With summer in full swing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, trail use continues to surge nationwide and guidelines about what activities are safest and where people should visit continue to evolve. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) recently released new data about how people are using the outdoors and trails during the pandemic, with findings reinforcing an overwhelming demand for safe places to walk and bike nationwide.

Nearly half of people (46%) indicated that having access to open spaces has reduced their stress levels during the pandemic and that the majority of people are getting outside about the same or more than they were before the pandemic (66%). Over half (52%)

are exercising outdoors in their immediate neighborhoods and local trails. Across the country, trail count data shows surging trail use, with numbers of people out on trails spiking to levels more than 200% higher than last year at the same time. Since March, trails nationwide have seen an average surge of trail use that is 79% higher than last year.

“We continue to see evidence that access to nature and the outdoors is a critical component of our well-being—especially during times of heightened and chronic stress like this,” said Torsha Bhattacharya, PhD, research director at RTC. “That’s why we’re seeing sustained surges in trail use and more people turning to outdoor activity and trails right now. With

that, comes an increase in awareness and support for trails as vital community assets and a need to continue to find ways to create more space close-to-home for people to walk, bike and be active that is separated from vehicle traffic.”

Recent studies indicate exercise and time spent in nature may be even better for mental health than exercising indoors—data which is being reinforced by the demand for trails right now. Additional findings from questions fielded to a subgroup of respondents (1,240) include:

- 75% believe that trails contribute significantly to the well-being of a community.
- 46% say they now consider trails and open spaces to be important, whereas 37% considered



rails-to-trails conservancy

trails to be important before the pandemic.

- 78% said it is very important to have access to places to walk and bike that are completely separated from vehicle traffic.

Demand for places to walk and bike that are separated from vehicle traffic,

juxtaposed with surging trail use and the challenges many communities experience accessing outdoor space that is close-to-home, led RTC to call for local officials to repurpose streets and other public space for physical activity.

Nearly 10,000 people have signed RTC’s petition and more than 67 U.S. cities and towns have taken action, making over 380 miles of streets available for people to walk, bike and be active.

“Being active has profound mental health benefits, and enhancing psychological health is especially critical in times of stress, which this certainly is,” said James F. Sallis, PhD, distinguished professor emeritus of family medicine and public health at the University of California, San Diego, and an RTC board member in an interview about safe ways to be physically active during the pandemic. “Each session of physical activity boosts mood and reduces anxiety, so making sure you get activity every day can be a partial antidote to worrisome news reports.”

The national survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey between May 2 and May 22, 2020 and fielded among 1,980 respondents including 740 RTC members and 1,240 respondents from the general public, representing an oversample of 31% Latino, 33% Black and 36% White. The margin of error is $\pm 5\%$ at 95% confidence level.

RTC has media assets as well as resources to help people find trails and recreate responsibly during the pandemic at railstotrails.org/COVID19, including TrailLink.com—a free resource provided by RTC that provides trail maps, walking and biking directions to local trails, contact information for local trail managers, and status updates about trail facilities for more than 38,000 miles

of trails nationwide. RTC is also a member of the Recreate Responsibly Coalition, a diverse community of over 500 businesses, government agencies, nonprofits, outdoor media and influencers working to share best practices and guidance to help people get outside safely and help keep the nation’s parks, trails and public lands open during the pandemic.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

MILK TRAIN TRAIL REMAINS POPULAR

Both Directions From Hurleyville Well-Travelled

by John Conway

HURLEYVILLE — While statistics compiled by the Rail Trail Conservancy indicate that more and more people are utilizing rail trails everywhere in the country during the pandemic, there is no concrete data to say whether or not the COVID-19 restrictions have impacted the usage of the Milk Train Trail here.

Some Sullivan County officials, speaking unofficially, say they have no way of accurately assessing the number of people using the trails in the county, but anecdotally at least, the numbers seem up. In Hurleyville, the Milk Train Trail remains extremely popular, and while the number of people using it significantly increases in the summer months every year, it has become a year around destination for many.

The trail head off the Main Street parking lot remains the principal access, and the east trail toward the Smith Hill Cut is by far the most heavily used,



PHOTO BY JOHN CONWAY

It is rare to see the Milk Train Trail deserted this time of year, as it remains popular in both directions.

although one afternoon in late August the upper parking lot off Railroad Avenue had at least a dozen cars, and most, if

not all, of the occupants were on the rail trail heading west, some walking, some running, some biking. That same afternoon on the east side trail, there were power walkers, bikers, people pushing stroll-

ers, and even some children on tricycles.

The ratio of females to males on the trail over a three-day period late in August was about four to one.

Despite the trail head signs in multiple languages advising users that masks are mandatory while on the trail, the majority of those using the trail over that three-day period last month, both male and female, did not have masks of any sort, while a few others had them hanging loosely around their necks. The ages of those using the trail during that time ranged from toddler to elderly, and it seemed that the older the person the more likely they were wearing a mask.

Litter along the trail does not seem to have visibly increased, although there could be found a carelessly discarded mask here and there on both the east and west routes.

A number of people have said that they will be utilizing the rail trail even more once the weather cools off a bit. Their walks, they said, would not only be more frequent, but longer in duration once the heat dissipates.

RAIL TRAIL INITIATIVE PUBLISHES TRAIL MAP

Hurleyville’s Milk Train Trail

One of Seven Featured

by John Conway

MONTICELLO — The Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Initiative has published a trail map that highlights seven of the rights-of-way repurposed as hiking trails in the county. Hurleyville’s Milk Train Trail is one of the those featured in the brochure.

