



## Family Fun Day

The Scarsdale Business Alliance in partnership with Scarsdale Moms will host Family Fun Day, Townsgiving, today, Friday, Nov. 25 from 2 to 5 p.m. in the Dine the 'Dale tent area, featuring a DJ, kids' crafts and activity stations, food, beer and cocktails.

While this is a free community event, wristbands are required for the kids' crafts and activities (\$45); a portion of the proceeds will go to GrassRoots Grocery, and a community action project is planned to create holiday food boxes for children in need.

Free parking will be available in the lower two levels of Christie Place Garage (64 East Parkway), in Freightway Garage and the adjacent outdoor parking lot (72 Freightway).

## Light the 'Dale road closures

In preparation for the Light the 'Dale event Friday, Dec. 2, Boniface Circle will be closed starting at 7 a.m.; Chase Road, from Christie Place to Popham Road, will be closed starting at 3 p.m.

Once an area is closed, there will be no entry or exit of cars permitted; cars must be moved prior to those times. Individuals will still be able to access stores along the roads, but no parking will be allowed.

## CNC open meeting

Scarsdale Citizens Nominating Committee welcomes 12 newly elected members and invites the public to observe its first meeting Monday, Nov. 28, at 8 p.m. at Scarsdale Public Library. The meeting is an opportunity to learn more about Scarsdale's nonpartisan system for selecting candidates to run for village office on the Scarsdale Citizens' Non-Partisan Party slate. The meeting will be recorded to air on Scarsdale Public Television.

If interested in running for mayor or trustee, or to suggest someone who might serve the village of Scarsdale well, contact CNC chair Omer Wiczak at 516-642-7795, omer@wiczak.com; or vice chair Janet Han at 310-909-3760, hanjanet@yahoo.com.

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# Village mulls potential tax exemption changes

By TODD SLISS

SCARSDALE VILLAGE — For the first time since 2007, New York State increased the income levels in the Real Property Tax Law for Low-Income Senior and Disabled Persons' Exemptions for county, village and school taxes, in addition to subtracting unreimbursed medical expenses from annual income to get potentially eligible taxpayers closer to qualifying. On Oct. 6, Westchester County approved the raise from \$29,000 gross annual income to \$50,000 to get a 50% tax reduction and include unre-

imbursed medical expenses.

The village of Scarsdale, town of Greenburgh, as well as the Scarsdale and Edgemont school districts must also decide what to do by May 1, 2023.

The village's board of trustees began its discussion at a work session Tuesday, Nov. 22, and set Jan. 10 as a public hearing date, with a vote expected on Jan. 24 in order to alert residents about the potential changes in time for them to apply well in advance of the deadline.

Village assessor Victoria Sirota explained that the amount of the exemp-

tion is based on annual gross income, not the figure the IRS uses for tax purposes, and takes several factors into consideration. She called it a "very comprehensive definition of income."

"The issue with this exemption is it is meant for a very narrow audience, for the very low income seniors and individuals with disabilities," Sirota said. "The definition of income as described by the Real Property Tax Law is one of gross income, and not taxable income, so there are probably going to be inherent differences between the definition set forth in the IRS guidelines for unreimbursed medical

expenses and unreimbursed medical expenses as it relates to the gross income definition for this exemption. We just don't know."

While the highest gross annual income to get the maximum 50% savings can now be set at \$50,000, there is a sliding scale and residents who earn up to \$58,400 would still get a 5% reduction.

If any changes are made, those would be for the 2023 assessment year for the 2024 tax year. Sirota did a "very rough estimated impact" despite "lots of gaps in info" and said if the village adopted the \$50,000

amount it would impact each household in the village by adding \$25.

Sirota said that with a "quick and dirty calculation" there would be a loss of \$139,000 to the village, about \$500,000 to the school district if the maximum \$50,000 figure were used as the number of households receiving the exemption would jump from 21 to 78, and that's not accounting for the unreimbursed medical expenses.

"This is a big deal," Sirota said. "It's not an insignificant number. I think the total county, village and school [reductions] could be over \$100 per

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Learning the art of calligraphy takes time and patience, but yields stunning results.

TODD SLISS PHOTO

# Local Chinese school brings community together

By TODD SLISS

You wouldn't know it if you showed up for school on Monday mornings, but Sundays during the school year are an extremely busy day at Edgemont Junior/Senior High School. In addition to the fields being used by youth sports teams in the fall and spring, most of the buildings throughout campus are occupied for about four hours by the Huaxia Chinese School of Greater New York.

"When we leave each day it looks just like it did before we came here," principal Xiaochuan "Paul" Yuan said. "That's very important. We want to make this a good relationship with the school. Last year we came here and had no issues. The volunteers check every classroom, take pictures and make sure everything is in the original position. That's important."

The three-hour preschool to grade nine program that runs from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. has great appeal to the local Chinese community, mostly from Scarsdale and Edgemont, offering not only classes in Chinese for the students who are mostly born and raised speaking English in the United States, but with other cultural and community-building elements that draws hundreds of families to enroll around 500 students each year.

"This is really the heritage of our Chinese culture and Chinese language," said vice principal Vivian Lin, who has two middle schoolers enrolled. "Most of our kids are born here and raised in a similar way to American families here. But we are Chinese and we have our own culture and language, so we would like our kids to learn that. It's part of their identity."

According to the school's website, the goal is for students to become "competent in listening, speaking, reading and writing in Chinese, as well as being appreciative of Chinese heritage." In 2014, the school was certified by Chinese Language and Culture Education Foundation of China as its first collaborating school on the East Coast.

