

# The Piermont Newsletter

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WINTER 2023

## Piermont Planting Project Approved!

At the Village Board of Trustees meeting held Tuesday, November 22nd, the Pier Planting Project was approved, and the contract awarded for installation in the spring of 2023. The plan for the planting of additional trees, native shrubs and perennials has been in the works for quite some time.

As part of a New York State Department of Transportation grant, the planting component follows the raising and repaving of the Ferry Road from the ball field out to the end of the pier which was completed in 2018. Specifically, the NYS DOT grant was targeted to improve the condition and resiliency of the waterfront roadways and related features in New York State. Sylvia Welch, the Village's savvy grant applicant, applied for the grant in 2018, identifying the work needed at the Piermont Pier to lift the roadway higher above the rising waters, enhance the roadway drainage, bolster the pier shoreline and establish additional plantings that would enhance the stability and sustainability of the pier. It was not the intention of this grant to 'beautify'

the pier or improve the park location for tourism, although these will certainly be collateral bonuses of the work.

Mayor Chris Sanders and the Board at that time supported efforts to secure funding for raising Ferry Road and landscaping the Pier. My office, Daniel Sherman Landscape Architect PC, prepared a site plan and budget estimates for the application. Tom Temple of the Village DPW helped supply the details and budgets for the roadway work. The DOT grant was awarded later in 2018. The current Mayor, Bruce Tucker, and Parks Liaison, Trustee Nathan Mitchell have been instrumental in helping to keep the project on the front burner.

The pier planting site plan, plant material lists and the Request for Proposals documents were prepared in large part, by Piermont native Greg Mercurio. Greg grew up on the Piermont waterfront, next to what is now Parelli Park. As a licensed Landscape Architect and certified Arborist, Greg has the background, experience and a passion for waterfront plantings. As co-chairs of the Piermont Parks Com-

mission, the late Carol Cameron and I walked the pier with Greg to identify locations for the proposed trees. The simple idea being; to fill in the gaps between the existing trees. We also inventoried the trees on the pier as a base for some tree species that have proven to be resilient in the nearly soil free planting condition and the harsh weather exposure.

The trees presently lining the Ferry Road on the pier are Mulberry, Hackberry, Cottonwood and a few Crabapple Trees. The proposed plantings include more Hackberry and Eastern Cottonwood adding Black Willow, Serviceberry and a few native Crabapples. We didn't add more Mulberry, as there are plenty already and the juicy berries drop all over the roadway and benches. The Hackberry was most favored. Besides being resilient and hardy in the exposed rocky shoreline, its root mass is like iron and anchors the rocks, gravel and meager soil along the edges of the pier. Proposed shrubs included Red Sprite Winterberry,

*continued on p.7*



Walk on the Piermont Pier. Photo by Betsy Franco Feeney

# Piermont Reflections—



After raising four generations of Piermonters, the Bullock family is moving on. Two side-by-side “For Sale” signs have been posted front of 123 and 129 Piermont Avenue. Last year this stretch of road was re-named Charles Bullock Way in honor of Charles Sr., a long time, much respected Piermont resident and Nyack Firefighter. He, his wife Lois, and daughter Chandra died of Covid 19 at the very beginning of the outbreak in 2020, a shocking loss for the tight knit family and community in Piermont. Charles Sr.’s granddaughter, Lian, whose children are fourth generation Piermont Bullocks, recounted that her grandfather grew up in New York State, and moved to Piermont, along the Sparkill Creek as a young man, having taken a job at Piermont’s Federal Paperboard plant in the 1960’s. Charles Sr.’s brother, Clifton, and his wife Annabel, began their life together in the historic stone building just east of Canzona’s Market. The families have been deeply committed members of the Sparkill AME Zion Church. The Bullock men were volunteer firefighters—Clifton Bullock, a Sparkill resident, still answers the call

at the Sparkill Firehouse. There are just a handful of Piermonters that have raised multi-generational families here. The Bullocks are one. They will be missed, and they will be remembered. I asked Charles Jr. where he was headed after his move. South, to his new home near friends and family, Charles said—about a half hour from Bullocksville, North Carolina.—*Margaret Grace*

The Piermont Newsletter remembers with gratitude the contributions of our colleague Richie Stark, who died in September 2022. Richie took the initiative to scan and archive more than 50 years of issues of the Piermont Newsletter. Thanks to his generous hours of research and data entry, the Piermont Newsletter is available online. Richie’s close friend, John McAvoy, has access to these Newsletter files, and will be adding to the archive as new issues are published. You can find the Piermont Newsletter online at [piermont-ny.gov](http://piermont-ny.gov) > Services > Newsletter”. Thank you, John, for preserving Piermont history.—*Margaret Grace*

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This issue of *The Piermont Newsletter*, and many past issues, can be found online at <http://www.piermont-ny.com/newsletter/>

Thanks to website manager John McAvoy.



