Unflappable & Unstoppable: Chappaqua's Kristen Browde
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MOUNT KISCO | $1,475,000 Sena Baron
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CHAPPAQUA | $1,149,000 Cindy Glynn
Walk to town from this inviting Colonial that seamlessly blends vintage charm & modern amenities.

CHAPPAQUA | $879,000 Jenny Harris
Walk to town from this inviting Colonial that seamlessly blends vintage charm & modern amenities.
MOUNT KISCO | $879,000  Richard Hayes Hopple
Alluring Lawrence Farms East colonial nestled on 1.43 hilltop acres with stunning western views.

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MILLWOOD | $849,000  Cindy Glynn
Chappaqua School District Colonial that seamlessly blends vintage charm & modern amenities.

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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, student athletes giving it their all or neighbors sharing why they love living in Chappaqua.

Happy and safe spring,

Grace Bennett, Publisher, Inside Press

A Message of Condolence—and Love

Very close to press time, tragedy befell a wonderful family and our beautiful town after the son of our town supervisor died in a terrible accident. On our own team and beyond, the impact was immediately felt. Relationships in town between children, and between parents and neighbors, are never that far removed in a tight knit community. We are collectively shocked and heartbroken. As we all struggle to process this, however, there’s one thing I am entirely certain of: this community rallies together to heal, support and honor. And that will be true in the coming months, and well into the future. As a resident in Chappaqua for 23 years, and a publisher here for 17 years, I have seen such love time and again, and I’m continually proud of how this community rises in difficult circumstances.

Grace Bennett, Publisher, Inside Press
Congratulations to our family of Award-Winning Agents

Top 5 Westchester Teams **by Gross Commission Income and Transactions**

1. The Berkowitz Marrone Team
2. The Strong Oestreich Team
3. The DeBellis Team

Top 5 Westchester Agents **by Gross Commission Income**

1. Sally Slater
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

Platinum **Award Winners**

- Margaret Harrington
- Glorianne Mattesi

Diamond **Award Winners**

- The Strong Oestreich Team

Gold **Award Winners**

- The DeBellis Team

President’s Circle **Award Winners**

- Maura McSpedon
- Vincent Vetrano
- Gladys DiSisto

- Melissa Frank Lutz
- Elizabeth Audet
- Cord Stahl

Leading Edge **Award Winners**

- Eileen McGrath
- Christopher Cortez
- Dorothy Mouldovan
- Suzanne Moncure
- Maria LaGattuta

- Ilisa Crosby
- Mary Jean Staudohar
- Miguel A. Cabrera
- The Paul Sarlo Team
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 Heddy 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.
SPONSOR WISDOM

Sowing the Seeds of Love!

BY BETH RORDAM

It is a good time to be an Acupuncturist. Medicare has announced that it will now provide Acupuncture as a required benefit. Although none of us would ever want to live in a world without modern medical advances, Acupuncture points to another way to view healing and now we have the research to prove it. The western viewpoint sees the body mechanistically as a series of chemical and physical reactions, Chinese medicine looks at the human condition as primarily energetic. We exist as a spiritual, emotional and lastly as a physical entity. All of the Acupuncture points heal at multiple levels. We never have to choose. We can treat it all.

Ear Seeds or auricular Acupressure is a wonderful way to acquaint yourself with this most ancient healing modality and best of all… NO NEEDLES!! During our Ear Seed Clinic we will teach you everything you need to know to use this simple self care technique on your friends and family. It is a wonderful time slow down, center yourself, connect and heal.

There seems to be a never-ending pattern of fear and conflict that has us all in its grip these days. The questions of this age are only going to get more complex not less. Authoritarian structures that use fear to control and limit will never provide the real solutions we desire. It is apparent to most of us that humanity needs to move in the direction of love and connection or witness a world torn apart by fear and violence. It is this connection of love between souls that is the true healing energy of the body, what the ancients called Chi. Come Saturday 5 p.m., share your love, connect with others, enhance your natural immune system and build bridges of love instead of walls of fear. This is true healing.

**APRIL 2020 | INSIDE CHAPPAQUA & MILLWOOD | 07**
When Kristen Browde’s son Theo came home from Horace Greeley, where he’s a sophomore, and told her about a second mandatory lockdown drill, Browde said her decision was made up to run for state assembly in New York’s 93rd district. “This generation has grown up with the fear that their school could be next.”

Browde, who has sat on the Chappaqua School Board’s financial advisory committee for almost ten years, said one of the things the committee often has talked about is how to “harden” our schools, but her contention is that security measures inside schools are not nearly enough.

“It remains easier in New York, in spite of our SAFE Act and red flag laws and all the progress we have made, to buy a high powered weapon—a military style weapon—and ammunition, than it is to buy a pack of Sudafed—and that is just wrong.”

A former TV broadcaster, Browde cited experience that includes decades of effective lobbying in Albany as a national and local officer for and on behalf of The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (now SAG-AFTRA). She worked on legislation to ban the use of non-compete contracts that kept industry salaries low or stagnating.

