

Three years later . . . NEW S L E T T E R **COMPASS**

performance...respect...commitment...



Naturally Essential

Picture: Alfred B. DelBello Muscote Farm in Somers

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PARKS
Congratulations

Woman in Business Award

Her work in the recreation field spans over four decades, beginning in the Village of Scarsdale's Parks and Recreation department. When she came to Westchester County Parks in 1980... **More Inside...**

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Website: parks.westchestergov.com

Greetings from the Commish

Greetings, PRC Family.

We have not published our popular COMPASS for the past three years due to the pandemic and the changing world around us. This is the first of many new issues as we plan to keep you informed as we meet any challenges together!

We have chosen a profession that under normal circumstances demands a tremendous amount of time and energy. Our emphasis on "Performance, Respect and Commitment" defines the passionate people who make up our PRC family. For the past 36 months you have managed to keep our patrons safe and our facilities clean, while embracing change that has helped our department grow and evolve.

Together, we worked with federal, state and local officials to transform the Westchester County Center into a hospital ready to receive patients and ultimately utilized as a medical operation that administered nearly 400,000 vaccines while Glen Island parking lot was converted into the first drive-thru COVID-19 testing site in New York available to thousands of our residents and neighbors. Simultaneously, we began to address Westchester community's need to mourn by dedicating a memorial to the victims of the pandemic, "Ribbons of Remembrance," built by parks employees and located at Lenoir Preserve.

Throughout the pandemic, the need for outdoor recreational outlets became increasingly vital for the mental and physical wellbeing of our residents. PRC worked hard to keep the initial summer months as normal as possible by opening the pools and beaches and children's summer camps safely. Golf, conservation, parks and recreation extended programs to accommodate public demand and revamped programs to adhere to the ever-changing protocols. You kept a positive attitude and embraced the challenges laid before us.

The silver lining to come out of this unfortunate time is that the public rediscovered how "Naturally Essential" Westchester County Parks are. Each one of our facilities experienced record attendance from nature centers, special facilities and regional parks to pools and beaches, our six county golf courses, and Playland when it reopened in the second year of the pandemic. Not only were Westchester residents enjoying our facilities, but nonresidents were driving long distances and discovering our Nationally Accredited Parks for the first time.

I wear my Parks jacket with great pride knowing that each of you has played an important role during this unprecedented time. It has opened the door to many conversations with the public thanking me for the terrific job you do. Our award-winning parks offer everyone the opportunity to get out and "recreate" while connecting with nature. Parks are imperative to every category of our health. Please make sure you take the time to relax, enjoy the great outdoors and reap the benefits that you have worked so hard to maintain.

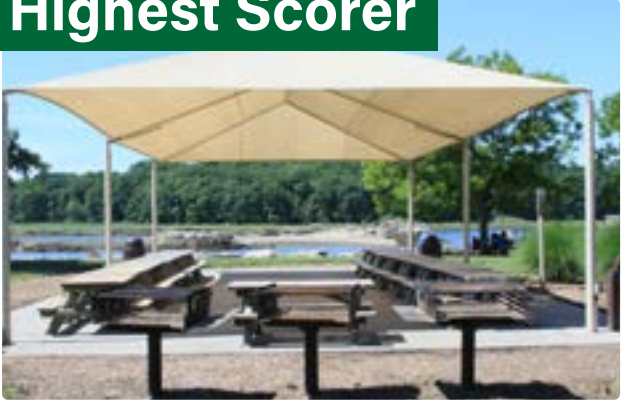
I want to congratulate you for a job well done and thank you for all that you do.

Kathy

Kathleen O'Connor, Commissioner
Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation

Pride in Parks

Highest Scorer



Glen Island Park ▪ New Rochelle

Second Place



Saxon Woods Park ▪ White Plains



P.I.P. Spotlight

PRC PIP Scores

Month	Facility	Score
Jan.	Ward Pound Ridge Reservation	89.90
March	Cranberry Lake Preserve	89.93
April	Blue Mountain Park and Sportsman Center, Georges Island Park	89.51
June	Sprain Lake Golf Course	90.61
Aug.	Glen Island Park / Nature Study Woods	91.84
Aug.	Saxon Woods Pool / Saxon Woods Parks and Trails	91.53
Sept.	Sprain Ridge Park / VE Macy Park / Ridge Road Park	90.91
Oct.	Ward Pound Ridge Reservation / Trailside Nature Museum	90
Nov.	Croton Point Park / Croton Gorge Park	90.50
Dec.	Alfred B. DelBello Muscoot Farm	91.29

The process by which all parks facilities and divisions are reviewed and scored according to set standards.

PRC Re-Accreditation Update

We think our parks system is one of the best in the country, and so does the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). Our first accreditation award was received in October, 2003. Hopefully we will celebrate 20 years of National Accreditation this coming October!