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## Meet Your Neighbor... Alexis Starke

There is a sense of inevitability or at least an exceptionally smooth flow to Alexis Starke's life. Now the mother of four she has lived in Piermont much of her life except for college and a few years spent in Ireland. If you ever visit our local library, you will surely be aware of Alexis who currently teaches very popular art classes for children there—sometimes takes on adults—and whose involvement with the library goes back to her infancy.

Born in Piermont, Alexis remembers frequently going to the library with her mother June to visit with her mother's librarian friend Grace Meyer. She

also remembers attending after-school movies there, and participating in the library's summer program, the Beachcomber Book Club. She says she always dreamed of living in the wonderful old building that then housed the library. And, remarkably enough, that's what she has ended up doing—though it took a while.

Alexis began her education at William O Schaefer elementary and finished her early schooling at New Jersey's Immaculate Heart Academy. After earning a degree from Dartmouth with a major in English and studio art, she left for Ireland. Descended from a part-Irish family, and having spent half of her year's study abroad in Ireland, she went back to the Emerald Isle to begin graduate work at University College, Cork from which she graduated with an MA in English and Art History

A year after she arrived, she met the man who was to be her husband, an Irish chemical engineer and project manager named Martyn Ryan. The two of them settled for more than 3 years in a small house in Newbridge, County Kildare, at which point something happened that seriously shaped their future. Alexis' mother wrote to tell them that plans were in the works for a new library, so the 1838 Greek Revival building that held the old library, was on sale. And she sent pictures.

What to do? Could the young couple decide, without at least walking through the building, whether this was the place to plant their future? Alexis' mother (who doubtless had a stake in their decision) sent more pictures. And in April of 2006 they made a bid on the building, (one of many in what turned out to be a bidding war) arriving back in Piermont in time for the closing, early February of the following year.

They lived with Alexis' mother in Tappan for a year while they did the necessary renovations to turn the old library into a home. On the top floor, formerly an apartment, they raised and repaired the roof, then built new bedrooms and installed bathrooms. The middle floor became their major living space—including the kitchen after they tore down a central wall. And the first floor, the former children's library,



*Alexis and baby Evelyn. Photo by Alexis Starke*

was turned into a family room, which allowed them, at last, to start a family to fill it. Their first child, a daughter, born in 2010, is now 11. She was followed by a sister, a brother, and another sister who are now 9, 6, and 9 months, enough to keep anyone busy.

But Alexis has also found the time and energy to become one of the village's premiere art teachers, conducting a full complement of art classes for children—and creating art experiences for adults—at the library and elsewhere. In the library children's room, she teaches grades 1-3 on Mondays, grades 4-6 on Wednesdays and 7th to 12th

graders on Tuesdays. Projects variously involve drawing, painting, print making, collage, and construction. This fall 's theme was Art from the Pacific Islands, drawing inspiration as the website explains from "contemporary artists, art history, science and the natural world." Other themes have been rainforests, pagodas, houses built on stilts and other unexpected subjects.

Once a month, she teaches a virtual Create and Sip class for adults—in which participants do just what the title suggests. November's theme was Paul Gauguin in preparation for which each participant received a goody bag containing "chocolates, a mini bottle of wine, paper, and inspiration images." Participants were asked to provide their own art materials— acrylic paint, oil pastels, colored pencils, or crayons,—and one or two of their own "inspiration images." Other Create and Sip evenings have been inspired by Winslow Homer, British artist David Hockney, and Japanese screen paintings.

Alexis' own creativity is evident from the opportunities she creates, but more to the point, perhaps, is the attitude she brings to her teaching. "Encouragement" and "All students are artists" are her responses to the question of what she does to inspire them into producing memorable work. Each June the library mounts an exhibit of some of the work done there, so you can go see for yourself.

Alexis also leads the PAL Family Playgroup using the Community center and its grounds as a base. Activities include yoga, dance, art and crafting, various sports, holiday themed events, movie nights, potlucks, fall lantern walks and various musical events. And sledding down the PAL hill, as she says, has been a community tradition for generations.

And finally, in her spare time, Alexis has long served on the Piermont Sustainability Committee and has been active since 2008 on the Orangetown Environmental Committee—dealing with such issues as how the surplus land at the former Rockland Psychiatric Center will be developed.

