SPRING BREAK: THEN & NOW

inside

armonk

THE MAGAZINE FOR NORTH CASTLE & BEYOND | THEINSIDEPRESS.COM | APRIL 2020

The Tateos: A Family of Champions
ARMONK | $2,589,000

If you are seeking exceptional value in a luxury property, your search is over!!! A gated estate perfect for today’s modern lifestyle on seven acres of professionally landscaped waterfront property with pool and spa ideal for entertaining. Do not miss this opportunity!

Lisa Koh
**BEDFORD | $2,299,000**
Welcome home to this special and architecturally unique colonial situated on a quiet cul de sac. The spacious interior is designed perfectly for entertaining as well as intimate family gatherings.

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**ARMONK | $1,349,000**
Sunsets & sunrises that will make your heart warm. Unique mid century style home in Windmill Farm Lake Community on professionally landscaped hill. A true nature lovers dream offering peace & serenity.
ARMONK | $1,150,000
Totally renovated brick and shingle colonial with easy flow for entertaining. Finished walk-out lower level perfect for extended family. Located on quiet cul-de-sac close to town.

BEDFORD | $1,199,000
Byram Hills School District Gem. Unique opportunity for an architect-designed, modern home with a 900 sq. ft., 5-room office & separate entrance. Enjoy views of nature from every room!
Pleasantville | $1,325,000 Grace LoBello
Fall in love with the fine craftsmanship of this wonderful new construction home!

Bedford | $1,050,000 DelVecchio Scarano Team
A perfect balance of formal, casual & functional space can be found in this fantastic Colonial!

Bedford | $899,000 Michael J. Neeley Team
Spacious home with a California-country vibe with light & bright open spaces.

Armonk | $1,098,000 Stacey Sporn
Location, Location, Location! Welcome to this fabulous home for entertaining family and friends!

Armonk | $949,900 Stacey Sporn
Welcome home to this bright and sunlit center hall colonial on perfect cul-de-sac close to town.

Armonk | $949,900 DelVecchio Scarano Team
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I was having a stressful morning. No further elaboration needed, but stepping into the Tateo household, the sheer warmth and welcome I felt made that all instantly dissolve. I had arrived for the cover photo shoot with Cathy Pinsky who was assigned to capture the amazing family behind North Castle’s annual Armonk for Autism 5k with photos to accompany Ella Ilan’s article. For the last couple years, I’d noticed signs all over town alerting residents to the walk. We finally decided to delve a little deeper in time for April which is World Autism Month–finding out that the walk was Morgan’s sister Reese’s idea and that she spearheaded it only made this family’s efforts that much more poignant. Kudos to the Tateos for building greater awareness and for fostering community too. In the meantime, spring is in full swing. We have a couple unique ‘Happenings’ suggestions and ‘so much more’ in these pages. We are also hard at work on May and June editions. As usual, we welcome your ideas and your support, too. Write to grace@insidepress.com
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Keeping Up with Corona

When we first had our editorial meeting to plan the current issue, the coronavirus wasn’t even on our radar. The topic of spring break came up and our team was excited to tackle it from different perspectives—as parents of young children, soon-to-be empty nesters and college age kids.

Today as I write my column, 100,000 people worldwide have been infected with COVID-19. Active Facebook groups in our towns such as Armonk Parents and Chappaqua Moms are posting a host of questions: Should I cancel my spring break? Should I keep my child with asthma home from school? Where can I get Purell locally? What survivalist goods should I keep on hand? And the list goes on and on…

Just as the weather gets warmer, the last thing I want to be thinking about is how to protect my family from this. I want to be planning summer vacations. I want to be thinking about what concerts and sporting events I’ll attend in June. But we are all in a holding pattern it seems.

Working in the magazine world, one of the hardest things is keeping up with the news cycle. The news on this pandemic is changing rapidly and by the time you get this, schools may be closed (hopefully not), telecommuting may be the new normal and Purell will be sold on the black market.

This morning I listened to a BBC newscaster interview a therapist who was offering telemedicine sessions for patients quarantined. The mental anguish that this has placed on families quarantined (or not) is palpable. One parent said that while his house was stocked with canned and paper goods, the hardest part now was entertaining himself and his three little ones. They were out of ideas.

While reading this issue cover to cover admittedly shouldn’t take more than an hour, I hope you find it entertaining, a bit distracting and chock full of stories that are at the heart of your community. And if spring break is in your cards, take this magazine on the plane, the beach or by the pool. I promise there has to be at least something in here that will make you smile—whether it be sheep shearing events, families coming together to raise awareness of autism or neighbors sharing why they love living in Armonk.

Happy and safe spring,

Stacy

In 1960’s Southside Chicago, a troubled war veteran moves into an apartment building and the residents become caught in an emotional whirlwind that threatens to change their lives forever. In the center of the conflict are the building’s landlady, Mrs. Elkins and her 16-year-old granddaughter, Gloria.

The world premiere of a new play by Joshua Allen follows last season’s staged reading of his previous work, The Last Pair of Earlies. Allen, a Chicago native, was also a co-executive producer on the Emmy-winning Fox TV series Empire. He is a graduate of USC and the Juilliard School.

The director, Cezar Williams, is a Yonkers resident and an award-winning director, whose recent Off-Broadway production of Dancing on Eggshells won critical acclaim.

