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**LovePeace jams out in Sea Cliff**  
 Page 19

## Talk about following in a brother's footsteps

Owen Valance, near right, a Navy veteran, a Glen Cove police officer and this year's recipient of the Tribute and Honor Foundation Impact Award, displayed the award alongside his older brother, Derek, a fellow police officer and Navy veteran — and the 2024 Impact Award recipient. Story, more photos, page 10.



Courtesy Elizabeth Sagarin

# Fundraiser in Bayville takes aim at diabetes

By **ROKSANA AMID**

[ramid@iherald.com](mailto:ramid@iherald.com)

When Jaime Greenberg's son, Sean, began guzzling water between hockey drills and running to the bathroom after nearly every shift on the ice, it didn't immediately raise alarms. "We thought he was just thirsty from playing so much because he played six days a week," said Greenberg, 52, of Glen Cove.

Sean, who's now 20, was 12 at the time, a travel hockey goalie, tough and determined — until the day when he vomited during a game.

Looking back, Greenberg recalls the moment with regret. "I was so upset," he said. "I was like, 'What's going on? You're not sick.' And he just literally threw up in his goalie helmet."

Sean had also lost so much weight that his heavy goalie equipment hung loosely on his frame. Within days, a blood test confirmed what his parents had begun to fear: He had Type

1 diabetes. His body was no longer producing insulin.

Greenberg will be honored on April 22 at the 20th annual Cooking for a Cure fundraiser, which supports the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation. The event, co-founded by Nas-

**W**e thought he was just thirsty from playing so much, because he played six days a week.

**JAIME GREENBERG**  
 Honoree

sau County Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton and held in Bayville, has raised more than \$1.5 million over its two-decade run to advance cure-focused diabetes research.

For Greenberg, an adoption lawyer, the cause is deeply personal. Just months before Sean's diagnosis, he had a frightening health scare of his own. Driving his son to a hockey tournament near Boston, Greenberg blacked out behind the wheel. "My blood sugar was probably in the 300s or 400s," he said. Sean had to grab the steering wheel and guide the car to the side of the road. Shortly afterward, Greenberg was diagnosed with Type 2, or adult-onset, diabetes.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

# I Am My Sister plans a night of empowerment and purpose

By **ROKSANA AMID**

[ramid@iherald.com](mailto:ramid@iherald.com)

In a city where most of the transformative work happens quietly — in classrooms, food pantries, recreation centers and small businesses — I Am My Sister is preparing to shine a spotlight on those whose impact has reshaped lives across Glen Cove.

The nonprofit will honor Edward P. Norris III, Phyllis Barnett, Irma Gente, Officer Darren Pittman Jr. and Nicole Robinson-Helmus for their sustained commitment to youth, families and community empowerment, at The Black History Month Gala and Legacy Awards, held on Feb. 21

at 6 p.m.

I Am My Sister, founded by Lela Watson, now its executive director, is a Glen Cove-based organization focused on youth leadership development, mentorship, empowerment programming and community advocacy. It works with students through in-school clubs, workshops and initiatives centered on confidence-building, representation and opportunity, and also organizes community-wide events such as Juneteenth celebrations and cultural programming.

The gala, Watson said, grew out of a desire to continue recognizing community members who quietly shape Glen Cove without seeking atten-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

# 311-hub plan targets 911-operator burnout

February 12, 2026 – GLEN COVE HERALD

By STACY DRIKS

sdriks@liherald.com

Nassau County Legislator Olena Nicks on Monday introduced legislation to create a countywide 311 non-emergency service, a move that she and other Democratic lawmakers say will reduce burnout on 911 operators and improve emergency response times.

County Legislator Carrie Solages, who represents Valley Stream, highlighted the public safety implications of reducing unnecessary emergency calls.

“When dispatchers are overwhelmed, it impacts response times for critical emergencies,” Solages said in a news release. “This legislation helps ensure emergency services remain focused on situations where every second counts.”

County residents often call 911 for non-emergency issues — including potholes, sanitation problems, streetlight outages and noise complaints. Nationwide data suggests nearly 50 percent of 911 calls fall into these categories.

The proposed 311 system would include a centralized call center staffed by trained personnel. It would allow residents to submit service requests via mobile app — including uploading photos — and track their status in real time. Lawmakers say that reducing non-emergency call volume would help address a 20 percent staffing shortage among emergency operators and cut down delays in



Stacy Driks/Herald

Nassau County Legislator Olena Nicks introduced her proposal for a countywide 311 system on Feb. 9, saying the service would help reduce 911 call volume and improve emergency response times.

life-threatening situations.

“While these calls deserve attention, they shouldn’t compete with someone reporting a fire, a violent crime or a medical emergency when only seconds count,” Nicks said. “Here in Nassau, our operators are handling everything from noise complaints to service requests, and these non-emergencies calls pull resources away from urgent needs.”

She pointed to similar systems in New York City, Suffolk County and the Town of North Hempstead. North Hempstead launched its 311-call center in 2005, and has handled more than three million

calls, according to Town Supervisor Jennifer DeSena. The center acts as a one-stop hub for municipal services, with requests tracked through completion.

County Legislator Viviana Russell, who represents parts of Uniondale and North Hempstead, said she was part of the original team that launched North Hempstead’s system. She also took part in the Suffolk operating system as well.

“I can tell you first-hand how it helped residents of the Town of North Hempstead,” Russell said. “Through tracking the calls, you are able to see where there are needs in different departments as

well as where residents need additional help, within the confines of the county.”

The county would also launch a public education campaign to help residents understand when to call 311 versus 911. Nicks said labor unions would be included in planning for staffing and training. As of now, the legislators are in close contact with CSEA, one of the largest public service unions in the state, and other labor groups have expressed support for the legislation.

“It’s about protecting the people who will protect us, this proposal will help reduce burnout, improve retention and strengthen emergency responses across Nassau County,” said Delia DeRiggi Whitton, a county legislator who represents Glen Cove and Sea Cliff, who serves as the Legislature’s minority leader. This is a commonsense workforce and public safety investment that benefits residents, employees and emergency responders.”

Also, the short staffing concerns have grown since County Executive Bruce Blakeman passed a voluntary buyout program for longtime employees in his \$4.4 billion executive budget in January. Possibly saving \$30 million annually, concerns were raised about losing experienced staff in public safety.

Under the plan, full-time workers with at least 10 years of service would receive a \$2,000 lump-sum payment for each year worked. About 3,400 employees are eligible — including 911 operators.

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Courtesy North Shore Hispanic Chamber of Commerce photos

The North Shore Hispanic Chamber of Commerce honored five community members for their years of support for the Hispanic business community.

# Hispanic chamber honors community members

By **ROKSANA AMID**

ramid@iherald.com

The North Shore Hispanic Chamber of Commerce held its 5th Annual Winter Celebration on Jan. 29 at the Sea Cliff Yacht Club, honoring five community members for their long-standing service, leadership, and contributions to the North Shore.

This year's honorees represented a wide range of civic, educational, business, and public safety leadership. Pascual Blanco, co-founder of the nonprofit La Fuerza Unida, received the American Dream Award. Felicia Kasow, director of PURE Mammography and a member of the Long Island Advisory Board of the American Cancer Society, was presented with the Outstanding Community Supporter Award. Glen Cove Police Chief Christopher Ortiz was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award, Dr. Alexa Doeschner, superintendent of the Glen Cove City School District, received the Community Leader Award, and Rafael Maldonado, owner of James Auto Works, was named Business of the Year.

During the ceremony, Lisa Golden, a chamber board member, praised Kasow's far-reaching impact on women's health and underserved communities. "Felicia is aptly awarded our Community Service Award, because those of you who know her know it's not just this community she's in. She's in every community," Golden said. She highlighted Kasow's efforts to provide mammograms to individuals who might otherwise lack access, particularly within the



Chris Ortiz, chief of police in Glen Cove, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Latina community, calling her "the very definition of a community supporter."

Glen Cove Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck echoed those sentiments while acknowledging the importance of early detection. "Nobody wants to get a mammogram. It is the most unpleasant, awful thing. Nobody likes it," Panzenbeck said, adding humorously, "I think you men should all get it too. But anyway, we thank you for what you do."

Chamber President Connie Pinilla recognized Chief Ortiz for his decades of leadership in law enforcement. "Chief Ortiz continues to lead with a purpose, ensuring the safety and well-being of all of our residents while honoring the department's commitment to excellence," she said.

Panzenbeck also reflected on her pro-

fessional relationship with Ortiz, whom she promoted during her tenure as mayor. "In my four years as mayor, I could never have done my job without all of the amazing help and support we've gotten from you," she said. "You've always been there for me... I was really concerned that I wouldn't be the mayor to promote you, because you're just the best."

Councilwoman Danielle Fugazy also congratulated Ortiz, telling him, "We are super proud of you, and we're very thankful that you are in the position, and we know you're going to do great things."

In his remarks, Ortiz credited his department for its success. "If you hire good people, people of character, people who are honorable and prideful, and



Chamber President Connie Pinilla announced the honorees.

you bring them into a police department, they will do great things," he said.

Dr. Doeschner, accepting the Community Leader Award, emphasized collaboration and gratitude. "I share this award with so many people—the trustees of the Board of Education, my Cabinet members, our educators and staff, and our students," she said, noting her 11-year journey in the district.

Panzenbeck praised Doeschner's leadership, calling herself her "biggest cheerleader" and commending her rapid rise and dedication.

The evening concluded with the presentation of city and county citations by Panzenbeck and Nassau County Minority Leader Delia DeRiggi-Whitton, followed by dancing with honorees, their families, and attendees.

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## Revocable v. Irrevocable Trusts

By now it is well understood that revocable living trusts (RLT's) avoid probate. However, that is only true to the extent that the trust is fully funded and that any assets outside the trust have a joint owner or a beneficiary. RLT's provide for who you wish to take over your legal and financial affairs if a doctor puts in writing that you are unable to. Both the revocable and irrevocable trusts provide for how you wish for your assets to be distributed after you pass.

