

New Rochelle Review



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newrochellereview.com

To Our Readership & Advertisers

For the past 25 years, Shoreline Publishing Inc., has published *Westchester Jewish Life*. After much consideration, we have decided to cease publication as of January 2026.

We thank all our loyal readers and advertisers throughout the years.

We will continue to publish our 5 monthly community newspapers and quarterly magazine along with our specialty publications.

Five New Rochelle High School Seniors Awarded QuestBridge Full-Ride Scholarships Valued at Nearly \$2 Million

Five New Rochelle High School (NRHS) Class of 2026 students are headed to prestigious colleges and universities on full, four-year QuestBridge Scholarships. QuestBridge matches high-achieving students with the nation's top colleges to provide "transformative educational, career, and life opportunities." The scholarships support students for whom top-tier colleges are financially out of reach.

The five New Rochelle students are among an elite group of 2,550 finalists nationwide recognized as Match Scholarship Recipients. The New Rochelle students are matched to Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern, and Colgate. They will receive early admission and scholarships that will cover the full cost of attendance, including tuition, housing and food, books and supplies, and travel expenses.

"This year's Match Scholarship Recipients embody excellence in so many ways, and we're excited to support them as they continue to dream big," said Ana Rowena Mallari, Co-Founder and CEO of QuestBridge. "Since QuestBridge's founding over 30 years ago, we've witnessed the incredible impact our Scholars can make in their lives, families, and communities, and we know



Left to Right: Bryan Mesajil, Sophia Fuentes, Melony Escobar, Daniella Anane-Sarfo, and Carlos Del Aguila

that this year's students will make a positive impact, too."

Student Government President Carlos Del Aguila is the first person in his family to attend college, and he is headed to Harvard to study applied mathematics with a focus on sociology. He attributes his success to the connections, encouragement, and guidance he received from his teachers and counselors during his 12 years in New Rochelle schools, and he encouraged others to pursue similar opportunities.

"Even if you don't come from a position of privilege in college admissions, and even if you don't believe you're the one to do it, just give it a shot. It's possible. Being surrounded by excellence and world-class faculty with opportunities for research and networking, it's opening a whole new set of doors for my future that I never would have had without them. This opportunity will change my life immeasurably,"

Del Aguila said.

His friend since their Jefferson Elementary School days, Bryan Mesajil, echoed his sentiments. Mesajil has been awarded a full scholarship to MIT, where he plans to

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Source: OKMLS, 2025, total dollar volume of single family homes sold by agent, New Rochelle school district. Jocelyn ranks in the Top 1% in Westchester County by single family homes sold, total dollar volume, 2025. Top 1.5% in the United States by Real Trends, America's Best.



From the Office of the New Rochelle City Manager



NEW ROCHELLE CITY MANAGER
WILFREDO MELENDEZ

Happy New Year!

As we welcome 2026, we begin the year with a renewed sense of purpose and momentum. Last month the City Council adopted a balanced, responsible budget that supports core services while investing strategically in our community's future. With this framework in place, we can continue advancing the priorities that matter most to residents, from improving roadways and strengthening stormwater infrastructure to expanding recreational opportunities, enhancing public safety and supporting small businesses and local not-for-profits. The adopted budget ensures that our investments

remain focused on enhancing quality of life across every neighborhood and allows us to maintain the City services residents count on while also positioning us to meet new challenges with resilience and innovation.

By now you should have received the 2026 DPW collection calendar and information booklet. Per that calendar, the week of January 19 will follow a holiday collection schedule as City offices will be closed on Monday in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Day. I encourage you to download the Recycle Coach app and get a customized pickup schedule for your address, as well as answers to your toughest recycling questions. It complements our MobileNR city app, through which you can report quality of life issues, submit complaints and easily access City services. Both apps are available in the Apple App Store and Google Play.

As the winter storm season begins, I would like to remind residents of how the City prepares for and responds to snow and ice events. When a storm is forecasted for our area, the City closely monitors weather reports

and receives detailed updates. At least 24 hours in advance, preparations begin, including scheduling staff shifts, mobilizing equipment, and applying brine to main roads and roads near schools and public safety facilities.

Once snow accumulation reaches approximately two inches and conditions allow, plowing operations begin. The City's Streets and Highways staff, with assistance from the Bureaus of Traffic Services and Sanitation, are responsible for clearing most city streets. Contractors assist with plowing smaller residential streets. The entire plowing operation is supported by staff from the City's Central Garage.

Sidewalks adjacent to City-owned properties are cleared by Sewers and Drains crews. Snow removal at City Hall and the Police Station is handled by Buildings and Grounds staff, while Parks and Recreation crews' clear sidewalks surrounding park facilities and park parking lots. Municipal parking lots, along with adjacent sidewalks, are cleared by the City's contracted parking operator.

As a reminder, the City Code

requires owners, lessees and/or occupants of a property to clear snow and ice from sidewalks abutting their homes and businesses. When conditions warrant, the City may offer free parking in certain municipal locations, including the Transit Center Garage and the New Roc Garage, to ease the cleanout burden for on-street parkers and to help crews more effectively clear streets.

