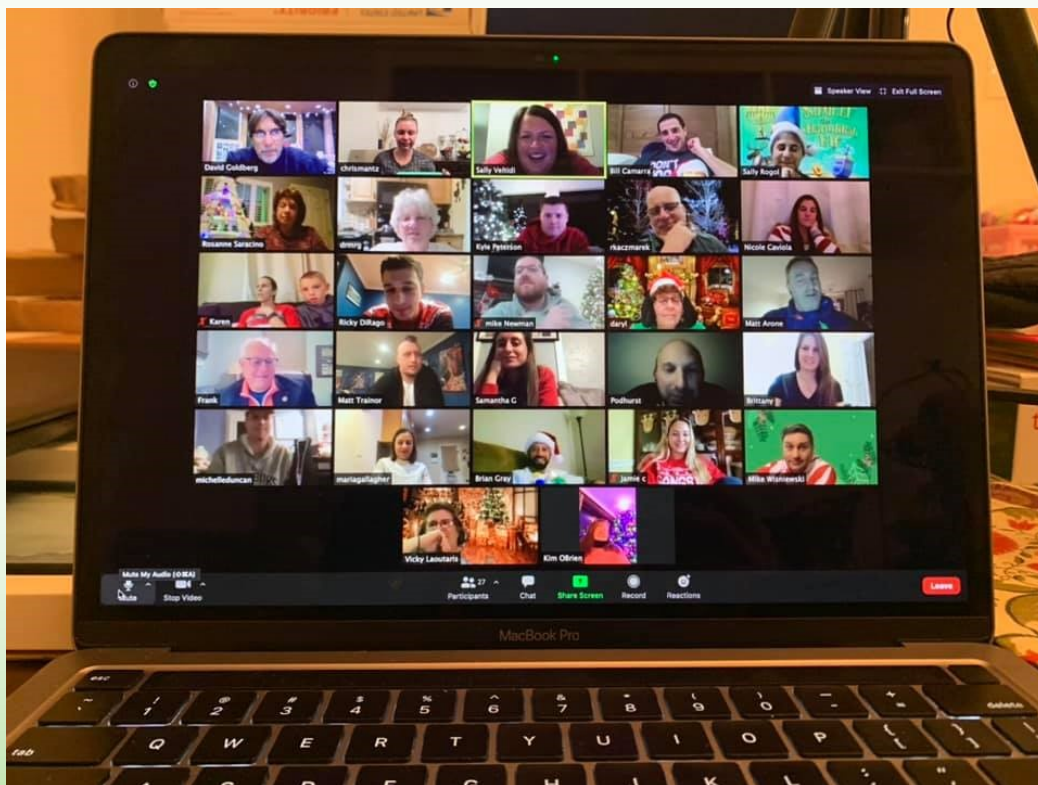


the

Grapevine



March 2021 Edition



WESTCHESTER RECREATION
AND PARK SOCIETY, INC.
P.O. Box 152 • Valhalla, New York 10595

WRAPS Presidents Message—by Dave Goldberg

With the beginning of loosening COVID restrictions, life as a Recreation and Parks professional can start to go back to some resemblance of normal. I can remember when the world was going to end as we closed out 1999. On January 1, 2000, the markets were going to crash, our computers would stop, and life as we knew it would forever change. I guess it only took 20 years for life to change as we knew it, but we survived and are a stronger community and organization for it. We always talk about how much screen time the kids spend in a day, who would have thought that we would be encouraging time on the iPad and computers as much, life is funny that way!



As we start to gear up for summer 2021, we put our heart and soul into all we do. We try to make our residents happy to be back in our parks, camps and pools all the while knowing they are safe because we are taking all the precautions to protect them and our staff from COVID. As we look to our future, things will get easier. Programs will go back to normal, concerts and other large crowd programs will be back in our parks, it will happen.