“When I worked at Channel Five and Channel Four, the broadcast companies would put a non-compete clause into our contracts. This would say ‘even after you leave my station, you cannot go to work for anybody else in this market for a certain amount of time.’ The result of that was that the employee’s bargaining power was substantially reduced because you would have to sit out six months or even a year.
without a salary—and that is how they kept you where you were at a lower salary, too. “It took seven years to get it passed. Back then, the Republicans were controlling the state legislature.” Browde proudly stated that she finally helped pass the Broadcast Employees Freedom to Work Act.

“And now that the State Senate (a last bastion of the Republicans), has flipped, all of a sudden, bills that had been bottled up for years… were finally able to be brought to the floor and enacted into laws signed by Governor Cuomo.

“In recent years I have had the opportunity to build relationships with people like the Governor and with the leaders of both houses, in the course of working on these issues. I know who they are and who

Gun violence prevention will be her top priority. “Every parent who puts their kid on a school bus in the morning wants one thing—to get that kid back at the end of the day. It is not just the kids that are growing up with this fear, parents are as well. We are having to spend huge sums of money on school security… But if we can protect just a little bit more and at no cost, we ought to be doing that… Do the background checks and do the positive identification. You don’t stop with the weapons; it’s about the ammunition too. Moms Demand Action has a tremendous legislative program, so does the Brady Campaign. Both have absolutely solid things that this legislation should be working on in the next session.”

Browde cited another critically important legislative task ahead: redistricting.

“We are going to have a census. It is almost certain that New York is going to lose a Congressional seat… Nita Lowey’s seat is a pretty safe Democratic seat. Sean Patrick Maloney’s is not. There are lines that are almost certainly going to be redrawn… We will need to protect the sanctity one person, one vote, rather than protect the sanctity of an individual politician. We have seen that in places like North Carolina what happens when you have tremendously gerrymandered districts that pack all the Democrats into one tiny little area: the Republicans, even though they are only 50% of the state, control 75-80% of the Congressional seats. We can’t let that happen anymore.”

Browde also pointed out that common points and if we can get together on those common points, then that is fine.

“But whether it is, anti-Jewish, anti-Black, anti-Hispanic, we have to use every single resource that is humanly possible to bring to bear to battle hate… That’s a conversation that we in New York can start. Frankly, we in New York have the biggest problem with it right now.

At this juncture, Peter Moses, Browde’s campaign advisor and a longtime journalist himself, pointed to Browde being “incisive, direct, and a listener” as key strengths during her media career. It’s that same skill set, he said, that helped her pass legislation in Albany.

“It is why (Westchester County Executive) George Latimer has her on a couple of committees. The fact that she’s really bright may have influenced him, but what keeps her there, what she keeps bringing to the table with all the new roles she takes on, is her ability to communicate and listen.”

**Melding Career Strengths Toward Key Consensus Building**

“I’ve gone from reporter to divorce lawyer, which I used to describe as combining the two least respected professions in America into one stellar career. Now I’m adding politician, so it’s a trifecta,” Browde chimed in with a smile.

“As a divorce lawyer, you are dealing with people who at one point said they love each other and now can’t see eye to eye about anything and you are trying to bring them together to a settlement that they can both live with. When you are doing a job of a legislator, or let’s say, someone who is trying to persuade other legislators to come over to your side, you are doing the same thing. People who want the same thing—which is the best for the people of the state of New York.”

“I’m also trying to figure out what the other person really needs, because frankly, while I don’t agree with the policy positions espoused by most Republicans, the fact is I don’t think they are bad people. I just think they have a different view of what is best… there are common points and if we can get together on those common points, then that is fine.

Browde reminded me too that “the sticking point right now is not the Republicans. In
Kristen is a force to be reckoned with,” Silverman says. “When she wants to get something done, she will get it done.”

BY ANDREW VITELLI

While Kristen Browde has the backing of the New Castle Democratic committee, she is running against a crowded field for David Buchwald’s 93rd Assembly seat.

Bedford Supervisor Chris Burdick and White Plains resident Jeremiah Frei-Pearson, a civil rights attorney who ran in 2012 but dropped out to endorse Buchwald, are two leading candidates. Alex Roithmayr, Buchwald’s chief of staff, and Greater New York Chamber of Commerce President Mark Jaffe are also seeking the nomination.

“White Plains seems to be coalescing around Jeremiah, and they certainly have a lot of votes,” Jane Silverman, co-chair of the New Castle Democratic Committee, says. “Women and the LGBTQ groups are really behind Kristen. So right now, I don’t necessarily think there is a frontrunner.”

In 2017, Browde challenged New Castle Supervisor Rob Greenstein for his seat, lost but still garnered 47% of the vote in the heated race. The contest was closer than some expected, according to Silverman.

Silverman points to Browde’s work for the New Castle Democrats as well as her work on Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Love Makes a Family council to legalize gestational surrogacy and her experience as a trustee for the $2.5 billion AFTRA Pension Fund.

