



KALEIDOSCOPE

The official student newspaper of Ward Melville since 1969

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COMMUNITY



by THE WARD
MELVILLE
KALEIDOSCOPE

Last year, our fall edition focused on the 2024 elections. We interviewed candidates for the State Assembly, State Senate, and the House of Representatives. We examined the presidential election from a student's point of view. We wrote about redistricting and the Supreme Court.

This year, there is no blockbuster election happening in November. But Election Day is still on the calendar, and there are many important issues on the ballot. From affordability to public safety to repairing Stony Brook's Mill Pond, local officials elected this November will have the power to change our lives. Unfortunately, most of us won't vote: only about a quarter of registered voters cast ballots in 2023, and this year we're

not even voting for County Executive.

Too often in our Internet-driven culture, we put all of our focus on events and discussions happening in Washington, all the while neglecting our local issues and communities. But that's precisely where we can have the greatest impact, and where we can most directly affect our own lives.

In this edition, we want to bring attention not only to these important elections, but to other events and changes happening right in our backyards. From profiling high-achieving students and exploring upcoming community events to interviewing the very people who will be on the ballot this November, we hope to highlight the Three Village community and encourage our readers to get involved.

Join Kaleidoscope!

by MICHAEL RETAKH,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Three Village is a unique place. Because of our large budget and engaged community, we are fortunate to have an enormous amount of wonderful programs and opportunities, especially at Ward Melville. New high school students must always choose from dozens of clubs and student organizations, not to mention sports. So every year, an unspoken conflict breaks out where clubs vie to recruit as many of these new students as possible.

It might seem unfair that my recruitment strategy is to put a large advertisement on the front page of a newspaper that we're going to mail to every Ward Melville household. But this very action highlights two unique features of *Kaleidoscope*.

First, the mailing part. Four times a year, we send out a print edition to hundreds of Ward Melville students and their families. Some of them might not read it, but many do. Joining *Kaleidoscope*

means that your writing, whether it's a news story you uncovered or an opinion you want broadcast around the world, reaches people. Being a part of *Kaleidoscope* means that the community will see and appreciate your work, a result that few other clubs can promise.

Second, the writing part. I made the decision to take up space on the first page with a self-centered advertisement. I didn't have to get approval or jump through bureaucratic hoops. Of course, I'm one of the two Editor-in-Chiefs, and we have the final say in what goes on the page, but the broader point remains: members of *Kaleidoscope* have the freedom to

pursue what they want to pursue. If you just want to make graphics and make sure our editions look the best they possibly can, then we have space for you. If you want to dive into the inner workings of the district, we'd love to have you. If you want to write about some niche opinion, you're welcome to.

Part of that freedom comes from being a high school student newspaper, not a large corporate outlet. We're not beholden to shareholders or to outside influences, and we aren't forced to cover everything that happens in the world. You're also not bound by the whims of an editor sitting in an office five floors above you, or

even in another city. We are a small community, and you will interact with people at all levels of the editing process from the moment you walk into Room 411. All of our editors guide, encourage, work with, and learn from all of our staff.

We at *Kaleidoscope* have a mission: to report the news. Contributing to that mission leaves you with a great feeling, both while you're doing it and after your article has been published. But we're also just a fun place to be. So come join us! You won't regret it.

Kaleidoscope meets in Room 411 on Thursdays after school. You can also reach out to us at kscopewm@gmail.com.



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Ward Melville’s New Students

by **ARIEL BASSIS,**
SPORTS EDITOR

The beginning of a new school year is always marked with adjustment, but this September has brought a more dramatic shift for Ward Melville than most other years. With the district’s recent grade restructuring plans officially integrating the freshmen class into the high school, Ward Melville has changed: there are new classrooms, more teachers, and twice as many new students. But what might feel like a relatively routine September for juniors and seniors is a massive change for the younger students. For them, these first few weeks have been ones of sudden adaptation to new hallways, classes, and social dynamics.

Administrators have emphasized the benefits of the restructuring—increased access to advanced courses and electives,

extracurricular activities, and smoother progression into the later years of high school—but for the students themselves, the first weeks have been about small adjustments. Sophomore Lilah Koltai pointed out one of these, saying, “The size of the building was kind of intimidating, but I got the hang of it pretty quickly.”

As Koltai noted, these adjustments will eventually become a daily routine despite the significant change for the underclassmen. In fact, navigating the crowded hallways, getting to class on time, waking up early, and making new friends have been some immediate successes, with sophomore Isabel Baker telling Kaleidoscope, “I got lost on my way to chemistry, but everything else was fine. I made a couple new friends in some of my classes, which I thought would be harder, but it was actually pretty easy.”

Despite challenges such as school navigation or the new social dynamics, both freshmen and sophomores are looking forward to

the benefits that Ward Melville has to offer, including the wide variety of extracurricular activities in both athletics and clubs, numerous electives, higher-level courses, and the opportunity to make new friends. “There have been a lot of amazing opportunities for me, like helping with [the theater club known as the Ward Melville] Players and the marching band,” explains sophomore Nick Managnes. Charlie Catania, a fellow sophomore, expanded on this sentiment, saying, “I like how I have more opportunities at the high school because the classes are a lot harder and there are more electives. I also love the people. I feel that it’s a different atmosphere at the high school because there are so many different people and such an individuality to each person, and I feel like that’s a really nice thing to have.”

For others, the school offers a motivating environment for both social and academic growth. “Everything is so much more fast-paced. I cannot wait to see all the new skills I’ll develop in the

next couple of years,” remarked freshman Colin Pickford. Koltai added, “I’m definitely most excited about the projects we’re going to be doing in my art classes. It’s going to be really fun.”

Hearing directly from the freshmen and sophomores gives us a glimpse into what it feels like to adjust to high school life. For some, the transition is about finding new friends and charting new social horizons. For others, it’s about discovering new passions, hobbies, and interests through Ward Melville’s academic classes, electives, and extracurricular activities. Nevertheless, it is clear that every student has their own way of adjusting and learning to this new environment. They may be at different stages of their high school journeys, but together, the freshmen and the sophomores represent the future of Ward Melville—full of curiosity, energy, and the kind of optimism that keeps the school community moving forward.