Ahead of any new winter weather, please sign up for our NewRo Alert system to receive calls, texts and/or email updates from City Hall. We also post important messages on our social media accounts, cable access channels and on the City website. Sign up at www.newrochelleny.com/newroalert.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership. As always, your feedback and engagement help shape our efforts, and I encourage all residents to stay involved as we move forward. I look forward to a productive, hopeful, and community-centered 2026 for our City and for all who call it home.



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Five New Rochelle High School Seniors Awarded QuestBridge Full-Ride Scholarships Valued at Nearly \$2 Million

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study mechanical engineering. He, too, is the first member of his family to attend a university.

"I wouldn't have expected in a million years to match to MIT. From early on in fifth grade, my teachers told me they had really high hopes for me. I don't think of myself the way they see me. I never would have expected anything as great as MIT. It's an unbelievable outcome."

Daniella Anane-Sarfo learned about QuestBridge from a TikTok video. She researched the opportunity and took a chance that gained her admission to Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, where she will study biology or neuroscience in pursuit of her dream of attending medical school.

"I look forward to being part of the tight-knit Colgate community. It will help me grow more emotionally and academically, and will be the perfect place for me to learn, be more curious, and get to connect with people from different backgrounds. I know it will prepare me for what is ahead," said Anane-Sarfo.

Motivated to study biomedical engineering by her mother's illness, Melony Escobar applied for the QuestBridge scholarship at the encouragement of her school counselor. She will attend Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois - a dream come true for a girl who had only envisioned going to school in New York State and working hard to pay for it.

Escobar said, "Now I know that there is no limit. This was never on my radar because I never thought I could leave New York to study. All the support from my administrators and counselors has opened many doors. People in the school helped me branch out and do the most I can with my opportunities for success."

Sophia Fuentes will study neuroscience at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the first from her family to go to a university and feels that Penn is the perfect fit. She wants to study neuroscience so she can help people like her grandmother, who has Alzheimer's disease.

"The New Rochelle Science Research Program has had the biggest impact on my academic career. Without it, I would not be able to get where I am now," said Fuentes. "They tasked me with finding a mentor in the research program that I wanted to pursue, which I found at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. I have been able to get hands-on experience with what I want to work with in the future."

"New Rochelle schools are elated to

celebrate this extraordinary milestone. To cultivate five QuestBridge Scholars in a single graduating class shatters our wildest expectations," said Superintendent Dr. Corey W. Reynolds. "This is the powerful culmination of the tireless collective work and unwavering commitment of our K-12 educators and support professionals, ensuring each of our students realizes their highest potential."

Four of the five QuestBridge Scholars are involved in the New Rochelle High School Science Research Program, a three-year honors sequence that trains students to design independent research projects and develop the professional skills needed to seek out mentors or conduct original studies. Throughout the program, students build advanced abilities in scientific writing, data analysis, public speaking, and research presentation.

"We are absolutely beaming with pride," said NRHS Principal Dr. Dago-berto Artiles. "Our students are our driving force - they are our 'why.' Their success and this prestigious recognition powerfully validate the rigorous, high-caliber education we deliver every day. It is a brilliant highlight for our Science Research Program, which pushes boundaries with opportunities typically only available in college, and has earned national recognition for both our program and our incredible students."

NRHS Science Research Program Coordinators Jeff Wuebber and Erica Curran seek to foster scientific curiosity in students, inspiring them to ask questions, explore, and discover. Through the program, students gain professional experience and develop a deep understanding of current research trends.

"This recognition for our students is the result of our district's wholehearted investment in and support of our program. What these students have accomplished is truly life-changing. We are so proud that the Science Research Program was able to contribute to their personal and academic growth that might not have otherwise been possible. This has been our vision since our program's inception, and we look forward to its continued growth and success for future students," said Wuebber.

"These students have consistently shown up, worked hard, and have overcome significant challenges," said Curran. "QuestBridge has opened a door for them, and I am confident they will excel in this opportunity. We are incredibly proud of all of them."

Resolution Number 9 Declares Lead Agency for DOZ Amendments

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

Mayor Yadira Ramos-Herbert called the Tuesday, December 9th New Rochelle City Council meeting to order, beginning with Consent Item Number 4, allotting an \$8,400 annual grant per year to support overtime patrols directed at combatting DWI crimes.

Resolution 6 authorizes the City Manager to transfer City Council member Sara R. Kaye's \$5,000 stipend to Feeding Westchester; Resolution 7, transferring \$2,500 of Councilman Matthew A. Stern's stipend to United Community Center and \$2,500 to Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle (Mascaro Branch) to be used for the "How Well Do You Know Me" program and Resolution 8, \$5,000 of Councilman David Peters' stipend to the Bethesda Community Enrichment Corporation (Older Adult Care Center). Councilman Shane Osinloye's stipend transferred \$2,000 to HOPE Community Services, \$2,000 to Feeding the Sound and \$500 to Westchester Community Opportunity Program (WestCop).