Families are eager to enroll their children as young as possible.

"When teaching language you don't want to wait," Yuan said. "Young kids, they are geniuses with languages. Whatever you teach them they will remember."

Added Lin, "[For] ages 3 to 5 it's more like a nursery school program. We do standard Chinese education from K to ninth grade and after that we also offer an AP class in Chinese language to prepare for the test."

As the kids get older it can be harder to keep

their interest, but the school prides itself on its student retention.

"Chinese study is not easy," Yuan said. "Chinese is a hard language to learn, so once they get to the middle school and high school they are a lot busier and it's harder for them to maintain this. Some of them have conflicts and we understand that." In many schools, there are a lot of younger students, "but as they get older it's like a pyramid," Yuan said, adding, "[at] our school we try to have a good bond with all the students and once they have a good foundation they tend to stay with us. Our school has all the other activities and the teachers and parents work together to build this good environment and they want their kids to finish the whole study." He said last year the ninth grade had 27 students. "We still keep a good percentage."

There are three class periods per day, each 50 minutes long. There are two periods of language and a period for other cultural activities like martial arts, crafts and calligraphy. The gym space is used for badminton, basketball and martial arts. Each class has 15 or fewer students with a teacher and an assistant.

"We try to provide as much as possible and we have three systems for Chinese language itself," *Continued on page 3*

# County proposes 4th straight property tax reduction

By JEFF MORRIS

COUNTY — Westchester County Executive George Latimer presented his proposed 2023 operating budget on Nov. 10. The budget, which totals over \$2.3 billion, includes a county property tax cut for the fourth year in a row.

The budget is now subject to review by the County Board of Legislators, which began a series of committee meetings Monday, Nov. 14. Representatives of all county departments and offices will make presentations to and take questions from the Budget & Appropriations Committee. The Board of Legislators is also hosting three public hearings on the budget.

Proposed budget expenditures total \$2,367,724,638, with revenues equaling that amount. The county property tax levy would decrease by \$6 million, and its share of the revenue total would be reduced from 24.7% to 22.9%. In 2021, property taxes were 27.19% of revenue.

The property tax reduction is offset by an anticipated increase in sales tax revenue of nearly \$77 million, from \$832,964,000 to \$909,850,000, and by a \$54 million increase in federal and state aid, nearly \$8 million in additional departmental income, and some \$15 million in other revenues.

In announcing the proposed budget, Latimer said he had been all around the county and heard from families feeling the strain of inflation. "This budget is for them," he said. "We have once again cut taxes, and expanded the programs that the people of this county need."

Latimer said the county was closing 2022 with a projected \$65.9 million operating surplus, and the new budget would include no borrowing for tax certioraris or pensions, and no use of the fund balance. It would increase the reserve fund to about 19% of county operating expenditures, which he said would help stabilize the county's bond ratings, currently AA+, AA+ and Aa1 ratings by Standard and Poor's, Fitch and Moody's, respectively, "among the highest ratings awarded by these three major agencies."

The 2023 budget, said Latimer, reflects a continuation *Continued on page 11*

# Reproductive rights attorney offers hope in post-Roe world

By DIANE E. BAYLOR

Rabia Muqaddam, a senior staff attorney for the Center for Reproductive Rights, was the featured speaker at the Scarsdale League of Women Voters' annual fall "Food for Thought" event Wednesday, Nov. 16. Though the format changed this year to a morning coffee instead of a luncheon, the promise of a meal proved to be an unnecessary incentive to draw a crowd for the post mortem of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization.

Even without the pre-publication leak of the draft, the actual opinion issued in June did not come as a surprise to those attuned to the ideologies of the current justices. However, last week's election confirmed that the decision remained unpopular with Democrats and Republicans alike and that the voting population is poised to resist legislative efforts at the state level to restrict what had



Rabia Muqaddam, speaking to the League of Women Voters in Scarsdale Nov. 16.

DIANE BAYLOR PHOTO

been considered a fundamental federal right for decades.

Muqaddam, who litigates legal chal-

lenges to abortion in Oklahoma, provided a compelling assessment of the flaws in the Supreme Court's reasoning

in Dobbs, a decision she characterized as "egregiously wrong," using Justice Alito's language to attack the integrity of his opinion. However, even as she described the situation on the ground as dire, she was generally optimistic that the pendulum will swing back and that the substantive rights to access reproductive health care, a broader category than the right to choose to have an abortion, will ultimately become the law of the land. In her words, "the arc of justice does bend, and it will, in our direction."

She explained that the dangers of Alito's originalist judicial philosophy as evident in Dobbs extend to matters beyond abortion. From Alito's perspective, the 14th Amendment protects only those personal liberties that were deeply rooted in the nation's history and tradition in the late 1800s when the 14th Amendment was ratified. Notwithstanding Alito's footnote to the contrary, Dobbs sets forth a clear path to eliminate other liberties that had previously

been considered fundamental substantive federal rights. In overturning both Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey, Dobbs now puts at risk liberties such as access to contraception, same sex marriage, procreation and interracial marriage.

But aside from the legal implications, the practical ramifications of Dobbs in predominantly red states have been, in Muqaddam's view, catastrophic. As she explained, 75% of people who seek to have an abortion are those who live 200% below the poverty line. States that are now banning or restricting abortion in-state and passing travel bans and gag laws to deter access to safe methods of abortion out-of-state are compounding the already dire circumstances these women confront. New anti-abortion laws are disproportionately affecting those who already lack access to pre- and post-natal care and suffer the *Continued on page 11*