The Teacher Transition

by **ALEXANDRA COTLET,**
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Throughout the district restructuring, much attention has been devoted to changes in the student body. But the freshmen and sophomores moving up to Ward Melville were accompanied by some of their teachers, and their move was certainly more unusual. It was a fresh start that called on them to adapt, reflect, and recapture what it means to be a teacher in a new school setting, perhaps for the first time in decades.

Dave Mutter, an Earth Science teacher with 25 years of experience at Paul J. Gelinas Junior High School, described the practical hurdles of the shift, most notably the shared classroom spaces. “The procedures are quite different, so it took some time to get used to how things work,” he explained. “It’s very difficult to get used to coming and going out of a classroom, often with tools and supplies, every time a class starts and ends so the next teacher can come in and set up.” Mutter has also had to accept an entirely revamped curriculum, with Earth Science being changed to Earth and Space Sciences. And yet, in all the disruption, there was a bright side. “It’s been great to see my former students who are up here,” Mutter smiled. “You have all grown up since I last had the privilege of seeing you. The

expression of astonishment and good feelings have been quite pleasant to go through.”

For Spanish teacher Karen Roarty, the most striking improvement was the autonomy of her students. “Junior high students are more routine-oriented and have to be directed, whereas high school students are more independent and self-directed,” she said. The transfer to Ward Melville also opened up new professional opportunities: along with her Level II classes, Roarty now teaches Level III Spanish. “Adding a new class has given me the chance to build new lessons and experiment with new methods to materials,” she said. This power to innovate was thrilling, but her junior high background had prepared her well. “The classroom management strategies and ability to establish clear routines, which have been developed in the junior high, have been most helpful in the high school,” she explained.

Roarty also appreciated the chance to return to her professional roots. “I started my career at the high school level,” she said, “so I was excited about coming full circle and continuing to challenge students academically and prepare them for life after graduation.”

Nevertheless, not all teachers had to adapt to a new curriculum, as Mutter and Roarty did. Christine Chase, who taught Advanced World History at Gelinas before moving up to Ward Melville, noted that her content remained consistent. For her, the transition was effortless largely because of the support she got from her department. “I just hoped



the circumstances would be the same—that I’d be supported and have the freedom to teach how I love. And so far, that has held. I have a great department and an understanding chair.” The biggest hurdle for her, much like her colleagues, was the earlier start time. “That’s rough,” she admitted.

Her teaching style, too, has been passed down. Well known for using games and activities in class, Chase still enjoys participatory lessons. “Ninth graders—and to be honest, all children—are open to that. No one can sit and listen anymore, so I try to keep things going,” she explained. Even after having worked exclusively in the junior high schools until now, the move has not changed what she likes most about being a teacher: making history fascinating and meaningful for students.

The district restructuring is not merely a scheduling decision; it is a cultural shift that will redefine the building’s identity for decades to come. But at its core, the change celebrates the people who bring learning to life and their importance to education. Mutter’s memories of reconnecting with students, Roarty’s eagerness to connect with learners on a deeper level, and Chase’s commitment to sparking enthusiasm for history are all reminders that teaching is equal parts passion and content. As Ward Melville enters this new age, the voices of its ninth-grade teachers convey a tale of hope, adaptability, and resilience. Their stories best describe that although change is not always seamless, it is often a period of learning—not only for students, but also for teachers.

Ward Melville Juniors Win International Science Medals

by SARAH WU, SCIENCE EDITOR

This summer, Ward Melville High School juniors Jason Yin and Eric Liu took their love of science to the international stage, earning awards at two of the most prestigious international olympiads. Yin competed at the International Earth Science Olympiad (IESO) in Jining, China, while Liu represented the U.S. at the International Biology Olympiad (IBO) in Quezon City, Philippines. By the end of the summer, Yin returned home with two gold medals and Liu received a silver medal, earning recognition not only for themselves but also for their school community.

The journey to an international olympiad is long and demanding. Students must first qualify through a national selection process and then attend a training camp before the top students are selected for the U.S. team. For Yin, it all began with a thunderstorm a few years ago that sparked his curiosity about the natural world. “There was this huge storm that got me really interested in how the Earth works,” he recalled.

Through a friend, he was introduced to the U.S. Earth Science Olympiad in eighth grade. In ninth grade, Yin made it to the training camp but fell short of advancing. “I didn’t perform well on the group projects, so I didn’t make it to IESO that year,” he explained. “But I came back the next year and

did much better, and that’s what got me on the team.”

Liu’s story started in a slightly different place. “I first got interested in biology through the Science Olympiad in middle school,” he said. “It made me curious to learn more, and eventually I wanted to challenge myself further, which is what led me to the Biology Olympiad.” After excelling in the early round of the U.S. Biology Olympiad (USABO), he earned a spot at the national training camp at Harvard University, where the U.S. IBO team was selected.

During IESO, Yin worked in teams of students from all over the world on two group projects in addition to his individual exam. According to Yin, one of the greatest challenges was collaboration, stating, “It was somewhat challenging due to language barriers. Although it was less difficult than I initially anticipated, it still created mild inconveniences at times.”

Liu, on the other hand, faced different challenges. At IBO, there are both theoretical and practical, lab-based exams. While he was thoroughly prepared for the former, the latter was unfamiliar territory. “At the earlier stages, I only focused on practice tests without any experiments, so moving to the international level required a very different kind of preparation,” he explained. “At Harvard, I had to pick up a lot of new skills in just 10 days.”

The lab portion of the IBO tested everything from dissections to techniques like chromatography. “One task that stood out was a mini-prep, where we had to run a DNA gel electrophoresis,” Liu said. “The time constraint was extremely tight—we had to finish the lab work while also answering test



Photo courtesy of Lingli Lou and Shuangye Yin.

questions at the same time. It was a hard but unforgettable experience.”

Liu was pleased with the results, with his strong performance on the theoretical portion helping balance out the challenges he faced in the lab. “I did really well on the theoretical portion, and considering my limited time in the lab, I think I did pretty well overall,” he said. His efforts earned him a silver medal to add to his gold medal from the national finals.

