

THE RIVERTOWNS Enterprise

The Hometown Newspaper
of Hastings-on-Hudson,
Dobbs Ferry, Ardsley
and Irvington

VOLUME 45, NUMBER 15 • JULY 10, 2020

75 CENTS

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JIM MACLEAN/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

The pool complex at Anthony F. Veteran Park in Ardsley.

Public pools open with pandemic restrictions

By Jackie Lupo

REGION — Public swimming pools began opening this week in the wake of guidance from the New York Department of Health that permits pools to operate, while stipulating sanitary and social distancing precautions to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The Anthony F. Veteran Pool complex opened to residents of unincorporated Greenburgh on July 6, but Town Supervisor Paul Feiner doesn't want anyone to take the measure as a guarantee that it's safe.

"We're making people sign waivers," Feiner said. "I don't want people using the pool and thinking it's OK. I think one of the problems is when all these pools are

open everybody's talking themselves into the idea that it's safe, because the government is opening the pool."

When people see that their pool is open, Feiner said, "They think, 'I'm gonna take my kids there. If the government is opening the pool they must know what they're doing.' I think the most important thing that every government should highlight is that they're going at their own risk."

Greenburgh is capping attendance at 300 people per session, compared to the pre-pandemic capacity of 750 swimmers, and enforcing strict social-distancing rules. Memberships will not be offered this season, but those who bought long-term memberships in 2019 will have them prorated for this season, or refunded if

they claim financial hardship. Feiner said that although there were objections to the elimination of season passes, the Town had to keep the numbers down.

"We don't really want to have a lot of people," he explained. "If they get a regular pass they might feel they are entitled to use the pool, and can't get in because we're limited to 50 percent capacity."

The per-session rate is \$8 per adult, and \$6 for youths and seniors, the same as the daily rate in 2019. Reservations can be made online or by phone at (914) 989-1811, starting at noon of the day before the desired attendance date.

Only one swimmer per lane will be allowed in the lap pool this summer. There

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Events aim to draw customers downtown

By Jackie Lupo

HASTINGS — Hastings merchants are weathering the pandemic by thinking outside their restaurants and storefronts. Over the past month, businesses have spilled out onto the sidewalks and even into local parks, often with the support of village officials.

As restrictions eased last month, Hastings mounted "Welcome Back" events downtown on Saturday, June 20, and Friday, June 26. The third event is scheduled for Friday, July 17, from 6-10 p.m.

"We close Warburton Avenue and

the Boulanger parking lot so restaurants can expand into the street, and people can put wares out onto the street," Hastings Downtown Advocate Barbara Prisant told the Enterprise. Last month some merchants held activities, such as the Observatory Shop, which offered a socially distanced outdoor knitting circle. Working with the Hastings Recreation Department, Amanda Kupillas Dance and Mary-Ann Mastreani of Hastings Yoga each offered outdoor lessons in Draper Park.

Restaurateurs have been eager to expand dining opportunities besides the take-out and curbside pickup they

were limited to in the spring.

Joanna Prisco, owner of The Good Witch Coffee Bar at the train station, found her café shut down by the pandemic less than three months after she opened for business in January. To survive after the commuters disappeared, Prisco turned the eight parking spaces in front of the building into a micro drive-in movie venue, which has operated every Friday night since June 12. She offers a movie, popcorn, and box of cookies for \$35 per two-person carful (an additional \$8 per person is add-

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Pajama Program founder pens book in effort to inspire

By Patricia Robert

Twenty years ago, Irvington resident Genevieve Piturro changed the course of her life by starting Pajama Program, a national nonprofit organization that benefits children. She tells this story, and much more about herself, in “Purpose, Passion and Pajamas — How to Transform Your Life, Embrace the Human Connection, and Lead with Meaning,” set to be published Aug. 4.

The book will be available through Amazon and Ingram.

In addition to being the founder of Pajama Program, Piturro is a speaker and organizer of master classes and summits featuring guest speakers. On her website, Piturro writes that her mission is “to help people and businesses everywhere learn to lead with meaning and find their own passion, purpose, and pajamas.”

“I’ve always wanted to write the book, and started thinking seriously about it five years ago. To see something on paper is very exciting. It proves that you came to this world, tried to be part of the community, part of the thread, not by yourself,” Piturro said. “The book is the whole journey.”