Changing gears, built on the efforts of Executive Boards and Membership bodies of both the past and present, WRAPS has been extremely fortunate to be in the position of financial growth and stability – even in the face of the challenges that COVID has brought on. We believe in the importance of supporting our fellow professionals and professional organizations whenever possible; the support and opportunities that WRAPS has enjoyed from NYSRPS is something our Executive Board cannot forget, more importantly now than ever before. As such, we have discussed and agreed as a board to assist NYSRPS in these difficult times with a \$10,000 donation to help bridge the budget gap they currently face. Additionally, we will implore the other Professional bodies in the state to do whatever they can as well to ensure the survival of such an important organization to us all. The time for talk is past, and we, as one strong WRAPS family, are honored to be able to act and provide this support to an organization such as NYSRPS, which year after year strives to give us so much as a profession.

With spring upon us, may your programs go smoothly and successful. In the meantime....

Stay safe, healthy and sane!

David Goldberg,
WRAPS President

Memories and Mentors from a Lifetime in Recreation

By Ben Shaw

As a young man I never dreamed of going to college or being in a profession. My family were blue collar workers who wanted me to be a fireman or a policeman. However, “things happen” and my love of the outdoors, and athletics, and key people in my life, lead me to a 45 year career in recreation in Westchester County.

The first recreation person to influence me was **Jim Kronenberger**, Supt. of Recreation for the Town of Mamaroneck. He was the trainer for the Mamaroneck High School football team and hired me to take care of the fields near the town yard and run a baseball clinic for young kids when I was in high school. Jim talked to be about a recreation career and then hooked me up with **Ralph Damiano**, Supt. of Recreation for Rye. Ralph gave me a summer playground director’s job and I found I was good with programming, working with young kids, their parents and staff members.

In addition to getting me a playground leader’s job, James Kronenberger sent me to see three recreation professionals, just to talk. I did not realize at the time the reputation of each of these individuals. They were **Dr. Sal Prezioso**, executive director for Westchester County, **Joe Curtis**, Supt. of Recreation in White Plains and **Bill Lederer**, Supt. of Recreation in Greenburg. Each one took time out of their busy schedule to meet with a fledgling and give me their philosophy of recreation. Before these three men the only other name I had heard about in recreation was **Red Klein** from the County. He had an iconic reputation and no one ever said no to him because of his work ethic and dynamic personality.

In total, I learned from these three recreation professionals that if you were going to be successful in recreation you needed to have a passion for the job and believe strongly in the field of recreation. They also said that you could not just focus on the areas of recreation that interested you, but needed to focus on recreation for all age groups, all abilities, all economic groups and all racial groups. Finally, they said the downside of recreation was that you would be working when other people were not. You would be working weekends and evenings in most cases.

After graduating with a degree in physical education from Hillsdale College, I interviewed with the King of Recreation at the time, Joe Curtis, Supt. of Recreation in White Plains. I don’t think there was anyone that did not admire Joe and think of him as the all-time great in recreation. I also interviewed for a recreation supervisor’s job in Chappaqua and one in Westbury, Long Island.

Again James Kronenberger, my first mentor, stepped up to the plate and advised me. He said it would be great working with Joe Curtis, but I would be a small fish in a big pond as he had so many other supervisors working for him. He said working at the Westbury Teen Center would limit my exposure to different groups and I would mostly be working evenings and weekends. He felt I should work in Chappaqua as the department was just starting and I would be a grass roots worker doing all sorts of recreation related job.

James Kronenberger was right. I did a little bit of everything working with **Barry Magnum** in Chappaqua. I was thrown into press releases, running all sorts of sporting events, leading a summer camp program and you name it. I learned so much from Barry Magnum but after six months he left for Greenburg.

Continued Next Page

Memories and Mentors from a Lifetime in Recreation—Cont

By Ben Shaw

Fortunately, **Bill DeCarlo** came next to Chappaqua and he was my favorite all time boss. We were like family. We challenged ourselves. We planned together. We shared programs and I learned how to embrace a community. When a superintendent's job opened up in Pelham, N.Y., Bill said I was ready to take on my own program.