In the RLT, you serve as the trustee and may buy, sell, trade and spend the same as before. There are no restrictions. You may take anything out, put anything in, amend, or revoke the trust. No tax return is required. All income is reported under your social security number. Essentially, it is the same as you until such time as you become disabled or die. RLT's are ideal for those who have (1) adequate long-term care insurance (2) are well off enough to self-insure for long-term care, or (3) are not concerned about protecting their assets from long-term care for any one of a number of reasons.

The irrevocable Medicaid Asset Protection Trust (MAPT) can vary widely from one law firm to another. The following describes the

MAPT prepared by our firm for the last thirty-five years. Similar to the RLT, the MAPT avoids probate. The MAPT is also used to protect your assets from long-term care, and qualify you for Medicaid benefits, by taking the assets out of your name. Assets are protected immediately for home care and the MAPT starts the five year look-back for facility care. In the MAPT, you must name someone else, usually one or more adult children, as trustees and limit yourself to the income only. People generally put their home into the trust, as well as other assets that they are only taking the income from or not even that. While you may not take the principal out of the MAPT, you may gift any amount to your children tax-free.

In the MAPT you reserve the right to change who you leave it to as well as to change the trustees at any time. You may, oddly enough, revoke the MAPT in New York on consent of all the named parties. If one of them won't agree, you may simply exercise your powers to remove them from the trust and then revoke it with the consent of the remaining parties. Further consultation with an elder law attorney can help you decide which trust is better for you.

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### Investing in PFAS treatment systems

Glen Cove will spend nearly \$800,000 to repair a water treatment system that removes so-called "forever chemicals" from the city's drinking water.

The City Council approved a \$776,000 payment to repair filters at the Seaman Road water treatment facility. The granulated activated carbon filter system is designed to capture and treat perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, which can accumulate in water supplies and persist in the environment.

The repairs are intended to ensure continued compliance with state and federal drinking water standards. New York State limits PFAS in drinking water to 10 parts per trillion and sets a 1 part per billion limit for 1,4-dioxane, a chemical considered a likely human carcinogen. In April 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established a stricter 4 parts per trillion standard for certain PFAS compounds. That federal requirement was initially set to take effect in 2029 but has since been post-

poned until 2031.

City officials anticipate spending millions more in the coming years to meet regulatory requirements. Upgrades to additional water treatment facilities are projected to exceed \$40 million by 2029.

Glen Cove is nearing completion of a \$2.6 million project to rehabilitate a well on Nancy Court and is currently in the design phase of an \$11 million project to treat PFAS at that site. An \$11.5 million project to enhance PFAS treatment at the Kelly Street well is expected to begin later this year. A separate \$16.8 million upgrade is already underway at the Duck Pond well station.

The Seaman Road station, which was taken offline around 2010, was restored at a cost of approximately \$6.3 million. The facility currently meets regulatory standards. Glen Cove serves about 10,000 customers and has secured several grants to help offset costs, including \$3 million for a new packed tower aeration system at its Duck Pond Road facility designed to remove Freon 22.

### Chocolate dip and decorating class

The Glen Cove Public Library will host a hands-on chocolate dipping and decorating workshop later this month, led by a local woman-owned catering company.

The class, titled "MsSauce Plates Chocolate Dip and Decorate," will take place on Thursday, Feb. 26, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the library's Community Room. The program is part of the library's adult offerings and will give participants the opportunity to dip and decorate a variety of sweet treats using chocolate and assorted toppings.

The workshop will be led by MsSauce Plates Culinary Horizon LLC, a Glen Cove-based catering company known for its Caribbean-inspired cuisine and desserts. Owner Jonelle Watson has built the business around sharing bold flavors and creative presenta-

tion, and the upcoming class will focus on the sweeter side of her culinary expertise.

Participants will receive guided instruction and assistance throughout the session, learning techniques for chocolate dipping and decorative finishing touches. The event is designed to be interactive and beginner-friendly, offering a relaxed setting for adults to explore a fun culinary activity.

Registration is required, and space is limited. There is a \$7 fee to participate. Those interested must register in person at the library's Reference Desk.

The Glen Cove Public Library is located at 4 Glen Cove Ave. For additional information about this program or other upcoming events, residents may contact the library directly or visit its website for a full calendar of activities.

GLEN COVE

# HERALD

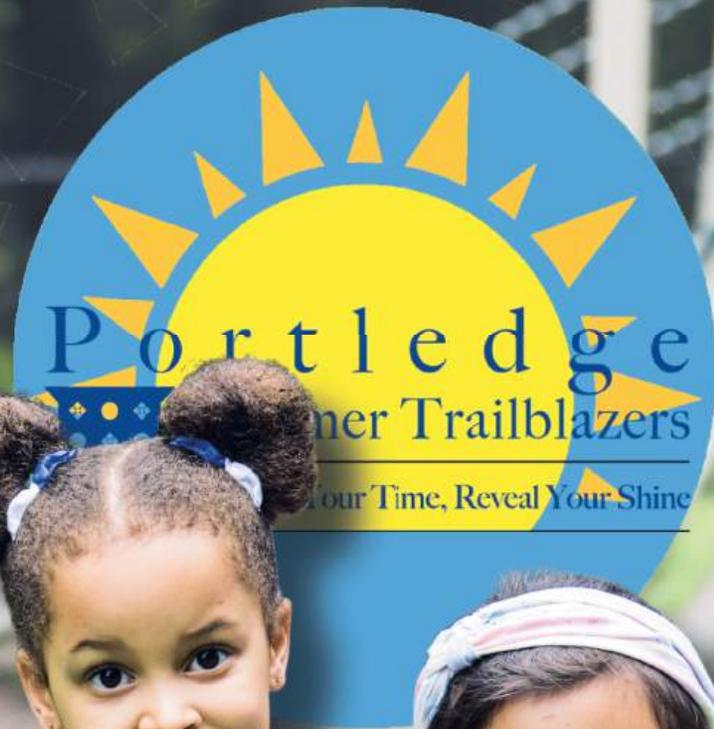
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# HERALD SPORTS

## Nassau girls wrestling takes center stage

By TONY BELLISSIMO

tbellissimo@liherald.com

Reese Adams experienced a wave of emotions for the second time in as many years at the Nassau County girls wrestling championships.

While recovering from knee surgery last February, the then-Calhoun High School junior was devastated to be a spectator for the inaugural tournament. This year, however, she was elated to not only participate but to capture a title in what would be her lone opportunity.

Adams rallied from behind to pin MacArthur's Olivia Rausenberger in 1:52 of the first period of the finals to win the 126-pound crown Feb. 1 at her home away from home — Long Beach High School. Her father, Ray, has coached the Marines' wrestlers for 30 years.

"It was thrilling and a relief at the same time because I put so much pressure on myself," Reese said. "To finally accomplish what I've worked so hard for is exciting."

She underwent surgery the day before Thanksgiving in 2024 and missed all of last season. That didn't stop her from attending the county championships at Bethpage High School, but it wasn't easy to watch.

"I cried a lot, but I wanted to support some of my best friends who were competing," said Reese, who is Calhoun's lone female wrestler and practiced with the boys team every day. "I'm glad it was at Long Beach this time," she added. "I practically grew up watching wrestling in that gym so it was a comfortable environment."

Adams fell behind Rausenberger 5-0 before scoring a take-

down to get on the board, followed by the pin.

"It was a rough year for her rehabbing and I'm so proud to see her win a county title," Ray Adams said of his Lehigh University bound daughter. "She worked so hard to get back on the mat."

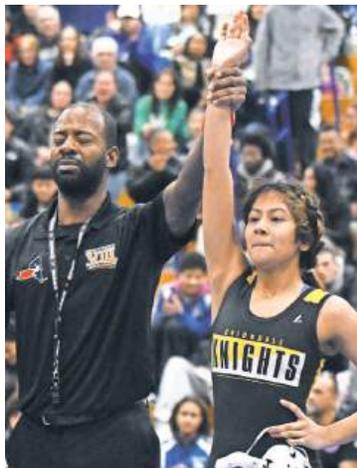
Long Beach girls coach Miguel Rodriguez said the vibe for the finals was "incredible." The Marines had five finalists and saw seventh-grader Brooke Varian finish a surprise runner-up at 94 pounds, and freshman Harley Eidens repeat as a county champ, taking the 107-pound title.

"We had a lot of great performances and those two really had a day," Rodriguez said. "Brooke is a great athlete who loves lacrosse and is so coachable. Harley was familiar with her opponent in the finals and was very strong defensively at the end to hold on."

Harley's sister, Presley, was second at 114 to MacArthur's Grace Palumbo and earned a wild-card berth to join her twin at the state tournament Feb. 26 in Albany. Junior Goddiss Hodge and Arianna Balsamo also reached the county finals stage.

Uniondale, which captured the Nassau dual meet team title with a 34-30 victory over Long Beach Jan. 21, continued its spectacular season with three county champions and two runners-up. Coach Tim Godoy said the Knights began the campaign with 45 girls as interest in the sport has exploded.

"The girls are excited to be a part of something new and they really put the work in," he said. "We had great support from parents and family members as well as about half of



Uniondale's Angeline Bonilla, won the first finals bout of the tournament at 94 pounds.

our boys team showed up. It was a special day."

Uniondale junior Angeline Bonilla, who took third place last season, captured the 94-pound title over Varian with a 12-5 decision.

"The impossible doesn't seem that far away if you keep pushing," Bonilla said. "It was the first match of the finals and not going to lie, I was a little nervous. Brooke is a tough wrestler and I felt it was a 50-50 match. I couldn't have done it without my coaches."