Burdick, meanwhile, has the support of the Bedford, Mount Kisco, and North Castle Democratic committees. He was elected supervisor in 2013 after serving on the town board.

Browde has thus far trailed in fundraising having raised just under $18,000, according to public records, while Burdick has raised more than $66,500 in the same period. Frei-Pearson’s fundraising totaled more than $163,500 including a $150,000 contribution to his own campaign.

Though the primary is sure to be a battle, the nominee will be favored to win the general election. The seat has been in Democratic hands for all but three years since 1993. The only Republican elected to represent the district over this period was Robert Castelli, who won a special election in 2010 and was re-elected later that year in a Republican wave election. For every registered Republican or Conservative, there are roughly 1.6 Democrats among active voters in the district.

As of press time, North Castle resident Sarmad Khojasteh, a partner at Kasowitz Benson Torres, confirmed that he was being considered as a possible candidate on a Republican ticket. Khojasteh, who serves on the Town of North Castle Assessment Review Board and on the Iranian American Bar Association’s New York Chapter Board of Directors, entered the race for the 37th Senate District in 2018 before dropping out and endorsing GOP nominee Julie Killian.

Andrew Vitelli is a Westchester native and White Plains resident. He has reported on the county for Inside Press and Examiner Media since 2009.

“Kristen is a force to be reckoned with,” Silverman says. “When she wants to get something done, she will get it done.”
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Chappaqua, New York
n November 2, the Horace Greeley field hockey team clinched its first Section 1 championship since 1984 with a 1-0 win over Mamaroneck. It was a late goal by senior captain Isabelle Klein that sealed the win at Nyack High School last Fall. But building a championship team—one that lost two straight sectional final games before breaking through—took years, both for the program and the girls who finally ended the drought.

The upwards trek towards the top of Class A began 11 years ago, when Sukhvindar Singh Sandhu—recently named New York State Coach of the Year—joined the coaching staff. Sandhu, who played pro field hockey in India, found a middling program that posed little threat to Section 1 Class A juggernaut Mamaroneck. Sandhu saw that many of the girls were relatively new to the game, and realized he needed to get a stick in their hands at a younger age.

Building a Hockey Program from the Ground Up

“Told to a couple of the parents, and we started a youth program,” he recalls. This helped grow the number of players coming out for the team, but it was not enough. “The next step was getting the travel team established, Sandhu says. “You need the kids playing year-round.”

Sandhu became head coach of the varsity team in 2009 after a year coaching JV. His first four years at the varsity level produced just one winning record and no playoff wins. In 2013 the Quakers began showing signs of life, making it to the Section 1 quarterfinals. The next year, Greeley reached the semi-finals, followed by three trips to the sectional championship game in four years.

The Quakers fell one game short of a Section 1 title in 2015, 2017 and 2018, losing to Mamaroneck each time. In November, the girls found themselves as the only team standing in the way of a Tigers threepeat.

“Seeing the seniors lose in that final game [the previous two years], I did not want to feel that as a senior,“ midfielder Sofia Rutnam says. “We just knew that couldn’t be our last game with the underclassmen.”

Klein’s goal, along with a dominant Quaker defense which did not allow a goal throughout the Section 1 playoffs, were enough to finally lift Greeley past the Tigers. Greeley won two more games to make it to the state championship. There, the season ended with a 2-1 loss to Maine-Endwell. “Most of the girls on our team who are juniors now were playing in that youth group with me,” says junior forward Lily Schoonmaker, who started playing the sport in fifth grade and has verbally committed to play for Colgate. “We’ve been going through the New Castle program through modified and now to varsity.”

Team Camaraderie & Coaches: Key Success Factors

Rutnam also pointed to the team chemistry as an important factor in their success. “I’ve been playing with these girls for six or seven years now, and it makes a huge difference just to know them and know their playing styles,” she explains. In the off field really well, and that translated to passing and connections on the field. It let us score a lot of goals.”

Schoonmaker, who led the team with 20 goals, and Rutman, who was named the Quakers’ MVP, both cited Sandhu and assistant coach Brittany Paulus as key to the team’s success. “If you have a foot in the wrong place as you’re approaching somebody with the ball, he knows exactly where you should be and how to fix it,” Rutman says of Sandhu. “He knows every aspect of the game.”

Following their 18-1-4 season, the Quakers will be favored to vie for the championship again next season. The team is graduating nine seniors, including Rutman, who was All State, All League midfielder Talia Belowich and forward Klein, and All League Honorable Mention forward Kristen Graham and midfielder Paige Dalynple. Defender Mia Warshaw, forwards Tess Fuqua and Sophie Dorst, and midfielder Mia Handler will also graduate.

But three All State players will be returning—Schoonmaker along with defender Caroline Flannery and midfielder Natalie Laskowski. All Section defender Stephanie Kasulka will be back, as will Emma Terjesen, Grace Arrese, Hannah Lane and goaltender Siena Jarrin, who were all named All League or All League Honorable Mention.

With a Section 1 title crossed off the checklist, the next goal is to win one more game and take home the state championship. “We are going to come back strong,” says Schoonmaker. “Now that we’ve been there, we have to do it.”