At IESO, Yin’s perseverance paid off. He won two gold medals, one for finishing in the top 12 individually and another for his group’s Earth Science Project. “Honestly, I thought I had done really badly on the exam,” Yin admitted. “So when they announced I had won a gold medal, it felt surreal. I was shocked but also proud of myself.”

Beyond the scientific aspect of the competitions, both Yin and Liu talked about how meaningful it was to connect with students from around the world. Yin recalled his favorite moments as the brief pauses between exams and projects, where he “got to just sit around and talk with people from all over the world.”

Liu had a similar experience with cultural exchange in the Philippines. “I met people from 77 countries,” he said. “It gave me the chance to learn more about their cultures and perspectives. We also exchanged small gifts. This made the connections feel very personal and meaningful.”

The competitions also allowed for some new encounters and sights. “We visited several sites near Jining, China, where I was able to observe geological formations firsthand,” Yin said. “For example, I had never

previously seen quartz staining in rocks, which was super exciting.”

Looking forward, Liu is clear about what the IBO means for him. “This experience has strengthened my passion in biology and confirmed that I want to pursue it in the future,” he explained. “Meeting with students from around the world showed me how science transcends borders and connects people across cultures.” Not only did the competition inspire him to continue learning and contributing to biology, but it also provided him with useful practice. “The advanced techniques, dissections, and research that I have learned gave me the experience necessary to achieve my goal: to study biology more deeply and eventually become a doctor, where I can use science to help people directly.”

As for Yin, the IESO was a chance to grow in unexpected ways and an overall meaningful accomplishment. “It’s something I’ll never forget. I’ll probably put it on my college application, but more importantly, it gave me an experience I wouldn’t trade for anything,” he reflected. Yin doesn’t have a plan set in stone for his future career, but plans on studying physics in college as he thinks about going into the field of meteorology.

Though Yin and Liu compete in different olympiads, their stories share multiple commonalities: their curiosities were sparked at a young age, they faced challenges and setbacks that required persistence, and they connected with students from all over the world. Both emphasized the cultural exchange as one of the most rewarding parts of their experiences, and both left their competitions inspired to pursue science at a deeper level.

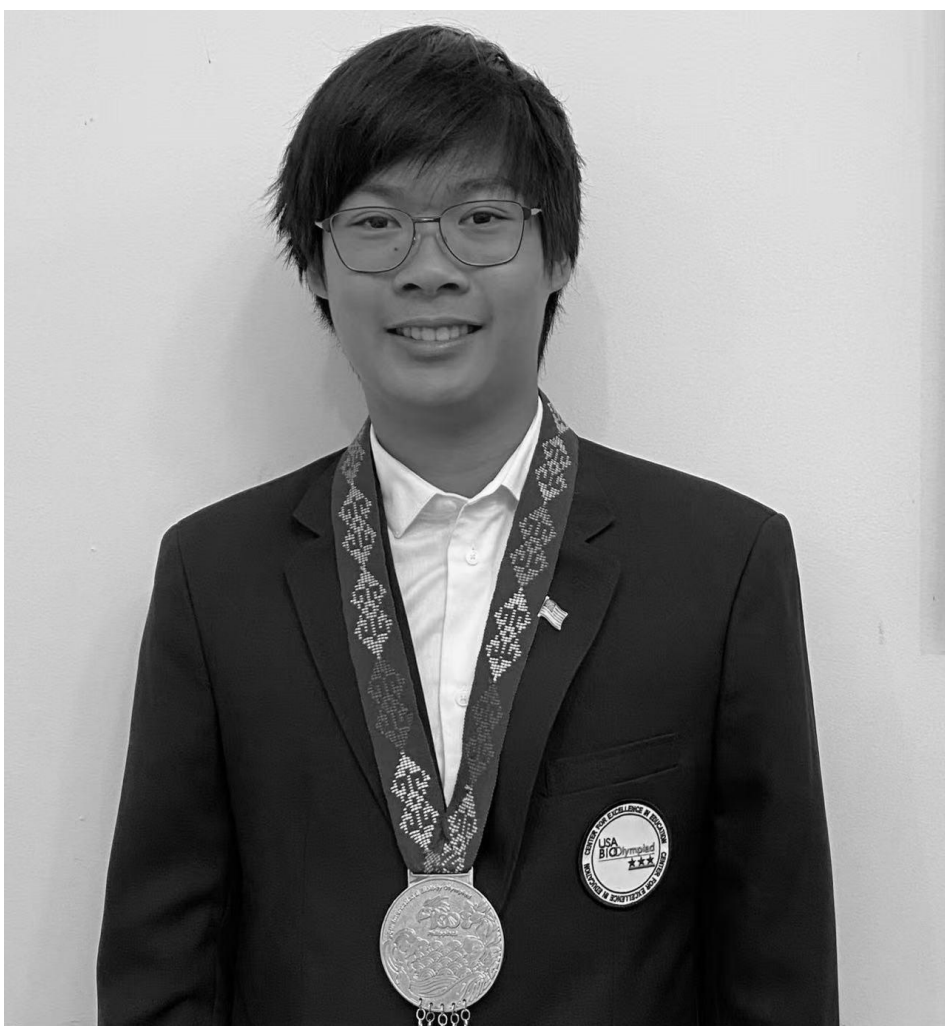


Photo courtesy of Chuyu Liu and Guimei Wang.

Overview of Local Issues

by **MICHAEL RETAKH,**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Over the past year, the Three Village area has been affected by many local issues and policy changes. New York State's ban of cell phones in school, the district's budget process for the 2025-26 school year, and the restructuring of the district have led many ordinary individuals to get involved in our community, perhaps not at a level seen in recent memory.

The most visible of all these issues has been the reconstruction of Harbor Road in Stony Brook, or rather the lack thereof. More than 14 months since the road collapsed, a gaping hole remains, and residents have justifiably become angry with the lack of progress. Main Street is now dotted with signs calling on the Ward Melville Heritage Organization (WMHO) to repair the dam, and a large sign saying, "Is this Ward Melville's heritage?" has been plastered over the fence on the far side of the crater.

