

Ocasio-Cortez Not Proud Of Westchester Roots



National political star Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez grew up in Westchester.

By Dan Murphy

My family first moved to Westchester in 1972, from the same Parkchester neighborhood in the Bronx as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who shocked the political world last month when she defeated Congressman Joe Crowley in a Democratic primary in Queens and the Bronx. Both Ocasio-Cortez and I attended Yorktown High School; I graduated in 1985, and she graduated in 2007.

I remain in the same area of northern Westchester and southern Putnam County that I grew up in. I wanted to stay here, I'm proud of the roots that my family and I have made here, and I wanted my daughter to try and have the same experience and education that I had growing up.

Ocasio-Cortez has taken a different path that has catapulted her into the national spotlight and will likely, after Nov. 6, make her the youngest female member of Congress in U.S. history – at age 28.

After her high school graduation, Ocasio-Cortez attended Boston University and worked for Sen. Ted Kennedy before returning to New York to work and help the family maintain their Yorktown home after the death of her father in 2008.

The Washington Post recently opined about Ocasio-Cortez and her unwillingness to acknowledge or be proud of her Westchester upbringing and education until she was confronted with it.

"In fact, there is another way Cardillo could

Continued on Page 9

Murphy-Harckham-Kesten Race Shows Insanity of Politics



State Senate candidate Pete Harckham, left, with Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

By Dan Murphy

One of Westchester's hottest political contests this year is for State Senate in the 40th District, which includes many northern Westchester towns and runs north into Putnam and Dutchess

counties. Incumbent Republican State Sen. Terrence Murphy will try to fight through the blue wave of progressive Democratic victories in recent elections in the county.

Continued on Page 8

Where are the Summer Movies?



John Travolta, right, as John Gotti, with Westchester native Chris Kerson, who plays Willie Boy Johnson in "Gotti."

By Dan Murphy

For those of us who like to take our significant other out for a simple night of dinner and a movie, I ask: What movies are out there? I thought summertime was the time for the great set of blockbuster movies?

The problem is, if – like me – you are not interested in comic book movies or other animated

movies, or horror movies, or a sixth sequel to Tom Cruise's "Mission Impossible" series, are there any adult movies that are released in an actual movie theater anymore?

My interest in movies includes historical biographies, political thrillers, mob movies, crime and the law movies, and an occasional "chick flick" for

Continued on Page 8

Astorino Leaves Latimer With \$32M Budget Hole

By Dan Murphy

An audit of the Westchester County budget and its finances, prepared by independent auditors O'Conner Davies, showed that at the end of 2017, the county had an operating deficit of more than \$32 million. The budget shortfall was accumulated by then-County Executive Rob Astorino, who presented budgets to the County Board of Legislators for eight years with a 0 percent property tax levy increase.

Astorino's "no new taxes" pledge, which was welcomed by a clear majority of Westchester homeowners and taxpayers who pay the highest property taxes in the country, is now being viewed and analyzed as bad practice. While Gov. Andrew Cuomo helped implement a 2 percent property tax cap for all local governments and school districts (including Westchester County government), Astorino took it one step further, passing budgets with 0 percent tax increases year after year, with the approval and consent of a majority of legislators on the county board.

Union contracts, capital improvements and other necessary expenditures were ignored under Astorino, according to Democratic legislators and County Executive George Latimer, who defeated Astorino last November.

In a statement Latimer, said:

"As anticipated, the 2017 Westchester County financial statements – the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report – has been finalized for 2017, showing an operating deficit of \$32,178,097 in the county's general fund.

"Our administration took office Jan. 1, 2018;

we have inherited this 2017 deficit from the prior administration, and it negatively impacts our current 2018 budget and projections for the 2019 budget, which will be in preparation beginning this summer. This deficit has been presumed for the last few months; the prior county administration budgeted \$15 million in revenue tied to the long-term sale of the airport, a policy that

was rejected in consecutive years by the Board of Legislators.