Resolution Number 9 pertained to Proposed Statement of Intent to Declare Lead Agency Related to Downtown Overlay Zone Amendments (DOZ). Commissioner of Development Adam Salgado introduced fellow panelists, Director of Planning and Sustainability Kevin Kain and Sarah Yackel, Principal, Buckhurst, Fish and Jacquemart (BFJ) Planning. "The Downtown Overlay Zone (DOZ) has reshaped New Rochelle's trajectory," Salgado stated.

"We see evidence in the growth of sales tax and property tax revenues and have done extensive outreach to the retailers, developers and residents. We are trying to make sure that the next decade of growth delivers higher quality development, stronger retail performance and better public spaces as well as long-term economic value.

"We are here tonight to initiate the State Environment Quality Review process (SEQR) and are rebuilding the North Avenue Bridge as well as redesigning the Transit Center," Salgado concluded.

Yackel noted moderate changes except DO 1, where approximately 1500 housing units were proposed.

More Than \$800,000 in Arts Grants Awarded to Westchester Organizations

New York State Senator Shelley B. Mayer announced that 37 arts organizations across Senate District 37 have been awarded a share of \$802,578 in state grants through the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). These awards come as part of a broader \$161 million commitment to the arts fund in the FY2026 New York State Budget.

The funds will help the recipient organizations maintain operations, launch new programs and initiatives, and expand public access to the arts. It also builds the NYSCA Reserve Fund to help deliver funding to organizations during financially challenging times.

State Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, "I am delighted that 37 arts organizations across my district will receive grants from the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). This support will help ensure that members of our community will have access to artistic opportunities - through music, the visual arts, dance, and more. Investing in the arts is an investment in our state's future, especially for the young people whose creativity and passion deserve to be nurtured. This funding strengthens our community, encourages young people to explore opportunities, and ensures art is accessible to everyone. I thank NYSCA for these allocations, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for fighting for this funding, and Governor Kathy Hochul for including it in the final New York State budget."

Among the recipients in SD37 are: ArtsWestchester; Ballet des Ameriques School and Company for dance; The Clay Art Center; Concordia Conservatory; Neuberger Museum of Arts; Hoff Barthelson Music School; Jewish Community Central of Mid-Westchester; Music Conservatory of Westchester; New Choral Society of Central Westchester; Rehabilitation Through the Arts; SONGCATCHERS; Steffi Nossen Dance Foundation; The Dial Magazine; The Emelin Theatre for Performing Arts; The Rye Arts Center; Westchester Children's Chorus, Inc.; and Westchester Philharmonic.



NYS Senator Shelley Mayer

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Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle Holiday Showcase Spotlights Talents, Enthusiasm and Spirit as Youths Sing and Dance for Huge Crowd

Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle member Mikayla Williams, 13, had two goals when taking centerstage to perform “All I Want for Christmas Is You” by Mariah Carey at the Club’s Holiday Showcase: “Having fun and showing what we can do!”

Williams and her fellow teenage singers and dancers did just that, delivering a rousing rendition of the holiday classic for more than 100 attendees Dec. 19 at the Club’s Remington Clubhouse. Afterward, Williams was thrilled. “We did our thing!” she exclaimed.

That dazzling performance was among several as the Boys & Girls Club presented a vibrant evening of holiday spirit, festive songs and dances choreographed to beloved holiday classics – and even recited an original poem. All earned thunderous applause, whoops and congratulations from the audience, creating cherished memories for over 100 youth performers and their families.

“The Holiday Showcase truly highlighted the exuberance, talents and confidence of our Club youths of all ages,” said Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle CEO Becky Mazzanobile, who thanked Club staff and youths’ family members in the audience for



their support. “This was a wonderful way to wrap up 2025 and show the care, love and support each of our children have as they demonstrate their artistry and explore their full potential.”

Performances, with Remington Clubhouse Director Yolanda Roberson as the emcee and children seated around the perimeter of the gymnasium floor, were offered by grade level. First grade students provided the finale, marching into the gymnasium as Santa’s elves with a banner proclaiming “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” as well as a wagon and two bins full of wrapped holiday gifts. One young-

ster, leading the troupe, yelled, “Merry Christmas!” to the crowd, eliciting massive applause. Also:

- Kindergartners swayed and sang along with “Jingle Bell Rock,” showing their moves in front of a festive Christmas tree.
- Second grade students gave a hearty rendition of “Oh, Santa” by Mariah Carey.
- Third graders provided a dance routine to “Rockin’ Around The Christmas Tree,” spinning and waving their arms.
- Fourth graders did a fan dance, featuring rhythmic clapping and stomping, and finishing with handstands.

- Fifth graders recited an original holiday poem and ceremoniously bowed at the end.

- The middle schoolers’ rendition of “All I Want for Christmas Is You” featured a Rockettes-style kick line.

Erica Boateng, a 13-year-old Club member and student at Albert Leonard Middle School, was happy to be performing. “I was excited, but nervous too,” she said. Co-star Paige Mickens, who along with Boateng performed with Williams, practiced for two weeks. That preparation paid off. “I was completely calm in the moment,” she said,

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January 2026 Events at the New Rochelle Public Library

All events take place at the New Rochelle Public Library, 1 Library Plaza, New Rochelle, unless otherwise noted. In addition to the programs listed below, daily programs for children and teens can be found on the NRPL online calendar at <https://bit.ly/NewNRPLCalendar>. As always, all programs are FREE and open to all!