I did as Bill DeCarlo suggested and took the Pelham job. However, in Pelham I did not have the type of leadership and commission support that I had in Chappaqua. The atmosphere in Pelham was much more politically charged and I was happy when **Bob Christman**, asked me to come back to Chappaqua as the Asst. Supt. of Recreation. Bill DeCarlo had left Chappaqua for Xerox and Bob Christman, almost my same age, had taken over. I really enjoyed working with Bob, however, he moved on to a job in private industry and then died shortly afterwards.

I was then fortunate to work with **Bill Seirup** who showed me how to write and justify a budget and go through a budget hearing without a problem. When Bill Seirup moved to Ridgefield, Ct. I then began working with **Marty Mucher**. Marty was a very special person who made coming to work fun. He was interested in the park system, loved working closely with the community, and respected people no matter what their background. Marty had always wanted to be a minister and left for that calling after a few years. I am still in touch with Marty who just recently moved to Arizona.

While working as Supt. of Parks and Maintenance for New Castle, I met many others in the field of recreation that I greatly admired and enjoyed working with. **Bernie Guagnini** from Harrison, showed me what a strong leader looks like and how he takes on tough issues. **James Arles and Charlie Rapp** from the county, brought park issues into focus for me and showed me how important it was for recreation and the parks to work together. **Paul Lohner and Dick McNight**, both from Pleasantville, showed me how neighboring towns can help one another out and provide creative and innovative programs.

On the county level I also learned from the leadership of **Joe Stout and Kathy Curtis O'Connor**. It is so much more difficult to oversee an entire county than a municipality and your negotiation skills have to be so much more acute. You also have to know how to be political, without being offensive, and look out for the good of everyone. I looked at the county level differently, after knowing Cathy and Joe.

In this summary of people that have influenced my career I would be remiss if I did not mention **Harry Caniff and Donna Esposito**. Harry came from a blue collar background like I did. His mother worked for us, he lived in town and took part in many of our athletic programs. Harry then began working for us as an umpire, on the fields and in any capacity that we could find for him. He loved the town and got along with everyone.

After Greeley High School, Harry went to Dean Junior College and continued to work for us. When it came time for our next hire, Harry was our choice, but he did not have a recreation degree. Because we saw potential in Harry, we gave him the recreation supervisor's job with the stipulation that he would get a recreation degree. Harry fulfilled his requirement, while working for Chappaqua and then went on to distinguish himself as the Superintendent of Recreation in Pleasantville and then Mr. Pleasant. I was always proud of Harry and his achievements.

Memories and Mentors from a Lifetime in Recreation—Cont

By Ben Shaw

Donna Esperito, supervisor from Chappaqua, is an example of an ultimate recreation person in Westchester County. She has devoted her entire life to working all aspects of recreation. She has followed exactly what Lederer, Prezisos, and Joe Curtis talked about as a true professional. Even after all these years in recreation Donna is still passionate about her career, still works every program at all different times of the day and week, makes certain that every group is taken care of effectively, and works endlessly as a volunteer for the Westchester Parks and Recreation Dept. Donna never complains, always helps out others, loves her community and county and eats, drinks, and sleeps recreation.

For many years, **Roz Robinson Mann** was my office mate in Chappaqua. Roz came from the arts but was Chappaqua's first director of senior programs. It is not easy starting a program from scratch and that is what Roz was able to do. She built her senior responsibility into a multifaceted program to meet the needs of all. Roz was also an active member of WRAPS and friend to so many in the recreation community. Roz showed me how to be a true friend to others.

I feel so blessed to still have recreation memories and mentors that I think about often. They have been role models for me for my entire life. These people and events changed the course of my life and made me realize that even now in my 80's I still need recreation just as much now, as I ever did.



We might not have been able to have our Annual Holiday Party in person this year but in true recreation fashion we made the best of it! Thank you to the WRAPS board for hosting a festive evening. We were mesmerized by the one and only David Levitan, won some great prizes and eagerly awaited to see who Mark Duncan passed the Lancers bottle off to.....
Congratulations: Sally Veltidi!