At Whippoorwill Hall Theatre, North Castle Public Library, Kent Place, Armonk, NY Opens April 24! For a full schedule and tickets, visit hudsonstage.com.
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2. Margaret Harrington
3. Glorianne Mattesi
4. Maura McSpedon
5. Vincent Vetrano

Top 5 Westchester Agents by Transactions
1. Margaret Harrington
2. Glorianne Mattesi
3. Maura McSpedon
4. Vincent Vetrano
5. Christopher Cortez

Pinnacle Award Winners
- The Berkowitz Marrone Team
- Sally Slater

Diamond Award Winners
- The Strong Oestreich Team

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Gold Award Winners
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- Maria LaGattuta
- Ilisa Crosby
- Mary Jean Staudohar
- Miguel A. Cabrera
- The Paul Sarlo Team
While many high school seniors were swamped with college applications this past fall, Byram Hills Senior Reese Tateo was no exception but she was also busy organizing the first-ever Armonk for Autism 5K race in downtown Armonk. Tateo organized the event along with her parents, Elena and Danny Tateo. Spurred by their love for Reese’s younger brother, Morgan, who has autism, the Tateos hoped to raise autism awareness in the community and raise money for the Byram Hills Special Education Department.

Support from Family and Friends

Despite it being a rainy day, about 130 people came to show their support on October 27, 2019 and the Tateos raised over $11,000. Although some registrants stayed home due to the weather, it was still a healthy turnout for their inaugural event.

“In the end, I think the rain added to it because everyone who came was there because they really wanted to support us and not because they were going out for a nice run in great weather,” reflects mom Elena Tateo.

The entire event was full of touching moments. Friends and family pitched in wherever they could, whether unloading bananas or giving out t-shirts. The Tateos met other families with autistic children and people outside of Armonk who have children with autism thanked them via email or donated five dollars to show support. They were delighted to see so many members of the community including Morgan’s classmates, his teacher, his Occupational Therapist, the Byram Hills Director of Special Services Jill Boynton, the Byram Hills Athletic Director Rob Castagna, and the high school football team.

Local businesses such as Hickory & Tweed, Mt. Kisco Seafood, Tazza, and Breezemont Day Camp also offered their support by sponsoring the race. Additional sponsors were featured on their website at armonkforautism.org. Also, a multitude of volunteers donors, plus the town made the race possible.

One of the most memorable moments came at the very end. It was raining hard, water was dripping through the tent, people were clearing out, and Elena was announcing the winners, trying to read their names off a wet paper. Suddenly, they heard there was still a runner out on the road. It was a teenage girl with autism running with her father and brother. The Tateos
corralled everyone back to the finish line and everyone enthusiastically obliged. “Everyone was cheering for her in the pouring rain,” recalls Reese. “It was amazing. I just viewed that as a symbol of what we were there for. We got everyone to come back and cheer and she was so happy.”

An Idea Blossoms into Tangible Results

Reese’s idea to organize a run came to her after watching her father, an avid runner, participate in many races over the years. “I noticed how many people would run for a cause so I thought it would be great to do it for autism,” Reese says. Danny Tateo has run to support other causes in the past with a picture of Morgan that says “I run for my son.”

To tackle the logistics of planning a race, the Tateos sought advice from the organizers of the annual Stayin’ Alive 5K which benefits the Friends of the North Castle Library.

Reese and her dad chose the course. “We drove with a GPS watch and went on so many different courses planning 3.1 miles,” says Reese.

After consulting with Superintendent Jen Lamia, HC Crittenden Principal Kim Lapple, and Director of Special Services Jill Boynton, the Tateos donated the money towards a kitchenette for the special needs students at the middle school and a greenhouse at the high school. The Tateos were excited to provide something tangible that can help foster independence for Morgan and others like him. The kitchenette is useful in teaching daily life skills and the greenhouse allows the students to learn agricultural skills, job skills, and marketing by growing plants and selling them.

Living with Autism

April is World Autism Month and several communities are having wear blue campaigns or are lighting up town monuments blue to raise awareness of autism. The CDC defines autism as a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. The CDC found in 2018 that approximately 1 in 59 children in the US is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

Living with a brother with autism has given Reese a special perspective. Morgan was diagnosed at a very young age so Reese never really knew a brother without autism. “I just grew up with autism. People ask me if it’s weird but I know no differently,” explains Reese. “I would watch him a lot while my parents were at work and couldn’t go to many after-school activities because I had to come home and look after him. That was different than a lot of people’s lives but he’s my brother and I love him.”

“She’s the best big sister you can ask for,” says Elena. “Morgan is smart and has a funny sense of humor. His biggest challenges are language and communication. We were excited about doing the race in our community because Morgan has become more integrated in the middle school than he was in the lower schools and we’ve no-
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Pleasantville • Contemporary home surrounded by Japanese gardens. Step into this updated home full of large spacious rooms with vaulted ceiling.
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Armonk · One-of-a-kind stone and stucco on 2.6 premier acres in Thomas Wright Estates. One level with high ceilings.

WEB# IA1582950 · Harriet Libov · $1,895,000

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**STUNNING MODERN CONTEMPORARY**

Armonk · Abundant light flooding every room, front and back stairs, all en-suite bedrooms, numerous skylights, recessed lighting.

WEB# IA1534135 · Barbara Greer · $1,675,000

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**PRIVATE YEAR-ROUND BEAUTY**

Bedford · Located in Byram Hills School District within the community of Armonk, this residence is sited on a cul-de-sac.

WEB# IA2497602 · Harriet Libov · $1,095,000

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**CONTEMPORARY CLASSIC COLONIAL**

Bedford · Completely Transformed with brand new bathrooms, updated kitchen, beautiful hardwood floors, and freshly painting inside and out.