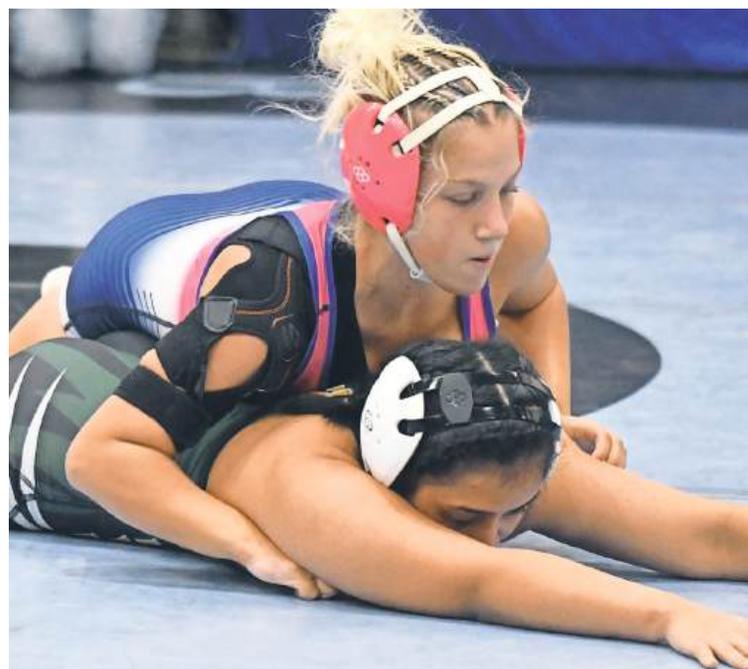
Also for the Knights, junior Brianna Marquez captured the 100-pound championship and junior Keishara Tulloch was a repeat county champ, winning at 152 over junior teammate Gabrielle Christian. Senior and first-year wrestler Emely Ramos reached the finals at 165, pulling several upsets along the way.

"The support these girls have for each other is awesome," Godoy said. "They were all screaming at the top of their lungs."



Terry Uellendahl/Herald photos

Calhoun's Reese Adams, top, rallied to capture the 126-pound title.



Arianna Balsamo, top, was one of five Long Beach finalists.

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# Cooking for a Cure funds diabetes research

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I finally said, I need to get involved in things that are going to help my family and help people with diabetes," Greenberg said. "I'm involved in a lot of things, but this comes right home."

His path to involvement began at Glen Cove Junior Soccer, where he serves as president. There he has spoken often with DeRiggi-Whitton, the event co-founder, and they spoke frequently about their children and their respective experiences with type 1 diabetes and love of soccer. At 3-years-old, her daughter, Amanda, was diagnosed after manifesting subtle symptoms that could easily have been missed.

"She started to wet the bed again," DeRiggi-Whitton recalled. "She was lethargic a little bit, she'd lost 2 pounds — nothing too dramatic." Trusting her instincts, she insisted on having her daughter tested. Amanda's blood sugar was 530 — more than five times the typical value. "Had I taken her home that night, she could have ended up in a diabetic coma," she said. "I always tell people just to follow their gut feeling and keep an eye on the water."

Cooking for a Cure was born out of that fear and determination. "This is our 20th event," DeRiggi-Whitton said. "It took 22 years to get here because we had Covid, so we stopped for two years. It's a big milestone for a group of

friends who decided to help me and run this." What began as a grassroots effort has grown into a powerful network of families directly affected by juvenile diabetes.

"One of the worst things that happened to me was my daughter being diagnosed," she said. "But one of the best things that's ever happened to me are the people I've met through this."

Greenberg joined the event's committee in 2019, shortly after he challenged and lost to DeRiggi-Whitton in the race for the 11th seat in the county Legislature. Despite their political rivalry, the two bonded over their children's diagnoses. "After the election, here we are, and we're friends," DeRiggi-Whitton said. "I am so honored to be having him as our honoree. That's the way the world should work."

The funds that Cooking for a Cure raises support cutting-edge research at the Diabetes Research Institute, in Miami, Fla., a global leader in cure- and prevention-focused science. Dr. Joana Lemos, the institute's associate director of scientific communications and data analytics, said the organization's work centers on one goal: "changing the course of diabetes by finding the cure, not just managing it."

Its research encompasses protecting and restoring insulin-producing beta cells, refining targeted immune thera-

pies and advancing cell replacement strategies. "The unifying goal is the same," Lemos said. "To preserve or restore the body's ability to regulate blood sugar naturally."

She added that the institute's work differs from traditional treatment models. "From the DRI's perspective, the most promising near-term advances are those that modify the disease itself rather than simply improving symptom management," Lemos said, pointing to prevention trials and refined cell-replacement therapies that aim to make treatments safer and longer lasting.

Researchers now understand that Type 1 diabetes does not begin suddenly, with its diagnosis. "We now understand much more about the early stages, when beta cells are stressed but still present," Lemos said. Preserving even partial insulin production can lead to "more stable glucose levels and fewer complications."

For Greenberg, that research represents hope — not just for Sean, who is now thriving, but also for families that may face the same diagnosis. Greenberg calls his son his "hero." Despite the daily management of insulin pumps, glucose monitors and strict dietary vigilance, Sean has adapted. "He just took it head-on," his father said. "He took something negative and made it a positive."



Courtesy Jaime Greenberg

Sean Greenberg, shown at age 12, continued competing on the ice even as early symptoms of his Type 1 diabetes went unrecognized.

Cooking for a Cure will celebrate that resilience while continuing its mission to fund research aimed at preventing and ultimately curing diabetes. Tickets to the April fundraiser are \$125. For more information, contact Mariah Moscone at (954) 964-4040, ext. 1123, or [mmoscone@drif.org](mailto:mmoscone@drif.org).

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# Top real estate professionals honored at Heritage Club

By HAILEY FULMER

The Herald's Real Estate Achievement +Leadership Awards at the Heritage Club on Jan. 28 celebrated professionals whose leadership and innovation have shaped the region's real estate landscape. Kelly Killoren Bensimon, founder, owner and broker specialist of Kelly Killoren Bensimon Inc. and Douglas Elliman was honored for her impact on real estate leadership. A former model and reality television personality, Bensimon has successfully transitioned into a successful real estate career. Her keynote speech reflected on her path into the industry.

After her mother became ill, Bensimon said she sold her family home by herself — a moment that inspired her to shift from television to real estate. Today, she focuses on client relationships and enhancing the value of the properties she represents.

"I became licensed because I needed to protect my family — and today, that instinct drives everything I do," she said.

Steven Krieger, chief executive officer of B2K Development, was named Real Estate Visionary of the Year, while Jan Burman, chairman of B2K Development, received the Legacy in Real Estate award.

The Rising Stars category recognized emerging professionals. Honorees included James La Dolce, vice president and branch manager at Flushing Bank, and Ashley Infantino, a licensed real estate salesperson with DeSimone Real Estate Agency.

Awards for construction, development and engineering recognized Rob Mannino, chief operating officer of The Kulka Group, who received the Commercial and Residential Construction Management award.

"It is such a pleasure to go to work every day and be surrounded by those people," Mannino said, crediting his team's growth over the past two years. He also expressed gratitude to partner Devin Kulka, chief executive officer of The Kulka Group, and his father, citing their guidance and leadership.

Joseph Picataggi Jr., principal of Terra Construction Group, received the Development and Construction award, while Matthew K. Aylward, a partner at R&M Engi-



Tim Baker and Holden Leeds/Herald photos

The real estate movers and shakers networked before the awards ceremony.

neering, was recognized for excellence in engineering.

Michael S. Ackerman, managing partner of Ackerman Law, took home the Excellence in Real Estate Law, PLLC. Keith P. Brown, a partner at Certilman Balin Adler & Hyman LLP, received recognition in the Legal category, and Robert M. Connelly of Romer Debbas, LLP, earned the Excellence in Real Estate Law award.

"We are proud to honor Long Island's most accomplished real estate professionals — individuals whose vision, dedication and innovation continue to shape the towns where we live, work and raise our families," said Stuart Richner, president of Richner Communications for 26 years.

The Father/Son Duo award was presented to John and Dylan Vitale, president and vice president of Vitale Properties, recognizing multigenerational leadership.

The Next Gen Brokerage category recognized Luca Di Ciero, founder and CEO of NYSpace Finders, and Giuseppe Gregorio, an associate broker with the firm. Gregorio, who began his real estate career 12 years ago, said he was drawn to the industry's evolving challenges. The Power Team honor was awarded to Darab Lawyer and Vanessa Ambrosecchia, licensed real estate salespersons with Douglas Elliman. Ambrosecchia highlighted the impact of her work on clients.

"I just like helping people," she said, "to change more lives."

Additional awards recognized



Keynote speaker Kelly Killoren Bensimon from Kelly Killoren Bensimon Inc. and Douglas Elliman.

leadership across the industry. Shaan Khan, president of the Long Island Board of REALTORS® and broker-owner of RK Realty Group, received the Real Estate Excellence award. Denise Savino-Erichsen, president and CEO of Automatic Industries, was honored in the Technology category.

In the commercial sector, Jonathan M. Stern, chief growth officer of Ackman-Ziff Real Estate Group, was recognized in celebration of the firm's centennial anniversary. Michael Tucker, associate broker at DGN Commercial, received the Commercial Brokerage award. Joel Lipsky, chief executive officer of Lipsky Construction, received the Construction Management award.

Tom Attivissimo, CEO and principal of Greiner-Maltz Co. of Long Island LLC, was named Top In-

dustrial and Investment Sales and Leasing Counselor of the Year. Shalom Maidenbaum, founder and owner of Maidenbaum Property Tax Reduction Group LLC, received the Property Tax Reduction award.

Additional residential awards were presented to Nicholas Sforza of Manhasset Realty Group and Marisa Filardo of Douglas Elliman, both recognized for Real Estate Excellence. Filardo, a mother of two, serves clients across Long Island and Queens.

The Team Leadership award went to Rachel King, a licensed associate real estate broker and team leader of The King Team at SERHANT.

For photos, go to [RichnerLive.com/realawards/2026-photos/](http://RichnerLive.com/realawards/2026-photos/) For more on RichnerLive events visit [RichnerLive.com](http://RichnerLive.com).



Ackman-Ziff Real Estate Group, Chief Growth officer, Jonathan M. Stern with his award.