Andrew Vitelli is a Westchester native and former editor of Inside Armonk.
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Spotlight on Adina Olan-Ellick: Owner of Breathe, a Yoga and Pilates Studio in the Heart of Chappaqua

BY STACEY PFEFFER

It was a chance encounter on a cruise ship that ultimately steered Adina Olan-Ellick on a new career path. Adina, owner of the newly relocated Breathe, a yoga and Pilates studio in downtown Chappaqua, recounts, "The only thing left to sign up for was Pilates, so we did it every day." She then embarked on the ship all of the exercise classes were filled up. "The only thing left to sign up for was Pilates, so we did it every day," she recalls.

Adina, an almost 25-year resident of Chappaqua, had always been athletic and was more of a self-proclaimed cardio addict. "I ran, did cardio kickboxing, aerobics, you name it," she says during our interview on a chilly afternoon just steps away from her sunlight-filled studio in the heart of Chappaqua.

**A Passion for Pilates**

Something about Pilates and the mind/body connection coupled with the intentional movements resonated with her. Upon returning to Chappaqua she hired a private Pilates instructor to teach her at home before her three young children woke up and before her commute to her cardboard converting company in Long Island City. That private instructor, sensing Adina’s passion for the exercise encouraged her to pursue Pilates certification. She did taking weekend classes from beginner mat certification all the way through advanced system which took several years. She also trained with renowned physical therapist Dr. Abby Ellsworth in Scarsdale, author of seminal books on Pilates instruction, yoga and physical therapy. It wasn’t easy while maintaining a full-time job with young kids but Adina likes to “have a lot on her plate.”

Her job at the cardboard warehouse and in a male-dominated field entailed a lot of interaction with factory workers which was challenging. A hair-raising incident at work though convinced her that long-term her career there wasn’t sustainable and downright dangerous. “I was six months pregnant with my younger daughter and it was pay day and I had a lot of cash on me,” she recounts. Two men tried to steal her bag. Adina’s quick-thinking saved her as she hid under a truck until help arrived.

“They never got the cash,” she laughs later in the interview and I can’t help but wonder if her strength, flexibility and quick reaction time may be attributed to her Pilates practice.

**Changing Careers**

Flash forward a couple of years later and Adina was asked to participate in a Pilates DVD with Ellsworth. The filming took place over several days. “It was the first time that I was alone in a hotel room by myself and had time to really think.” She finally had her true a-ha moment and called her husband, an insurance and commercial lawyer and asked for his help in closing her business. She wanted to pursue Pilates instruction full-time and spend more time with her family.

She initially started teaching part-time in Scarsdale with Ellsworth but decided to ask for a job at the Pilates Center of Westchester, the former Breathe location. Adina asked the owner to give her a try. She was reluctant at first but she begged her for a Sunday morning class and then Adina ultimately asked her friends to participate.

After teaching there for many years, the former studio owner decided move to Arizona. Adina bought the studio a decade ago changing its name to Breathe, adding yoga classes following advice from her yoga-loving husband.

**On the Horizon**

And it’s that personalized attention that have earned the studio praise. “I’ve seen Chappaqua have its ups and downs,” she observes but with the new streetscape and additional retailers opening up recently, she hopes it is on an upswing. In addition to offering private yoga lessons, tower workshops and outdoor seating, Adina hopes to foster a sense of community at Breathe. Her studio also offers Pilates certification for students who want to teach there in the future. With a loyal fan base at Breathe, that future certainly looks bright.

Breathe is located at 14 South Greeley Avenue. For additional information, visit yoga-pilates-chappaqua.com.

**Knowledgeable Instructors: A Hallmark of Breathe**

Adina has always prided herself on hiring highly knowledgeable instructors who have a strong sense of anatomy. “I have clients that had very low flexibility when they came here and now they can function pain-free in their daily lives. This method works.”

Both Pilates and yoga are forms of exercise with no age limits. Breathe even has a 92-year-old client. “A lot of people come to the studio after an injury or in conjunction with physical therapy,” explains Adina. Her old studio was up a flight of stairs so when the now defunct Hall of Scoops spot became available, she leased it.

The new studio features almost 40 Pilates and yoga classes a week, fitness apparel, grab-and-go food items from Rye Ridge’s Organic Pharmer plus F-factor, a fiber-based diet program.

“Sometimes a client will say they tried Pilates at their gym and got hurt. I wonder how can an instructor watch your form with 50 students in a mat class?” asks Adina. That is why she limits Pilates tower classes to seven students.

**PHOTO BY RANDY MATUSOW**
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The days are growing longer, birds are chirping and buds are sprouting. This can only mean that the mass exodus known as “Spring Break” is upon us and parents 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 idyllic vacation. In stark contrast, families with older children on the precipice of adulthood are managing a different type of supervision to thwart an MTV-worthy experience. Though the arrangements vary, the common goal is to set the stage for a fun-filled, memorable vacation.