One would be forgiven for believing that the inaction has purely been the fault of the WMHO, and that they are solely responsible for the repairs. However, the issue of ownership is far more complicated, partially explaining why construction has been delayed for so long. Harbor Road is a public road, yet it lies on private land owned by the WMHO. The road also straddles the Town of Brookhaven and the Town of Smithtown, making it somewhat unclear as to which jurisdiction has control over the collapsed section. Finally, there is some evidence to suggest that the County was involved in the road's construction many decades ago, implying at least partial ownership.

The road collapse and the ensuing rush of water caused a house to be partially destroyed, with its back half falling into the creek. The owner of the house proceeded to sue those responsible for the road, essentially freezing negotiations between parties. It currently seems that he has released his lawyer and the suit is currently on hold, but the entire episode contributed to the various delays.

There have been some small developments over the last several weeks and months, most notably the filing of a lawsuit against the WMHO by the Village of Head of the Harbor. However, it is unclear what effect this will have on the speed of the negotiations and construction.

The WMHO also claims

that it has taken action to slowly move forward with the initial stages of construction, even as these thorny issues of ownership and financial responsibility get sorted out. According to its website, studies involving ground penetrating radar, borings, and hydraulic processes have either been completed or are in progress. These will eventually become important to the design of the new road as officials try to prevent a similar disaster in the future.

Despite the fact that all the roadside signs blame the WMHO for inaction, residents have begun to voice their increasing displeasure towards the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County. An open letter was sent to both Town Supervisor Daniel Panico and County Executive Edward Romaine, calling on both officials to do something other than "adopt a posture of helplessness and powerlessness in their ability to help resolve this situation." Signed by more than 150 Three Village residents, the letter demonstrates ever-increasing frustration at the continued impasse between involved parties and the resulting inaction.

Another major issue for the town has been the impending closure of the Brookhaven landfill. The shutting down of the landfill was first scheduled several years ago as it became clear that it would soon reach capacity, but the final date has been pushed back several times, most recently to 2028.

Despite the rapidly approaching date, local officials have yet to finalize plans for trash collection and removal after the landfill closure. Last year, a controversial plan involving waste transfer systems across Long Island was proposed, but this was soon abandoned. A true alternative has not yet been made public, and the delay has been affecting the planning of the closure itself.

Further complicating matters, the landfill has been found to be emitting a plume of toxic chemicals, affecting the health of nearby residents. The town had attempted to blame other factors, including several nearby industrial properties, for the plume and its high levels of PFAS, or "forever chemicals," but this explanation was swiftly rejected by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Therefore, along with actually closing the landfill, the town must also deal with the environmental damage and anger from residents who were only recently notified about the presence of the toxic plume. These issues will not disappear immediately after the landfill closes, as the plume could continue to exist for decades before finally dissipating.



The town and county have also been focusing their efforts on wastewater treatment. After the passage of Proposition 2 in the 2024 election, which raised sales taxes slightly to help fund water quality improvements, town and county officials have been busy allocating funds. They will be used primarily to upgrade existing sewer systems and to install thousands of new, advanced cesspools every year.

A perennial issue on Long Island are high taxes, with property taxes in particular being a burden on many Three Village households. County Executive Romaine has made repeated pledges, both during his campaign and while in office, to not pierce the state tax cap, and he has so far adhered to this pledge in all his county budgets. However, because the county accounts for a relatively small share of total taxes collected, this promise may have a smaller impact than many have hoped.

Conversely, the Town of Brookhaven's 2025 budget pierced the tax cap for the first time, which officials at the time defended as unfortunate but necessary. For the recently announced 2026 budget, the tax increase stayed under the cap, but it nevertheless has already attracted some controversy. Most notably, Supervisor Panico announced the closure of the Holtsville Wildlife and Ecology Center following a yearslong investigation into potential animal abuses. Residents were generally supportive of this move, but the plan to relocate the animals to other Long Island locations attracted concerns from animal advocates. Another controversial measure in the budget were salary increases for county officials, including for Panico.

Of course, Long Island does not exist in a vacuum, and changes in state and federal policy also affect the Three Village area. On the subject of taxation, the One

Big Beautiful Bill Act signed into law by President Donald J. Trump on July 4 raised the state and local tax (SALT) deduction from \$10,000 to \$40,000 for those making less than \$500,000 annually, though only for the next five years. The provision is generally expected to decrease taxes for many Long Island residents.

However, other actions of the Trump administration, including other provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill, have been far more controversial. The bill slashed environmental programs across the nation, many of which provided funds to Long Island's many green spaces and parks. Green energy programs, including a solar panel tax credit, were also heavily cut or eliminated, stalling local efforts to provide renewable energy sources. Furthermore, programs with many beneficiaries and dependents on Long Island, including Medicare, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, were slashed. All this presents a challenge to local officials who have touted these programs and who now have to decide how to help affected residents, if at all.

Local policing has also been affected by the federal government, most importantly through the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The agency has detained several Long Island residents, some of whom had no criminal record and were taking steps to obtain permanent residency. ICE agents have been spotted throughout Suffolk County, most notably in Brentwood, Islip and Riverhead. However, local officials have expressed little concern about such operations, with Romaine saying back in June, "If there is fear, it is self made."

Town Supervisor Daniel Panico and County Executive Edward Romaine did not respond to requests for comment.

An Interview with Steven Englebright

by LILY HUANG and
ZAINA KHAN, COPY and
NEWS EDITORS

Kaleidoscope sat down with Steven Englebright, the Democratic incumbent seeking a second consecutive term as Suffolk County Legislator in the 5th district, a seat he previously occupied from 1984 to 1992. From 1992 to 2022, he represented the Three Village area in the New York State Assembly. Below are some excerpts from our interview: the full interview can be found at bit.ly/kscope-englebright, or by scanning the QR code below.