The process of re-accreditation began the day after receiving our 4th award. Currently, William Bland, Assistant Director of Division - PRC, and Gigi Carnes, Curator are in the process of putting the finishing touches on our 5th PRC application for re-accreditation. The Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) will review this application and determine if we meet their rigorous standards. CAPRA provides quality assurance and quality improvement of accredited park and recreation agencies throughout the United States. CAPRA is the only national accreditation of park and recreation agencies and is a valuable measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management, and service to the community. Accreditation is a distinguishing mark of excellence that affords external recognition of an organization's commitment to quality and improvement.

Will the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation prove to be deserving of this prestigious award and remain the only Nationally Accredited Park System in New York State...and only one of three in the tristate? Stay tuned...only time will tell.

Westchester County Center is Back!

We were thrilled to officially reopen the Westchester County Center after its closing in 2020 and being transformed into a medical facility in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a full circle moment for the Center as the iconic Section One Basketball tournament, the last event held there in 2020, returned Monday, Feb. 27, through Sunday, March 5, 2023.

Converting the County Center into a medical resource was no easy feat. The building's infrastructure, which includes the basketball court, was completely rearranged as hospital rooms, and offices were built to accommodate the public.

Restoring the County Center to its previous incarnation was no small task either. Countless people worked long and hard to replace the main wood floor, the carpets in meeting rooms A through D and the Atrium flooring. Many other areas in the building as well as its parking lots also underwent extensive reconstruction.

County Executive George Latimer and Commissioner Kathy O'Connor hosted a press conference on February 24 to officially reopen the landmark site, which is affectionately called "the Mecca of High School Basketball," and welcome back Section One Basketball.

All of us at PRC are proud of our much-loved County Center's rapid and expert rebirth. We're excited that it's "back in action" and look forward to seeing the lineup of shows that await.



TopRight: Westchester County Center transformation. Wooden floor removed, treatment rooms and offices constructed as a COVID medical facility. CenterBottom: Westchester County Center final conversion back into all its glory as an entertainment arena.

Employees in the News

(2020) Welcome to ... (includes transfers in)

Louis Antonelli, Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), Lasdon Park
Samuel Carvalho, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Carpenter), General Maintenance
Anthony Fasce, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Mechanical), North County Trail
Jonathan Jorge, Senior Maintenance Mechanic II (Electrician), General Maintenance
Carlos Lazaro, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), Maple Moor Golf Course
Dominic Marchese, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Carpenter), General Maintenance
Ramon Vargas Marmolejos, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Maple Moor Golf Course
Crehus Parker, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Sprain Lake Golf Course
Philip Pinto, Maintenance Mechanic I (Utility), General Maintenance
Martin Santangelo, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Saxon Woods Park
Jessica Schuler, Program Coordinator (Natural Resource Management), Lasdon Park
Timothy Wilson, Park Operations Manager, Administration

(2021) Welcome to ...

Juan Berisso, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (PRC-Mech), Hudson Hills Golf Course
Sam Costa, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), General Maintenance
Nicholas Debraz, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (PRC-Mech), Sprain Lake Golf Course
Gabrielle Dwyer, Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), Muscoot Farm
John P. Enriquez, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (PRC-Mech), Saxon Woods Golf Course
John Hunter, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Willson's Woods Park
Kenneth Mathews, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Croton Point Park
Buster Mathies, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Ridge Road Park
Mark Orlando, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Mech), County Center
Christian Reis, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Plumber), General Maintenance
James Rogers, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Kensico Dam Plaza
Darrell Strickland, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Saxon Woods Park
Andriy Syneokyy, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), General Maintenance
Ricardo Taveira, Senior Maintenance Mechanic II (Electrician), General Maintenance
Xavier Warren, Park Foreman, General Maintenance
Robert Whittle, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Glen Island Park
Darryl Williams, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Tibbetts Brook Park

(2022) Welcome to ...

Kim Albert-McLaughlin, Program Administrator (Payroll/Personnel), Administration
Judith Allen, Community Work Assistant, Administration
Rigoberto Alvarado, Recreation Leader, PRC, Tibbetts Brook Park
MaryAnn Alvarez, Maintenance Worker (PRC), Administration
Shaun Annacone, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Mohansic Golf Course
Dontae Brisco, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Bronx River Parkway
Leah Cass, Curator, Ward Pound Ridge

Employees in the News Continued

Jené Davis, Recreation Leader, PRC, Willson's Woods Park
Emmanuel Frederique, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Bronx River Parkway
Henry Guerrero, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Hudson Hills Golf Course
Kristina Hayek, Curator, Cranberry Lake Preserve
Taurean Holliman, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), South County Trail
Tucker Lajos, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Glen Island Park
Keith Lesko, Program Specialist (Graphics), Administration
Salvatore Longo, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Maple Moor Golf Course
Joseph Maccariello, Construction Coordinator, Administration
Sam Melaniff, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), General Maintenance
Joseph Meyer, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), General Maintenance
Vincent Ninzatti, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), General Maintenance
Kyle Peterson, Recreation Supervisor, Recreation
Joseph Petruzzelli, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), South County Trail
Louis Rossi, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Kensico Dam Plaza
Joseph Rossi, Maintenance Mechanic I (Utility), Glen Island Park
Julia Snook, Curator, Lenoir Preserve
Curtis Thigpen, Maintenance Worker (Utility), Willson's Woods Park
Alex Vega, Maintenance Laborer (Utility), Sprain Lake Golf Course

(2020) Congratulations to those who were promoted...