Let Me Entertain You

Oftentimes 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 vacation, 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 massage 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 carry-on bag that would impress Mary Poppins as she laughsingly 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. As Sorrell aptly states, “Ultimately, we always think about what’s appropriate and fun for our daughter, while ensuring that there are amenities that also keep us happy. Choose wisely and do your research.”

The major distinction in preparing for high school Spring Break is the preparation, which hinges on conversations rather than the “things” referenced by Sorrell. Chernoff offers candid advice, saying, “I highly recommend open conversations about the dangers of alcohol and alcohol poisoning. We had many honest discussions with our daughter leading up to the trip. She had a great time, but easily could’ve taken advantage of the situation. There is a lot of hard alcohol and the way kids are consuming it is very dangerous. Education, moderation and knowing your body’s limits are key.” Colombo agrees, saying, “We know what happens on Spring Break and since it’s legal to drink there, I wasn’t under any false pretenses, but we discussed moderation, hydration and eating well.”

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 couldn’t peak 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.” Having parents nearby was not a deterrent to the Spring Breakers as Colombo adds, “Most nights, the kids chose to take advantage of the amenities at our resort including the shops, casino (the legal gambling age for non-residents in Bahamas is 18) and a late-night grill. We spent time together, but it definitely turned out to be a vacation for me as well.”

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.” Similarly, Spring Break is also no longer a focal point for Chernoff. “This year, my daughter just wants to come home for Spring Break and catch up with friends,” she says. This, however, will follow a short, weekend trip to Mardi Gras. And, though Chernoff won’t be there, she will contact some friends in the area if her daughter needs a backup… just in case!

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.
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What Makes Your Neighborhood Special

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.

“There are lots of dogs. You can get together with neighbors for dog walks. I met some of my best friends in the neighborhood.”
- Mary Bueti

“I love that if I need help getting one of my kids off the bus there is always a willing neighbor. I love that we have neighborhood text chains. I love our neighborhood Facebook page where we can ask for opinions and advice.”
- Nikole Ostrov-Gilet

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.
Kisco Park: A Neighborhood Straddling Chappaqua and Mount Kisco

Kisco Park is a much sought-after neighborhood encompassing the best of Chappaqua and Mount Kisco. It is a quiet and friendly neighborhood that is close to town and shopping, yet is also quite bucolic and close to nature as well. Kisco Park lies within the Chappaqua school district with a Mount Kisco PO.

Kisco Park is also home to the Bueti family. The family consists of Mary O’Rourke Bueti, Key Account Manager at American Regent, Sam, Director of Sales at PepsiCo, Emma, age 18, college freshman, Lily, age 14 and Alex, age 12. The Bueti family has lived in Kisco Park since 2003. Sam grew up in the neighborhood and that was one of the reasons the family decided to move to the area. They enjoy being so close to family. Sam’s siblings also live in Kisco Park and the Bueti children can walk to visit their grandmother’s house.

The Bueti family really enjoy all the things their Kisco Park neighborhood has to offer. One special feature is that there are many dog owners in the area, which definitely helps with meeting new neighbors. As Mary says, “There are lots of dogs. You can get together with neighbors for dog walks. I met some of my best friends in the neighborhood.”

Kisco Park is also a hub of fun and festive community activities. They hold a wonderful Halloween parade each year that both kids and adults enjoy. There is also an annual picnic for families, held at Smith Park. A Town of New Castle park, Smith Park lies within Kisco Park and features a multi-purpose athletic field, playground and half-court basketball area.

Kisco Park has a lot of natural beauty to offer its residents including a brook that runs right behind the neighborhood. The brook separates Kisco Park from Riverwoods and Croton Avenue. As Mary says, “Many houses have a view and access to the brook.” It’s definitely a lovely, relaxing feature - one of many reasons to enjoy living in Kisco Park.

Hardscrabble Lake: A Dream Neighborhood for Families

The Gilet Family has called the Hardscrabble Lake neighborhood home for more than six years. Anthony Gilet, a radiologist, Nikole Ostrov-Gilet, a gynecologist and children Dylan, age 9 3/4 and Briella, age 6 1/2 enjoy everything Hardscrabble Lake has to offer.

Moving from Manhattan, the family was looking for a town that was convenient to both parents jobs, safe and family oriented, had great schools and was a close-knit community where they could find friends and neighbors for all to “grow up” with. Says Nikole, “When we were looking at houses all across Westchester, it wasn’t until later in our search that we discovered Chappaqua and the second we pulled onto Hardscrabble Lake Drive, I said to Anthony ‘this is my dream neighborhood’ and it hasn’t let us down.”

The kids are able to ride their bikes in the street of their cul de sac and are always able to find other kids playing whenever they venture outside. Everyone in Hardscrabble Lake is always willing to lend a hand. “I love that if I need help getting one of my kids off the bus there is always a willing neighbor. I love that we have neighborhood text chains. I love our neighborhood Facebook page where we can ask for opinions and advice. I love that we have the greatest sledding hill in our front yard and other kids come over to enjoy it too,” says Nikole.