New Rochelle Art Association 2025 Adolph Grant Award Show
December 8 - January 9
During regular Library hours
The New Rochelle Art Association presents the Adolph Grant Show. It is named after Adolph Grant, who was a patron of the NRAA, and a successful businessman who was very active in civic affairs as Chairman of the Zoning Commission and as a Rotarian. At the NRAA's first Sketch Exhibition in 1921, he pledged an annual \$50 prize for the best sketch. By the year 1932, the award was given for the best work of 2-dimensional art by a New Rochelle artist, and has remained with stipulation to the present. Today, the award is \$100 which is awarded to the best 2-D work by a New Rochelle resident, and the Best In Show Award. Ribbons will also be awarded in each category.

Knitting Club
Friday, January 16, 30, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Join professional knitter Stephanie Lieberman Paley for a drop in knitting class. Bring a project you are working on or start something new if you wish. Stephanie will be here to guide you through your project. All levels are welcome. You must bring your own supplies. Drop in. FREE!
Location: Community Gallery

Chair Yoga
Mondays, January 5, 12, 26, 12:30 - 1:30 pm
Wednesdays, January 7, 14, 21, 28, 1:00 - 2:00 pm
Conquer stress and fatigue, and infuse your day with renewed energy and focus with a gentle yet invigorating session of chair yoga. No need to change clothing or lie on a mat. Space is limited; first come-first-served. FREE! Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room/Ossie Davis Theater



Open Sewing
Wednesdays, January 7, 14, 28, 10:30 am - 1:00 pm
Wednesday, January 21, 12:30 - 3:00 pm
The New Rochelle Public Library is excited to offer our Open Sewing Program for experience sewists with state-of-the-art Necchi sewing machines. Patrons are responsible for bringing

their own supplies, including fabrics, threads, patterns, and any other materials necessary for their projects. This is offered on a first come first served basis and space is limited. Location: Community Gallery



Friday Night Concert: The Lenore Raphael Trio
Friday, January 9, 7:00 - 8:30 pm
Kick off the New Year with internationally acclaimed jazz pianist Lenore Raphael as her trio pays tribute to the legendary Hank Jones. With Paul Beaudry on bass and Dwayne Cook Broadnax on drums, expect swing, sparkle, and fresh takes on timeless jazz standards—a perfect night for jazz lovers. Location: Ossie Davis Theater
Registration requested at bit.ly/LenoreRaphael_Jan2026

"Music of Michael LeMorin - Evoking Sounds of the Caribbean," with the Michael LeMorin Quintet
Saturday, January 10, 2:00 - 3:30 pm
Tutti Bravi Productions commemorates early Huguenot settlers who established a presence on the island of Hispaniola in the mid-17th century, ultimately arriving in America. Maestro LeMorin has concocted a recipe for Afro-Caribbean Jazz Fusion that blends Vodou (an Afro-Haitian spiritual tradition) with sweet and spicy tropical styles. We honor these traditions, with new sounds, and the journeys of those who seek freedom of expression and opportunity. E pluribus unum. Location: Ossie Davis Theater
Registration requested at bit.ly/LeMorinQuintet_Jan2026



Acoustic String Open Jam Session
Saturday, January 10, 3:00 - 4:30 pm
Looking for other musicians to play with in an informal and judgement-free environment? Come join our new monthly acoustic string instrument jam session! Bring your guitar, ukulele, mandolin, banjo, etc. and join together with other like-minded aspiring musicians to share your love of music and song. Location: Basement Classroom
Registration requested at bit.ly/NRPL_Acoustic-Jam

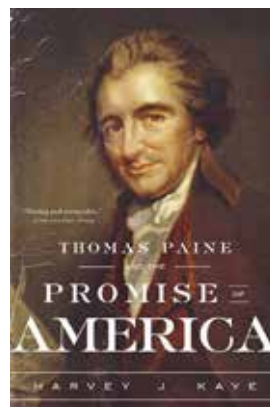
The Secrets Behind The Wizard of Oz
Sunday, January 11, 2:00 - 4:00 pm
Step behind the curtain of one of Hollywood's most beloved classics in this captivating lecture on The Wizard of Oz (1939). Discover the untold stories that shaped the magic—the on-set accidents and near-disasters, the surprising cast

replacements, the unseen footage, and the behind-the-scenes intrigue that brought Dorothy's journey to life. Every reel of this Technicolor masterpiece hides astonishing secrets: from toxic makeup and blazing costumes to the mysterious fate of the Tin Man's first actor. Packed with rare insights and fascinating trivia, this session will make you see The Wizard of Oz as you've never seen it before—where movie magic met real-life mayhem on the yellow brick road. Presented by Andi Stix, New Rochelle Council on the Arts. Location: Ossie Davis Theater