So aren't we all lucky that Alexis came back to Piermont!

—Joan Gussow

## Piermont EMS. See You There.

I can't stop obsessing about the pager. It's been clipped to my jeans for two days—completely silent. What if it's broken?!?! And suddenly it erupts in a blaze of static and a voice bellows: Department 13, EMS emergency, and my adrenaline soars as I fly out the door and race to the firehouse. I am the ride-along, tasked with helping get the word out about February's EMS recruitment drive. I'm finally in the ambulance and we're on our way. Today I ride with Daniel Goswick, Sr., (Senior). He is a master. Once we arrive, there is injury and the potential for chaos, but Senior takes control. Calmly and compassionately, he diffuses a potentially harrowing situation. He bandages wounds, cleans blood, ensures the individual is covered for modesty. *Treat every patient like your mother or father.* These words were bestowed upon Senior as a young EMT. He still imparts them to his own trainees. Everyone, he says, deserves dignity.

The EMTs, along with the firefighters, divers (water distress), and high-angle rescue (mountain rescue), compose the Piermont Fire Department. Membership spans generations: up, down, and across family trees, and comes from all walks of life. I've ridden with Candy Goswick, (Mama G), whose passion for the Department is contagious. During twenty-three years of service, she has seen it all. Babies born and lost, car accidents, fires. "We leave our tables, we leave our beds, our pagers never leave our sides," she tells me. The EMTs support one another both on and off the rig. If a call comes in involving one of their own, every member shows up. Tiny, a big burly EMT I also had the honor to ride with, attributes his personal and professional successes to his firehouse family. But astoundingly, Piermont is in danger of losing its ambulance. The Department is woefully understaffed.



EMS rig. Photo by Jackie White

ty-three years of service, she has seen it all. Babies born and lost, car accidents, fires. "We leave our tables, we leave our beds, our pagers never leave our sides," she tells me. The EMTs support one another both on and off the rig. If a call comes in involving one of their own, every member shows up. Tiny, a big burly EMT I also had the honor to ride with, attributes his personal and professional successes to his firehouse family.

But astoundingly, Piermont is in danger of losing its ambulance. The Department is woefully understaffed.

So, if you live within 5 miles of the firehouse, listen-up. Anyone, of any age, can be an EMT. You simply must be mentally sound and physically able. Free training starts in February. It's a three-month, 200-hour class, meeting Tuesday and Thursday nights and every Saturday from eight to two. Applications are available at the firehouse Mondays between seven and nine p.m. and at [piermontfd13.com](http://piermontfd13.com). One shift, twelve hours a week, is the ongoing commitment. A special appeal to Piermont Landing: most ambulance calls come from your community, yet no residents are members of the force.

Back at the scene, Senior stabilizes the patient for transport and we speed to the hospital. There are some who, only because of our EMTs' grit, determination, and long, long, stubborn periods of not-stop CPR, still walk among us today. I didn't go on those calls. My calls weren't heart attacks, or river rescues, or mountain recoveries. The calls I went on were neighbors in distress. Those that could have been you, could have been me. Thankfully, our patient will recover. But if there is no one to ride the ambulance, there is no ambulance. Are you looking forward to February's recruitment, I ask Mama G. One can only hope, she answers. The course starts February 18th. See you there. —Jackie White

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# The Scourge of Suburbia – and What Communities Are Doing About It

**A**t first glance, suburbia looks peaceful, green, and natural – a contrast to the grey, concrete, polluted city. But is that really true? Take a closer look at the things we do to maintain our “green” landscapes - first we drench them in chemicals, and then we hand them over to armies of painfully loud, gas-spewing machines. Let’s focus on the worst of these – the gas-powered leaf blowers (“GLBs”).

**Why are GLBs So Bad?** Portable GLBs use two-stroke engines, the most primitive and dirtiest type of machinery still in legal use. These machines require the operator to pour in the oil and gasoline, which mix together but burn incompletely, with as much as a third of the fuel being spewed out. The emissions from GLBs include carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides, hydrocarbons (notably benzene), and ultrafine particles (“PM2.5”) that lodge deep inside the lungs – powerful contributors to lung cancer, asthma, COPD, and other lung and cardiovascular diseases. They are particularly dangerous to vulnerable populations and especially harmful to the workers, whose exposure is a matter of environmental injustice.

A 2011 Edmunds study found that a half-hour of yard work with a GLB produces as much pollution as driving

3,900 miles from Texas to Alaska in a 6,200-pound Ford Raptor truck. In 2017, the California Air Resources Board estimated that emissions in Southern California from SOREs - “small off-road engines” comprised mainly of landscaping machinery would soon exceed those from passenger cars.