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Upper Room Meal, Communion and Tenebrae Service

Easter
April 12 • 7:00 am
Sunrise Service in Bruckner Garden
10:00 am in Sanctuary
Easter Egg Hunt
11:30 am

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April 10 • 7:00 pm
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All are welcome
ARTICLES BY CHRISTINE PASQUERALLE
PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAMILIES INTERVIEWED

Editor’s Note: Last month we included a feature asking local residents to comment on what makes their neighborhood special. There are so many distinct areas in town that we wanted to continue this popular series.

One commonality of all these profiles just like the previous article is a passion for the place these families call home. Read on and see if some of your neighbors are included.

It’s the people who ultimately make a neighborhood great.

Christine Pasqueralle is a freelance writer, wife and mom of two. Based in Hawthorne, Christine enjoys yoga, the arts and exploring NYC and the surrounding areas.

Good Neighbors

What Makes Your Neighborhood Special

Wrights Mill: New Appeal for an Old Section of Town

The Wrights Mill neighborhood has a storied past dating back to the American Revolution. Thomas Wright, for whom the area is named, owned property and operated a mill in North Castle. Major Andre, who worked as a spy with Benedict Arnold, was captured in Tarrytown and held in a barn at Wright’s mill. A plaque now commemorates the sites of Thomas Wright’s mill wheel and buildings.

Today, Wrights Mill is a neighborhood filled with lovely homes close to downtown Armonk as well as to Wampus Pond Park. Calling this neighborhood home is the Arany family. Dr. Karina Gritsenko, an Associate Professor of Anesthesiology at Montefiore Medical Center and Mr. Magen-David Arany, who works in finance, live here with their four sons Joshua age 14 (going on 26), Isaac age 4.5, Jacques age 2.5 and Yonatan, age 3.5 months. The family moved from New York City two years ago after 16 years of living on the Upper East Side. With a growing family, they knew they needed more space—it was just a question of where.

As Karina puts it, she came to Westchester kicking and screaming. She and Magen-David even had a friendly competition for who could find a new home first, with Karina looking at apartments and Magen-David at houses. He eventually found one in Wrights Mill that was perfect and the family has loved living there ever since. The family truly enjoys meeting new people wherever they go and even realized soon after moving in that two of Karina’s colleagues at Montefiore are also Wrights Mill neighbors.

The Arany family love the social aspect of the neighborhood and are always happy to help out their community. Magen-David is a volunteer firefighter in town and Karina is involved with the PJ Library. As she says, “Give the busiest person something to do and they’ll do more.” Wrights Mill is a very family-oriented neighborhood with people always willing to lend a helping hand. For example, during a recent blackout, neighbors offered showers and hot meals to those who lost power.

Some of the family’s favorite outdoor spaces in town are Lombardi Park and the Montessori playground, as well as their own backyard. As Karina says, “We always look for adventures and everything in Westchester is routinely 15 minutes away.” Definitely a perk of living in a place with so much to offer.
Spring has sprung in Northern Westchester. Be sure to mark your calendar for these exciting events all within a short drive. There’s something for everyone.

**Sheep to Shawl:**
April 18-19 at Philipsburg Manor, Sleepy Hollow

Folks looking for some spring fun can flock to Sleepy Hollow’s Philipsburg Manor for Sheep-to-Shawl, kicking off Historic Hudson Valley’s event season on Saturday and Sunday, April 18-19, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. On-site activities include crafts for children, including a giant 20-foot diameter weaving project. And for fashionistas, visitors can check out Project Colonial Runway all while tapping their feet to a live bluegrass band.

Visitors to this event can follow the process of textile creation, from the sheep’s back to yarn, experiencing the entire process of turning wool into cloth, watching as sheep are shorn by hand, and taking a turn dyeing and weaving the finished product—all done just like it was over 300 years ago!

Sheep-to-Shawl takes place rain or shine. If purchased in advance online, admission is $16 for adults, $12 for seniors, $8 for children ages 3-17. Children under 3 attend for free. Onsite prices are $2 more per ticket. Tickets can be purchased online at hudsonvalley.org.

**OPEN GARDENS:**
April 26 Rivendel, Ossining

Calling all aspiring green thumbs and nature photographers. Get ready to be inspired at Rivendel, a picturesque, mature, rocky, un-mulched shade garden in Ossining, with a pond, stream, and greenhouse. As part of The Garden Conservancy’s Open Days, private gardens are open to the public throughout the spring and summer.

Throughout Rivendel’s few acres, design and appearance have been dictated by a difficult and daunting plot, which was tilled and toiled since the second half of the eighteenth century, by manumitted slaves, who went on to become among the earliest African-American land owners in the newly formed United States.

Their unique Hedy Burying Ground is visible in front and is accessible from Spring Valley Road, where parking is available. Terrain is steep in places. A Manhattan schist 150-foot cliff and woodland walk skirts the far side of the pond, also accessible from Spring Valley Road.