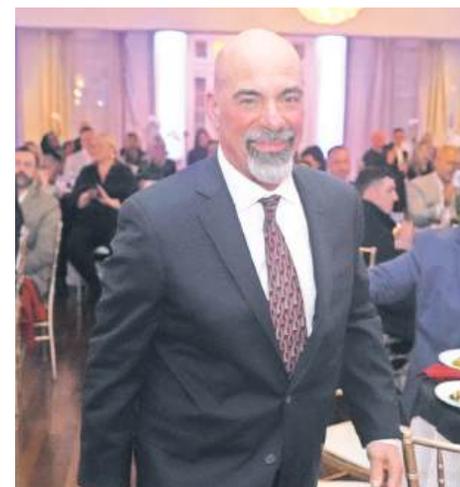
DGNY Commercial, Associate Broker, Michael Tucker walking up to accept his award.



From Certilman Balin Adler & Hyman, LLP, Partner, Keith P. Brown.



Awarded the Father/Son Duo Award, President and Vice President, respectively, Dylan and John Vitale from Vitale Properties.



From Greiner-Maltz Co. of Long Island, LLC, CEO & Principal, Tom Attivissimo heads to accept his award.



The Kulka Group's Chief Operating Officer, Rob Mannino.



Licensed Real Estate Salespersons Darab Lawyer and Vanessa Ambrosecchia from Douglas Elliman won the Power Team award.



R&M Engineering, Partner, Matthew K. Aylward, PE.



Interior Motives New York, Founder and Principal Designer, Susan Mandel.



From NYSpace Finders, Founder & CEO Luca Di Ciero and Associate Broker Giuseppe Gregorio took home the Next Gen Brokerage award.



Photos courtesy Elizabeth Sagarin

Honorees and community members gathered during the 5th annual Tribute and Honor Awards Ceremony and Fundraising Gala on Feb. 7.

# Service and sacrifice honored at ceremony

By ROKSANA AMID

ramid@lherald.com

A sold-out crowd packed the room Saturday night as the Tribute and Honor Foundation hosted its 5th Annual Tribute and Honor Awards Ceremony and Fundraising Gala on Feb. 7, marking a milestone year for the organization with its largest turnout to date.

Veterans, families, first responders, elected officials and community leaders from across Long Island gathered to recognize eight honorees whose leadership and service have strengthened the veteran community and those who support it.

“It is always meaningful to participate in the Tribute and Honor Awards,” said Pam Panzenbeck. “This event unites our community in recognizing veterans and their supporters, and the record turnout shows the wide-reaching support for this mission across Glen Cove and Long Island.”

Foundation President and Founder Gaitley Stevenson-Mathews said the awards were created to promote broader public understanding.

“These Awards go beyond individual recognition,” he said. “They are meant to shine a light on the challenges veterans and their families face and to help the broader community better understand the importance of service, advocacy, and support.”

This year’s honorees included five veterans: Peter Carbone, who received the Community Service Award; Officer Owen Valance, the Impact Award; Robert Free-land, the Volunteer Award; Philip Como, the Leadership Award; and Scott Whitting, the Legacy Award. Three supporters were also recognized: Long Island Cares Veterans Services, which received the Homefront Award; Eileen Shanahan and the Warrior Ranch Foundation, the Awareness & Remembrance Award; and Simone Renaud, honored posthumously with the Front Runner Award.

Although unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict, Glen Cove Police Chief Christopher Ortiz shared a statement of support for the foundation and for Valance’s recognition. He noted the department’s pride in serving the community and highlighted the importance of honoring veterans who continue their commitment to service as first responders.

Howard Stillwagon, commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 347, reflected on the foundation’s growth since its founding in December 2021. He point-



The 2026 honorees are recognized during the 5th Annual Tribute and Honor Awards Ceremony and Fundraising Gala on Feb. 7 in Glen Cove, celebrating their leadership, service and commitment to the veteran community.

ed to its efforts following the 2021 fire at the VFW Post, as well as initiatives such as the Ben Farnan Scholarship and the Military Banner Program in Morgan Park, as examples of its expanding impact.

Now in its fifth year, the Tribute and Honor Awards Ceremony has evolved into one of the region’s signature events, raising funds to support the foundation’s ongoing mission to serve veterans and their families. More information is available at [TributeAndHonor-Foundation.org](http://TributeAndHonor-Foundation.org).

Evelyn Kandekn expressed her gratitude towards the evenings honorees and the men and women who continue to serve the country.



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Photos courtesy Glen Cove City School District

District leaders stand inside one of the modernized science classrooms following the ribbon-cutting ceremony funded by the December 2022 bond.

# District upgrades science labs via Dec. 2022 bond

More than 100 families gathered at Glen Cove City School District's high school on Wednesday, Feb. 5, for the district's seventh annual Family STREAM Night, which also featured a ribbon-cutting ceremony for newly renovated science laboratories.

Members of the Glen Cove Board of Education joined administrators, teachers and students to officially open the upgraded labs, which were funded through a bond approved by voters in

December 2022. The ceremony offered residents their first opportunity to tour the modernized spaces.

"It was wonderful to see so many families exploring these new spaces together," Alexa Doeschner, superintendent of schools, said. "The state-of-the-art labs provide our students with the modern learning spaces they need to learn and grow, and we are grateful to the community for supporting the bond that turned these plans into reality."

The evening featured a variety of hands-on STREAM (science, technology, research, engineering, art and math) activities designed to engage students and parents alike. Families participated in stations such as Bubble Science, Doodle Bots and Save the Duck, encouraging collaborative problem-solving and experimentation.

A highlight of the night was the Prismatic Laser Light Show, sponsored by the Glen Cove Education Foundation, which demonstrated the intersection of art and light science through a colorful, interactive display.

The event was organized by Victoria Curtis, coordinator of science, and Lauren Lavelle, coordinator of technology, with support from STREAM teachers, staff and student volunteers who guided families through the activities.

District officials said the new science labs represent a key component of Glen Cove's commitment to 21st-century learning environments and hands-on instruction that prepares students for future academic and career opportunities.

—Roksana Amid



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Families explore hands-on STREAM activities, including Bubble Science and Doodle Bots, during Glen Cove's Family STREAM Night, which drew more than 100 attendees to the high school.

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# Nonprofit plans Black History Month gala

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1  
tion.

“We wanted to make sure that we were continuing on with highlighting people in the community, and Black people in the community, that are doing the work without the expectation of the pats on the back or the awards, that [are] passionate about youth and families and community,” she said.

“It’s our responsibility to highlight those people so that the young people see themselves and see opportunities that they can aspire to,” Watson added. “These people are doing the work that’s going to carry on for generations to come. And they do it because of the love and the passion that they have for youth families in our community.”

Honorees are selected through a board-led nomination and voting process that focuses on long-term impact rather than a single achievement. “We’re looking at legacy,” Watson explained. “So, what have they been doing on a continual basis to change lives? There’s people in the community that’s better because of the things that these people do.”

Norris, the director of choral music at Glen Cove High School, is being recognized for his leadership in arts education, which has broadened students’ exposure to opportunities far beyond their hometown.

“Mr. Norris has made it his life’s



Roksana Amid/Herald

Clothing and essential items in “The Closet,” an I Am My Sister initiative at Glen Cove Middle School that offers students free access to clothes.

work to expose these young people to the best of the world’s art and music,” Watson said. “Wherever he takes these young people, they now have a whole world that they see that now they have the ability to touch. They’re no longer afraid of what the future holds.”

Norris said he considers the award an extension of his commitment to student advocacy. “I think the organization is wonderful,” he said of I Am My Sister. “I think it’s giving a voice to a population that is sometimes underrepresented and underserved. I’m very excited to be a part of this and very excited

to share it with my students. My service is really to the students in the school community.”

In recent years, he said, supporting students emotionally has become just as important as musical instruction. “I try very hard to make each child that’s in my care feel loved, feel appreciated, feel like they have a voice that can be heard, feel safe,” Norris said. “I just want to continue to be a voice and an advocate for them to be their best selves.”

Honoree Nicole Robinson-Helmus is the founder of Level Up Glen Cove and

its nonprofit arm, Level Up Cares, launched in November 2023 to expand access to health and wellness services.

“We often give free classes to seniors and to young adults in the community,” Robinson-Helmus said. “Last year I opened it up for anybody, I Am My Sister and anybody else in the community who didn’t have things to do for the summer all teens who came in had a free workout to keep them busy, keep them occupied and to keep them healthy for the summer.”

Community investment, she said, is fundamental to her mission. “If you want a business, if you want people in your community that you’re serving to be empowered, to feel supported, you also have to give back to that community,” Robinson-Helmus said. “With health and wellness, if you’re healthy physically, but not just physically, mentally healthy, that you can feel strong, you can feel empowered. You make your own destiny.”

For Watson, the gala is ultimately about ensuring that young people see models of leadership that reflect possibility.

“These people are doing the work that’s going to carry on for generations to come,” she said.

The gala will be held at the Metropolitan Caterers, 3 Pratt Blvd. in Glen Cove. Tickets can be purchased at iammysister.org.



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# DEC head discusses state's goals, policies

By MADISON GUSLER

mgusler@liherald.com

More than 200 people attended the Long Island Association's Energy and Environment Committee meeting on Feb. 5 at LIA headquarters in Melville. The highlight of the program was a discussion with the commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Conservation, Amanda Lefton.

"Long Island's environment is our economy," Matt Cohen, LIA president and CEO, said. LIA is a nonprofit association that works to ensure Long Island's economic vitality.

Lefton previously served as the director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in the Department of the Interior. She has over 15 years of experience working on energy and environment in both the public and private sector.

"As Long Islanders, we know that things like water quality and our natural resources are critical to our livelihood," she said. "We know these things aren't in competition, but actually complement each other if done correctly. That is the perspective that I bring to the department.

"We continue to move forward," Lefton added, "to make sure that we're not just delivering on our mission of protecting the state's environment, protecting water quality, delivering on clean air, protecting our natural resources,

but also doing so in a way that there's transparency."

Billy Haugland, vice chair of the Energy and Environment Committee, who led the discussion, praised Lefton's ability to bring government and industry leaders together, leading to productive outcomes, increased collaboration, and reliable environmental stewardship.