Equally problematic is the noise pollution GLBs produce. Research has shown that noise is far more than a nuisance, that it has serious health consequences. GLBs reach volumes of 115 decibels, way exceeding the 85 decibels considered safe (from a hearing loss perspective). Even worse, they emit a particularly nefarious type of noise – low-frequency sound that travels over long distances, penetrates through walls and windows, and contributes to heart disease, hypertension, psychological problems, sleep disturbances, cognitive problems, and endocrine abnormalities. Animal studies have shown that low frequency sound substantially damages body tissues. Noise pollution has become a greater concern since the pandemic, with so many people working from home.

GLBs also blast air at hurricane-force wind speeds of up

*continued on p.11*

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# Pessimist: 53% of Piermont Is At Risk of Flooding Or Optimist: There's a Wave of Good News

**P**essimist: Ugh. We hear it all the time. Climate change. Global warming. Rising Sea Levels. Smaller storms, more frequent than those big behemoths, are dangerously intense, doing just as much damage. Higher sea levels pushing storm surge water into the Hudson, winds driving waves several feet above these raised water levels, causing substantial waterfront flooding. Now, even on sunny days, higher tides can flood

## Sandy – 2012 – Piermont Ave



Photos provided by PWRC

low-elevation homes and limit emergency access. And don't forget hillside and streambank flooding. As climate change worsens, it just might take a special kind of person to live in Piermont.

**Optimist:** Real progress is being made by the Piermont Waterfront Resiliency Commission, (PWRC), which works tirelessly to build a resilient and sustainable Piermont. A few examples: After years of NO, PWRC has secured funding and is accepting proposals to develop a Comprehensive Master Plan. The Plan is intended to create a blue-print for the immediate and long-range enhancement, growth, and development of the Village. Given Piermont's coastal and sensitive environmental areas, the Plan will focus, among other concerns, on flooding and climate change issues and how to sustainably grow our quality of life and commerce into the future. The Planning and Zoning Boards will look to the Village's Comprehensive Plan for guidance in creating a uniform approach to development, one intended to avoid repeated flooding and rebuilding, as well as preventing development that will need to be abandoned in the future. As the Plan progresses, look for notices seeking public input.

To date, \$100,000 has been funded to improve stormwater drainage on the Erie path. A design is in place to raise the path by eighteen inches and add catch basins to the uphill side. Still, additional monies are needed for this project. The Environmental Bond Act, passed in November, is expected to provide funding for exactly this type of resiliency project. The Village hopes to secure the balance from this source as soon as next year. In addition, there is a pending FEMA grant to enlarge the Upper Ritie Street culvert carrying stormwater down to Hudson Terrace. The insufficiency of the existing culvert caused the path wash-

out in 2021. And how about that surprise combined funding of \$170,000 from the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve and the Department of Environmental Conservation which will enable pier planting and erosion repair on the south side of Ferry Road?

So, Pessimist or Optimist? If, as a community or as individuals, we decide to look backwards to divine our future, then today's



*"I've lived here for years and it's never happened to me" will be tomorrow's "I've lived here for years and I never know it could be this bad".* Solution? No pessimists or optimists, only Realists. Be realistic about the challenges that lie ahead and prepare for them now. Yes, it will take a special kind of person to live in Piermont. One who can learn, adapt, and overcome. But this is

a special kind of Village. One that prepares, protects, responds, and recovers. The very definition of resiliency.

Special thanks to PWRC's Nathan Mitchell and the slide-deck from the Town Hall Meeting.

<https://fb.watch/h3yU9aG-Lt/> —Jackie White

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# The American Rescue Plan (ARPA)\* Comes to Piermont

Total received	\$259,589
Expenditures and Commitments as of 11-22-22	
Covid Bonus Pay – June 1, 2022	22,500
Bob Samuels Park with Grace Knowlton Sculpture	14,500
Emergency Medical products (EMS equipment)	4,100
GOGov – Village emergency notification system	9,600
Brooker Engineering flood mitigation studies.	4,701
New Playground at Community Center	80,000
Community Center Building and repairs	96,188
Potential Hazard mitigation grant – 25%	28,000
Balance	0

\*ARPA : The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, also called the Covid 19 Stimulus Package, is a 1.19 trillion-dollar economic stimulus bill passed by the 117th Congress and signed into law by President Biden in March 2021.