Rivendel is on Spring Valley Road (#106 on satellite maps) which runs parallel to and just north of Route 134, mid-way between the Taconic State Parkway and Route 9A. It is 1 mile west of the Teatown Nature Preserve. Admission is $10 and children under 12 are free. Photography is permitted and the garden is handicap-accessible. Additional information is available at gardenconservancy.org.
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ENTS WITH CHILDREN OF ALL AGES ARE IN PREP MODE. THERE
IS, HOWEVER, A GREAT DIVERGENCE AMONGST THE DEMOGRAPHICS.
FOR THOSE WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN THIS MEANS COORDINATING CRIBS,
HIGHCHAIRS AND KIDS’ CLUB RESERVATIONS TO CREATE AN IDYLIC 
VACATION. IN STARK CONTRAST, FAMILIES WITH OLDER CHILDREN ON THE 
PRECIPICE OF ADULTHOOD ARE MANAGING A DIFFERENT TYPE OF SUPERVISI-
ON TO THRUST AN MTV-WORTHY EXPERIENCE. THOUGH THE ARRANGE-
MENTS VARY, THE COMMON GOAL IS TO SET THE STAGE FOR A FUN-FILLED,
MEMORABLE VACATION.

LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU

OFTEN TIMES TRAVELING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN CAN FEEL LIKE MORE OF A 
RELOCATION THAN A VACATION. CHAPPAQUA RESIDENT SUSAN SORRELL, 
HOWEVER, HAS FOUND THAT A LITTLE RESEARCH CAN GO A LONG WAY IN 
PLANNING A RESpite THAT TRULY SATISFIES THE ENTIRE FAMILY. “WE’RE 
BOTH WORKING PARENTS THAT DO THE DAILY COMMUTE, SO WHEN WE 
GO ON VACATION, WE REALLY WANT IT TO BE A VACATION FOR ALL OF US.
WHEN MY DAUGHTER WAS 18 MONTHS OLD, WE BOOKED ONE ROOM 
in A BEAUTIFUL HOTEL, BUT QUICKLY REALIZED THAT EMMA CLAIRE’S 
BEDTIME MEANT LIGHTS OUT FOR US TOO,” RECOUNTS SORRELL, WRYLY 
ADDING, “WELL, YOU ONLY MAKE THAT MISTAKE ONCE!”

Not all resorts are created equally. Through trial and error, 
the Sorrell family identified their own non-negotiable criteria. 
“Most importantly,” Sorrell says, “we want places where we 
don’t have to bring a lot of stuff. We’ve been traveling to Club 
Med Punta Cana for several years now, which offers strollers, 
pack-n-plays and wonderful in-room, on-site night sitters. The 
property also offers two-bedroom private villas with pools.

Now, Emma Claire’s bedtime isn’t ours and we can sit on the 
patio in the evening and enjoy a drink.”

While some families seek privacy, others crave a social vaca-
tion, so consider the vibe of the resort before booking. “We 
look at vacations through the lens of our daughter, who is an 
only child,” Sorrell explains, “sometimes we want it to be just 
the three of us, but the reality is that Emma Claire doesn’t 
want to be with us all of the time either, so we look for that 
happy blend and oftentimes travel with other families or go 
to resorts with quality programming. The Club Med we’ve 
stayed at offers a kids’ club broken down by ages set on a 
private, secure beach. Beyond that there is full programming 
for teens, tweens and adults and I can get a fabulous mas-
sage or do a yoga class.”
Danielle Gootzeit, also of Chappaqua, identifies with the Sorrell family’s philosophy. The mother of three boys, ages 6, 11 and 13, explains, “In the past, we’ve done beachy, all-inclusive resorts with built-in activities and easy flights like Beaches Turks & Caicos or Half Moon Jamaica. As my kids are getting older, however, they’re becoming more courageous in both their activities and cuisine. Gone are the days when we’re tied to destinations that offer pizza and chicken nuggets in fun shapes! This spring, we’re breaking out of our comfort zone and embarking on our first European adventure to Amsterdam. It’s a very touristy, structured vacation where we will tour the Anne Frank House and Van Gogh Museum, learn about World War II and enjoy the tulips and windmills.”

They say it’s about the journey, not the destination, but this phrase takes on a different meaning when traveling with young children. Gootzeit typically travels with a carryon bag that would impress Mary Poppins as she laughingly describes, “I pack approximately one million snacks and wrap little gifts like crayons, coloring books and Matchbox cars to unwrap every 40 minutes to keep the kids entertained.” This year, however, since the family will be taking a redeye, Gootzeit will simply ensure that all iPads are charged and headphones are at the ready. Envisioning that a good night’s sleep will not be achieved by every member of the family, the Gootzeits planned appropriately by booking a hotel for the previous evening where they can rest their heads immediately upon their 7 a.m. arrival. This type of proactive planning promotes a seamless experience. The trickiest part of planning vacations is trying to find a time that works for the whole family and doesn’t conflict with either my daughter and son’s respective college and high school schedules.” Similarly, Spring Break is now related to ensuring safe travels and a safe environment. The trickiest part of planning vacations is trying to find a time that works for the whole family and doesn’t conflict with either my daughter and son’s respective college and high school schedules.”

After consideration, both the Chernoff and Colombo families along with “approximately 25 other parents” opted to stay at a nearby property during the trip. Explaining the setup, Colombo says, “The kids stayed at the Breezes Resort, while most parents were at the neighboring Rosewood Baha Mar. The properties are connected by a winding pathway and though we could’ve peaked in on the kids, we really didn’t infringe on their ability have an independent vacation. Our real purpose was to be close enough if any issues arose.” Similarly, Chernoff says, “We completely trust our daughter, but although they feel like grownups, these are still 17- and 18-year old kids and there is the influence of other people to consider. Even parents who didn’t join the trip designated someone onsite to be responsible for their child.”