Brown Bag Book Club: Before the Coffee Gets Cold by Toshikazu Kawaguchi
Tuesday, January 13, 12:00 - 1:00 pm
A librarian-led book discussion. Newcomers welcome. A supply of the book to be discussed is available to borrow from the first floor hold shelf. Drop in. This month's featured title: Before the Coffee Gets Cold, by Toshikazu Kawaguchi
Location: 2A - 2nd Floor Meeting Room

Tween Book Club Discussion: The Girl Who Drank the Moon by Kelly Barnhill
Tuesday, January 13, 4:30 - 5:30 pm
Join us for snacks, trivia, and to chat about this month's book club pick! Registration required, registration for each discussion begins four weeks before each discussion date. The first 10 registrants will be given a free copy of the book! Register by calling 914-813-3716 or visiting the Desk in the Children's Room at the Main Library. Location: Children's Room

Winter Birding in Westchester (Virtual Program)
Thursday, January 15, 7:00 - 8:00 pm
What birds can we expect to see in the winter months at bird feeders and when we visit local parks and sanctuaries? How do birds adapt to winter weather? What winter bird sounds can we hear? Anne Swaim, Executive Director of the Sawmill River Audubon, will explore these and other questions with many images and video clips of local birds in winter. Come tune up your eyes and ears for winter birding! Location: Virtual
Registration required at bit.ly/NRPL_Bird_01_15_26



NEW! The Past Pages Society: NRPL History Book Club
Saturday, January 17, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
Are you a history buff—or simply curious about the stories that shaped our world? Join us for the launch of The Past Pages Society, the New Rochelle Public Library's new monthly history book club. Each month, we'll explore engaging titles that connect history with art, culture, politics, and the stories often left out of textbooks. Selected titles will highlight American, local, and world history. We'll kick off the series in honor of the

250th anniversary of the United States, reading Thomas Paine and the Promise of America by Harvey J. Kaye—a fitting choice as Paine spent his final years in New Rochelle. Come share ideas, learn from different perspectives, and enjoy lively conversation with fellow history enthusiasts. Location: 2A - 2nd Floor Meeting Room
Registration required at bit.ly/NRPL_PastPages_Jan2026



Bokandeye African Dance Workshop
Saturdays, January 17, 24, 31, 3:30 - 4:30 pm
In celebration of Black History Month, join us for a 6-week African Dance workshop where participants will learn basic traditional West African dance movements, some which date back to the 13th century Old Mali Empire. The workshop will culminate in a final performance for the public on Saturday, February 21. Location: Ossie Davis Theater
Registration requested at bit.ly/Bokandeye_2026

Art Workshop for Adults: Quote & Create - Mixed Media Wall Hangings
Thursday, January 22, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Need a little inspiration for the New Year? We provide the quotes and the materials; you provide the creativity. Using mixed-media techniques, you will design a one-of-a-kind wall hanging using inspirational quotes with lots of collage papers and materials to create a one of a kind wall hanging. Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room

American Red Cross Blood Drive
Tuesday, January 27, 1:00 - 5:00 pm
Prospective donors are currently being sought by the American Red Cross for this upcoming blood drive. Please visit American Red Cross Blood Drive if you are interested in being a blood donor for this blood drive. Refreshments are provided! Donors need to be at least 17 years of age. Donors may inquire about registering by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS, or by visiting www.redcrossblood.org. Donors should bring a photo I.D. and allow an hour to complete the donation. For more information, contact the American Red Cross at: 1-800-RED-CROSS. Location: Ossie Davis Theater
Registration required at bit.ly/NRPLBloodDrive

Westchester County Youth Bureau Joins Lower Hudson Valley My Brother's Keeper Alliance 2025 Youth Leadership Summit

The Westchester County Youth Bureau, in partnership with Lower Hudson Valley My Brother's Keeper (LHVMBK) Alliance, the Obama Foundation and SUNY Westchester Community College (WCC) hosted the Youth Leadership Summit aimed at overcoming obstacles and fostering leadership and empowerment for youth of color.

The event was kicked off with inspirational messages from education, community and sports leaders and featured student-led panel discussions on personal branding and the impact of

social media on youth culture. Attendees, called "Fellows" also heard from a panel of MBK alumni and members of WCC's Black and Hispanic Male Initiative who shared their experiences since graduating high school. In attendance were Fellows from Greenburgh, Mount Vernon, Peekskill, Port Chester, Newburgh, New Rochelle, Ossining, Southern Westchester BOCES, White Plains and Yonkers.

The LHVMBK Alliance is a consortium of municipalities, local educational agencies and non-profit organizations that have accepted former President



Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper Community MBK Challenge. Since 2018, Westchester County and the Youth Bureau have partnered with fourteen local MBK programs to improve life outcomes of boys and young men of color and help change the narrative too often associated

with this demographic.

Westchester County Youth Bureau Executive Director Ernest McFadden said: "The youth-led summit was more than a gathering; it was a spark for the young men who attended. Youth voices

were prominent during the three youth-led panels and the feedback session with the LHVMBK leadership. My message to the young men is 'Your generation is redefining what leadership looks like: collaborative, innovative, inclusive, and

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Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle

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further comforted by siblings in the audience. "That made me more confident. My friends were there for me, too," she said.