Notes: In Piermont, funds were issued in two parts. Under federal guidelines, the first half of funds were used by the village to support essential workers and for parks. After 10 months the federal government expanded uses of funds, which Piermont then earmarked for engineering studies, instituting a 4-year plan for a GOGov Communication system for Piermont (see page10), repairs to the Community Center building and grounds, and providing a 25% co-payment for a potential \$100,000 flood hazard mitigation grant.

Additionally, a “Thank You” to Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick, for bringing Piermont \$260,000 in grants from NY State during his 2-year term, paying for new DPW and dive team equipment, and flood prevention and repairs.  
—Margaret Grace

## Piermont Planting continued from page 1

Bayberry and Low Grow Sumac.

Miche Brisson and Drew Ciganek reviewed the plant list and compiled additional planting components that would support and enhance habitat for the birds and pollinators for the bees and other insects. The focused review by local lovers of the pier’s unique habitat was appreciated.

The south side of the pier is part of the NYS DEC Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve, and so the Village required a permit to make these plantings on both the north and south sides of the pier. After reaching out to DEC, a survey documenting erosion and loss of vegetation on the south side of the pier was prepared by Daniel Spitzer and reviewed during a site visit with representatives from DEC and Village personnel. Subsequent to that, a permit application with supporting documentation compiled by Nathan Mitchell was submitted on our behalf by Heather Gierloff, the HRNERR manager, to both perform erosion repair and these plantings to mitigate future erosion. DEC granted this permit in 2022, and upon learning that the responses to our RFP for the project were all far beyond our remaining budget, HRNERR was able to contribute \$50,000 to the project, which was enough to get us into contract for the work.

After a process of competitive bidding, the contract for furnishing and installing the plantings according to the plan was awarded to Carmine Gizzo of Guardia Landscape and Masonry. Guardia recently installed the Gair Memorial Park with the chess tables at the corner of Piermont Avenue and Ash Street and more recently, the replacement of the Train Station floor and surrounding site grading improvements.

The Piermont Pier is a unique and outstanding feature of Piermont’s Hudson River waterfront, cherished and enjoyed by local residents, folks and dogs from all over the Hudson Valley and travelers from around the United States and the world. Sustaining this precious asset has taken a Village, literally, from initiating this grant to reeling it in and launching the work. Well done.

—Dan Sherman  
Landscape Architect  
Chair of Piermont Parks Commission

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## From The Library

**H**appy New Year from Piermont Library! Do you have a library card? If you don't, now is the time to get one! Come into the library anytime we are open. Aside from the traditional books, magazines, and DVD's, we have so many online resources, museum passes, and a plethora of programs each month.

To stay up on the latest, make sure you are receiving our emails (email us at [info@piermontlibrary.org](mailto:info@piermontlibrary.org) to get on our list). Our website ([www.piermontlibrary.org](http://www.piermontlibrary.org)) always has a full list of events and you can follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Coming up in 2023, we are looking forward to having another one of our popular Library Book Sales and our second Arts and Crafts Fair! Both events will raise funds to support our library.

Our popular series of Art Classes for Grades 1 – 12 with Alexis Starke will take on a new sense of excitement as we look forward to our first Student Art Show since 2019 in June! Our art classes for kids explore a wide range of materials and techniques and take inspiration from artists and designers across history and around the world. These interdisciplinary classes include academic components as we delve into culture, geography, history, and the STEAM subjects.

As always, Ms. Nancy, our wonderful children's librarian, will offer book clubs for all ages as well as story hour for our tiniest book lovers and Story and Craft for ages 3 – 7, and of course seasonal special events. Friday Family Bingo is another monthly favorite!

Have you been thinking of joining a book club? We have a great one that reads a rich variety of excellent books and engages in provocative meetings and discussions once a

month. New members are always welcome!

We are very happy to be back in person for our monthly art exhibitions. January will feature the incredibly talented portrait artist, Lauren Rudolph of Nyack. February will present the classic watercolors of local scenes by long-time Snedens Landing resident, Robert Adzema. March will showcase the elegant photographs of Piermont photographer Page Simon. April will show the art of Renaissance man and local pastor JohnVandenOever. May will bring the creative and inspiring art of Sparkill resident Lisa Lockwood. And finally, June will showcase our Student Art Show from our very talented young artists in Alexis Starke's library art classes.

And adults, if all this talk of art shows is making you want to explore your own creativity, we've got you covered! Alexis Starke offers monthly Create and Sip classes for adults! These fun and open-ended classes are meant to spark the creative process for all levels of artists from beginner through professional. — Alexis Starke

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# Piermont Celebrates the Holidays

Photos by Betsy Franco Feeney



# Pickleball Comes to Piermont

What do LeBron James, Tom Brady, Mark Cuban and Bill Bloom of Piermont have in common?