George R. Antalosky, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), General Maintenance
Luis Jimenez, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Grounds), Maple Moor Golf Course
Calyca Marshall, Management Analyst, Administration
Cristiano Da Silva Nogueira, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Carpenter), General Maintenance
Joseph Simoncini, Director Program Development II (Parks), Administration
Dwight White, Maintenance Mechanic I (Utility), Bronx River Parkway

(2021) Congratulations to those who were promoted...

Jobin Alias, Application Support Specialist, Administration
Stephen Gilleo, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (PRC-Mech), Maple Moor Golf Course
Kevin Hill, Budget Specialist II, Administration
Richard Kemlage, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Grounds), General Maintenance
Wilmin Marmolejos, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Repair), General Maintenance
Alex Massimi, Budget Specialist III, Administration
Angelo Palladino, Program Coordinator (Information Tech Systems), Administration
Kerry Riguzzi, Coordinator Fiscal Operations, Administration
Richard Romero, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Electrician), General Maintenance
Michael Rotella, Senior Excavating Machine Operator, General Maintenance
Justin Seelaus, Senior Maintenance Mechanic II (Farmer), Muscoot Farm
Anthony Spano, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Plasterer/Mason), General Maintenance
Neil Squillante, Deputy Commissioner-PRC, Administration

Employees in the News Continued

(2022) Congratulations to those who were promoted ...

Ronald Anderson, Program Administrator (Park Management), Administration
Russell Argila, Program Administrator-Maintenance, General Maintenance
Jonathon Benjamin, Farm Manager, Muscoot Farm
William Bland, Assistant Director of Division –PRC, Administration
Sara Cavanaugh, Recreation Supervisor, Recreation
Cirilo Cruz Velasquez, Senior Maintenance Mechanic I (Grounds), Sprain Lake Golf Course
David Crockett, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Grounds), Merestead Estate
Anthony DiRubba, Staff Assistant (PRC), Administration
Angela Dragonetti, Operations Assistant- PRC, Administration
Francesco Fiore, Director Maintenance – PRC, General Maintenance
Domenic Gangemi, Recreation Supervisor, Kensico Dam Plaza
Chelsey King, Maintenance Mechanic I (Utility), Administration
Frank Lemak, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Grounds), General Maintenance
Evelio Lopez, Park Superintendent III, North County Trail
Linda Lovallo, Director Program Development II (Community Relations), Administration
Ryan Mathews, Park Superintendent II, Saxon Woods Park
Kevin Motta, Park Foreman, South County Trail
John Ponce, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Repair), General Maintenance
Angel Reyes, Senior Maintenance Mechanic III (Carpenter), General Maintenance
Oscar Rivera, Park Foreman, Kensico Dam Plaza
Martin Santangelo, Park Foreman, Saxon Woods Park
Nicholas Spano, Assistant Director – Maintenance, General Maintenance

(2021 and 2022)

Congratulations also to those who marked their Silver Anniversary...

The celebration honoring their 25 year achievement was held at Tappan Hill Mansion in Tarrytown. We appreciate their strong work ethic and dedication to PRC!

Michael Babak, Dunwoodie Golf Course
Frank Cuomo, Croton Point Park
Ludwig Malchar, General Maintenance
Kenneth Meyer, Croton Point Park
Robert Pallas, Saxon Woods Golf Course
Samuel Ferranto, Mohansic Golf Course
Cirilo Orozco-Sanchez, Playland Park
Angelo Palladino, Administration
Michael Tomanelli, Tibbetts Brook Park
Andrew Santoro, Saxon Woods Park

Employees in the News Continued

(2020-2022) Good luck to those who transferred ...

Anthony Finateri to DPW
John Girardi to DEF
Frank Lyons to Corrections
Joseph Lattinville to DPW
Daniel Potignano to DPW
Rocco Tolla DEF
Samuel Gyamfi to DPW

(2021-2022) Good luck also to the following resignees ...

Francis Basciano, Playland Park
Rocco DeRose, Maple Moor Golf Course
Emily Lavin, Administration
Devin O'Donnell, Bronx River Parkway
Nicolas Barreto, Bronx River Parkway
Beth Bricker, Recreation
Sam Carvalho, Playland Park
Nicholas Debraz, Sprain Lake Golf Course
Christopher McGrath, Mohansic Golf Course

(2020) Best wishes for a happy retirement to ...