Living in Hardscrabble Lake gives the Gilets a real sense of community. Says Nikole, “This is a neighborhood where kids can just be kids and adults can rely on each other for advice, some eggs in a pinch, child care help, a friend to take a walk with and lifelong bonds. I still to this day get the feeling that I had when I drove in that very first time during our house search, that Hardscrabble Lake is my dream neighborhood.”
Eli 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.”
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. “Do not be indifferent when you hear lies, historical lies. Do not be indifferent when you see the past is stretched to fit the current political needs. Do not be indifferent when any minority is discriminated against.”

He explained that the 11th commandment should be “Thou shall not be indifferent.” He warned that if you “don’t heed the 11th commandment you cannot be surprised when you see (another) Auschwitz fall from the sky.” He explained that if people are indifferent when incremental steps of discrimination are implemented, then another Holocaust could happen. Turksi 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 11th Commandment

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.

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 Saiontz’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.
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Joan Lunden, journalist, best-selling author, former host of Good Morning America and senior living advocate.
People like to live in places that have walkable downtowns. But the reality is that online shopping has impacted many local merchants significantly, and if the hamlet of Chappaqua is going to thrive, town planning must ensure the area is kept vibrant as it faces modern pressures.

The Town of New Castle has had a new comprehensive plan since 2017, and many of the action items provided for in the plan are now underway. One of these is the adoption of a new type of zoning code, which may happen this fall. The code, Sabrina D. Charney Hull, director of planning for the Town of New Castle, said, aims to provide a framework for making many positive changes to the hamlet of Chappaqua that residents have requested.

“I’ve been working for the town for seven years and part of my job is to update the town’s comprehensive plan,” Charney Hull said. The last comprehensive plan New Castle had was completed in 1989 but was never formally adopted. It’s a tremendous undertaking, and the time had come to move forward with creating a new one.”

“My responsibility was to update the Comprehensive Plan in an efficient and timely manner,” Charney Hull said. In 2014, New Castle contracted with the Pace Land Use Law Center to canvass the community with a survey, to find out what residents wanted for their town. There were also public meetings and other means of outreach. “You name it, we did it,” Charney Hull said.
Diverse Housing Stock Needed

Overall the feedback indicated, besides other things, that New Castle residents wanted a revitalization of the town’s hamlets, including a walkable, livable, eco-sustainable downtown Chappaqua. Residents indicated that while they highly valued open spaces and their single-family neighborhoods, they also wanted a greater diversity of housing stock to provide more options for residents to downsize once they had raised their families, and to enable more young people to live in Chappaqua. This is particularly important for town services dependent on volunteers, like the fire department and ambulance corps. “There’s a record low in volunteering because there’s no population to volunteer,” Charney Hull explained.

These responses and more were incorporated into the town’s 2017 comprehensive plan, which aims to recognize and respond to the many changes that have taken place that impact the town since the last plan. Among these are the internet, which has changed shopping habits drastically. Merchants need more foot traffic to overcome online competition.

Additionally, “as millenials” (the younger generation’s) economic self-sufficiency increased and the baby boomers (older generation’s) age, these populations are becoming more interested in amenities, housing, services and entertainment options that are accessible without a personal vehicle or through public transit. Also, there is a trend to introduce “healthy living” and “active lifestyles” into everyday actions (plannewcastle.us/abouttheplan). New Castle residents want to create a “diversity of housing,” Charney Hull said.

The plan also recognizes modern post-9/11 security and disaster/emergency preparedness concerns, as well as modern concerns for environmental stewardship. When the town board adopted the comprehensive plan, the town hall held a full house of supportive residents, Charney Hull said.

Foot Traffic Needed Downtown

When looking to create opportunities for more diverse housing stock, it made sense to look at downtown Chappaqua–it has a train station, it’s connected to town sewer and water. The infrastructure is there, and that’s where merchants need foot traffic. In neighboring Mount Kisco, efforts are also underway to revitalize the downtown, but there, the village has decided to work with a master developer, while Chappaqua has decided to approach change by considering moving to form-based zoning.

One of “active actions” provided for in the plan is a revision of the zoning code. “Right now we have zoning that’s called Euclidean zoning,” Charney Hull explained. “You zone by use–houses in one area, businesses in another, industrial uses in another area.” That’s how it has been since the 1920s, when that type of zoning was needed for health and safety reasons. However, the kind of zoning now proposed is called form-based zoning.

“We know the existing zoning isn’t conducive to today’s commercial market and we also know we don’t have enough feet on the street,” Charney Hull said. “When creating a walkable, livable environment, the first step is to look at your zoning.”

Defining a Form-Based Code

A form-based code is “a land-development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code,” according to the Form-Based Codes Institute. That means that residential and commercial uses may coexist in the same area, while attention is paid to the architectural harmony of the buildings, and how they relate to public spaces such as sidewalks, no matter what they contain. (Of course, Charney Hull pointed out that in downtown Chappaqua, there will be allowable uses–not all uses will be allowed.) Charney Hull said that anyone developing a property in the Chappaqua downtown area will have seven or eight architectural templates they can draw from, which will describe how the detailing on windows, trim boards and so on, should be.