Dignitaries cheering on the performers included:

- Congressman George Latimer, representing the 16th District. He was impressed by the talent, warm holiday atmosphere and the performers' enthusiasm. "The holiday season truly comes alive in the faces of children!" he said.
- City of New Rochelle Mayor Yadira Ramos-Herbert led the kids through a rousing "6-7" chant when offering warm holiday wishes before the performances. Afterward, she said, "We are lucky to have the Boys & Girls Club as a safe space, where kids can be kids and they can celebrate the holidays together."
- Terry Clements, of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, is a former teacher deeply experienced with working with kids. "It was so well organized. They went through the program flawlessly," she said. "The staff did a fine job. The kids enjoyed it and I had fun."

For 95 years, Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle has been an integral part of the community, offering quality, achievement-driven programming encompassing academics, mental wellness, fitness, leadership and civics. Today, it is one of Westchester County's largest nonprofits and a leader in youth development, serving over 10,000 youths annually at 12 school sites and two clubhouses. Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle's impactful before-school, after-school, elective, and summer offerings empower members to excel in school, become good citizens, and lead healthy, productive lives while effectively bridging the gap between school and home. Learn more at BGCNR.org.

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I enjoyed many fine culinary experiences this past year. Here is a short list of favorite dishes and dining venues you should try not to miss in 2026! Winter Farmers Markets, too...



Partners Ro Flanagan, Shane Clifford and Chef Brendan Donohue, proprietors of popular Jack's Bar & Kitchen, a popular Irish American tavern in Eastchester, premiered Jill's Bar & Restaurant in Mamaroneck, across from Harbor Island Park. Jill's, a colorful ode to modern Ireland, serves a winning combination of gastropub favorites and modern-Ameri-

can and European specialties along with a good dose of hospitality. The Fried Chicken Sandwich is a winner. There's also Truffle Parm Fries, Chili Roasted Cauliflower, Lobster Cobb Salad, Braised Beef Short Ribs, Ahi Tuna Bowl. Hearty Sunday Roast. Jill's, 100 W. Boston Post Road, Mamaroneck, off the corner of Mamaroneck Ave. Happy Hours. Weekend brunch. Closed Mondays. 914-341-1776 www.jillsbarandrestaurant.com

Anita Gawde is a dynamo. At one moment she is greeting entering patrons, the next she disappears into the kitchen, the next she is on the dining room floor touting her menu: the tasty street foods of regional India. Anita and her husband Jayant Gawde have been marking their 1st. Anniversary with vibrant specialties plated with pizzazz. We recently feasted on a tasty tour of savory small plates: Samosa Chaat, Sabudana Vada, delectable Chicken Kathi Roll, ending with their delicious Chicken Masala and crispy crust-ed Shrimp Fry. The Kesar Phirni, their version of rice pudding, was a festive dessert. Anita and her friendly staff will

help you with the menu. Mumbai Katta,
227 Westchester Ave., Port Chester. 516-
953-3265 www.mumbaikatta.com

Cited by Forbes Magazine,
Chef-owner and personable host Dean
Vivolo serves his robust regional Italian
cuisine out of a vintage diner just across
from Harrison's Metro-North station. Sit
at the counter, tuck into a booth, or take
a table in the rear greenhouse and enjoy
the surprising contemporary and tradi-
tional flavors emanating from his kitchen:
tasty thin-crust pizza; Crostino di Po-
lenta topped with wild mushrooms, gor-
gonzola, and tomato sauce; Linguini Nere
with bay scallops; Grilled Lamb Chops;
Lasagna Bolognese al Forno; and wonder-
ful Spaghetti a la Vongole. Fine wine list.
Sparkling lights in the evenings. Seasonal
outdoor patio. Free parking. Trattoria
Vivolo, 301 Halstead Ave., Harrison. 914-
835-6199 www.trattoriavivolo.com

Partners Mike Hoffer and Justin Zeytoonian re-opened their new industrial-designed BBQ restaurant in The Rockwell, a new building along North Ave., New Rochelle, near IONA. It is directly across from the shuttered original which they founded in 2007. The well edited menu includes a good selection of craft beers along with signature Tacos, BBQ Chicken and Racks of Ribs. Recently, we ordered their popular Brisket, and it was flavorful and tender. The Tomahawk Burger is prepared with Pat La Frieda beef and is a satisfying winner. The original Smokehouse Tailgate Grill is located at 587 North Ave., New Rochelle, not far from IONA College. (914-813-8686). Their second location: Smokehouse Tailgate Grill, 320 Mamaroneck Ave., Mamaroneck. (914-341-1655). www.shtailgate.com

buzz about his traditional and non-traditional pizzas and Italian/American fare have reached across the area often drawing lines of patrons to his cozy take-out pizza shop. (There are a few tables if you can score them.) Our recent indulgence: his Sunday Sausage & Peppers Pizza was an entirely decadent experience loaded with flavor. We finished it over two days. A must try! Pizza Fenice, 304 5th Ave., Pelham. 914-633-3332. www.pizzafenice.com