Mary Kaye Koch, Administration
Dean Lari, Mohansic Golf Course
Philip Manuli, Croton Point Park
Ed Matos, Playland Park
Bryant Nixon, Croton Point Park
Tom Reinertson, South County Trail
Madeline Roe, Administration
Karen Sposato, Administration
Mark Tabor, Administration

(2021) Best wishes for a happy retirement to ...

Regina Birkenstock, Administration
Vincent Caldarola, General Maintenance
Leslie King, Administration
Walter Nickerson, Playland Park
Mike Piechota, General Maintenance
Robert Romano, General Maintenance
Dennis Scofield, Playland Park
Richard Swartz, County Center
Scott Trainor, Saxon Woods Golf Course

Employees in the News Continued

(2022) Best wishes for a happy retirement to ...

Louis Carone, Playland Park
Brenda Bates, Muscoot Farm
Miguel Gonzalo Diaz, Playland Park
Lorraine Lang, Administration
Tom Neville, Wilson's Woods Park
Bill Paonessa, Saxon Woods Park
Martin Stonehouse, Playland Park
Ken Uhle, Planning



Thank you for a life's worth of service and love for the residents of Westchester County and for your Parks family.
You'll be forever in our hearts and thoughts.



James Leonard
General Maintenance

Passed away in August, 2022.



Mike "Bump" Walsh
Conservation

Passed away in October, 2022.



Stephen Pecora
General Maintenance

Passed away in January, 2023.

Our sincerest condolences to their families.

Employees in the News Continued

Condolences to ...

Michael Lanni of the County Center on the passing of his father, Ralph Lanni: February 2022

Chris Bryant of Playland on the passing of his mother, Mary Alice Bryant: February 2022

Former Parks employee **Sue Moga** on the passing of her husband, Jerome J. Moga, MD: March 2022

Audrey Crockett, mother of Dave Crockett and grandmother of Chase Crockett: April 14

Former Parks employee **Lorraine Lang** of Administration on the passing of her mother-in-law, Jeanne Lang: June 2022

Evelio Lopez of Conservation on the passing of his mother, Lucy Vega: June 19

Doug Daniels of the Permit Office on the passing of his grandfather, Walter Daniels: August 2022

Nick Spano on the passing of his father, John J. Spano: September 2022

Wilson Thomas Jr. of Willson's Woods on the passing of his father, Wilson Thomas Sr.: October 1

Stonie Oates of Blue Mountain Reservation on the passing of his son-in-law: October 2022

Former Parks employee **Jack Walsh**, who worked at Croton Point Park, passed away on December 5.

Buddy Sarlo of Golf on the passing of his brother, James A. Sarlo: December 2022

Westchester County PRC Celebrates 100th Anniversary of the Parks Commission

In 1922, the Westchester County Board of Supervisors was authorized to appoint an authority to acquire land for a parks system. They established the Westchester County Parks Commission.

On March 27, 1922, the county was able to purchase its first property—Mohansic Golf Course—for just \$1. Shortly after, the commission began to create a chain of parks connected by parkways that covered this area from the Hudson River to the Long Island Sound.

Had it not been for the Parks Commission's hard work and strong leadership, the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation (PRC) would not be what it is today. PRC has adapted and grown to fit today's world, continuing its 100-year legacy.

To celebrate the centennial anniversary, Parks created a traveling station that detailed and outlined the history of the Parks Commission. The display debuted at Mohansic Golf Course in July and moved on to many of our other properties.

The July launch of the 100-Anniversary traveling station coincided with Parks and Recreation month, which acknowledges that parks are vital to many residents. PRC has brought joy and activities to our community for a century. We celebrated not only the anniversary but continued to acclaim our parks and recreation professionals who work hard for Westchester residents.



Display created to mark the 100 year anniversary of the Parks Commission which was shown at different parks throughout the county.

Westchester County Parks Commissioner Kathy O'Connor Receives Woman in Business Award



Kathy O'Connor, the commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, was one of 24 women selected to receive the 2022 Women in Business Award from 914 Inc. Magazine.

Kathy's work in the recreation field spans over four decades, beginning with the Village of Scarsdale's Parks and Recreation department. When she came to Westchester County Parks in 1980, she quickly ascended the ranks by implementing successful programs including Camp Morty summer camp at Sal J. Prezioso Mountain Lakes Park, designing and executing events at the Westchester County Center and successfully supervising hundreds of staff members.

Kathy is the first female commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, a role she's held since 2010. Under her supervision, the department has upgraded several facilities, including pools, golf courses and Playland; she has also earned over a dozen awards and received re-accreditation by the National Recreation and Park

Association for four successive terms.

The latter part of Kathy's term as commissioner included an initiative that put Westchester County in the spotlight when Glen Island in New Rochelle became a COVID-19 drive-through testing site--one of the first of its kind--and worked with New York State to create a holdover hospital at the Westchester County Center.