***Kaleidoscope:* What accomplishments during your time as county legislator are you most proud of, and what else do you hope to accomplish during your term?**

Steven Englebright: We have a sole source of drinking water in this county. That water is in the ground, and it is in the ground from precipitation. I first ran for the county legislature in 1983, and was elected in 1984. And I pushed for the county parks system to be utilized to protect drinking water. Fast forward several public

referendums later, we now have the second-largest county park system in the nation: 63,000 acres of parkland, much of it in the Pine Barrens. We're racing every day to preserve more. And I think we will be number one soon.

A huge concern for voters is the cost of living, especially with the passage of the last budget. Do you have any plans to combat this?

The first thing you do is try to stop the bleeding, and to hold the line on taxes. The next thing is to try to use the taxes in a way that allows for the possibility of reducing taxes. It's also important to make some investments. I'm very focused on the cost of living aspect of this. I live here. The taxes are oppressive. The county taxes are the least of it, by the way. Most of the taxes are property taxes [from the towns]. The sales tax in this county is slightly less than many of the other counties in the state. We like to keep it that way.

Last year the Avalon Park Preserve was destroyed by severe flooding. Are there any plans underway to help restore this significant part of our community?

Yes, but it's been painfully slow. There has been a lot of confusion as to what unit of government or private not-for-profit

Part of your campaign is about improving public safety. What is your plan to do so?

One of the ways I think we can improve public safety is by improving the morale of our police department. It's a very difficult job. It's dangerous, and they need to know that we appreciate them. If we care about their job, they'll care about their job more too. Letting the police know that we appreciate them and that we want them to keep working hard for us is important, but we also have to support their budget, listen to them, and provide what they need.

A lot of your campaign is based on improving housing costs. What is your plan on this issue?

In my experience with real estate and working at the County Clerk's Office, I'm very familiar with the whole process of purchasing. This includes all the fees, where exactly they go, title companies, government, and those types of things. So my goal really is to try to keep many of the fees that we send up to the state here. If we can keep more of those fees here, then we can reduce them.

There are also streamlined processes that we can do to make things easier and more affordable



Photo courtesy of Englebright for Suffolk.

ownership should take responsibility for repairs to the dam. But we recently found documents that may give the county the opportunity to get involved, because it turns out the county used eminent domain to take the land and the right to build the road.

Your opponent, Laura Endres, is running largely on a public safety platform. What will you do to address these issues?

I'm very pleased that I have received the endorsement of all of the police unions. That is a validation that I'm very proud of. Take a look at my record: I have a 100% affirmative voting record for the resolutions that have come before the Committee on Public Safety, of which I am a member.

I am troubled that we now

have federal employees abusing police powers. For example, [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] arrested a seven-year-old girl. It's beyond unnecessary: it's harmful. I think rather than imitating the totalitarian style of use of police power, the federal government should more closely imitate the Suffolk County police and the tradition of restrained, disciplined, and cautious use of that power.



An Interview with Laura Endres

by ALLIE HARRISON and
CAROLINE QIAN, OP-ED
and ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EDITORS

Laura Endres is the Republican candidate for Suffolk County Legislator in the 5th district and is challenging incumbent Steve Englebright. Below are some excerpts from *Kaleidoscope's* interview of Endres: the full interview can be found at bit.ly/kscope-endres, or by scanning the QR code below.

***Kaleidoscope:* What made you run for this position? Is there a specific issue that you want to address, or a perspective that you thought was important but unvoiced?**

Laura Endres: I don't have any one real focus. I would like to reduce fees, because we have our parks, and we pay taxes for them. We have all of these things that are a benefit to us, but the fees just keep going up. For the people who really enjoy things that have fees, it's a lot. So I guess reducing fees would be my focus, but I really want to have a global view of everything that our district could use.



Photo courtesy of Laura for Suffolk.

for people who are building, people who are renting. Some of those things aren't something the county legislator can do, but relationships with the other county officials and the town officials are what's going to be important. And since I know the process already, I don't have to learn that.

Your opponent, Steve Englebright, is running with a focus on environmental protection and conservation of Suffolk County's green spaces. What are your views on this issue?

My views are very close to his. I worked in the parks when I was younger, and I love that. I think there's enough places where we could do redevelopment. We

don't need to touch any of our open space. We have open space programs and grants, and I would like to grow that. But I think redevelopment includes a global approach.

I also think sewers and wastewater treatment plants are really important. They passed all those initiatives, and we've got to get that money into our district.



Four Local Favorites: Our Community

by ALEXANDRA
POTEKHIN,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

If you spend a Saturday wandering through the Three Village area, it's hard to miss the sight of a community in action: the smell of fresh coffee drifting through the library; people chatting at a diner counter; some antiques in a gift shop, all with a unique story; or a bustling all-day eatery and ice cream parlor on Main Street. To see this in action, start with four town favorites: Level Up Kitchen at Emma S. Clark Library, Setauket Village Diner, Ben's Garden, and Sweet Mama's.

Emma S. Clark Memorial Library announced plans for renovations in 2021, explicitly aiming to make the building feel like a true community center. Completed in 2023, the most noticeable change may have been the addition of an outdoor terrace, where residents could enjoy the weather, sample books before checking them out, or take advantage of the extra study and meeting space. But the cafe, run by Level Up Kitchen, is perhaps more important: it invites people to slow down, meet a friend, or just grab a quick snack.

Its origins and operations are based in the very community that it is helping support. The owner of the cafe is Chelsea Gomez, a Setauket native who previously was the Executive Chef at Pentimento, a restaurant in Stony Brook Village that closed in 2021 and has since been replaced by Luca. Gomez also sources many of her ingredients from local farms and growers, promoting not only sustainability but also local cooperation.

The cafe is simple: selections are primarily hand-made food and pastries, accompanied by coffee and other drinks. The menu can be browsed quickly, and it makes you feel content before you head back to a book, a table, or an event. Some employee favorites—courtesy of Olivia Miller, a Ward Melville senior—are the Turkey Wrap, the Cinnamon Roll Blondie, and the Iced Vanilla Coffee.

Nevertheless, the bigger impact is the cultural change. Adding a cafe changes how people use a library: instead of just checking out and leaving, there's space to stay. If a student comes in to study and doesn't bring food, they can eat without interrupting their work. If they're with their friends, there's

now a place to hang out. It becomes one of those “see you there” places where life actually happens.