Pickleball of course- the fastest growing sport in America! Although Bloom may not own a pro team like the aforementioned, he has certainly done his part in bringing the sport to our community!

After becoming obsessed with the game, himself, Bill began volunteering his time teaching a beginner class at the Piermont Community Center earlier this year. I am one of a good number of Piermonters who took advantage of the free lessons. With the patience of the Dalai Lama, Bill taught us the game. While phrases like warm up with dinking, stay out of the kitchen, and don't forget the bounce-bounce rule rang in our ears, we too came to love the game. And there were other benefits Bill, and the sport brought our way. For me personally, my couch and I are spending a lot less time together, and according to my Apple Watch, a lot of calories are being burned! More importantly though, I am forming friendships as fast as I did when I was a kid playing kickball on Piermont Place. That's the thing about Pickleball... it is not only famous for the healthy addiction that comes with the game- but the fast and fun social connections as well! I now have at least 40 contacts in my phone with the last name Pickleball!

As the class grew in popularity and an intermediate class was added, the center has seen a resurgence of activity, again thanks to Bill Bloom. Not only has Bill volunteered his time teaching and creating a fun experience for so many of us, but he also came to see the needs of the tired center. So, he took that on too. First by taping on court lines, and eventually painting permanent lines in the gym. Then as interest grew and more court space was needed, he painted another court outside. Bill also took on some of the safety issues at the center. From regularly mopping and cleaning up flooding in the gym, to installing a sump pump to help prevent rainwater from getting inside. He has cleaned up overgrowth of shrubs and trees around the building, addressed a drainage issue around the foundation by creating a berm, and did some concrete work to repair cracks. To say Bill Bloom has gone above and beyond for us and our

center would be putting it mildly!

His efforts have not gone unnoticed. The town has recently earmarked grant money to do some additional repairs, including a new roof. And there is much more on the horizon for the center, and in turn our community. If you want to come see what this game called Pickleball is all about, Bill is still volunteering his time teaching an intro class from 9:30-11 on Thursdays, followed by an intermediate class from 11-12:30. See you at the center, and THANK YOU Bill Bloom!—Lynn Cluess Manzione



Photo by Lynn Cluess Manzione

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to 185 miles per hour. They disturb the ecology of topsoil, dispersing not only soil, but spores, fungi, pollen, chemical residues, and animal feces. They dislodge beneficial soil organisms and pollinators, disrupting the natural processes of plants, insects, birds, and other small wildlife, and destroying their habitats, which are essential to maintaining the very plants we are trying to grow.

Margaret Renkl, in the New York Times, eloquently described GLBs as “monsters...[that] come in a deafening, surging swarm, blasting from lawn to lawn and filling the air with the stench of gasoline and death.”

**Do We Really Need to Do So Much Blowing? What Can We Do Instead?** Somehow, conventional landscapers have gone from using GLBs for major clean-ups to using them routinely throughout the season. From a horticultural perspective, this makes no sense - grass clippings are a valuable source of natural fertilizer that should be left on the lawn, not removed at considerable cost, only to be replaced by synthetic fertilizer, to the profit of the chemical industries.

**What about leaves?** Increasingly, both experts and residents are advocating a more sustainable approach known as “Love ‘Em and Leave ‘Em” (LELE). Numerous Cooperative Extensions recommend “mulch mowing,” - shredding them with mower blades right on the lawn where they become free fertilizer. When raked onto garden beds, they insulate and fertilize trees and shrubs, and provide shelter for beneficial insects and other small creatures. LELE builds soil health and supports pollinators and other wildlife. It advocates working with nature, not against it (“Mother Nature knows best”). Of course, leaves should be removed from roads and sidewalks, but hardly from the entire landscape. And less vacuuming and carting away can save municipalities and taxpayers a great deal of money,

On a broader level, we should ask ourselves where the idea that residential landscapes should be “manicured” and look like golf-courses came from - and who benefits from setting this artificial standard. Just as fashions changed from “French gardens” to the more natural “English garden” style, so too can we learn to appreciate a more natural look and thereby benefit from a healthier environment.

**What about Battery-Powered Equipment?** Battery-powered equipment is improving dramatically and taking over increasing shares of the market. Not only do electric machines produce lower and less harmful noise, but they are emission-free, and thus far preferable to GLBs.