In the late 1990s, Piturro recalled, she was busy climbing the corporate ladder, wanting to be a sort of Mary Tyler Moore, and making it to the top or, at least, being vice president of a marketing company. She was 38, with no husband or children, and began volunteering at shelters for children in her native Yonkers and in Manhattan.

“I began reading bedtime stories to the children,” she recalled. “The children were so quiet and I realized they

were all waiting for ‘the next step’ having no idea what that step would be. Inwardly I thanked my Mom for always making me feel secure at night where everything would be OK with no questions asked of ‘what about tomorrow?’”

In what would be a life-altering moment, Piturro asked a child what she slept in. The answer: in my pants. Piturro asked the supervisor if she could bring pajamas the next time she came, which she did. Some of the children had no idea what this item of clothing was. So, in 1998 Piturro quit climbing the corporate ladder and then, in 2000, started The Pajama Program, which was granted nonprofit status in 2001.

“My book recounts all of that — plus things I never shared with anyone at the time. It’s pretty honest. I write about the debt I fell into, about the run-ins with a longtime friend who couldn’t understand that I was following what my heart was telling me to do, couldn’t understand my passion,” Piturro said. “So I made a decision about who would be with me, who wouldn’t. Soon after this I met a man, a wonderful man, Demo DiMartile, and he said, ‘Go for it.’ We married in 1999.”

By 2007, The Pajama Program was gaining national recognition, which led to an appearance by Piturro on “The Oprah Winfrey Show.” At the time, The Pajama Program had distributed 86,000 pairs of pajamas to children in shelters.

“Being on ‘Oprah’ was a game changer,” Piturro said. “The response was unbelievable.”

Along with the success came growth for the organization. Piturro had served



Genevieve Piturro

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Piturro

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as both founder and executive director since the beginning. Some two to three years ago, she began to realize that she wasn't good at, and didn't enjoy, "pushing papers." What she was good at was raising money and awareness. So she suggested that The Pajama Program hire an executive director, which was done in 2017, and she stepped down from the position.

Once again, Piturro was free to follow her heart, her passion, and a new purpose. This time, her focus was on helping others to become leaders. During the pandemic, for example, she has continued to give her "7 Step Master Classes" virtually rather than in person. The final guest for this series, which ended June 30, was Lee Woodruff, the author of three books including "In an Instant: A Family's Journey Through Love and Healing," which she co-authored with her husband, newsman Bob Woodruff.

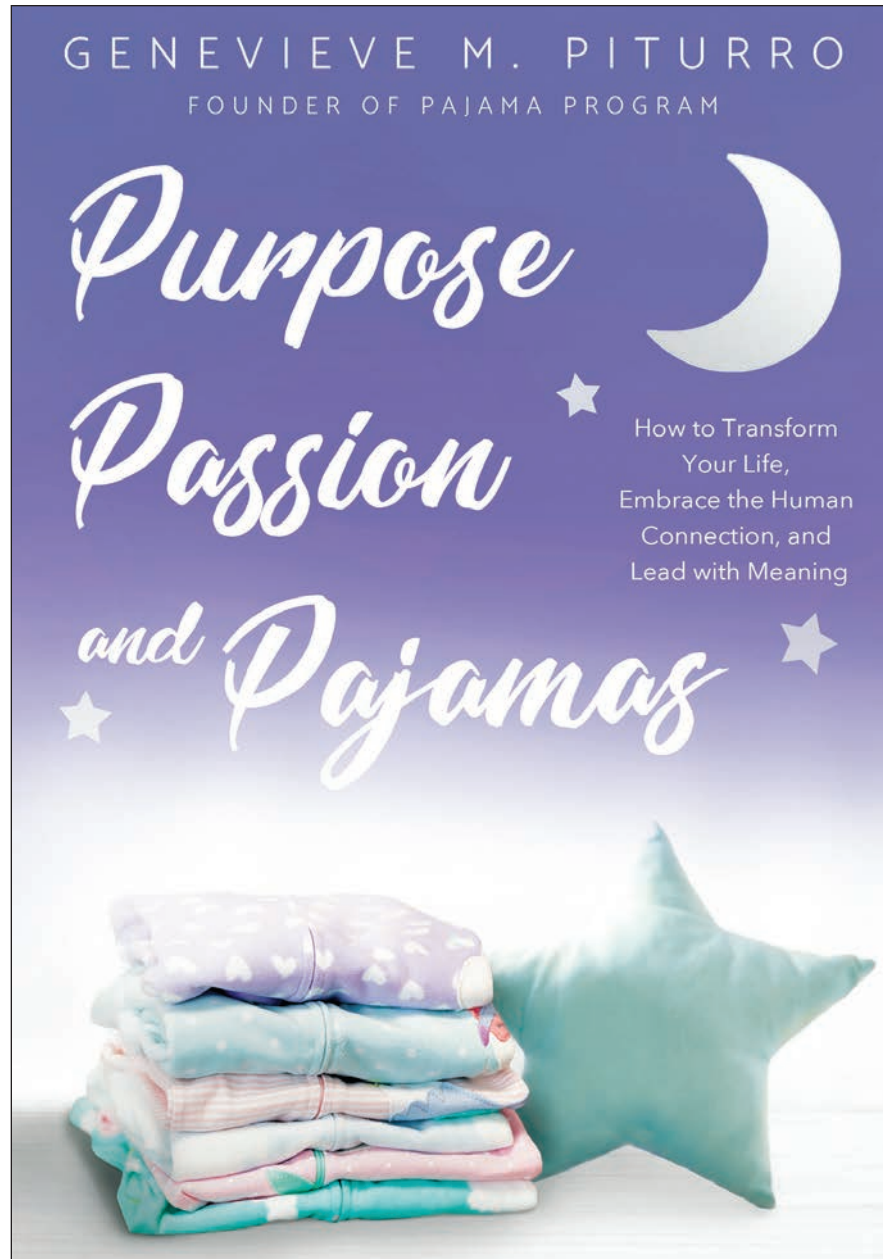
"I called Lee's Master Class 'Leading with Grace,'" Piturro said.