Lefton discussed aspects of the state's policy proposals and 2026 executive budget, and highlighted its steps to reduce pollution, its transition to clean energy and investments in infrastructure and transportation. She contrasted state actions with federal efforts to dismantle environmental protections. "The jobs and benefits that could be lost on Long Island through the stalling of offshore wind projects are one of the many causalities of this chaos," she said.

Lefton pledged to continue communicating with stakeholders around New York. The DEC is prioritizing accessibility, streamlining its processes and improving data navigation, supported by investments from Gov. Kathy Hochul to modernize its website and technology.

Hochul's 2026 budget proposal also supports a robust environmental agenda, and Lefton complimented the tangible results for New Yorkers. The governor's "Let Them Build" agenda includes a series of reforms to speed up housing and infrastructure projects and reduce costs. The initiative includes adopting

common-sense reforms of the State Environmental Quality Review Act to speed up construction of zoned and permitted housing while preserving environmental safeguards. It also aims to reduce delays in building critical infrastructure, including clean-water projects.

"The governor's common-sense approach to securing more certainty in environmental review timelines," Lefton said, "will help advance more critically important projects."

She discussed Hochul's investments in water infrastructure, a commitment of \$3.75 billion to clean-water projects over the next five years, including improving sewer infrastructure. "We can ensure that we're continuing to tackle urban contaminants, protecting clean water, and delivering on the funding for our municipalities," Lefton said.

The Hochul administration has authorized a critical resiliency project on Long Island, with a \$1.7 billion investment in protecting the expanse from Fire Island to Montauk against storms and erosion. Additional investments have been made for various other Army Corps of Engineers resiliency projects in the Rockaways and Long Beach.

Lefton also mentioned a state grant award to Freeport, supporting the expansion of its advanced stormwater system, which is designed to reduce chronic flooding of the village's low-lying streets.



Madison Gusler/Herald

Amanda Lefton, commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Conservation, spoke at the Long Island Association's Energy and Environment Committee meeting on Feb. 5.

"We have strong programs in place to protect our air and water while encouraging investment in our communities," Lefton said. "We're ensuring that we have these programs available specifically to deliver for Long Islanders."

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# STEPPING OUT

## Our nation 250 years later

An artistic perspective

By Abbey Salvemini

The American Revolution might have happened 250 years ago, but the conversation about who really benefited from it is far from over. That's the idea behind Hofstra University Museum of Art's newly opened exhibition, "Our Unfinished Revolution(s)." On view, through July 24, it invites visitors to reflect on the promises of liberty, exploring how the ideals of the Declaration of Independence have shaped the nation.

July 4, 1776, has long been ascribed as the date that the United States was formed, Presley Rodriguez — the museum's assistant director of exhibitions and collections — writes in her essay in the exhibit catalog. There are other events that could have represented the birth of the nation — perhaps first battles of the Revolutionary War, or the signing of the treaty that formally ended the conflict. But it is the day that the Declaration of Independence was ratified that is credited with changing the world as we know it.

Today, many consider the Declaration of Independence as the document that proclaimed "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as guiding priorities of the United States. As significant as the signing of the Declaration of Independence was, however, it was also a rebellious act that those loyal to the English king viewed unfavorably in 1776.

"The Declaration of Independence is the North Star of liberty, democracy and freedom," says Hofstra Museum Director Sasha Giordano. "The exhibition explores who most benefitted from the Declaration of Independence. Although women, Black and enslaved people, Indigenous peoples, and immigrants played instrumental roles during the Revolution and were closely connected to the events surrounding the Declaration, they were not granted the same liberties at the nation's founding."

The 250 years of history are organized into four dated sections: 1776, 1876, 1976 and 2026. The artworks and archival materials on view illuminate the ways in which the Declaration of Independence has been interpreted, challenged and defended over time. Works drawn from the museum's permanent collection, alongside loans featuring artists such as Faith Ringgold, demonstrate the diversity of artistic responses to the Revolution's legacy across 250 years. Included are a mix of 18th-century prints, mid-century works and contemporary pieces by artists such as Alexander Calder, Larry Rivers and Jeremy Dennis, the show's featured artist.

Groups whose liberties were initially denied come into focus: women, Black, Indigenous and immigrant communities. Rodriguez — who curated this exhibit — searched Hofstra's database for art that best captures their stories.

"This is really an homage to 250 years of freedom," she explains. "There are walls in the gallery dedicated to each of these anniversary years, and the artwork was created around these moments."

Beginning with 1776 section, works reflect the founding ideals and the exclusion of certain communities, while later sections show how those



- Now through July 24  
Programs require advance registration; visit events.  
hofstra.edu to RSVP or call  
(516) 463-5672
- Emily Lowe Gallery, behind  
Emily Lowe Hall, Hofstra  
University's South Campus,  
Hempstead



Courtesy Hofstra University Museum of Art  
Jeremy Dennis' Cloak of Divisibility, from the series Rise, 2025, archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist.



Map of New England, 1676, ink on paper. Gift of unknown donor, HU62.7.



Washington Crossing the Delaware, Evening Previous to the Battle of Trenton, December 5 (sic), 1776, 1800-1900, hand-colored lithograph. Gift of Mary Estabrook, HU64.98.

Ringgold's 2009 series, "Declaration of Freedom and Independence." Her work perfectly embodies the exhibition's theme and reflects the ongoing struggle to make liberty a reality for all, according to Rodriguez.

"The exhibition invites you to consider your own role in shaping the nation's future. The response wall allows visitors to contribute their perspectives, and those ideas will literally be on display for others to see," she adds.

Her aim is that visitors reflect not only on the past but think hard about what our future holds. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to the Wish Wall Project, the collaborative response wall developed by a nationwide network of museums and libraries, where all can leave their thoughts, reflections and reactions to the exhibition.

"Our Unfinished Revolution(s)," connects to the broader Untold Stories of Revolution: A Hofstra University Initiative for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution, a campus-wide exploration of the Revolution's lesser-known narratives. Related programming tied to the exhibit invites students, faculty and the public to engage with themes of democracy, equity and civic responsibility.

Events include a conversation with Dennis on March 5 and a curator-led gallery tour on April 9; programs that allow participants to engage more deeply with the exhibit.

"During the gallery tour, visitors will have a chance to notice details they might miss on a casual visit, and they can hear the stories behind why specific works were included," Rodriguez says.



Bill of Sale for Enslaved Person, 1779. Courtesy of Special Collections/ Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University Library.

struggles continued and evolved.

For Giordano, framing the Revolution as "unfinished" allows us to revisit and reclaim its milestones. It's presented as an ongoing conversation, rather than a closed chapter in history.

"Anniversaries are a way to remind us of what we celebrate and how we honor our country's life," she says. "This exhibition meets viewers where they are. You bring your own ideas and thoughts, and it encourages reflection. It could challenge you, or it could reaffirm what you already feel."

Jeremy Dennis, an enrolled member of the Shinnecock Indian Nation and founder of Ma's House & BIPOC Art Studio Inc., brings an Indigenous perspective into the narrative of America's evolving freedom through his photography.

"As a leader making art representing Indigenous people, his work speaks to current times and shares a relevant story," Giordano adds. "Through his art and photography, he takes us into that world."

Another standout is Faith

Ringgold's 2009 series, "Declaration of Freedom and Independence." Her work perfectly embodies the exhibition's theme and reflects the ongoing struggle to make liberty a reality for all, according to Rodriguez.



### 'RENT' in concert

The unforgettable music of Jonathan Larson's groundbreaking musical fills Tilles Center in a powerful symphonic concert setting. RENT is currently celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2026, marking three decades since its Off-Broadway debut in January 1996 and subsequent move to Broadway. Experience the music of Larson's landmark work through its original Broadway legacy as Adam Pascal, who originated the role of Roger, hosts the evening and returns to the stage for a special encore performance. Presented in a symphonic concert format with full orchestra, the event celebrates the iconic songs that changed musical theater forever. "To be able to host RENT in concert and then step back on stage for an encore is incredibly special, Pascal says. This concert is about honoring Jonathan Larson's voice, the community that formed around this show, and the power of these songs to still speak, loudly and honestly, to audiences today."

Friday, Feb. 13, 8 p.m. Tilles Center, LIU Post campus, 720 Northern Blvd., Brookville. Tickets available at [tillescenter.org](http://tillescenter.org) or (516) 299-3100.



### 'So don't stop me now'

Queen-mania rolls on. Almost Queen returns to the Paramount stage with their homage to the beloved band. They don't just pay tribute to the legendary band, Almost Queen transports you back in time to experience the magic and essence of Queen themselves. The band — featuring Joseph Russo as Freddie Mercury, Steve Leonard as Brian May, Randy Gregg as John Deacon, and John Cappadona as Roger Taylor — is "guaranteed to blow your mind" with iconic four-part harmonies and expertly executed musical interludes. The band's authenticity shines through in their impeccable attention to detail and genuine costumes, while their live energy and precision captivates fans of all ages with an unforgettable concert experience. The carefully curated setlist featuring Queen's best-loved songs, including, of course, classics like "Bohemian Rhapsody," "We Will Rock You" and "We Are the Champions!" It's no wonder fans keep coming back for more.

Saturday, Feb. 14, 8 p.m. The Paramount, 370 New York Ave., Huntington. Tickets available at [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com) or [paramountrny.com](http://paramountrny.com).

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## CALENDAR

**FEB**  
**14** **Camillia Festival**

Planting Fields welcomes all to its annual winter festival. Experience the season's most enchanting sight: over 200 camellia varieties in full bloom! Long celebrated for their elegance and color, these stunning flowers offer the perfect escape from the winter blues. This multi-sensory festival spans both the Main House and Camellia Greenhouse, with something for every visitor. Talented poets craft personalized, one-of-a-kind poems. View the Coe Family camellia plate display: Explore the historic dining room adorned with the family's rare and exquisite camellia plates, a glimpse into the estate-era elegance, with curated tea tastings, workshops and more. Plus guided tours of the Camillia Greenhouse. Don't miss this joyful celebration of winter's most elegant bloom. Tickets required.