Kathy attributes a major part of her success to her wonderful co-workers (deputy commissioners, management and Parks staff). Together they manage a \$55 million annual budget, 244 full-time employees and hundreds of seasonal employees who provide recreation opportunities to three million annual visitors per year. Throughout the year, Parks hosts hundreds of sports, entertainment, educational and community events on our more than 18,000 acres of parkland, which includes more than 50 beautiful facilities ranging from golf courses, pools and beaches to parks, trailways and nature centers.

Congratulations, Kathy! From all of us at PRC

Tom Avezzano inducted in 2022

Westchester County Sports Hall of Fame



Tom Avezzano spent 66 years in a job he loves, and he received the well-deserved recognition when he was inducted into the 2022 Westchester County Sports Hall of Fame.

In 1956, Tom's mother sent him to earn some money as a caddie at Sprain Lake Golf Course, and he's been there ever since. After a one-year stint as a caddie, Tom was promoted to a position in the pro shop. In 1975, at the age of 31, he became Sprain's head pro. The Yonkers native, who still lives less than two miles from the golf course, manages the tee sheet, organizes events, sells equipment and gives golf lessons—thousands and thousands of them so far.

"What makes me happiest is that I have helped so many people enjoy the game," Tom says. "I'm very thankful. People have been great." Tom reveals that he gives everyone one simple tip about golf: "This is recreation—and you're supposed to have fun at it! It's more important that people learn to enjoy the game than to get a low handicap. That's my only goal."

The annual Halloween Scramble Tournament that Tom initiated is just one example of his belief that "fun" is synonymous with "golf." So many golfers signed up for the tourney in 2022 that it had to be spread over two days at the end of October. Nearly 250 male and female golfers navigated the course, which had been transformed into a veritable Halloween-themed amusement park.

It included a beverage cart driven by a skeleton, fairways roamed by ghosts, witches and goblins, and—scariest of all—a quartet of mimes. A closest-to-the-pin contest was held on the par-three 13th hole, but every ball had to dodge an obstacle course of pumpkins to get anywhere near the hole. All the participants had a blast.

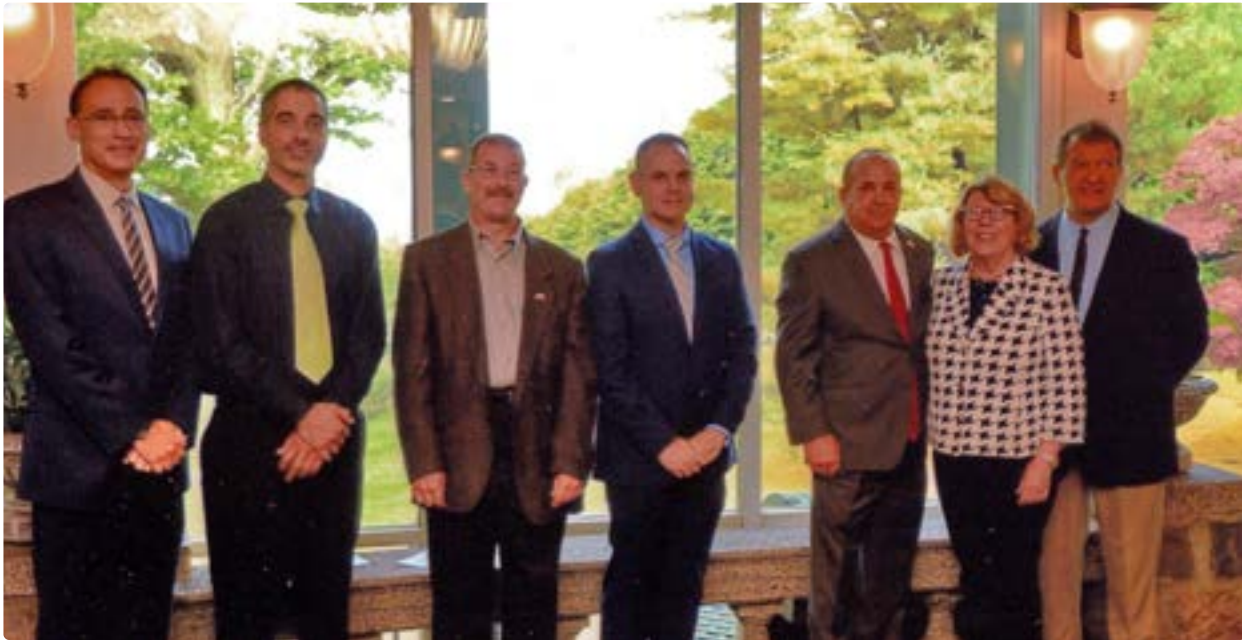
Congratulations, Tom!



Pumpkins decorate the green at Sprain Lake Golf Course and become a fun challenge during the annual Halloween Scramble Tournament.