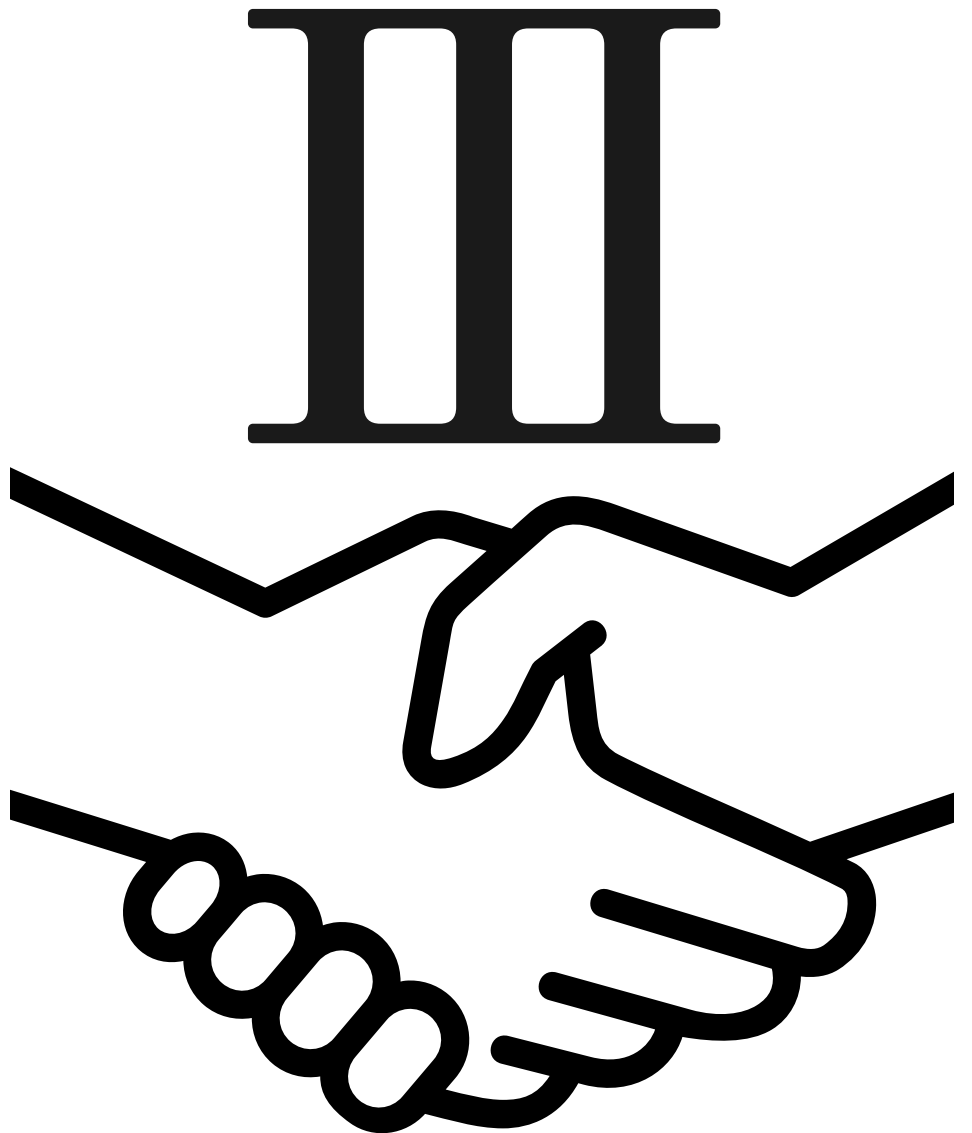
A few minutes away on Route 25A, Setauket Village Diner can be visited for anything from morning coffees to late-night cravings. Family-owned and with roots going back decades, the diner boasts a classic long menu and the promise of “Breakfast Served Anytime.” Its long hours make it a good spot for students and families with widely different schedules, and its location is easy and close: 238 Route 25A in the shopping center near Wild by Nature.

Menus at diners can be overwhelming, but locals will tell you that's half the point. At Setauket Village Diner, that means a long list of omelets—Greek, Athenian, “Stony Brook,” and more—Benedicts, egg platters, waffles, burgers, and sandwiches. It's exactly the kind of spot where one person is ordering a turkey club at 10 a.m. while someone else is munching on pancakes at noon.

Beyond the specifics, there's a mood you get in a diner that few other places have: a nice conversation, the friendliness of a server who knows you, and the comfort of knowing that your favorites are still on the menu. From Stony Brook University students to families after elementary school sports games, this is the place to take a break from a busy life and spend some quality time with others.

Between the diner and the heart of Old Stony Brook is a pleasant stretch of roads that quietly shifts from everyday life to local charm and history. The short drive lets you slow down: you'll notice front porches, mature trees, and the calm water full of life of Stony Brook Harbor. It's the kind of transition that gives you a moment to pause, breathe, and ease into the slower, quainter rhythm of the local village life.

Walk into Stony Brook Village and you'll find Ben's Garden, a boutique that feels curated in the best way—part stationery, part home décor, part find-the-perfect-gift. The brand is the creation of artist Ben Busko, who grew up in the Three Village area and started selling his pieces at local art shows before creating a recognized line with trays, paperweights, greeting cards, coasters, and more. The products are beautiful household items, and this small shop at 141 Main Street—the fourth location of Ben's Garden, joining stores in SoHo, Huntington, and Oyster Bay—brings his journey full circle, building a hometown brand right in the heart of Stony Brook.



What makes it an essential isn't just the merchandise; it's the store's personality. The whole place is charming: quotes on glass trays, cute and clever cocktail napkins, vintage-inspired prints. You can pop in for a last-minute birthday card and walk out with a gift that feels personal rather than generic. It's the kind of place that makes you want to send more notes and celebrate small moments, which is a rare but beautiful change in our digital age.