- **Where:** Main House and Camillia Greenhouse, 1395 Planting Fields Road, Oyster Bay
- **Time:** Sessions from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 1-4 p.m.; also Feb. 15
- **Contact:** plantingfields.org or call (516) 922-9210

**Winter's Heartbeat**

Explore Sands Point Preserve's natural environment on a guided winter walk to explore the quiet but active life of the season. Look for animal tracks, signs of winter survival, and the subtle movements that reveal how wildlife stays active even in the coldest months. Bring your Valentine — whether that's a partner, family member, friend, your four-legged walking companion, or simply yourself! Perfect for all ages, this walk offers a refreshing, engaging way to connect with nature and experience the hidden heartbeat of winter. Meet at Castle Gould's Clock Tower. \$15, \$10 members; children \$5, free for members.

- **Where:** 127 Middle Neck Road, Sands Point
- **Time:** 10-11:30 a.m.
- **Contact:** sandspointpreserveconservancy.org or call (516) 571-7901

**Art explorations**

Converse, collaborate and create with kids at Family Saturdays at Nassau County Museum of Art. Get inspired by the art and

**FEB**  
**22** **Wild days in the Bronx**

Chazz Palminteri is back on the Paramount stage with his electrifying solo performance of "A Bronx Tale," the autobiographical one-man show that launched his remarkable career. Raw, riveting and deeply personal, the play draws on Palminteri's own bruising childhood in the Bronx, including the moment — at just nine-years-old — when he witnessed a gangland killing that would forever shape his view of the world. Onstage, Palminteri inhabits 18 vividly drawn characters, seamlessly shifting between friends, foes and family members to conjure an entire neighborhood with nothing but his voice, physicality and storytelling prowess. First written and performed in 1989, A Bronx Tale quickly became a sensation, hailed as one of the most sought-after stage properties since Rocky. The original production paved the way for the acclaimed film adaptation — directed by Robert De Niro — and later a hit Broadway musical. Born and raised in the Bronx, Palminteri stands firmly in the lineage of iconic Italian-American artists who redefined New York storytelling in the 1970s, including Martin Scorsese, De Niro, Al Pacino and Joe Pesci. Like them, he brings grit, muscle and an unflinching realism to his work, capturing both the violence and the humanity of life on those sidewalks. This return engagement offers audiences a chance to experience the original, powerhouse performance that started it all — up close, uncompromising and unforgettable.

- **Where:** The Paramount, 370 New York Ave., Huntington
- **Time:** 7:30 p.m.
- **Contact:** ticketmaster.com or paramountny.com

objects in the galleries and then join educators at the Manes Center to explore and discover different materials to create your own original artwork. Kids and adults connect while talking about and making art together. A new project is featured every week. \$20 adult, \$10 child. For ages 2-14. Registration required. \$20, \$10 child; members free.

- **Where:** 1 Museum Drive, Roslyn Harbor
- **Time:** Noon-3 p.m.
- **Contact:** nassaumuseum.org or (516) 484-9337

**FEB**  
**15** **Hempstead House Tour**

See the grand rooms inside the massive 50,000-square-foot Tudor-style mansion at Sands Point Preserve, the former summer residence of Howard Gould (1912-1917) and later Daniel and Florence Guggenheim (1917-1930). For adults, but children 5+ are allowed. \$10 per person.

- **Where:** 127 Middle Neck Road, Sands Point
- **Time:** Noon-2 p.m.; also Mar 1
- **Contact:** sandspointpreserveconservancy.org or call (516) 571-7901

**FEB**  
**16** **Winter Break Workshop: Backyard Birders**

Planting Fields Park introduces young explorers to the remarkable birds that call Long Island home in the winter. Kids ages 6-12 can explore native winter birds, including loons, barred owls, and turkey vultures. Engage in hands-on activities to learn about the special adaptations that help these birds survive the winter. Then head outdoors for a guided nature walk using interactive field guides to identify and count local bird species. End up at the Bird Sanctuary, where visitors become citizen scientists by collecting data for the Great Backyard Bird Count. \$25 per child.

- **Where:** Check in at Education Center, 1395 Planting Fields Road, Oyster Bay
- **Time:** 10 a.m.-noon
- **Contact:** plantingfields.org or call (516) 922-9210

**Nature Detectives & Story Makers**

Kids in grades 3-6 are invited to Sands Point Preserve for a winter writing adventure. Young authors explore the preserve like detectives — uncovering nature clues left in

the ice, snow and winter woods — and transform their discoveries into curious, magical tales. Instructors guide participants to connect with the natural world and use it as inspiration to write original stories inspired by what they discover, create fantasy maps and more. \$60 per child.

- **Where:** 127 Middle Neck Road, Sands Point
- **Time:** 6-8 p.m.
- **Contact:** sandspointpreserveconservancy.org or call Tracy Strianese at (516) 570-2185

**FEB**  
**21** **Black History Month Gala & Legacy Awards**

I Am My Sister invites all to an elegant black-tie evening celebrating culture, leadership and community impact at its annual gala. This year's theme, "Our Stories, Our Strength: A Legacy of Power," sets the tone for a night of inspiration, recognition and fundraising in support of the organization's youth leadership and empowerment programs. Enjoy a cocktail hour followed by dinner, dancing, raffles, a silent auction, live performances and the presentation of Legacy Awards honoring local trailblazers who have made lasting contributions to Glen Cove and the

surrounding community.

- **Where:** The Metropolitan Caterers, 3 Pratt Blvd.
- **Time:** 6 p.m. cocktail hour; program begins at 7 p.m.
- **Contact:** iammysister.org or call (516) 528-4989

**Harlem Globetrotters**

Don't miss out on the action when the Globetrotters bring the team's 100 Year Tour — the most legendary tour in Globetrotters history — to Nassau Coliseum. This centennial season is a once-in-a-century celebration of 100 years of jaw-dropping "No Way!" moves, "Wow!" moments and basketball thrills. From gravity-defying dunks to game-changing tricks, fans feel the history, the joy, and the fun that only the Globetrotters can deliver. For the first time, the team will also debut their new 100 Year jerseys, honoring a century of global impact, as they face off against their longtime rivals, the Washington Generals. Fans can also expect all-new surprises like the Golden Basketball by Spalding®, epic pre-game Magic Pass experiences, and an unforgettable 5th Quarter autograph session.

- **Where:** Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale
- **Time:** 2 p.m.
- **Contact:** ticketmaster.com

**FEB**  
**22** **Art talk**

Nassau County Museum of Art hosts Dee Shapiro, a New York-based artist, is known for her richly detailed paintings exploring geometry, architecture, and place. She discusses works from her City and Landscapes series featured in The Real, Surreal, and Photoreal exhibit, which capture the rhythm and structure of urban and natural environments.. \$20, \$15 seniors, \$10 students (members free). Limited seating, register in advance.

- **Where:** 1 Museum Drive, Roslyn Harbor
- **Time:** 3 p.m.
- **Contact:** nassaumuseum.org or (516) 484-9337

**Having an event?**

Items on the Calendar page are listed free of charge. The Herald welcomes listings of upcoming events, community meetings and items of public interest. All submissions should include date, time and location of the event, cost, and a contact name and phone number. Submissions can be emailed to kbloom@liherald.com.

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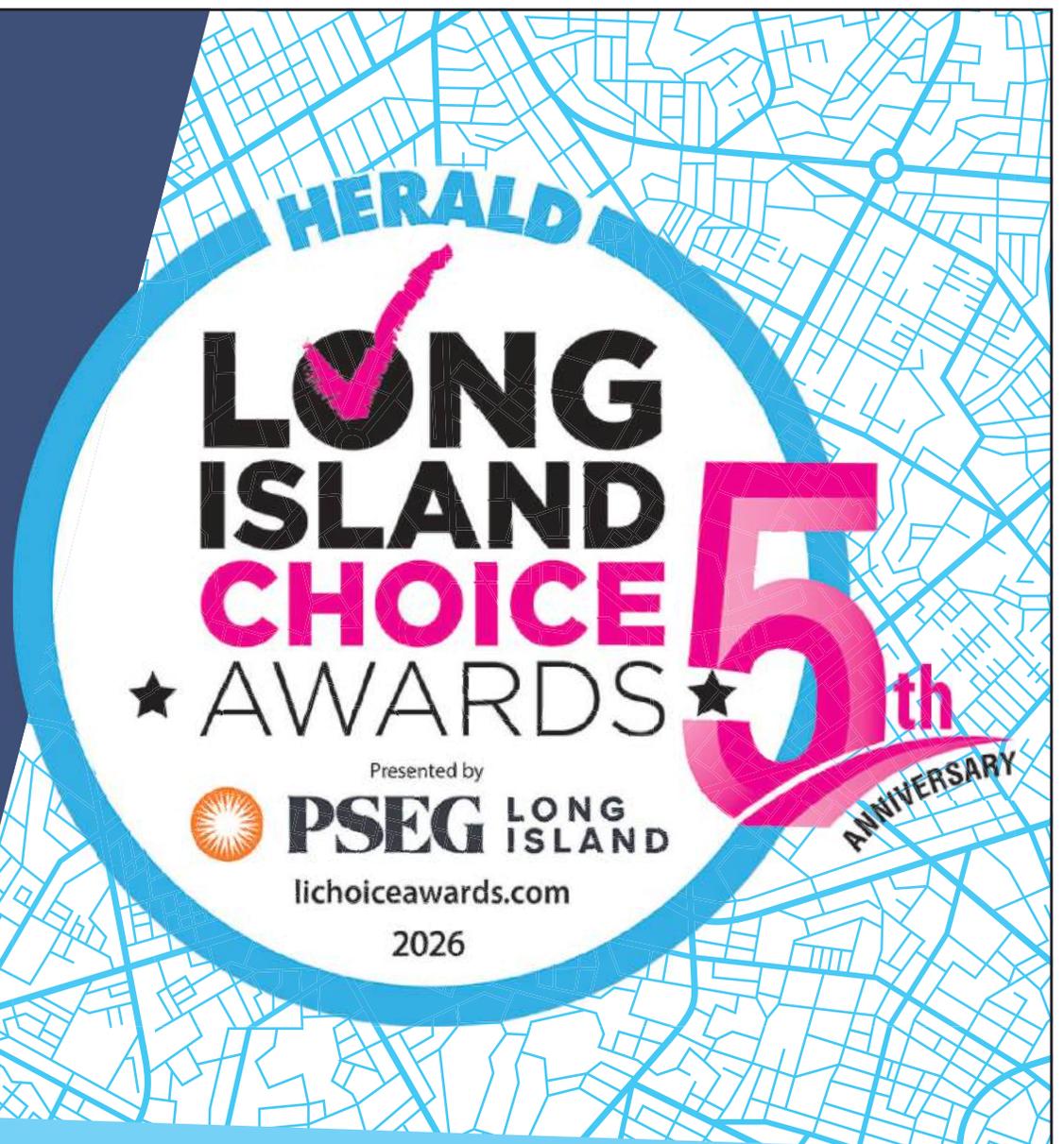


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# Live music finds another home in Sea Cliff 19

By JULIA CAPITELLI

jcapitelli@liherald.com

The Sea Cliff community packed the village's General Store on Sunday for live music and hot chocolate, despite the cold weather. Local band LovePeace performed as well as Frank & Friends.