On July 21 and 22, from noon to 4 p.m., Piturro will host an online summit, "Leading Through Change With Purpose and Passion." The summit is described on Piturro's website as "a gathering for leadership professionals committed to pioneering new pathways and innovative approaches for leading us forward with dignity and grace."

As with Piturro's master classes, there is no fee to attend the summit. Information, including a list of speakers, can be found at www.genevievepitarro.com.

As Piturro looks to the future, especially a post-pandemic future, she hopes that people will have used this time to learn the importance of "connection."

"One positive aspect of wearing a mask is that we have to look people



eye to eye to show our expressions and I hope we keep that going," she said. "As I write in my book, the effect of the expression in that little girl's eyes on me so many years ago has now been shared

verge of cracking... Let's just say that it was a very interesting time for all of us."

Food Network's tease for the episode leaves no doubt about that.

The promo reads, "Chef Mark Esteve visits Saw Mill Tavern in Ardsley, New York, after a conflict between the owner Charles Amchir and his head chef puts the future of the restaurant in jeopardy. Their volatile relationship negatively impacts the staff, as well as the food being served to customers. Then, just when it seems like Mark is making progress, he makes a shocking discovery that forces him to shut down the restaurant and consider aborting the mission."

"We had problems with the kitchen and they made us clean it up," Amchir said. "You have to watch it."

He added, "It was some tough times because the head chef is a very close

friend of mine."

The episode is set to air Wednesday, July 16, at 10 p.m., and again on July 17 at 1 a.m.

"The plan originally was to show the episode back in March," Amchir said. "But with the Covid crisis, they decided to push everything back, which was beneficial to all the restaurants involved with the show because we were all forced to shut down back then."

Now, the Saw Mill Tavern, which employs eight people, is up and running with limited indoor dining available since June 23.

"Right now we are operating at 50 percent capacity and doing about 40 percent of the in-house business that we would usually be doing at this time of the year," Amchir said. "But our take-out business is booming — that portion is up about twenty-fold."

Kerr agreed. He said, "It is Augie's enthusiasm, creativity, and hard work that has made this happen... he deserves all of the credit for having created this wonderful new garden for the community."

Like Brosnahan, Kerr hopes the OCA project will lead to more pollinator gardens, both along the Aqueduct and across the Rivertowns.

"You can go out and plant these things in your yard, and it makes a difference," Kerr said. "It allows people, who are frustrated with the environment and climate change, to have tools in their own yard, to go out and make decisions that have a direct supportive relationship to these animals which are crucial to so many parts of our food chain and the animal chain... It's something that everybody in the community can be doing."

when the plants fully bloom.