With high school Spring Break behind them and their daughters off in college, both Chernoff and Colombo are taking a more hands-off approach this year. “Now that she’s in college, I’m fine with the independence,” Colombo explains, saying, “She’s going to the Gulf Shores with a big group of friends and I totally trust her. My primary concern is now related to ensuring safe travels and a safe environment. The trickiest part of planning vacations is trying to find a time that works for the whole family and doesn’t conflict with either my daughter and son’s respective college and high school schedules.”

Shauna Levy is a writer and marketing communications professional. She is currently raising her three boys, ages 10, 8 and 6, alongside her husband in Chappaqua, NY.
Train tracks leading into Auschwitz - prisoners were transported in cattle cars

Elie Wiesel stated “To hear a witness is to be a witness.” I am a witness. On January 27th 2020, I traveled to Auschwitz for the 75th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz with 105 Auschwitz Survivors from around the world and 50 world leaders to commemorate the victims and honor the Survivors.

The memorial service took place on the grounds of the death camp where 1.1 million, mostly Jews, were murdered. We sat under a large heated tent that straddled the train tracks that had dragged prisoners into Birkenau, often to their death in the gas chambers. As Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress, stated “I am here, simply, as a Jew. And, like all Jews everywhere, this place, this terrible place called Auschwitz has sadly become an inseparable part of us. Auschwitz is like a scar from a terrible trauma. It never goes away and the pain never stops.”

Walking into the camp I quietly reflected on my grandparents stories of survival. I took in the remains of the barracks, including the barrack where my grandfather spent his youth being tortured against his will. The weather was cold but I was well bundled and couldn’t help but think about my grandfather who was forced to spend his time in Auschwitz without a warm jacket or hat or gloves.

I listened to each Survivor as they shared intimate details about their own personal stories, details that humanized the unfathomable atrocities of Auschwitz. Details that I will shout out to the world and share with future generations so they know the Holocaust happened to men and women and children with personalities and stories, like all of us, not to abstract numbers.

The Survivors all related stories about how upon their arrival at Auschwitz over 75 years ago, they were stripped of their dignity, forced to strip down to nothing in front of all, have their heads shaved, their possessions stolen and arms permanently tattooed with a number. 94-year-old Auschwitz Survivor Batsheva Dagan spoke about her arrival and subsequent assignment of being forced to sort belongings of those sent to the gas chambers. She cried to the crowd, “Where was everybody? Where was the world who could see that, hear that and yet did nothing to save all those thousands?”

Turning A Blind Eye on the Jewish Refugee Crisis

In his speech Lauder explained “And when European Jews begged the world for a safe harbor, someplace to go, the entire world turned its back on them. Even my own country—the beacon of freedom—turned out its light on the Jewish people when they needed it most. The US organized a conference in Evian, France in July of 1938 to discuss the Jewish refugee crisis. There were a lot of lovely speeches but the US did not let any additional Jewish refugees in and every other country in attendance followed their lead. There were 32 countries and none of them, except for the tiny Dominican Republic wanted any more Jews. Hitler saw this. Four months later came Kristallnacht. And again, there was no world reaction. Hitler tested the world. And at every step he saw the truth—the world did not care. That’s when he knew he could build this factory of death. Evian led to Auschwitz. Kristallnacht led to Auschwitz. World anti-Semitism led to Auschwitz.”
Survivor Josef Kreitenberg commented “I don’t know how I survived but I just kept on believing because that’s all you could do.”

Survivors are Dwindling

As the years pass and the eye witnesses who can say “I was in Auschwitz” dwindle in numbers, these Survivors made it their duty to return to ensure the world does not forget! Polish President Andrzej Duda vocalized “We have with us the last living Survivors, the last among those who saw the Holocaust with their own eyes. The magnitude of the crime perpetrated in this place is terrifying, but we must not look away from it and we must never forget it.”

For some of the Survivors it was their first trip back since that day 75 years ago when they were finally free from their terror. However, for most it will be their last. But to all the Survivors who returned the memories of what occurred inside the infamous gate bearing the words “Arbeit Macht Frei” (translation: work sets you free) are no less haunting today. Survivors continue to have nightmares as their memories are still fresh. However, Survivors feel the need to share these painful memories with future generations so the world will never forget, especially today when we witness the ominous growth of anti-Semitic attacks and hatred around the world.

No Graves to Visit

Some of the Survivors returned to Auschwitz to memorialize their family members murdered there. These Survivors whose family members went up in flames in the gas chambers and crematorium do not have a grave to visit. To them, Auschwitz is a cemetery. Survivor Tova Friedman said “My going back is my telling them, I remember you.”

Survivor Ben Lesser explained: “People would love to forget the hard truths and that’s why we need to keep coming back here to refresh our memories and keep the world from acquiring amnesia. Unfortunately, we can’t live forever. What happens after we are gone, I don’t know.”

93-year-old Survivor Marian Turski declared “Auschwitz did not fall from the skies.” He urged the next generation to be vigilant. “Auschwitz did not fall from the skies.” He explained that if people are indifferent when incremental steps of discrimination are implemented, then another Holocaust could happen. Turski reminded the room that what allowed the Holocaust to happen was not just the evil of the Nazi’s but also the indifference of the world.

Lauder emphasized “We will never eradicate Anti-Semitism. It’s a deadly virus that has been with us for over 2,000 years. But we cannot look the other way and pretend it isn’t happening. That’s what people did throughout the 1930’s and that is what led to Auschwitz.”