On January 27th, WRAPS held a Virtual Surprise Retirement Party honoring Maria Gallagher!
Congratulations Maria and best wishes to you! ENJOY RETIREMENT!



March 19, 2021

Dear WRAPS Member,

Is it over yet? Well that was certainly the question of the year for 2020! Its 2021 now and I hope this new year finds you and yours healthy, happy and hopefully vaccinated...or soon to be. Although a bit delayed, as most things have been, it is now time to accept nominations for the Westchester Recreation and Park Society Executive Board Members-at-Large.

This year we will accept nominations for two (2) Members-at-Large. Current Members-at-Large, Beth Bricker and Kyle Peterson, have terms that will expire this year.

Nominees must be a paid member of WRAPS for at least one (1) year prior to nomination. There will be no verbal nominations taken from the floor at any meetings. To submit a nomination, please use the attached official **"2021 Nomination Form"** and return it to:

Mail: Christopher Soi
Bedford Recreation & Parks Department
425 Cherry Street
Bedford Hills, NY 10507
E-mail: csoi@bedfordny.gov
Fax: (914) 666-3863, to the attention of: Christopher Soi

Important reminder: If you respond by e-mail *without* the form, please make sure to include your name and all the information requested on the form. **The deadline for nominations is Friday, April 7, 2021.**

Sincerely,

Christopher Soi
Chairperson - Nominations & Elections Committee



OFFICIAL 2021 NOMINATION FORM

The **Members-at-Large** vacancies are a three (3) year term beginning September 1, 2021.

I would like to nominate the following person(s) for **Members-at-Large**:

1. Name: _____

Business Address: _____

Business Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

2. Name: _____

Business Address: _____

Business Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

PLEASE NOTE: You must sign the form to be valid.

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Work Phone #: _____

Please return to: Christopher Soi
Bedford Recreation & Parks Department
425 Cherry Street
Bedford Hills, NY 10507

E-mail: csoi@bedfordny.gov
Fax: (914) 666-3863, Fax to the attention of: Christopher Soi

IMPORTANT: The deadline for nominations is Friday, April 7, 2021.

Chick Galella

By Matt Arone

As recreation professionals, we've all been part of community-wide special events. Whether it's holiday themed gatherings, outdoor concerts, street fairs, parades or carnivals....we've all been involved in the planning and execution. They always are a lot of work on our end, but usually very enjoyable and exciting for the public. I recently was involved in a special event which I can say might have been one-of-a-kind and the most rewarding. How many of you have thrown a surprise 100 year birthday celebration for a resident, who not only is a veteran, but a Pearl Harbor survivor? In the winter during a pandemic nonetheless! The reason for this article isn't to tell you about the event we pulled off, but to brag about a true hero we all having living here in the Hudson Valley.

Armando "Chick" Galella was born in North Tarrytown (now Sleepy Hollow) on January 1, 1921. He got the nickname Chick because he had skinny chicken legs as a kid and the name stuck. 19 years later, he enlisted in the Army and happened to be at Hickam Air Force base in Hawaii during World War II on December 7, 1941. That was the day the Japanese attacked and destroyed 20 American ships, 300 aircrafts and sadly killed over 2,400 people including soldiers and civilians. The next day, congress approved President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's declaration of war on Japan.

But this isn't supposed to be a history lesson. You either know the rest of the story, or can read and learn about World War II at another time. I'd like to tell you more about Chick. He survived the attack on Pearl Harbor as I mentioned and left the service in 1945 after 5 years of battles which included Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal. When he came home to resume his life here in Westchester, he did much more than just get a job and start a family. He entrenched himself in his community. He was a Cub Scout leader, a member of his church board, a fire commissioner, chairperson of the Immaculate Conception Bazaar and is an honorary life member of the local Hook & Ladder. Chick also served on the village board and was deputy mayor. Nowadays, the member of the New York State Veteran's Hall of Fame spends his time speaking at schools across Westchester telling kids about the war and his experiences. He has-