Charney Hull said response from business and property owners in the hamlet has been “very positive.” That’s because “right now it’s not economically viable to re-develop,” Charney Hull explained. “Our existing code at 2-3 stories is not developable.” An expert hired by the town determined that the numbers don’t work–developers won’t be motivated under the existing code. If the proposed new zoning code is adopted in the fall, buildings on Greeley Avenue and lower King Street can be built to four stories.

Merchants Weigh In

Of course, one major part of this plan of action is that there be no net loss of existing parking. “It would be good for the businesses,” Angelo Tradito, owner of the Old Stone Trattoria on King Street, said of the proposed zoning code. “I think it’s better for the town to have more mixed-use... it’ll bring new people to Chappaqua.” While Tradito’s business is on the west side of King Street, farther from the train station and Greeley Avenue, he said he does get some foot traffic currently.

“Not a lot, but some,” Tradito said. There are apartments behind the building housing his restaurant, and a new building going up across the street that Tradito said may bring more pedestrians to his place in the future. However, currently most of his patrons come by car.

Trish Kallman, owner of hip-kid in the heart of downtown Chappaqua notes that she is in favor of changing the zoning. “I’m for it as long as it’s respectful of the look and feel of the town. I get that people want the beautiful bucolic downtown feel. But it’s not very vibrant right now.”

Kallman said that a change in zoning would benefit people who live in Chappaqua as well as the merchants. “As long as certain things are protected,” she said. “You don’t want it to look like a city.” Patrons of hip-kid generally come by car at this point, although Kallman said it would be nice if new zoning resulted in more downtown residents who could shop there.

Christine Meyer, owner of Wags & Whiskers, is less optimistic about potential future foot traffic if the zoning changes. Meyer’s business is located on the west end of King St, across from Walgreens. Most of her customers come by car. But Meyer did say more foot traffic would “absolutely” be a good thing for the hamlet.

“It’s up to the individual property owners,” Charney Hull said, to determine when existing properties are re-developed under a new code, should it be adopted. It will likely be up for a vote by the town board as soon as the fall. “The community is spearheading this,” Charney Hull pointed out. “It’s what they have asked for, and the town board has been supportive of this process throughout.”

Amy Kelley is a frequent contributor to Inside Press publications.
When Dr. Maria Briones started working with orthopedic patients at Burke Rehabilitation Center in 1999, she noticed that many of her patients’ problems, from arthritis of the knees and hips to broken bones, resulted from carrying extra weight. Much of the natural wear and tear on people’s joints and the need for joint replacement surgery was, according to Briones, exacerbated by excessive weight.

“Losing all the weight can be a lifesaver for these patients with knee and hip problems who use canes to walk,” says Briones, who opened her Medical Weight Loss Center, a Mt. Kisco-based medical weight loss facility in 2007. Briones partners with her patients, motivating them, and investing in their weight loss success.

**Individualized Plan for Patients**

Briones focuses on whole body health. She works with her patients to set up goals and plans. She identifies any medical causes of weight gain and designs a manageable weight loss reduction program for her patients. She creates individualized nutrition plans, vitamin and supplement regimens, and professionally designed, customized exercise plans. If necessary, she provides FDA-approved appetite suppressants and hormone replacement therapy.

Most importantly, Briones helps her patients develop a long-term wellness plan, teaching her patients how to maintain their weight loss and offering ongoing support whenever they need it. Her plans are adaptable to the changing needs of her patients. “My patients feel like I am a friend,” says Briones, who credits her warm relationships with her patients for much of her success.

Former Pound Ridge resident Nancy Farkas, who spent three years as Dr. Farkas’s patient, whole-heartedly agrees that Briones’s close relationships with her patients is key to their success. “She’s wonderful to speak with, she’s inspirational. We had a wonderful relationship.” Farkas, who saw Briones approximately once a week, was impressed with the detailed yet flexible program that Briones built for her. “I followed her specific schedule and her careful instructions, and that was a huge thing for me.”

Briones has lived in Westchester for over 25 years, spending the past 15 years in Chappaqua. “This is a great place to raise a family.” She started her career as an internist. Born in Spain and raised in Nicaragua, Briones attended medical school in Costa Rica before coming to the United States.

**Long-Term Relationships with Patients**

“People tend to stay with me,” says Briones, who has significant client retention and a high percentage of success. She believes that feeling good about yourself is key to staying healthy. That is why Briones encourages her patients to take steps to ensure that they do not look older than they feel.

In addition to weight loss therapy, Briones offers non-surgical weight loss solutions, including cellulite treatments, Cool Sculpting, and Lipo Light Therapy. She started adding cosmetic procedures, like Botox and Ultherapy as well as other anti-aging, skin tightening, and skin rejuvenation therapies. These cosmetic procedures are designed to help patients maintain their youthful radiance.