Just a few doors down along the Stony Brook Village Crescent is Sweet Mama's, a restaurant-cum-ice-cream-parlor. With a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere and a menu that's made for couples, families, or those who just want a sweet treat, it is a true crowd-pleaser. Like Ben's Garden, Sweet Mama's too boasts another Long Island location, this time in Northport. But the Stony Brook branch, found at 121 Main Street, is made unique by its surroundings and, of course, the ice cream offerings. With hours that run through dinner most days, Sweet Mama's is a reliable pick for “something everyone will eat.”

For locals, Sweet Mama's is an easy place to go to. It's a casual spot to go with your friends—especially for the ice cream sold in the front space—but it's also somewhere you can bring your whole family with no complaints. It works for birthdays, team meals with your coach, or just a long catch-up with someone you haven't seen in a while. It's a cute date spot and is right in the center of the village, leaving you with

something to do once you finish your meal. The energy spills out onto Main Street, adding to that village feeling that makes our Stony Brook such a great place.

What ties these together is how they shape daily life. The library cafe turns a book run into a study date; the diner guarantees a warm breakfast well into the afternoon; Ben's Garden helps you out when you need a gift that doesn't look like everyone else's; and Sweet Mama's solves the never-ending “where should we go?” group text.

Of course, there's an economic story here. Each of these locations is a local employer—some even of students right here at Ward Melville—and a small business. But culture shines through the stores that keep people shopping and browsing in-person instead of just lazily clicking “Buy Now.” Diners and cafés become little town halls. Family-run places pass along the ridiculous number of little kindnesses that big chains never quite learn.

Places like this make our big town small. It's not unusual to see a to-go cup from Level Up at work, or to run into your Sweet Mama's server later at the grocery store, or to spot a Ben's Garden trinket at your friend's house. These businesses, along with the many others that dot our neighborhoods, bring us all closer together. And they make this town, our town, a true community.

Ward Melville Celebrates With Homecoming Carnival

by SARAH CHERLIN,
COPY EDITOR

On Saturday, October 4th, Ward Melville's Homecoming celebration took place as the football team faced off against Sachem North. Just like every other year, members of the Three Village community all came together to celebrate the high school student body. But while most high schools across the United States choose to celebrate Homecoming with a school dance, Ward Melville has a unique way of fostering a sense of school spirit before the big game: the Homecoming carnival. Featuring an assortment of booths offering games, engaging activities, and prizes, the carnival appeals to students across all ages and attracts a sizable crowd.

This year, members of several different clubs and organizations skillfully decorated their own unique booths. Their main goal was to create interactive ways for attendees to enjoy themselves at the carnival, but they were also hoping to show younger students the many opportunities that Ward Melville has, and to encourage them to get involved once they can. Most of these stations were

completely set up and run by student volunteers from Ward Melville. Some of the participating clubs in this year's carnival included DECA, HOSA, the Red Cross Club, the PTSA, and multiple different honor societies. The theme of the carnival was Growing Through Change—a fitting topic considering the recent and significant changes in the Three Village district, most notably the restructuring of grade levels and the integration of new students into both the middle schools and the high school.

The carnival provided an entertaining time for the young kids attending, but volunteers were not left empty-handed. Many were able to engage with the younger students and serve as role models, giving them a valuable and memorable experience. Members of the Science National Honor Society quizzed kids with science-related trivia questions at their booth, offering prizes such as candy and stickers. Just a few steps away, the National English Honor Society encouraged young students to read by helping them decorate their own personalized bookmarks, giving them a way to get in touch with their creative side. At the National Honor Society's booth, children were welcomed to receive temporary tattoos from active members of the club. Sydney Duca, a senior at Ward Melville who volunteered to help run the booth, said her experience was both "enjoyable" and "rewarding." She added, "I was



able to see the smiles sweep across the kids' faces as they picked out their tattoos and had the opportunity to talk to us high school students."

At the booth run by HOSA, a club aiming to educate and prepare students interested in pursuing a future career in the healthcare industry, young students were encouraged to write letters and short, positive messages to kids in the Stony Brook Children's Hospital. Additionally, volunteers from the club passed out candy and taught kids a lesson about human anatomy through an interactive game of "pin the heart on the skeleton."

The Red Cross Club also provided an educational experience for kids interested in learning about first aid techniques. Members of the club taught students how to

quickly and effectively tie splints in case of an emergency through a short demonstration. On top of the brief lesson, they allowed eager students to try out the techniques themselves, with the volunteers at the booth acting as injured patients for the kids to tend to.

Even exploring only a few of the myriad booths and activities planned by members from numerous diverse clubs made it increasingly obvious how much Ward Melville students truly care, both about their individual clubs and about collectively making the event a success. The effort put into the preparation of this event was impressive, and the volunteers at the carnival demonstrated a genuine sense of school spirit and care for their community.

The 2025 Emmy Awards: A Recap

by REBECCA MALZ,
CHIEF FINANCIAL
OFFICER

On September 14, 2025, Hollywood's biggest actors came together to honor television's best at the 77th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards. Some categories were all but decided before the evening began, but many others produced winners that shocked everyone.

The comedy category brought the most predictable victories of the evening. *The Studio*, an Apple TV+ satire that takes a behind-the-scenes look at the world of film production, received four awards, among them Outstanding Comedy Series. Co-creator and star Seth Rogen also took home Emmy statuettes for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series and Outstanding Director, the latter alongside Evan Goldberg. By the end of the weekend, *The Studio* broke the all-time record for most awards won by a comedy in an

Emmy season, an honor previously held by FX's *The Bear*.

The drama categories were far more competitive. *The Pitt* prevailed in a close competition for Outstanding Drama Series, with its star Noah Wyle capping off a career resurgence with a first-time Emmy win. The medical drama did not sweep its categories; *Severance* star Tramell Tillman made Emmy history by becoming the first Black man to ever win the award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series. Additionally, *Severance* star Britt Lower earned an Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series, providing further consolation to stars and fans of the surreal office thriller.

The limited series categories were swept by Netflix's *Adolescence*, a show depicting events following a horrific stabbing. The limited series, famously using just one continuous shot for each of its four episodes, ended the night with six awards, the most major awards of any show. Owen Cooper, the 15-year-old *Adolescence* star, became the youngest male to ever win an acting Emmy and the second-youngest winner overall.