n't slowed down dedicating time to his hometown either. His latest crusade was to raise money to have a life size Gold Mothers Statue placed at Horan's Landing Park in Sleepy Hollow. That site is very important to Chick because he himself had the park named and dedicated for his childhood friend John Horan who coincidentally died in the same Pearl Harbor attack that Chick was able to survive. A Gold Star Mother statue represents all the mothers who lost a child during wartime. In Sleepy Hollow, if Chick puts his time towards something, it gets done. Therefore, he helped raise \$95,000 for the bronze statue that will eventually be placed at the park with the Hudson River as its' backdrop.

Continued Next Page

Chick Galella—Cont

By Matt Arone

The special event we held for Chick was held on Saturday, January 2nd (the weather was bad on his actual January 1 birthday). Chick and his immediate family were permitted to attend a brief meeting at village hall where he was read a few proclamations from local politicians such as Senators Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Pete Harckham and County Executive George Latimer. Face masks were worn by all and social distancing regulations were obeyed. He was presented with two birthday cakes (which he had to take home to share with his family) and was shown a video with over 90 friends and relatives who wished him a happy birthday (one video clip was from famed county music star Wille Nelson). A motorcade around the village in a convertible so all the residents could safely wave and blow whistles from their own front yards came next before a final stop at Horan's Landing where Chick got to hold a golden shovel for a ceremonial ground breaking at the future site of the Gold Star Mothers statue. In conclusion, a firework display was the final show of recognition for a special individual.

During the short groundbreaking opportunity, Chick said he was proud that his community was recognizing Gold Star Mothers and his hope was that more local municipalities would do the same. So for those who are reading this article and have the authority, power or means to put a Gold Star Mothers plaque or a statue in one of your parks, please consider it. Maybe you'll have it in place for one of Chick's next birthday parties!

For more information about Gold Star Mothers, please visit www.goldstarmoms.com

WRAPS ENTERTAINERS VIRTUAL AUDITIONS

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the Entertainers Auditions!

Copy and paste the below link for the Video of this event. Please go to www.wrapsny.com for the updated booklet. Please support our entertainer vendors!

Video Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-Bj6RoG8-qOkTljdJrodJl_e7yFihEP9/view?fbclid=IwAR2YWfRO-YaTqxmGzHDR69TMn-rYfgGM3VM7GW12EaWshmhNBK4mUs1hmzDA

Thanks again to Jamie Corradina for your hard work on this. WRAPS cannot thank you enough!

WRAPS VENDOR & ENTERTAINER MEMBERS

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Are you an Entertainer or a business looking to reach a Parks & Recreation audience? Please check out: www.WRAPSNY.com for more information on how to become a member of WRAPS!

To Reach the Executive Board

Dave Goldberg, President 764-3987
Sally Veltidi , VP 771-3313
Kim O'Brien, Secretary 864-3716
Matt Trainor, Treasurer 273-3325
Brian Gray, Past President 722-1160

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Beth Bricker 231-4645
Bill Camarra 771-3342
Jennifer Giusti 273-3000
Bob Kaczmarek 722-1160
Brittany Neider 238-6391
Kyle Peterson 941-6560

WRAPS WEBSITE

Since you are reading the Grapevine on the WRAPS website, why not explore the entire site! Check out our Vendor and Entertainer Members, our social/events page and our NEW Employment page! Have any idea for the website?

Email Kyle Thornton at kthornton@mountkisco.ny.gov



Find us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/WRAPSNY/?fref=ts>

Copy and paste the above address for our WRAPS Facebook Page! Be sure to like the page to keep up to date on what's happening within WRAPS.

CALL FOR GRAPEVINE ARTICLES!

The next issue of the Grapevine is scheduled to be posted online in June 2021!

Anyone interested in submitting materials must do so by **Wednesday, May 26 2021**

E-mail Information to:

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1 Wallace Drive
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kthornton@mountkisco.ny.gov