Westchester County Honors Employees

25 Years of Public Service



On October 14, 2022, the County of Westchester honored a number of employees for completing 25 years of public service. The ceremony was held at Abigail Kirsch at Tapan Hill Mansion in Tarrytown. County Executive, George Latimer recognized the esteemed honorees and presented them with a 25 year award.

Parks Department honorees, **Michael Tomanelli, Andrew Santoro, Angelo Palladino, Joseph Maccariello, Samuel Ferranto** and **Cirilo Orozco-Sanchez** were accompanied by their First Deputy Commissioner, **Peter Tartaglia**, at the ceremony.

The Parks Department congratulates all of the recipients!

Congratulations for 25 years of service!

Above and Beyond from CE Latimer



George Latimer
County Executive

May 17, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Many people do not know what the Refuse and Recycling Division of the Department of Environmental Facilities (DEF) does, but we all should. Every time you recycle or throw something away, including dangerous chemicals or substances, the staff at DEF is making sure it is properly handled. Part of offering these vital services to Westchester County residents is the collection of hazardous household and hard-to-dispose of wastes. Though DEF offers these services at the Household Material Recovery Facility (H-MRF) in Valhalla Tuesday through Saturday by appointment, DEF also holds several Household Recycling Days (HRD) throughout the County each year. These HRD events accept items including chemicals, bulk metal and e-waste, and they have now expanded to include paint and textiles.

On May 7, DEF held an HRD at Sprain Ridge Park. Despite the pouring rain, the event was extremely successful. More than 700 vehicles came out to deliver items. DEF, together with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, worked in the heavy rain to unload vehicles and assist residents with safe and responsible disposal.

I want to give a special thanks to those dedicated employees from DEF who put in the time even though it was a challenge: George LaMonica, Dan Cea, Joe Palmiotto, Stephen Abenavoli, Kevin Phillips, Jennifer Egziaco, Joe Rodriguez, Chenier Thomas, Mike Messina; from Public Safety Billy Duany, Detective Donald Emery and Officer Christian Gutierrez; and to our friends in Parks who jumped in to assist, **Luigi Mazzella, Mark Porter, Buster Mathies, Max Rivera and Chris Mathies.**

Moving items out of residents' vehicles and managing traffic flow are never easy tasks, and they were made all the more difficult in the rain. That said, we should recognize our colleagues' commitment to safe and responsible disposal, which makes Westchester County a cleaner, greener place to live, work and enjoy

Sincerely,

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

Above and Beyond from CE Latimer Continued



George Latimer
County Executive

August 5, 2022

Dear colleagues,

Westchester County's Parks System is among the best in the nation, and the summertime is when our Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation truly shines. With more than 18,000 acres of parkland spanning our beautiful County, there is truly something for everyone to enjoy.

Every year, we host hundreds of entertainment, sporting, cultural, educational and community events at our more than 50 fantastic facilities, including our pools, beaches, trailways and nature centers. This season, our residents have been pouring into our County pools and beaches, where we were able to offer free admission on certain days of the week. We keep Parks Commissioner Kathy O'Connor very busy during the summer and throughout the year, but the result is a County Parks system that is second to none.

Lorraine Lang, Director of Program Development

Lorraine has been with the Parks Department for close to three decades and is retiring at the end of the month. As a personnel director, she implements Civil Service law to a department made up of over 247 full-time and 600 part-time employees who are located at over 50 facilities in the County. Lorraine understands the ins and outs of Civil Service and is happy to work with our employees to make sure they are functioning fairly within the guidelines, providing beneficial advice. While this is always a large undertaking, Lorraine exuded excellence and grace under pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic, when laws were changing on an almost daily basis. She read and analyzed directives that came in from the State and County, and she provided direction to upper management on how to implement them to ensure the safety of our staff. Lorraine has also done a wonderful job of leading her team and pushing them to grow within the Department. We are going to miss Lorraine and her tremendous leadership skills. We wish her nothing but the best in her next chapter!

Sincerely,

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

Above and Beyond from CE Latimer Continued



George Latimer
County Executive

August 5, 2022 Continued...

Dominic Gangemi, Superintendent of Kensico Dam Plaza

Dominic Gangemi is an incredible asset to the Parks Department, managing the "Central Park" of Westchester County: Kensico Dam Plaza. Kensico is one of the County's most utilized parks, from children enjoying themselves on the playground, to fitness enthusiasts getting in a good jog and, of course, the various events that take place that can draw thousands and thousands of guests. Dominic makes sure the park is not only in tip-top shape but safe for patrons. He's always available to answer questions and help the public.

This year, the July 3 Music Fest and Fireworks returned for the first time since the pandemic, and it drew in record crowds. Dominic and his staff managed the crowd with ease to ensure a safe and fun celebration for all. Additionally, our Cultural Heritage Festivals have returned, with the bulk taking place at Kensico, along with the usual programming of Summer Concerts and Screenings Under the Stars. With these back-to-back events during the summer, Dominic and his team have their hands full and never miss a beat in preparation.