Last spring, the NYS Senate and Assembly both passed a bill that provides for sizeable rebates on the purchase or leasing of new battery-powered landscaping equipment of all types, with the exception of robotic mowers (which may be an unintended omission).

Are there companies that have already gone electric? Indeed, there are. The American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA.net) is a member-based organization of landscapers who have left gas-powered machinery behind. AGZA provides education, training, and professional certification. It evaluates and certifies equipment. The AGZA website lists 28 certified landscapers nationwide, of which 9 are in the Northeast. And this list is far from exhaustive.

AGZA also certifies “Green Zones” —areas on which “routine landscape maintenance is performed with low-impact equipment and people-powered tools.” Green Zones include municipalities, universities, school districts, and residential properties. In our area, Rye, Larchmont, and Southampton have established Green Zone parks; Southampton, the first to do so, was rewarded with 10 NYS Climate Smart Innovation Points.

**What Else Are States and Municipi-**

**palities Doing?**

Communities around the country have begun to recognize the serious dangers of GLBs, responding to both public pressure and medical societies’ recommendations. Many have enacted “seasonal bans,” i.e., restricted GLBs to spring and fall clean-up. A few have banned them entirely.

In 1998, Los Angeles forbade the use of GLBs within 500 feet of a residence. In 2021, California passed a law requiring all new SOREs sold in the state to be zero-emission by 2024. As California Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez said, “It’s time we phased out these super polluters.”

In 2018, Washington, D.C. forbade the sale or use of GLBs (except on Federal property which the city does not control), with a three-year phase-out.

In our sister county of Westchester, 23 communities have enacted seasonal bans. Larchmont took this farther, with a full ban on GLBs and seasonal restrictions on battery-powered blowers starting in 2022.

Closer to home, Upper Nyack adopted a seasonal ban in 2021, focusing on the noise issue and enforced by fines levied against the property owner. On July 14, 2022, the Nyack Village Board unanimously adopted a one-year seasonal ban on GLBs for 2023, followed by a full ban starting in 2024.

Can we simply sit back and hope that the landscaping industry will move forward and regulate itself voluntarily? The scourge of second-hand smoke has now largely been eliminated from public spaces, but hardly through the actions of the tobacco, hospitality, or travel industries. Concerned citizens spoke up and eventually government heard them and passed laws.

For more information, check out Quiet Communities, Healthy Yards Westchester, Huntington Calm, and Beyond Leaf Blowers, or email martheny@verizon.net. —*Marthe Schulwolf*



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# Scarecrow Building Contest

As part of this year's Halloween celebration, the PCA once again hosted a scarecrow building contest at the Piermont Public Library. Here are the winners...

Photos by Lynn Gluess Manzione



**Scariest Scarecrow**  
Jayne Ziegler and daughter Dana's family.  
3rd time winners for Scariest!



**Funniest Costume**  
Rachel Levy and Family



**Most Creative Costume**  
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## The “Friendly” Fox?

Piermont was once a true natural paradise, teeming with wildlife. Although much has changed, we are still fortunate enough to share our habitat with wild animals. The question is, how best to do so?

In 1609, when Henry Hudson sailed his Half Moon Ship up the Mahican-tuck (a name that meant “great waters in constant motion” or “river that flows both ways”), there were as many as 12,000 Native Americans living along the shores. They belonged to the Lenni Lenape (“the original people”). By the end of the 17th century, the Lenape had been reduced to three clans— the Turtle, the Wolf, and the Turkey. The Tappan (“cold water” or “rolling stream”) were a subgroup of the Turtle Clan. Like all of the Lenape, they revered the wildlife that helped sustain them.

The Dutch were the first Europeans to lay claim to the area. When they arrived, they found the marsh alive with ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds, and deer “as fat as any Holland cow.” The banks were lined with oysters. The waters abounded with both saltwater and freshwater fish, among them sturgeon “twice the size of grown men.” There were wolves, bears, mountain lions, and elk. For hundreds of years after that, the blooming of the Shadbush in May indicated that the annual shad run had begun - the fish had begun making their way up the Hudson to spawn in fresh water and it was time to net the river to catch them. Sadly, since 2010, all recreational and commercial fishing of shad has stopped, as the population has become dangerously low.

So, what does all this have to do with “the friendly fox”? Wild animals still reside among us - fox, coyote, deer, bear, birds of all kinds including waterfowl, otters, raccoons, and even adorable little chipmunks. We are now the “keepers of the animals” and we owe it to the Lenape – the “original people” who taught the new tenants how to survive here – to treat them with reverence. They may no longer sustain us through hunting, but they remain a critical part of our eco-system, and a source of joy when we catch a glimpse of them.