The Nazis tried to dehumanize and obliterate all Jews of Europe. But the 75th Commemoration attended by over 200 survivors proved that Nazi’s did not win. These Survivors signify that the Jewish people won. They survived and were resilient. “There is one more part of the Auschwitz story that no one ever talks about. When the Survivors were liberated from this Nazi nightmare, they never sought revenge. They lost their mothers and fathers. Sisters and brothers... After everything that happened to them, these Jewish Survivors just walked out of these gates and went on to build new lives, raise new families, work hard and create,” said Lauder.

After the long day of memorializing in Auschwitz, we arrived back at the hotel for a late dinner. By 11 p.m., Auschwitz Survivor David Wisnia asked for a microphone and explained that he wrote a song while in Auschwitz—a parody about life in the death camp. On January 27, 2020, 75 years after the liberation, David Wisnia, a man full of life, sang this song proudly from his wheelchair to a room full of witnesses who will NEVER FORGET.

All the Survivors agree that they do not want their past to be their grandchildren’s future. The Survivors on this journey did not talk about anger or revenge, but rather their love for their new life and family. I felt embraced by love on the trip by Survivors who ironically were treated with the worst type of hate, and whose lives were torn apart by hate. Through conversations with the Survivors on my journey and with my grandparents throughout my life, I have learned that the Holocaust is not just a story of hate. It is also a story of resilience, humanity, love and kindness. People who are taught to put others before themselves; people who are taught to love, those people do not hate—rather, they choose life.

Stacey Saiontz’s paternal grandparents survived the Holocaust. Her grandfather Jack Feldman’s story was made into an HBO documentary called “The Number on Great Grandpa’s Arm” in 2018 and features him along with Stacey’s two sons, Elliott and Jared. Following Saiontz’s visit to Auschwitz, Katie Couric recommended viewers watch the documentary in her Wake-Up call e-newsletter. Saiontz, who was recently honored by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, is one of the co-founders of the New Castle Holocaust Memorial in downtown Chappaqua.
A Conversation with

Adam Schleifer
Candidate for the 17th District

BY GRACE BENNETT

It’s always delightful to discover a candidate’s creative side. In an interview with 38-year-old Adam Schleifer over coffee in Armonk, we covered a lot of territory— including his acapella, choir and Glee Club participation at both Greeley High School and at Cornell University! But we also discussed in depth Schleifer’s most recent role as a no-nonsense, accomplished federal prosecutor in California and the issues he would prioritize and strengths he would bring to the table as Nita Lowey’s successor.

Growing Up in and Returning to Chappaqua

We met soon after a Chappaqua forum addressing controlling noise from Westchester County Airport, an issue important to both New and North Castle neighborhoods. No stranger to noise, spending his early years in Manhattan next door to New York Hospital, and sharing a room with a younger brother, Schleifer attended the forum “to learn about the flight path over New Castle” and consider ways to tackle the issue and affected residents’ unhappiness. “The questions are whether there’s more that can be done to have a curfew that’s more enforceable,” he noted, recognizing the noise caused by both private and commercial aviation and the need to “reasonably balance the infrastructure and commercial needs of the area with the livability of the area.”

Schleifer was in the second grade when his family moved from the city to a home near Kisco Park—a neighborhood he speaks of fondly. “It was like the Wonder Years… cul-de-sacs and streets branched off… I would ride my bike around, explore and get into minor trouble—but nothing too serious, thankfully,” he recalls. He also had a fantastic Greeley experience, remembering the sprawling campus and different buildings housing many school clubs. “It fit my sense of a really sophisticated, grown-up experience; it always struck me that if you went to Horace Greeley, you were prepared for the world.”
He also took full advantage of his years at Cornell, double-majoring in Government and Philosophy, singing acapella and playing baseball. Schleifer notes that he encourages others to embrace college as a time in life when “your entire job is to invest in yourself and learn as much as you can to develop the toolbox you can use to negotiate the rest of the world.”

Schleifer picked up a few more good tools at Columbia Law School, especially, he said, serving on Law Review and participating on a competitive international Moot Court team. He was also a research and teaching assistant in Constitutional Law for Professor Michael Dorf, and also formed a close bond with other professors, including Professor Arthur Chaskalson, former Chief Justice of South Africa’s Constitutional Court and member of Nelson Mandela’s defense team.

From Public Service to Private Practice and Back Again

After graduation, Schleifer spent two years as a federal law clerk, for both a Clinton-appointed pragmatic Democrat in the Southern District of New York, and, thereafter for a conservative appointee to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. As a result of working equally well with both, he realized that “it was the beginning of my sense that in government, in law, in policy and in politics, most of the time, there is a right answer to a question. The media can produce a warped sense that everything is hyper-partisan.”

Schleifer then spent five years practicing commercial litigation with Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz in New York City, starting just weeks after Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy. “It was a tremendous time to start your career as a private attorney. The founder of the firm wasn’t sure if the western capitalist marketplace system would even be around in three months at that point.” But then Schleifer decided that he wanted to be in the public sector “partly out of an insight that banking and insurance were two sides of one financial coin,” and became a Special Associate Counsel for the New York State Department of Financial Services focusing on consumer protection issues.

Schleifer is most proud of having worked against a payday lending lead generator named Money Mutual, which was backed by “high finance” companies that collected and sold information about people intended to seduce certain communities—mostly of color and veterans—into agreeing to usurious payday loans via advertising by spokesman Montel Williams, who they trusted. Schleifer’s team removed those ads from the airwaves and “we shut down that practice as it existed in New York.” He also said that he did similar work with respect to the subprime auto lending industry as part of a team on the first-ever case brought by a state under the Dodd-Frank Act to enforce consumer protection spending laws. It was this type of work, he said, that inspired him to become an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Department of Justice.