Lastly, Westchester's Winter Wonderland has taken place at the facility for almost 10 years and most recently, it was turned into a drive-thru to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic. During the event, the park is still utilized during the day, then transformed into a holiday Winter Wonderland at night. It's a fete that not just anyone can execute. Dominic is a valued member of the Department, and we are excited to see him continue to transform the park for years to come!

Sincerely,

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

Above and Beyond from CE Latimer Continued



George Latimer
County Executive

August 5, 2022 Continued...

Ron Anderson, Superintendent of Croton Point Park

Ron has been with the Parks Department for almost 30 years. He has proven to be one of our most malleable employees, as he has worked at a variety of our parks, beginning his journey with us as a laborer at Glen Island. During his time there, he dedicated himself to his job, quickly rising in the ranks and receiving several promotions, topping out as a maintenance laborer. He then went to work at Ridge Road Park as a foreman, returned to Glen Island, followed by a transfer to Tibbetts, and then to his current role at Croton Point Park.

Ron's role at Croton includes new layers of responsibility, such as working with the facility's nature center, helping to inform the public of Croton's rich history and natural elements, in addition to enforcing rules and managing Croton's camping and RV grounds. He is the most seasoned employee at the facility, and his staff is comfortable going to him to learn new skills. Under Ron's leadership, Croton Point has become a wonderful destination for Westchester County residents. Croton Point has undergone several capital projects, and Ron works seamlessly with staff to communicate needs while maintaining a safe and fun outlet for parkgoers. Ron has shaped a large part of the Parks Department over his years here, and we could not have asked for a more dedicated employee to leave a mark on Westchester County Parks!

Sincerely,

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

Above and Beyond from CE Latimer Continued



George Latimer
County Executive

August 5, 2022 Continued...

Jessica Schuler, Program Coordinator for Natural Resources at Lasdon Park

Jessica joined the Parks Department only a few years ago from the New York Botanical Garden. In her short time with the County, she has brought a whole new layer of education to our Conservation division. She has participated in various research projects and published articles, including a *Frontiers* piece titled *Climate Adaptive Silviculture for the City: Practitioners and Researchers Co-create a Framework for Studying Urban Oak-Dominated Mixed Hardwood Forests*. Jessica's wealth of knowledge has positioned Lasdon Park as a leader in the space, allowing her to spearhead numerous programs to educate the public about various aspects of the environment, including fun and interactive exhibits for children and families.

In addition to her work at Lasdon Park, Jessica has taken on a leadership role at Hilltop Hanover Farm in Yorktown Heights, working with the staff there on programming and reimagining its mission. We are proud to call Jessica one of our own and look forward to her work that makes our Conservation division one that surely stands out from the rest!

Sincerely,

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

PARKS Holiday Programs

Lasdon Holidays on the Hill Train Show

Holidays on the Hill Annual Train Show at Lasdon was high on holiday spirit and attracted people from far and wide. With more than 5,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor exhibit space, visitors were surrounded by colorful characters and enchanting holiday scenes. The iconic trains chugged along 12 multi-level tracks that took them under tunnels and over bridges.

Visitors got to watch elves at work, say hi to some playful snowmen and much more. Children were thrilled when they met the jolly fat man himself, Santa Claus! This year's show was a smashing success and continues to be a favorite holiday event!



Inside the conservatory the festive train display includes multiple trains running on elevated bridges, loops and tunnels.

Alfred B. DelBello Muscoot Farm Sparkled During Its Holiday Lights on the Farm

Muscoot Farm in Katonah got into the holiday spirit by illuminating the farm animals' living quarters during this festive event.

Children and adults alike enjoyed visiting with the animals while gazing at the lights and dazzling decorations. Attendees participated in a variety of activities including decorating cookies, creating crafts, making treats and more.

On Saturdays, the fun included a holiday market at which people could buy gifts and other treats. On scheduled dates, popular food trucks, such as Wanna Empanada and Fork in the Road, sold their delicacies to enthusiastic visitors.



A horse at the farm enjoys the upgrade to the barn in one of the numerous features of the new event.

PARKS Holiday Programs Continued...

Winter Wonderland Set Everyone's Heart Aglow

Westchester Parks Foundation (WPF) was proud to present Westchester's Winter Wonderland Drive-Thru Holiday Light Extravaganza for the ninth year in a row.

This memorable holiday experience that the whole family could enjoy was presented in partnership with Westchester County Parks and the presenting sponsor, Westchester Medical Center.

Guests were dazzled and delighted with 1.2 miles of holiday lights, larger-than-life displays and a visit with Santa himself from the warmth of their cars. Holiday music classics were simulcast through each vehicle's FM radio, which set the perfect mood from the moment cars entered the park. Special-event nights included the opening night's official tree-lighting celebration and a festive, family-friendly way to ring in the New Year.