Oakes said, "It's become really interesting to so many people who walk by it. The Aqueduct has been there forever, and it really hasn't changed much in the last 180 years. I don't take doing anything like this lightly, and I thought twice about whether this was what I wanted to use this part of the trail for. I've been so pleasantly surprised by the reaction of the park patrons — they really seem to love it."

Kerr, Ludden, and Oakes were impressed with Brosnahan's dedication to the project, leading the garden from an idea to a reality in a matter of months.

"To my astonishment, [the garden] just looks great... August was carrying water bucket by bucket to keep these plants alive," Ludden said. "He's just done a phenomenal job."

Black@Ardsley

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they let you in."

Political opinions also drew fire. "I said I didn't like President Trump out loud. A white guy told me I was lucky to be in America and that he wished it was back to the slave days so I'd learn my place." A woman who responded to that post wrote, "I'm from class of 2005 AHS. Nothing really has changed."

The impact of Black Lives Matter showed in another post: "The same people that are saying the N-word for fun with their friends are the same ones posting about BLM because it's a trend. I don't think my life is a trend... Our struggle has been never-ending, it's not a 30-day trial."

Pithy comments also appeared: "Makes you uncomfy to hear about racism? Try living it."

Black@Ardsley has become a topic among local Facebook parent groups, an unforeseen result. "It wasn't in the plan," the moderators' representative noted, "but it worked better because parents are looking at it and having conversations with their kids."

Also unexpected were messages from people admitting to previous racist behavior, who said they were trying to make a change.

The group hopes to address the issues raised, in a forum format, and to create a presentation to bring to a meeting with the district administration.

In early June, Schools Superintendent Ryan Schoenfeld and the board of education, as well as the principals of the three district schools, issued e-blasts affirming the district's "commitment to teaching and practicing inclusion and acceptance." Schoenfeld added, "...most of us can barely begin to understand the personal toll that racism inflicts..."

His message recapped the district's efforts so far: the middle school's No Place for Hate program, Concord Road's R.O.A.R. program, promoting the Village's Multicultural, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, holding a Diversity Career Fair, and supporting the high school's Building Bridges, Gay Straight Alliance, Asian Society Club, and Students of Color clubs. The district also is cooperating with the Village in planning employee anti-bias training.

Schoenfeld's message addressed another critical issue. "The [school] board has taken a hard look at policies in recent years to update those that address bias in any way," he stated. "The board reviews policies on a regular basis. Policy 7550, Dignity for All Students, was last updated in 2018 and is currently under review. In addition, we will be reviewing the Code of Conduct this year."

To help educators and parents address racism, the district has compiled a list of resources, available at ArdsleySchools.org, under "Announcements."

Black@Ardsley knows there's a long way to go. They've received hate mail. The administrators decided to post some "to shine a light on it, for the people who are saying Ardsley is not a racist town..." the representative explained. "Just because you don't see it doesn't mean it's not there."

Schoenfeld acknowledges there's more to be done. "While we have some programs in place, the narratives highlighted in Black@Ardsley indicate that we have more work ahead of us."

Schoenfeld encourages students to bring issues to a trusted adult in the school. "We can then give individual matters proper attention while maintaining respect and student confidentiality," he said.

The Black@Ardsley Instagram account includes a link to a petition addressed to Schoenfeld, the three principals, and the board of education. As of July 8, the petition, at linktr.ee/blackatardsley, had 400 signatures.

Tavern

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He also sold men's suits and shoes at Nordstrom and Bloomingdale's.

"They [Food Network] had said they were interested," he said. "They said they would like to film in the summer, but June passed by and then July — no word. They said filming was all pushed back."

Amchir continued, "They finally said they were interested in coming down in September, but that plan fell apart."

As if on cue, "Undercover Chef" chose the last week in October.

"Just when we are starting to get busy," Amchir said. "That is right when things are starting to pick up once again."

He continued, "But it was an interesting time for us because we were on the

OCA garden

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"talked about the importance of not only having native pollinators, but also things that can coexist with pollinators. Butterflies and bees need not only flowers that provide pollen to them, but before butterflies metamorphose, when they're caterpillars, they actually prefer native grasses. Talking with [Ludden], I wanted to make a garden that would sustain the full life cycle of a pollinator."

The 400-square-foot garden, now blossoming with pollinator-friendly plants and native grasses, has begun attracting bees and butterflies, although it may not be in full swing for a few years,