The trail map describes the “Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Initiative” as “a decades-long effort, spearheaded by multiple municipal, private, and grassroots organizations, all with a common goal of connecting communities along the corridor and providing an important recreation and transportation asset to area residents and visitors alike.”

The initiative is currently being led by Sullivan County government.

The trail map includes information about the O&W Rail Trails in Mamakating, Mountaintop, Woodridge, Hurleyville, Liberty, and Parkville, as well as the repurposed D&H Canal Trail in Mamakating. Although they are not contiguous, the trails total nearly 28 miles, and feature a wide variety of ecosystems, abundant natural beauty, and interesting historical landmarks.

In addition, both the Hurleyville and Parkville sections feature multiple in-

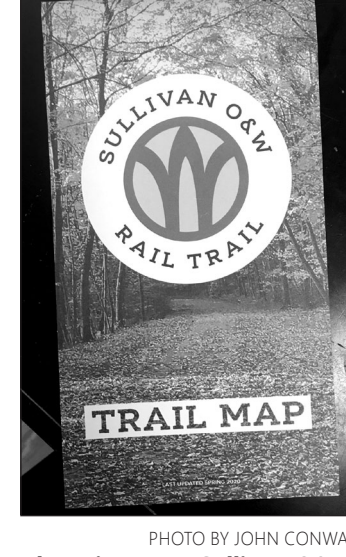


PHOTO BY JOHN CONWAY

There is a new Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Map available that depicts seven trails in the County.

terpretive signs explaining natural and historical highlights along the trails with text and illustrations.

In all, there is more than 50 miles of O&W right-of-way throughout the heart of Sullivan County, and several miles of D&H towpath extant that could eventually be turned into hiking trails. The vision of the Rail Trail Initiative is to create “a continuous recreational trail linking businesses and amenities in nine hamlets and two villages.”

Prior to the effort to repurpose them, most of the rail rights-of-way in the county had been abandoned and neglected since the O&W’s demise in 1957.

Gym Reopenings Are Under County’s Authority

MONTICELLO — Per New York State’s directive, Sullivan County Manager Josh Potossek has asked Public Health Services to undertake inspections to enable gyms to reopen in compliance with the Governor’s requirements.

Governor Andrew Cuomo has stated that effective August 24, but no later than September 2, gyms can reopen across the State under the below circumstances. Gyms include standalones, hotel gyms, residential gyms, office gyms and fitness centers, gyms at higher education institutions, yoga/Pilates/barre studios, boxing/kickboxing gyms, fitness boot camps, CrossFit or other plyometric boxes, and other group fitness classes. Further guidance is available at <https://forward.ny.gov/phase-four-industries> (scroll down to “Gyms and Fitness Centers”).

“I take this new role very seriously, as the future of these businesses is hanging in the balance,” Mr. Potossek said. “Assuming they have met the reopening guidance, and in coordination with our Public Health Services office, I intend to give the needed signoff to allow every gym in Sullivan County to open at the earliest date possible. They have waited long enough, and I will not stand in the way of any business that is able and eligible to reopen.”

All gyms in Sullivan County should call Public Health Services at 292-5910 x 0 with the following information

- a. Legal name, address and phone number of gym.
- b. Town or Village where gym is located. This will enable inspections to be better coordinated.
- c. Owner(s) of gym.
- d. Name of responsible

person at gym. This is the person or persons who will be responsible for ensuring ongoing compliance with the Governor’s requirements.

e. Plan to comply with the Governor’s requirements.

f. List of any health-related, pandemic response improvements the gym has made in 2020.

g. Posted occupancy limit of gyms (prior to the reduction to 33%).

h. Whether the gym offers indoor classes. Under Governor Cuomo’s rule, counties must approve the offering of indoor classes.

i. Hours of operation when the gyms are available for inspection (must be between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday-Friday, weekends optional) through September 7.

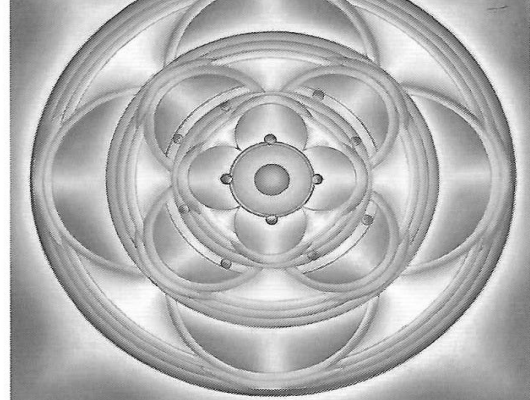
Gyms must also file with the State the “Read and Affirm Detailed Guidelines” available at <https://forward.ny.gov/phase-four-industries> (scroll down to “Gyms and Fitness Centers”).

Public Health Services has formed a team, including access to resources from Code Enforcement officials, who will be able to meet with gym owners and go over the checklist and NY Forward Guidance to ensure all areas are in compliance for safe reopening. Successful completion of the checklist will result in the issuance of a certificate of inspection to the business owner.

“We look forward to working with gym owners to ensure a smooth and safe reopening process,” said Public Health Director Nancy McGraw.

Business owners can call the above number or email questions to GymInspections@co.sullivan.ny.us. Any calls or emails will be quickly returned.

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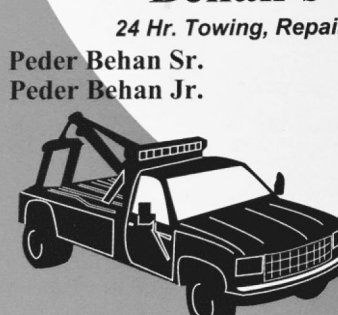
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