When Laura and Ralph Bonelli bought the property and opened the General Store, they chose to preserve its bar and stage. Both had been parts of Woodpecker Hall, the private event space that previously occupied the building.

"We really wanted to keep the integrity of the place," Laura said. "and just allow the community to be able to come in."

The General Store opened in November and offers gifts and toys for children along with other merchandise like leather bound books. The Bonellis utilize the preexisting features, hosting musicians on the stage and keeping locally source kombucha and Sylvester's cold brew on tap at the bar.

Laura described herself and her husband as being "very community driven." They moved to Sea Cliff roughly three years ago and have two children in the North Shore School District.

"We want to give back," Laura said. "and we want people to have a place to go, and that's why we incorporate things for children. And even just to have people come and sing on stage, we think is great. They can do poetry. There's so much opportunity there."

Roughly 40 people attended Sunday's performance, according to Laura, and she and Ralph provided complementary



Courtesy Laura Bonelli

Frank Ferrara, Eddie Matthews, Lori Spielberger Klein, Marsha Silverman, Stephanie Sobol, Stephen Gronda.

hot chocolate. Local musician Frank Ferrara performed with both groups and was joined on stage briefly by his three-year-old granddaughter.

Musicians Leanne Luce and Katharine Colgan both performed after hiatuses, and it was Luce's first time playing guitar and singing.

"A lot of really wonderful things happened," Ferrara said. "People are more

aware of the store, which hasn't been around that long. The place was absolutely packed."

When the store opened, Ferrara helped the Bonellis get the sound system operational again. He also introduced them to Mark Sobel, village trustee and Sea Cliff Arts Council producer at large, so they could get a permit to host live music. Ferrara said meeting

the couple for the first time was "a wonderful interaction."

The General Store has joined places like Still Partners and the arts council as live music venues in the village.

"I think that's what's special about Sea Cliff," Ferrara said. "is that there's both this wonderful, supportive audience and people willing to provide venues for this to happen."



Photos courtesy Alan Klein

Frank Ferrara, left, also played alongside Eddie Matthews and Katharine Colgan.

General Store owners Laura, right, and Ralph Bonelli kept the building's stage to host musicians.



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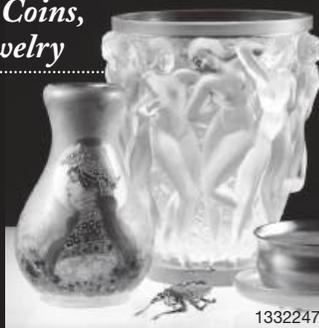
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## OPINIONS

# Preparing future leaders by listening today

Over the past year, school districts across the state have seen a shift in the way students are represented in school governance. As of July 1, 2025, Boards of Education are required to include a student board member at public meetings. This change marked a crucial step forward in recognizing that students deserve a voice in conversations that shape their educational experience.

While this requirement was new for many districts, in Glen Cove, student voices in board discussions were already part of our practice. For several years before the law was passed, our school board included a student member at public meetings, reflecting a shared belief that students bring perspectives adults alone cannot provide. Their experiences as learners and members of the school community help ground board discussions in the realities of student life.

The state law formalized this approach and removed the need for a local referendum to establish a student board member position. Under the law, each district includes at least one ex officio, non-voting student member who participates in public board meetings. Student board members do not vote, and do not attend executive sessions. Their role is to observe, listen and contribute to open discussions when appro-

priate, offering insight into how policies and decisions may be experienced by students.

As districts have worked to implement the new requirement, guidance from the New York State School Boards Association has helped shape best practices. One recommendation encourages districts to include student board members in board policy committee meetings, where much of the detailed discussion and review of district policies occurs. This reflects an understanding that student voices can be especially valuable during the policy-development process.



**ALEXA  
DOESCHNER**

In Glen Cove we have taken this guidance to heart. Our student board member is invited to attend policy committee meetings and observe the work that goes into shaping district policies. This step allows students to better understand how policies are developed, revised and aligned with district values, while creating additional opportunities for student perspectives to inform conversations that directly impact school life.

Student board membership is not intended to place students in situations they are unprepared for, nor does it shift adult responsibility onto young people. Rather, it creates a thoughtful opportunity for inclusion by allowing students to learn how governance

works, observe decision-making in action and share their perspectives in a supportive and respectful setting.

In Glen Cove we view student board membership as an area of continued growth. While our student board members have participated in meetings for several years, we recognize that meaningful student engagement in governance requires ongoing reflection. We are working to expand opportunities for student voices by thinking carefully about how students are prepared for leadership roles, how they are supported throughout their service, and how adult leaders respond to and learn from student input.

This work challenges us to listen more closely. Students often notice aspects of school life that adults may overlook. Their observations can raise important questions and help clarify how decisions made at the board table are experienced in classrooms, hallways and extracurricular spaces. At the same time, participation in board and policy meetings offers students an authentic civic learning experience. They gain firsthand exposure to public service, collaboration and the complexity of decision-making in a democratic system.

Including students in governance aligns closely with what we strive to teach in our schools. We want students

to develop critical thinking skills, civic awareness and a sense of responsibility to their community. When students are invited into these conversations, they see that leadership is built through listening, dialogue and shared responsibility. They learn that their voices matter, and that respectful participation can contribute to positive change.

At its heart, the inclusion of student board members is about belonging. It sends a clear message that students are valued members of the school community whose perspectives deserve consideration. Their presence helps keep our work focused on what matters most, and strengthens the connection between decision-making and student experience.

Our goal isn't simply compliance with a mandate, but the continued development of a culture that values student voices as part of thoughtful and responsive leadership. By expanding opportunities for student input with care and openness, we believe our schools will be better positioned to serve today's students while preparing them to be engaged and informed citizens tomorrow.

*Dr. Alexa Doeschner is superintendent of the Glen Cove City School District. Andrew DiNapoli is the district's assistant superintendent for Human Resources.*



**ANDREW  
DINAPOLI**

# Keep driverless cars off Long Island roads

Gov. Kathy Hochul recently announced that the state plans to test driverless for-hire cars outside New York City. I'm a Long Island resident, and the



**TOM  
GOULDSBURY**

idea of robot cars on our streets is scary. As a transportation professional with over 25 years of experience on the roadways of our communities, I know how extraordinarily unsafe a plan like this would make us.

On Long Island, our cars are how life happens. Parents, kids, commuters and seniors are on the road every day, often navigating heavy traffic, construction and unpredictable weather. Spend five minutes on the Long Island Expressway at

rush hour, or near a busy school zone at the beginning or end of a school day, and it becomes clear why safety cannot be left to unproven technology.

And let's be honest about what's really going on here. The goal for these tech companies is New York City. Testing driverless cars just outside the city line is a sneaky way to move closer to that goal without facing the complexity, scrutiny and opposition that would come with starting in the city itself. In the meantime, Long Island is expected to carry the risks as the testing ground.

Safety is where this proposal really starts to fall apart. Driverless cars have already stalled in traffic, blocked emergency vehicles, sped past school buses loading children and failed to handle basic roadway situations in other parts

of the country. When you complicate that track record with a February snowstorm or a rainy evening rush hour here, the risks become obvious.

And these risks aren't just on paper — driverless cars are already hurting people. Reuters reported three weeks ago that a Waymo self-driving car hit a child during morning school drop-off near an elementary school in California. Federal regulators were investigating the incident, which raised serious questions about whether this technology can safely operate around children, parents and busy school zones. It should give every Long Island family pause.

The pressure behind the proposal to deploy more driverless cars is coming from powerful technology companies and executives like Elon Musk, who are focused on expanding their platforms

and opening new markets. Their priorities are driven by growth and investors' demands, not by the realities of Long Island roads or the safety concerns of the families who live here.

Long Islanders tend to be practical. We care about safety, accountability and systems that work. Decisions that affect our roads and neighborhoods should reflect those values, not treat our communities as a steppingstone to somewhere else.

Governor Hochul should listen to the people who live and work here and understand these roads firsthand. Long Island should not be asked to bear unfair risks so that technology companies can inch closer to New York City.

Transportation policy should put safety first. For Long Island, that means protecting our roads, our workers and the people who rely on them every day. We're nobody's guinea pigs.

*Tom Gouldsbury is president of the Long Island Limousine Association.*

**T**he safety of so many drivers cannot be left to unproven technology.

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(516) 569-4000**HERALD EDITORIAL****Black History is Long Island history**

**E**very February, Black History Month arrives with familiar names and stories. We rightly honor the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman and other giants whose courage reshaped the nation. Their legacies deserve remembrance.

But for many people on Long Island, those stories might feel distant — heroic, yes, but abstract, having unfolded somewhere else, in another place at another time.

What often goes missing is the understanding that Black history did not only happen on the National Mall or in Southern courtrooms. It happened here. It happened in the neighborhoods we walk every day, in the schools our children attend, in churches tucked onto residential blocks, and in town halls where decisions quietly shaped who could live where, who could teach, who could lead and who could serve.