Briones works with two certified medical assistants, both of whom help with everything from interacting with patients to taking vital signs. “Her staff is so helpful,” says Farkas, who believes that everyone at the Medical Weight Loss Center goes out of their way to “act in your best interest and to motivate you to stick with the program.” Briones encourages everyone to try to be their best self. “Don’t be afraid to make a change in your life. It’s always better to try. Anything is possible.”

Deborah Raider-Notis is a co-owner of gamechangerow.com and a frequent contributor to The Inside Press. You can also view her writing on thepurgechick.wordpress.com.
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 a cappella 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非常多 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 handgun, 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
a tax credit to incentivize voting and other methods to support fair and active voter participation.

Schleifer also has a personal connection and many views regarding the United States relationship with Israel, as the grandson of Holocaust survivors and the son of a woman who has devoted a large part of her life to supporting that relationship (Schleifer’s mother Harriett is President of American Jewish Committee). He recognizes the unfortunate politicization of the issue over the past four years, laying blame at both the feet of Congressional Republicans and the Israeli government.

“I think that we need to get back to the fundamental strategic reality, which is that the United States and Israel are close and mutually beneficial allies and that is not a question of partisanship, but a question of mutual interest. We should be mindful of the fact that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, which is a pretty rough neighborhood. They have been so for a long time in an area that is, to borrow from Martin Luther King, ‘suffers from the sweltering heat of injustice and oppression.’ Israel is in many ways the shining light of the region, and it is unfortunate that it has become popular to both hate Jews to hate Israel in some very ignorant and uninformed ways throughout the world and throughout all parts of the political spectrum.”

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 outdo 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 last the 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.**
BY ELIZABETH ELLICK

If you are a college or high school student drinking and partying on the beach for a week in Mexico with hundreds of kids your age sounds like a dream, right? I thought so too, but there is a lot of social pressure that comes with a high school or college spring break trip. I went to the Bahamas, with my best friends since kindergarten, in my senior year at Greeley. I definitely had fun; I mean come on it’s still a trip to the beach. I woke up next to my best friends, put on a bathing suit, and then the partying officially began.

With no parental supervision, it was certainly a good time. My parents never set limits on my social life because we have a communicative relationship that makes them trust me. For a lot of kids, though, this is not the case, and that fact makes spring break trips such as these more appealing. It also influences these teenagers to party harder, with less care, as they take advantage of time away from their parents. Endless margaritas, dancing, jet skiing, and more fill the days while gross food and questionable living quarters simply add to the supposedly once in a lifetime experience. I’m serious though about the conditions of the rooms—I wish I was kidding when I say that we brought our own sheets and snacks. We believed we were prepping for the apocalyptic. While many consider spring break to be a once in a lifetime experience, it is not one I ever want to do again.

These trips put a lot of pressure on teenage girls and boys to look a certain way which can lead to unhealthy habits. In the week leading up to the Bahamas, I was so anxious and hungry that I wound up being rude to my mother. The poor woman endured sass and stubborn behavior for days due to my need to look skinny for a weeklong trip, where people would be too drunk to notice what I look like anyway. Girls want to look thin and boys want to be lean and muscular adhering to the pressures broadcast on social media. The combination of anxiety and unhealthy eating habits takes a toll on these kids’ mental health. Trust me, I have been one of them.

When presented with the opportunity to go on a spring break trip this year to Cabo as a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I originally signed up because I thought it was I what I was “supposed to do,” knowing full well that I most certainly did not want to go. I was immediately anxious about the trip, just as I had been before going to the Bahamas. That was my first red flag. The next flag waved every time someone said how excited they were for the trip and I simply could not relate. The third and final flag arose whenever someone would say “my Cabo diet is starting tomorrow” or “oh my god how cute is this bathing suit for Cabo.”

It was when these statements started consuming my life that I knew I couldn’t put myself through this again, so I decided to back out, despite the fines and my fear of missing out. I never thought I was the type of person to miss out on a trip like this because I have always been too scared to be left out or miss a fun time with my friends.

As I now continue to hear my friends talk about their exciting trip to Cabo, I no longer have any fear of missing out. I feel confident about my decision to take a step back and decide what is best for my mental health and wellbeing, and that trip was certainly not it. So, if you are someone like me who doesn’t necessarily want to endure a week of such partying at the expense of your mental and physical health, take a page from my book and trust your gut instinct—you won’t regret it. While I know there are people out there like me, there are also those who consider this a trip of a lifetime, and so I salute you and wish you a bon voyage.

Just remember though that there are those that choose to spend their breaks differently and that’s ok too. I will be one of them as I spend the week in Aspen with one of my best friends from growing up, and I could not be more ecstatic. I will go home the weekend before Aspen, and return home the weekend after before heading back to school, providing me just enough time with my family before the honeymoon period ends. I couldn’t imagine a better spring break, with one of my closest friends instead of a lot of alcohol-fueled acquaintances plus some quality time with my family. No matter how you choose to spend the week, wishing everyone a great spring break!

Elizabeth Ellick is a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Madison studying Political Science and a Horace Greeley High School graduate class of 2018.
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