So, winter just started and you miss visiting your favorite farmer's market. Some of our most popular markets operate all winter, and while you may not get all the spring/summer/fall harvest can produce, it's still a good place to pick up a variety of artisanal goods such as meats, cheeses, jams, breads. Here are some markets worth a winter's drive. Check ahead for times and dates. Happy grazing:

Larchmont Winter Farmers Market, Metro-North upper lot, Chatsworth & Myrtle Blvd., Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., year-round. www.downtoearthmarkets.com

Hastings -on-Hudson Winter
Farmers' Market, Commuter Parking
Lot, across from Metro-North station.
134 Southside Ave., Hastings-on-Hud-
son. Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

www.hastingsfarmersmarket.org
Pleasantville Farmers Market,
Metro-North Parking Lot, 10 Memo-
rial Plaza, Pleasantville. Saturdays,
8:30 a.m. to 12, through March 2026.
www.pleasantvillefarmersmarket.org

Irvington Winter Farmers' Market, Main Street School Auditorium, 110 Main St., Irvington. Sundays, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. www.theirvingtonfarmersmarket.org

Gossett's Farm Market, Gossett Brothers Nursery, 1202 Rt. 35, South Salem. Year round. Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. www.gossettbrothers.com

Cold Spring Indoor Farmers
Market, Boscobel House and Gardens,
1601 Rt. 9D. Garrison. Saturdays, 10
a.m. to 1 p.m. www.coldspringfarmersmarket.org

(Morris Gut is a restaurant marketing consultant and former restaurant trade magazine editor. He has been tracking and writing about the food and dining scene in greater Westchester for 30 years. He may be reached at: 914-235-6591. Email: gutreactions@optonline.net)



In just 3 years, John Gristina, proprietor of Pizza Fenice in Pelham, has become a pizzaioli to be reckoned with. The

Happy New Year!

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Disinheriting a Family Member from Your Estate Plan



BY BERNARD A. KROOKS, CERTIFIED
ELDER LAW ATTORNEY
SPECIAL GUEST CONTRIBUTOR: AMY C.
O'HARA, CERTIFIED ELDER LAW ATTORNEY

Disinheriting a family member is a sensitive and often emotional topic. It must be handled carefully. Many people assume that they are entirely free to leave their property to whomever they choose. However, New York law has specific rules that protect spouses and restrict the ability to disinherit them. Understanding who can be disinherited, how to do it properly, and the potential challenges involved can help ensure that your estate plan truly reflects your intentions and is upheld after your passing.

The most important limitation under New York law concerns spouses. A spouse cannot be completely disinherited unless there is a valid prenuptial or postnuptial agreement in which the spouse waives the right to inherit, or they signed a waiver of right of election in line with state law and requirements. Otherwise, even if you write a Will leaving your spouse nothing,

New York's "right of election" gives the surviving spouse the legal right to claim approximately one-third of the estate. This includes probate assets, those that pass under the Will, as well as certain non-probate assets, that pass outside the Will, such as joint accounts, payable-on-death designations, and even certain property transfers made before death if done to intentionally deprive the spouse of inheritance rights. This rule underscores a key principle of New York law: spouses are protected and disinheriting one is legally difficult unless both parties knowingly agreed to it in advance.

Children, on the other hand, do not have the same protections under New York law. Many people are surprised to learn that a parent is legally permitted to disinherit an adult child for any reason, or for no reason at all. The key is clarity: a Will must make it unmistakably clear that the omission was intentional and not accidental. Estate litigation often arises when someone is left out of a Will with no explanation, leading disinherited family members to challenge the document.

When someone decides to disinherit a child or other family member, the Will should directly address the decision. Sometimes a person writes: "I make no provision for my son John, not for lack of affection, but for reasons personal to me." Other times, the document simply states that the individual is intentionally

excluded or that they are receiving \$1 to clearly demonstrate awareness and intention. Contrary to popular belief, leaving someone \$1 is not necessary, and in some cases can even be insulting. A well-drafted statement of intentional omission is usually sufficient and preferable.

It is also important to understand that disinheritance does not automatically prevent legal challenges. A disgruntled family member can still attempt to contest the Will by claiming that the person who created it lacked mental capacity, was unduly influenced, or did not execute the document properly. The more contentious the family dynamics, the greater the risk of post-death litigation. To minimize challenges, individuals should take additional steps, such as executing the Will under attorney supervision (which creates a legal presumption of validity), and adding a "no-contest clause," which states that any beneficiary who challenges the Will risks losing their inheritance. A no-contest clause can deter challenges, but it only works if the person being discouraged has something to lose; if they were already receiving nothing, they have no incentive to refrain from contesting.

Additionally, many people forget that disinheritance in a Will only applies to probate assets. If a family member is named as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy or retirement account, or as joint owner of a bank account, those assets

pass outside the Will. Therefore, part of effective disinheritance is ensuring that all beneficiary designations, account titles, property deeds, and trust documents consistently reflect the estate plan.