On Long Island, Black residents confronted segregated housing patterns long after the law said discrimination was over. Veterans returned home from fighting for democracy abroad only to find out that it did not fully extend to them in their own communities. Black educators pushed open doors in school districts where they were once excluded from classrooms except as students. Black churches became organizing centers, social safety nets and sources of political power when other institutions shut their doors.

King spoke at Rockville Centre's South Side Junior High School — now

South Side Middle School — on March 26, 1968, just nine days before he was assassinated in Memphis. In his remarks, he spoke of poverty and injustice, and urged unity. People like Roslyn's Hazel Dukes, who served as president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from 1990 to 1992, made it their life's work to combat pervasive housing discrimination in many of our communities.

These are not footnotes to history. They are history.

Local athletes who broke color barriers on high school fields, teachers who became the first Black faces in faculty rooms, small-business owners who built livelihoods despite limited access to credit, and community leaders who advocated for basic services all helped shape what our communities look like today. Their contributions did not always come with applause or recognition. Many are remembered only by those who lived through the changes, if they are remembered at all.

That absence matters. When history is presented only as something that happened "somewhere else," it becomes easier to disconnect from it. It becomes symbolic rather than instructive.

But when Black history is grounded in familiar places — the elementary school you attended, the block where you grew up, the library or park you pass without a second thought — it becomes harder to ignore and easier to understand.

It also forces uncomfortable but necessary questions. Why do some figures

receive plaques and street names while others fade from memory? Why are certain struggles celebrated as defining moments, while local battles for fairness are overlooked? And what does it say about us if we fail to acknowledge the people who made our own communities more just, more open and more representative?

Black History Month should be an invitation to look closer, not just farther away. It should prompt school districts to examine whose stories are included in local curriculums. It should challenge libraries, historical societies and news organizations to document and elevate the experiences of Black residents who helped build these communities. It should encourage towns, villages and neighborhoods to ask whether public recognition truly reflects their full history.

This is not about diminishing national heroes. It is about completing the picture. National change is always the sum of local actions, people showing up to meetings, organizing neighbors, mentoring students, opening businesses and insisting on dignity in places where they were told to wait their turn.

For Black history to matter, it cannot live only in textbooks or documentaries. It must live where people live.

On Long Island, Black history did not unfold at a distance. It unfolded on our blocks, in our schools and in our town halls. Remembering that truth honors the past, helps us understand the present and reminds us that the next chapter of history is still being written, right here.

**FRAMEWORK** by Tim Baker

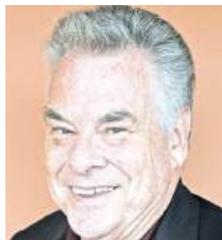
Watching the big game at Craftu Kitchen &amp; Tap House — Wantagh

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## OPINIONS

# There are better ways to resolve the immigration crisis

**T**he raging debate over Immigration and Customs Enforcement's policies and practices has potential long-term consequences for the nation that transcend the political partisanship of the moment. Let me say up front that I support ICE, and believe it serves an important national purpose. I also believe that constructive changes



**PETER KING**

can be made in those policies and practices that will not undermine the agency's underlying mission to enforce America's immigration laws.

As a grandson of immigrants, I strongly support legal immigration, which I believe is the lifeblood of our nation and has

made us unique in the world. I emphasize "legal" because, especially in today's world of drug cartels and violent gangs, it is vital that we know who it is we are inviting to live among us. There is also the reality that a country without borders isn't really a country.

It is generally accepted that the Biden administration allowed at least 10 million immigrants to enter the country illegally. If only 1 percent of that num-

ber were bad actors, it would mean that at least 100,000 potential drug dealers, sex traffickers and gang members are loose on our streets.

Some historical perspective: President Obama determined that 5 million undocumented immigrants in the country constituted a crisis, and during his administration more than 3 million were deported. Not only was there little or no media hysteria about Obama's reliance on ICE, but it was actually hailed. CNN, which now runs anti-ICE stories almost 24/7, not only supported ICE, but had a reporter accompany ICE agents on raids as they broke into homes in a sanctuary city at night to apprehend undocumented immigrants.

While ICE remains an essential component of immigration enforcement, raids no longer need to be as extensive. President Trump's strict border-enforcement policies have brought illegal immigration to the lowest levels in decades. It is virtually nonexistent.

While the law must be enforced, however, there is always room for reasonable discretion. There is no longer the need for dragnet-style raids. The time has come for a more surgical strategy, focusing almost entirely on criminal ele-

ments. Trump's designation of border czar Tom Homan to oversee ICE operations in Minneapolis is a major step in that direction.

In dealing with Minneapolis, however, it must be noted that almost no other city where ICE is operating has seen these kinds of disturbances, primarily because other elected leaders, and local and state law enforcement, cooperate with ICE. At a minimum, that means keeping demonstrators from getting in the faces of ICE agents or interfering with their operations.

Also, Minneapolis, and Minnesota, must agree to honor ICE detainers and turn over undocumented criminals in their prisons and jails before their release. This minimizes the possibility of fatal interactions. (It is slanderous and irresponsible for officials and critics to describe ICE agents as "murderers." While investigations are ongoing, the reasonable interpretation of the multitude of videos we've all seen is that, at worst, there were heat-of-the-moment reactions to unexpected incidents.)

Various "reforms" of ICE are being suggested, and I'm sure a number of them, such as the use of body cameras,

will be accepted and implemented. But I would strongly oppose any requirement that ICE agents remove their masks. Despite the hysterics of Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and others who shamelessly label ICE agents "Nazis" and "Gestapo," wearing masks has become absolutely essential for them. There are well-organized, systematic efforts to identify and "dox" ICE agents and their families. In cases of their alleged improper actions, they can be identified for investigation by numbers on their uniforms.

Now that the border is secure, we should make reasonable immigration reforms. Those who are undocumented, but were brought to our country as children and have lived here for a specified period of time without incident, should have a path to citizenship. There should be no attempts to track down undocumented people who are living here without bothering anyone. They should be urged to register and, after a certain period, be allowed to apply for residency.

It is to everyone's benefit, and society's gain, for people to be brought out from the shadows. With proper leadership and cooperation, we could be approaching a reasoned resolution of this divisive crisis.

*Peter King is a former congressman, and a former chair of the House Committee on Homeland Security. Comments? pking@liherald.com.*

**ICE remains an essential component, but raids no longer need to be as extensive.**

## Thirty days of the good, the bad and the ugly

**T**he year 2025 was a dizzying one for all Americans. So many things happened in Washington that it would take about 50 pages of the Herald to walk readers through every one. Rather than take on that project, I prefer to write about January, and



**JERRY KREMER**

how we were impacted by the news of the month. I declare January the month of the good, the bad and the ugly.

Of the good things that happened, I'll focus on the Cinderella story of Indiana University football quarterback Fernando Men-

doza. Every time I think about him and his accomplishments, I can't help but smile. If you love an example of perfection, Mendoza is exactly that.

It starts with his decision to enroll at Indiana, which was roundly criticized by all of his supporters. Why would you go to a school that has never won a national championship? But Mendoza defied the taunts and joined that much-maligned Hoosiers team.

Then, with smarts and determination, he guided the team to a 16-0 season and a national championship. He won the coveted Heisman Trophy and charmed all of America with his mature and impressive interviews. His displays of love for his wheelchair-bound mother were touching and memorable.

So the Mendoza story tops the good. The decision to send thousands of ICE and border-patrol agents to Minneapolis definitely tops January's bad news. The Trump administration's actions were poorly handled by Kristi Noem, the secretary of homeland security. Her instant labeling of Alex Pretti, the second Minnesotan shot by ICE agents, as a "domestic terrorist" was a reckless reaction to the death of a U.S. citizen with no criminal record.

The idea of drowning a major American city with thousands of law enforcement agents never made sense to begin with. Ask any respected police official about how the situation in Minneapolis was handled and he or she will tell you that the vast majority of the officers sent there were not trained to handle

crowds of protesters. The 600 members of the Minneapolis police force, who handled the George Floyd demonstrations, were the best people to deal with such a crisis, but they were bypassed.

The White House staff, headed by close Trump adviser Stephen Miller, bungled every stage of the Pretti shooting, and poured more gasoline on the fire by labeling him an "assassin." Miller and Noem were the wrong people to juggle a political crisis, and every step they took proved it. President Trump, who ordered the mass invasion into Minneapolis, was eventually forced to say he wanted to "de-escalate" the situation, but he's stuck with the optics of a horrible event.

There are so many things I could classify as ugly, but one stands out, because it has largely escaped public attention. A few weeks ago, a group of federal employees in Philadelphia were captured on local television removing historical materials relating to the history of slavery. This on top of media reports that the administration is taking a number of measures to eliminate

**From Fernando Mendoza to Alex Pretti to federal buildings in Philadelphia.**

any references to slavery in numerous federal facilities.

The attempts to erase this sad chapter of American history are part of the run-up to the July Fourth observation of the nation's 250th anniversary. Apparently, some people in the White House have decided that we must reflect only on the happy things that have happened during the past 250 years, but slavery is part of our history, and it can't be wiped away. There are people who promote the idea that the Holocaust never happened, which is why we observe International Holocaust Remembrance Day each year.

It's hard to predict what the next 11 months are going to be like in our nation's capital. There's new evidence every day of our bitter partisan divide. The president's postings on social media are often inflammatory. The tone that dominates the daily news is depressing. I wish there were a little more happy talk in our political world, but that, as Shakespeare said, is devoutly to be wished.

*Jerry Kremer was a state assemblyman for 23 years, and chaired the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee for 12 years. He currently chairs the Capitol Insight Group, a government relations firm. Comments? jkremer@liherald.com.*



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It's been a busy start to 2026. Here are some opportunities I have available:

**16 Old Field Woods Road, Setauket** is an all-inclusive, waterfront, luxury, 6-bedroom, 5-bath home available for rent at \$16,000 per month. **9 Harrison Avenue, Unit #2, Glen Cove** is a beautifully updated 3-bedroom, 1.5-bath apartment for rent at \$3,200 per month.

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