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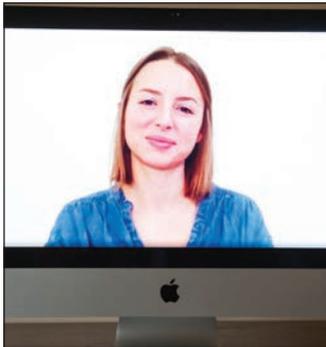
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TIM LAMORTE/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

Mayor Vincent Rossillo cuts the ribbon on Dec. 18.

Community center awaits end of pandemic

By Kris DiLorenzo

DOBBS FERRY — Dobbs Ferry's renovated Embassy Community Center, at 60 Palisade Street, had a "soft," symbolic opening on Friday, Dec. 18, when Mayor Vincent Rossillo cut a ribbon stretched across the building's front path.

A coterie of masked village officials gathered outside, as Covid-19 guidelines preclude gatherings inside the building.

Before Rossillo wielded the outsize scissors, he introduced the village board and representatives of the recreation, public works, and building departments who played key roles in pulling together the remodeling of the 60-year-old facility, which had been closed since June 13, 2016.

Rossillo assured those present and viewers watching the ceremony on the

Village's YouTube channel that there will be "a bigger, splashier event" when conditions allow. The board decided to hold the ceremony in the meantime. "It's important to show the residents of Dobbs Ferry that this project has been completed," Rossillo stated.

"The first step is always the hardest step," he said, and acknowledged former Mayor Hartley Connett "for having the vision to start this project, with Deputy Mayor Vic Golio," and for beginning the process of applying for grants. Rossillo also noted the efforts of former Mayor Bob McLoughlin and former Village Administrator Charlene Indelicato.

Such an undertaking requires "a lot of money," Rossillo stated. "Our special thanks go to Assemblyman Tom Abinanti, who was happy to throw his support

behind this project." Abinanti helped the Village obtain a \$150,000 grant from the New York State Dormitory Authority.

Rossillo told the attendees that additional funding came from the Environmental Protection Fund, administered by the state's Department of Environmental Conservation through its Climate Smart Program; and from a NYSERDA (NYS Energy Research and Development Authority) Clean Energy Communities grant.

The project's cost was originally estimated at \$3.2 million. The final cost will be determined after all invoices and bills have been received.

"These critical funds made it into a high-efficiency heating and cooling cen-

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Volunteers help refugees adjust to the U.S.

By Jackie Lupo

REGION — When Afghan refugee Sameem and his wife arrived at JFK last March, he scanned the crowd of unfamiliar faces until he saw a man and woman standing together, the woman holding up a sign. They were Irvington residents Steve Grieder and Kay O'Keefe, president and co-founder of Rivertowns for Refugees, who would help guide them through their first months in America.

"From the first day when I came here, they were with us," Sameem told the Enterprise on Dec. 11. "I really appreciate them. They were always there for us if

we needed anything."

Sameem didn't reveal his wife's name, or their last name, for this interview. They made their way to New York on Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), a type of refugee status awarded to individuals from Iraq and Afghanistan who rendered special service to the U.S. government or military. They are no longer safe in their home country, and could be targeted here if their identities were publicized.

"I think there are about 60 to 70 million refugees who are in danger for their lives and aren't able to continue to live in their home countries," Grieder said in an interview on Dec. 10. "Only a small percentage are admitted to the U.S., and

they get vetted by the United Nations, the State Department, the military and intelligence agencies. There's a lot of hurdles you have to jump to be admitted as refugees to the United States."

Grieder explained that SIVs go through the same vetting process, but because of their service to the U.S., the process is expedited.

Rivertowns for Refugees was founded five years ago and is made up of volunteers from Yonkers to Tarrytown. "We basically got together and said, 'We want to help people who have been cleared for admission to the U.S. to resettle as

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