Disinheriting someone is rarely done casually. Whether the motivation is estrangement, financial irresponsibility, lifetime gifts already made, or personal reasons, it is wise to consult with an experienced estate planning attorney to ensure that the wishes are expressed legally and effectively. Outside of spouses, New York law allows individuals broad discretion, but it also provides protections and safeguards to prevent unjust or accidental outcomes. Crafting a careful and thoughtful estate plan not only ensures that your intentions are honored but also reduces the likelihood of painful disputes among those you leave behind.

Bernard A. Krooks, Esq., is a founding partner of Littman Krooks LLP. He was named 2021 "Lawyer of the Year" by Best Lawyers in America® for excellence in Elder Law and has been honored as one of the "Best Lawyers" in America since 2008. He was elected to the Estate Planning Hall of Fame by the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils (NAEPC). Krooks is past Chair of the Elder Law Committee of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC). Mr. Krooks may be reached at (914-684-2100) or by visiting the firm's website at www.littmankrooks.com.

Westchester County Youth Bureau Joins Lower Hudson Valley My Brother's Keeper Alliance 2025 Youth Leadership Summit

continued from page 8

unafraid to imagine something better. In a world that often tells young people to wait your turn, you are proving that your turn is now."

New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Dr. DaMia Harris Madden said: "It is an honor to be with the talented young men who look so professional, who speak with conviction and have taken the opportunity to lead. Let me remind you all that the trailblazers who are here today like Mr. McFadden, Westchester County Youth Bureau's Executive Director, and the local MBK Coordinators on the dais who started this movement in the mid-Hudson Valley, have worked really hard to open doors. It will be your legacy, through My Brother's Keeper, to help your brothers walk through the next set of doors with strength, resilience and purpose."

Assistant Commissioner for the NYS Department of Education's Office of Access, Equity and Community Engagement Dr. Anael Alston said: "The Hudson



Valley MBK Regional Youth Summit shows what is possible when a community refuses to let any young person's brilliance go unseen. Nine school districts, civic leaders, and community partners united to create a space of belonging where students are reminded that their potential is limitless. It was a privilege

to represent the NYS Education Department and to witness the talent, hope and determination of these remarkable young people and the adults who champion them."

MBK New Rochelle Program Coordinator Nate Adams said: "It brought me great joy to bear witness to such a dy-

namic room of motivated young men of color who represented so many communities from our MBK Hudson Valley school districts. The synergy in the room from all participants, students and adults truly displayed what community is all about. We look forward to continuing our work with these young men as we embrace, engage and empower our young men of color throughout the Hudson Valley area."

New Rochelle High School Junior Kelechi Njoku said: "I honestly loved it. It's not often where you're lucky

enough to be surrounded by people who think and look like you. There's no better encouragement than seeing people like you succeeding and thriving in an array of ways. I learned so many valuable lessons from my peers and I can't wait for another opportunity like this!"

Moody's Ratings Assigns MIG1 to City's Notes, Affirming Aa2 Rating

Moody's Ratings (Moody's) has assigned a MIG 1 rating to the City of New Rochelle, NY's approximately \$40.99 million Bond Anticipation Notes, 2025. In addition, Moody's has affirmed the City's Aa2 issuer rating and general obligation limited tax (GOLT) rating. Following the sale, New Rochelle will have roughly \$209 million in long-term GOLT debt outstanding.

Moody's Ratings noted that the MIG 1 rating reflects the City's strong underlying credit quality, reflected in its Aa2 issuer rating, healthy liquidity, and demonstrated history of market access. New Rochelle has maintained the rating of Aa2 since 2017.

The Aa2 issuer rating is supported by New Rochelle's solid and rapidly expanding local economy. Over the past five years, the City's full value has increased from \$9.2 billion to \$11.3 billion, raising full value per capita to a robust \$140,002. This growth is driven largely by significant development activity in the downtown area, which continues to strengthen the economic base.

While the City has a long track record of stable and responsible financial operations, it experienced an unusual decline in 2024 driven by several one-time factors. The City expects reserves to begin rebuilding by the close of fiscal 2025 and continue strengthening into 2026 as these temporary impacts subside. The city recognizes that restoring reserves to their historical levels is important for maintaining a strong long-term credit profile, and is committed to achieving that goal.

"Moody's assessment reflects the underlying strength of New Rochelle's economy and our commitment and plan to restore our financial position following an unusually challenging year," said Wilfredo Melendez, City Manager of New Rochelle. "Our proposed 2026 budget demonstrates this commitment by focusing on rebuilding reserves and avoiding the use of unassigned fund balance. With major development projects continuing to advance and our fiscal strategies taking hold, we remain confident in the City's long-term financial stability and our ability to deliver high-quality services to the community."

Please see <https://ratings.moody.com> for any updates on changes to the lead rating analyst and to the Moody's legal entity that has issued the rating.

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Edward Shapiro, President and Publisher
es@shorelinepub.com

Cynthia Pena, Art Director, Editor
shorelineproduction@gmail.com

Lauren Levine, Advertising Account Executive
levinelaur@gmail.com

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