As a federal prosecutor in California, Schleifer had the experience of being in court every day on behalf of the United States, eventually taking on more responsibilities regarding investigation, indictment and courtroom prosecution of crimes. He worked on everything from a prosecution of a motorcycle gang member dealing in large-scale distribution quantities of methamphetamine, to a gang’s conspiracy to traffic in illegal assault rifles and high-capacity handguns, to the murder of a federal agent by an international drug cartel, to “smog fraud,” where people were falsely certifying that their cars had passed emission standards.

Schleifer is particularly proud of his prosecutorial work on financial frauds, including a scheme by two Israeli brothers who took advantage of their own synagogue members and the immigrant community of the San Fernando Valley, essentially taking their money by claiming that they were expert investors. He worked on a similar matter where a Church member took control of a church primarily made up of elderly members, masterminding the multi-million dollar sale of the building and taking the money for himself. Schleifer noted that in many other areas of crime “we ask ourselves where the system may have ‘failed’ someone, where someone who otherwise would have lived a life of honesty and rectitude was pushed by various circumstances to do things that were unfortunately anti-social and criminal, but in the fraud world, it is much more clear that many of these people are acting out of sheer avarice and laziness and vanity. I take this very seriously.”

Strengths and Priorities

“I have a record of achievement; I’m getting actual things done–like the Montel Williams case–but that’s just one example of actually working hard on behalf of New York borrowers to make New York markets more fair and to make the insurance and healthcare industries more fair and transparent,” Schleifer said of his qualifications, adding that his state and federal bipartisan experience sets him apart.

As far as what his priorities would be as Congressman, Schleifer noted that they have changed and evolved as he has engaged with people in the district. For example, local constituents are angry about the cap on state and local tax deductions: “that’s a cynical, unfair attack on blue states—that would be part of a broader repeal of the Trump tax bill,” he said. Schleifer added: “We need to make sure that at the higher levels, we have fiscally responsible, sustainable and fair marginal tax rates.

“I hope to accomplish many more than five things if I am elected… but I can say amongst the really important ones are gun legislation–universal background checks, it should be harder to possess a firearm than drive or lease a car, so that seems pretty common sense to me. There should be a ban on certain weapons of war, similar to some of the ones I took off the street in California.”

Schleifer is also committed to addressing climate change. “That may be number one because it is a matter of national security, international standing and intergenerational fairness. Everything else becomes a sort of arranging the deck chairs of the Titanic if we don’t have a healthy and habitable planet that we can leave to our children and our grandchildren.” He said that he would push very hard for a carbon tax “to disincentivize the production of additional greenhouse gases while also forcing companies that emit greenhouse gases to pay the full freight for the environmental cost that they impose.” He believes that green technology would benefit from the fair competition that would result, which would create more jobs, another one of his priorities.

Noting that gun control is the first step in addressing the rise in domestic terrorism and antisemitic violence, Schleifer adds that federal criminal laws—including the Matthew Shepard Hate Crime Prevention Act—already on the books are underutilized, but are now being more frequently used (as in the recent attack in Monsey). He wants to focus on “enforcing these laws in a tough way to stand up to the scourge of terror because in 2020, whether it is Jewish people or any other people, should not be attacked for exercising their First Amendment rights or for anything else—(such as) who they love, what skin color they have or freedom of religion. This is a shadow of barbarism that we cannot abide.”

Schleifer would also like to see a federal holiday on election day, at least every four years, and “we should be promoting both through interstate compact and through constitutional amendment” the abolition of the electoral college.

“It’s insane that in 2020, most of the country’s views are essentially irrelevant to the question of who becomes the president and that a few voters in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and maybe sometimes Nevada, Oregon, Washington or Arizona define our presidential conversation. Voters in Texas, whether they are blue or red, and voters in New York, whether they are blue or red should have a say in our presidency,” he said, adding that he would also push for things like a tax
Schleifer points to the antisemitism demonstrated by left-wing politicians in Britain and France and right-wing would-be fascists in Germany as examples abroad, to both alt-righters chanting “Jews will not replace us!” in Charlottesville and certain left-wing groups in the U.S. attacking our community.

Why Run for Congress?

Schleifer loved being a federal prosecutor, but when he was home for Yom Kippur last fall, his father had asked if he thought he would return to New York. That same day, Bet Torah Rabbi Aaron Brusso delivered a sermon on the troubling trend of “cancel culture”—noting how that on social media people are not engaging with each other as humans but rather are just trying to undo one another.

The sermon resonated with Schleifer, who while admittedly not particularly political and only a passive user of Twitter for news, felt despair over the state of the country and the president, who he calls the “bully/fraudster in chief.”

“I know how to take on bullies and fraudsters because that was my specialty for the last six years. Trump has done more to undermine our institution and our sense of constitutional governance than anyone, maybe ever, in our country,” Schleifer said. And he recalls that at the same time, he was reading More for Less by Andrew McAfee, which is about, as he calls it, the “four horsemen of the optimist: fair, efficient and vibrant capitalist markets, the resulting innovation, biological, technological, environmental advances, and free and informed citizenry with a responsive government. Schleifer thought “wouldn’t it be nice if our political leaders actually spent time thinking about real data and how to solve real problems.”