This dry summer and into fall, a young fox was seen roaming in and around Tallman Mountain State Park; residents described it as showing no fear of humans, almost “friendly.” One of two things could account for that – either it had rabies or people were feeding it. As



Photo by Tom Hughes

it looked healthy, it is likely the latter. This raises the question – should people be feeding wild animals? How should they handle encounters with them?

For your own safety, if a wild animal is approaching you, try to take a different path and move away slowly. Do not run away and do not move towards the animal. Also never feed wild animals, with the exception of backyard birds under certain conditions (see [www.humanesociety.org](http://www.humanesociety.org); [www.fws.org](http://www.fws.org); and [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)). This may be easier said than done, as often our compassion urges us to feed the animals. But feeding them almost always does more harm than good. It upsets the balance of nature, leading to an overabundance of some populations over others. Regular feeding increases the potential for infectious diseases spreading among the animals and can lead to aggressive behavior both

among wildlife and towards humans. It can also create concentrations of both rodents and predators. Most importantly, the animals begin to rely on this feeding and lose the ability to survive on their own, even changing their migratory patterns.

Examples of this would be a fox that no longer controls the exploding chipmunk population because it is being fed by humans, or waterfowl who no longer view mosquitoes and larvae as a delicacy due to human feeding. Killing the bugs that birds eat with pesticides so we can feed them stale bread makes no sense at all. Feeding wildlife is also illegal. When you enter any National Park, you receive brochures that include the warning, “A fed wild animal is a dead animal.” This is especially true for those we see as threatening—foxes, coyotes, and bears. When they lose their fear of humans, park rangers or other authorities euthanize them to prevent dangerous situations. This has happened to a number of bears in Harriman State Park.

Not only should you not feed wild animals. You should also remove outdoor pet food and secure your garbage in a can with a tight lid. This not only protects the wildlife, but also small pets and children who might be endangered by coming into contact with these animals.

As to the “friendly fox” in Tallman, it disappeared when the weather turned cold and wet. We hope it is surviving out in the wild. Maybe we will be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of it traveling through the snow...—Tom Hughes

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Once you sign up, you will receive village notifications on both your phone and email. This app is also a portal through which you can contact Piermont village officials and departments. You can sign up by downloading the MyPiermont app from Google play or Apple App Store. Instructions for signing on are quick and easy, but if you have questions, contact the village clerk at [clerk@Piermont-ny.gov](mailto:clerk@Piermont-ny.gov) for assistance. Once installed, the MyPiermont app will appear on your device, looking much like a lapel pin, and become your connection to Piermont, wherever you are.

The Village Board and our emergency services encourage all residents to sign-up for MyPiermont notifications.—  
*Margaret Grace*

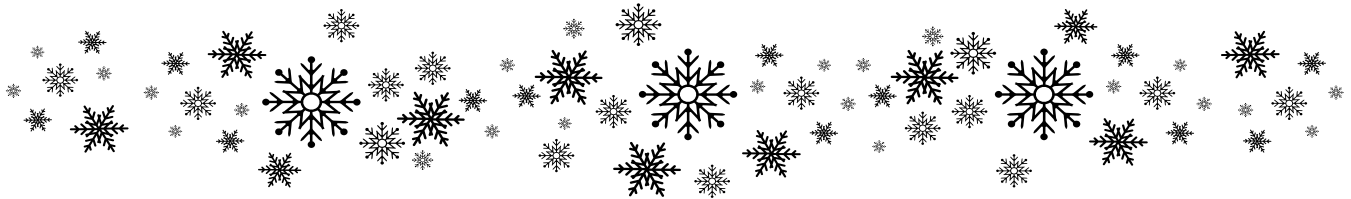
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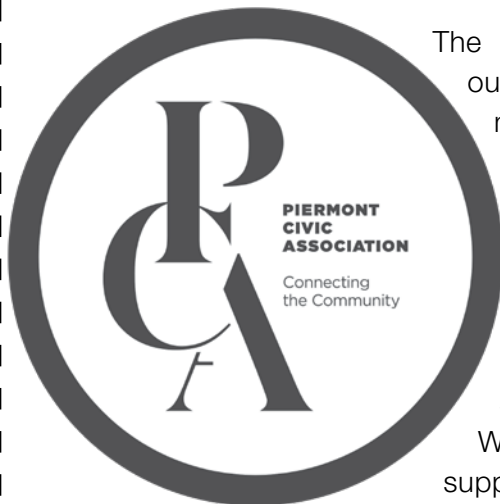
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