Winter Wonderland also received donations to benefit the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital in Valhalla. Volunteers from The Arc of Westchester lovingly packed 5,000 Ned and Albert's Holiday Treat Boxes.

WPF was extremely proud to bring an exciting and affordable event to the public. We couldn't imagine a holiday season without Winter Wonderland. Our partners—the dedicated staff and administration of Westchester County Parks—went above and beyond to help us turn the drive-thru plan into reality. The light show was created and programmed this year by the amazingly creative minds at Dark Tech Effects.

We are sincerely grateful to our founding presenting sponsor Westchester Medical Center Health Network and returning platinum sponsor Con Edison. We also thank tree-lighting sponsor Robison Oil, New Year's Eve sponsor M&T Bank, holiday music sponsor Iona Preparatory School, Ned and Albert's Holiday Treat Box sponsor Wegmans, Benjamin Steak House, and, as always, our media sponsors Westchester County Tourism, Westchester Magazine and Altice Media.

The use and enjoyment of our parks are core to our mission, and Winter Wonderland invites people of all ages to enjoy the spectacular beauty of Kensico Dam Plaza during the holiday season. This year more than ever, Winter Wonderland and the Dam played an important role in providing the public with a safe way to celebrate the holidays. Proceeds from this event directly benefit the Westchester Parks Foundation and allow us to serve the Parks system year-round through programming, advocacy and direct support.



TOP: Toy soldiers hold up the Winter Wonderland arch with huge hand-made ornaments to welcome the public. BOTTOM: A car full of friends and family seem to float as they drive-thru the multi color light tunnel.



From the E-mail Bag

Compliments

Sent: Friday, Jan. 14, 2022

To: Kathleen M. O'Connor

I want you to know that you have a Super Employee, **Heidi Schwalbach**. I have been protecting the Merestead property for over 30 years. I have dealt with many Program Specialists over those years. Heidi is by far the best. She is on top of everything and extremely helpful. Westchester has a winner. Just thought you should know, but I think you already know.

I just wish I could pronounce her last name.

Thanks,
Don Lehman

Sent: Thursday, March 24, 2022

I love Cranberry Lake and just wanted to comment that I had the pleasure of meeting the curator, **Danniela Ciatto**, who has done an awesome job with the preserve! Trails are always extremely well-maintained and marked, and it's an awesome preserve and facility all around.

Thank you!
Alex Yoken

Subject: Ward Pound Ridge

I have been taking Scouts to Ward Pound Ridge for many years and it is always a pleasure to work with **Bob Calabrese** and **Jeff Main**. They keep the park in great shape and are always available to help us. All the new sites that have been built and repairs to existing sites makes us want to come back year after year.

David Cusick



Compliments continued...

To: Taro Ietaka

Subject: Weekend visit

I wanted to send this email to let you know about the great experience we had this past Saturday when we took our granddaughter to the Bugs & Slugs program at Cranberry Lake Preserve. Your employee **Kristina Hayek** was amazing! She was so incredibly knowledgeable, friendly and patient with our 3 1/2-year-old. Our experience was fantastic and we will definitely be returning to visit again. Thank you so much for hiring Kristina. She is wonderful and perfect at her job!

Donna Borelli

Sent: Monday, Aug. 8, 2022

Subject: Arab American Festival

Good morning,

I sincerely want to thank you all that helped with our Heritage day especially **William Bland** and **Claudinei Santos** they made sure anything needed they assisted again thank you all!

John Khader

Sent: Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2022

Subject: Our stay

Hi, sorry this is a little delayed but we visited Croton Point Park a couple months ago and we just wanted to let you know that the staff was amazing, especially the office staff. **Jennifer Gordineer** (manager)? was absolutely a pleasure to deal with and answered all our questions and made sure we were taken care of. She was friendly, courteous and when we had an RV issue she offered to help find us the right people to talk to. We would come back to Croton for the main reason we felt safe and taken care of!

Thanks,
Suzanne Gilman Whitley



Compliments continued...

Sent: Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2022

Subject: Parks recognition

Hi Kara,

Michael and I were discussing the progress of the compliance training and I would like to give **Chrissy Simoncini** and the Parks department some kind of recognition for the excellent job they do. Their employees are scattered all over and usually nowhere near a computer and their 816 users are done. Chrissy tracks them down herself and keeps on top of registration even though hers are mostly self-enrollment who continue to register for months. Still they get their people done. Chrissy informs me of people who are out on leave or who leave the department. She catches when an employee self-enrolls in addition to being registered with their county email. She gives me detailed lists of emails to remove from the system. If anyone had an excuse for not getting this done quickly, it is parks but they never fall back on that. They are done long before other office-based departments with a much smaller number of users.

Best regards,

Allie

PARKS Weekly E-Blast

Keep track of what's happening in our park system throughout the year by subscribing to our weekly eblast. Learn if there is an event with your interests or discover something new.

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