When he learned that Nita Lowey was not seeking re-election, Schleifer “felt like this problem was identifying itself to me. I felt that I had a record of concrete achievement at the state and federal level and that this was my home district and that I could make a real contribution.”

After a few weeks of discussion with his wife Nicole, who works in strategic communications, and discussions with stakeholders and individuals in his personal life and the world of politics, “I thought that I would come back home and give it a shot.”

Grace Bennett is Publisher and Editor of the Inside Press and a recipient of the Bernard Rosenshein Courage to Care Award of the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center. Special thanks to Inside Press intern Kiran Sheth for assistance with this article—third in a series of Inside Press spotlights of NY-17 congressional candidates.

Continued from page 10

oped his peers be so accepting of him, which is amazing. He does track at school and even participated in the 1.5 mile loop at the race.”

Reese passionately reminds us, “if you see a kid that’s not socially out-going or looks uncomfortable, reach out and be nice to them and don’t look down on them for not knowing how to act or speak.”

“It’s important for parents to always strongly advocate for their children and it’s an ongoing life-long process,” says Elena. “Parents need to network, educate themselves about what their children need, and think about planning for the future early on. We also have to remember to be inclusive, be kind, and recognize that everyone counts. I love Temple Grandin’s quote about being “different, not less.” I think that is how our society should consider all people, with or without a disability.”

Reese and her dad have already started planning for next year’s race. “We have to fight for those who can’t fight for themselves,” says Danny.

For more information, visit www.amonkforautism.org or for race-specific questions email reesetateto@amonkforautism.org.

Ella Ilan is a local resident and frequent contributor to Inside Press publications.

“We also have to remember to be inclusive, be kind, and recognize that everyone counts. I love Temple Grandin’s quote about being “different, not less.” I think that is how our society should consider all people, with or without a disability.” - Elena Tateo

Inside Press
Irony shows us a sobering look at Spring Break.

Do you remember when debauchery was an integral part of a successful spring break trip? When THE “biggest beach party on the planet” was at Coca-Cola Beach on South Padre Island? Now, it’s what happens when your daughter sits diaper-less on the sand. We enter a new realm. Perhaps this is one that makes you tremble because dearest heavenly cloud, what on this wetland-infested area are you going to do with your children over spring break?

Whether you are fleeing to a family-friendly resort, or staying put, you may have to entertain for an entire week while school is closed for no reason (actually, the origin of Spring Break has quite a long and complicated history if you feel like going down a rather interesting rabbit hole during your free time).

Then we wanted party buses, and now we want school buses. Once tan lines, and now, zinc oxide. Oddly invigorated by loud music, but now, noise-cancelling headphones and sound machines. In. Every. Room. Then we wanted glass on the beach, yet now we fear shards. Together, we weep and wonder and take a moment for a fun trip down memory lane. Go ahead and close your eyes and enjoy for a bit. The rest of the article will be here when you wake.

Ok. So, should you be so “lucky” to flee town, allow me to suggest some things. First and foremost, make sure your hotel has a 24hr Kids Club, Free WIFI, INSTANT food, giftshop, in-room babysitting, chocolate-covered strawberries during turndown, and a nice bed for you to continue dreaming in. Pack light and use bags that don’t require using an arm and/ or hand; backpacks and fanny-packs are totally stylish and ideal. Ha! No, really though. I like them. Lastly, my husband always reminds me when packing, “If you forget something, we can always try to buy it there…” He says this as he sees me staring into the dark hole of our suitcase with fear and terror. But yeah, unless you’re going to the Arctic, take a little load off the mind and remember my husband’s wise words.

Oh oh ohhhh, perhaps Grandma and/ or Grandpa are being blessed with your presence for Spring Break? You. Are. Toast. 😬 Enjoy bocce! Hopefully you can ditch the old with the young and escape for a nice romantic dinner one night. I will be thinking about you.

If you are staying put, bless your heart. I hope this helps.

Holiday Camps. Many local gyms and art studios can help get your kid (and you) some drop-off time. Smart businesses capitalize during this time so do some work on Google and you may be surprised with your findings. And check-out the local library schedule and the town’s mini camps: Secret Agent Labs and STEAM Adventures.

Day trips. Care for some skiing at Thunder Mountain? It’s only 30 minutes north once you hit 684. The museums & shopping in Norwalk & Danbury, can also keep you astir for 4+ hours.

Activities. Cooking/ baking (from recipe hunt thru grocery store trip, you’ve got a good 5-hour chore here). If I mention “spring cleaning” how does that makes you feel? I mean, you COULD make it fun AND get some help!

Playdates. Ask around at your kids’ school and find out who else is staying in town so you can arrange playdates now.

Plan ahead. Pray. And remember, time goes faster when you are out of the house. As exhausting as it may be to pack-up and head out for an adventure, remind yourself that the minutes will fly and the memories will last.

On a somewhat related note, I’d like to bring the following to your attention for consideration: Mother’s Against Spring Break (MASB) recently launched a compelling campaign which explains how it would propose “removing” this break from the school calendars. Instead, the school year would end sooner. If the petition reaches 100,000 signatures it will be sent to Cuomo’s desk and signed into law. Please check it out at www.youwish.com.

And remember, if you fall, I will always be there for you – The Ground

Jennifer Drubin Clark is a comedian, entrepreneur, writer and a local volunteer. An Armonk mom with two active toddlers and a rescue pooch, Jennifer loves architecture, hats, skiing, and fast cars. She holds a degree in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona and previously worked in digital product development at WWE and Verizon.
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