In addition, The Outstanding Lead Actor and Supporting Actress in a Limited Series awards went to *Adolescence* stars Stephen Graham and Erin Doherty. The series finished the night with the Outstanding Limited or Anthology Series.

In one of the evening's most shocking outcomes, Cristin Milioti, star of the Batman spinoff *The Penguin*, won a tight race for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Limited Series. After winning her first ever Emmy, Milioti told the audience that she had documented her victory speech in her therapy notes and exclaimed, "I love acting so much!"

As with any such broadcast, the 2025 Emmys were not solely defined by the envelope openings. First-time host and comedian Nate Bargatze promised that he would donate \$100,000 to the Boys and Girls Clubs but would reduce the amount donated by \$1,000 each time a winner went over the provided time limit. Bargatze also pledged to add \$1,000 for every awardee that managed to keep their speech under the allotted time. Although his methods failed to solve the perennial problem of overlong

speeches, Bargatze ended up contributing \$250,000 to the Boys and Girls Clubs on top of the \$100,000 CBS was donating.

In a political moment, *Hacks* star Hannah Einbinder ended her acceptance speech for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series by criticizing Immigration and Customs Enforcement, soon adding a call to "free Palestine." In doing so, she went over her allotted time, but Einbinder promised to "pay the difference" of \$10,000 for doing so. Following the ceremony, fans created a GoFundMe to cover the cost.

Another notable moment was Stephen Colbert's win for Outstanding Talk Series, a first for his late-night show. Just two months before, Colbert had announced that his last show would air the following May, following CBS's much-criticized cancellation of the show during a merger with Paramount. Colbert used his speech as an opportunity to "suggest" his resume and those of his 200 employees. After his speech, he received a standing ovation, and loud chants of "Stephen!" were heard from the audience.

Crossword Puzzle
by MICHAEL RETAKH,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

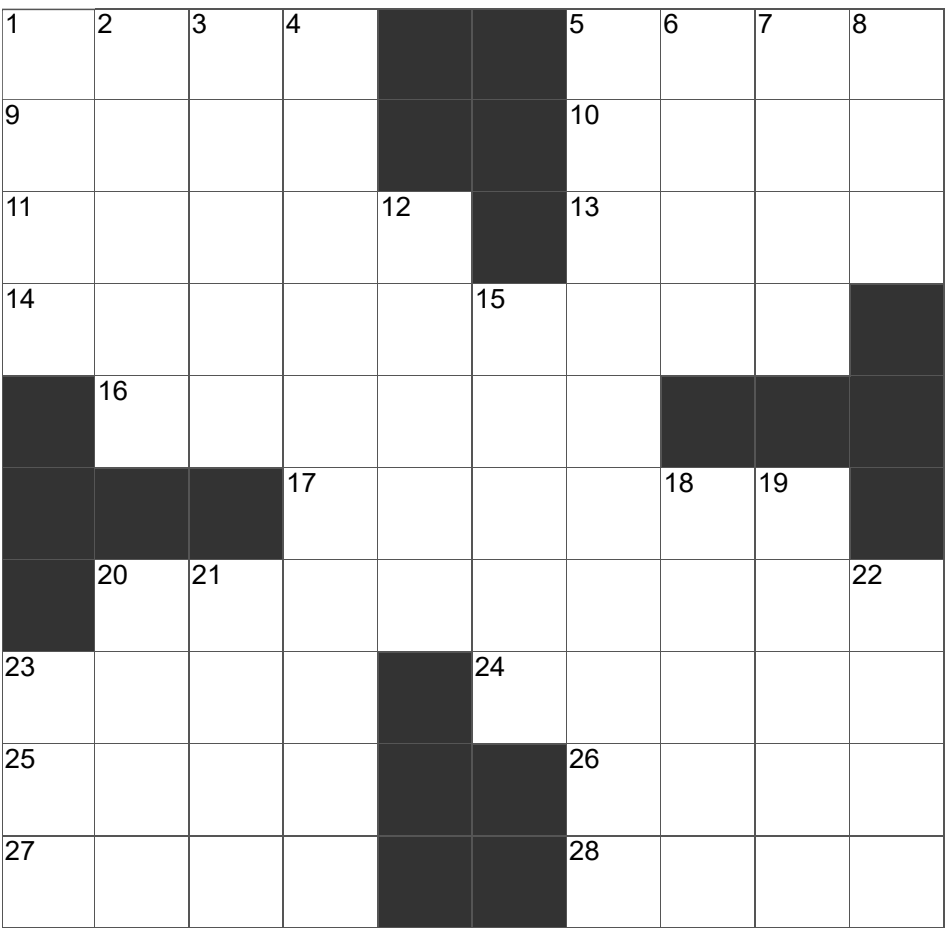
ACROSS

- 1. HarperCollins or Macmillan, abbr.
- 5. One of the five tastes
- 9. Antidepressant, abbr.
- 10. Doctor's ____, abbr.
- 11. Harvard's motto, in English
- 13. Brooklyn basketball team
- 14. One of four missing from this puzzle
- 16. Small bullet or fuel piece
- 17. The fifth was a Prince in the Tower
- 20. NASCAR tournament
- 23. With E., food poisoner
- 24. Beatle and Thomas the Tank Engine narrator
- 25. Dynasty preceded by the Five Kingdoms

- 26. One of the five branches of the U.S. military, abbr.
- 27. ____, poor Yorick!
- 28. Arizona city

DOWN

- 1. Type of medical residency, abbr.
- 2. LaLota or AOC, abbr.
- 3. Pas blonde
- 4. Agatha Christie's Five ____
- 5. Hospital for long-term recovery
- 6. Three Grand Slams
- 7. ____ no good
- 8. Highways or bus lines, abbr.
- 12. Places where checked baggage goes
- 15. Loud kitten
- 18. Wash without soap
- 19. Impressionist Edgar
- 20. Song by Gwen Stefani, or one from West Side Story
- 21. Not the radius
- 22. A loveseat is a small one
- 23. Java-based AP course



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