"The prior county administration negotiated and closed contract settlements, the costs of which were not fully budgeted, with the Westchester County Police Officers Benevolent Association, Westchester County Police Officers Benevolent Association Superior Officers Unit, Westchester County Corrections Officers Benevolent Association and the Westchester County Corrections

Continued on Page 7

Throwing \$50 Million Out the Window



By Dan Murphy

Last month, few voters in Westchester and across New York State went out to vote in a federal primary for members of Congress. Here in Westchester, less than 10 percent of Democrats went to the polls to vote for Eliot Engel, with a total of 17,519 voters coming out in the county.

Westchester voters are used to voting in a Democratic or Republican primary in September,

and they still do – but only for state elections. Federal primary elections, previously held also in September, were changed to June 26.

That decision has been a disaster on several fronts; turnout has dropped and the cost to New York State has been \$50 million per year to conduct another statewide election.

Many Westchester elected officials have

Continued on Page 8

The Sagamore: Staying Close for Family Vacation



The Sagamore Resort in Bolton Landing, just north of Lake George.

By Dan Murphy

Like most Westchester families, our usual tendency for a family summer vacation was to get on a plane, or travel eight to 10 hours each way by car, and try to "outdo" ourselves or our neighbors from the last year's jaunt.

The stresses of airline delays or the grind of a day-long car ride usually take away from the desired result, so I was pleasantly surprised when

my wife suggested that this year we travel less than three hours north on the New York State Thruway to spend a week in Lake George.

Our family vacation included staying several days at The Sagamore, a landmark hotel with a prestigious history located 10 miles north of Lake George in Bolton Landing. Located on a private, 70-acre island, The Sagamore offers elegant lake-

Continued on Page 8

Seniors and Health Care

Access Social Security's Educator Toolkit

By Elias Hagos
Social Security District Manager, Yonkers

With so many students gone for the summer, teachers may now have time to prepare a different kind of lesson plan. Help students prepare a better future for themselves with practical knowledge about financial planning. There's no better time to let young people know that the younger they start saving, the easier it will be to reach their goals.

Let us introduce you to the Social Security Educator Toolkit. This is a rich resource for teachers and advocates. Our "Information for Educators" page contains a toolkit with information and resources to educate and engage students on Social Security. It includes two lesson plans with objectives, infographics and handouts for each lesson plan, links to Social Security webpages, talking points, quiz questions and answers.

It's important for students to understand why Social Security was created and why it is essential to their lives today and in the future. This knowledge and understanding will provide students with a strong base on which to build their financial future.

Access the webpage and toolkit at www.socialsecurity.gov/thirdparty/educators.html.

Young workers can also see how Social Security directly relates to them at www.socialsecurity.gov/people/students.

Getting young people excited about saving can be a somewhat abstract subject. Let them know their dreams can be achieved with thoughtful planning and a bit of discipline. Social Security is securing today and tomorrow with your help and the help of today's educated youth.

We're also always here for you if you need information about programs and benefits. Visit us anytime at www.socialsecurity.gov.

Pace Raises Awareness About Clean Water Scarcity

Pace University in Pleasantville hosted the Westchester Walk for World Water on Saturday in partnership with the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation Student Ambassadors. Participants included more than 100 Pace students, staff, faculty, community members, and students from local high schools including Bedford, Eastchester, Irvington, Kent Place, Scarsdale, Sleepy Hollow/Tarrytown, and The Hackley School including CELF student ambassadors.

Participants walked one mile with large buckets of water on their heads to demonstrate the trek that many women around the world make each day to collect water.

Westchester Walk for World Water, organized by the Dyson College Institute for Sustainability and the Environment at Pace University and CELF, was held to draw attention to the scarcity of safe drinking water around the world and raise funds to provide LifeStraw Community filters to schools in need. While most of us are just steps to the nearest source of clean drinking water, in many parts of the world, people (mostly women and children) walk miles to find water.

"CELF is thrilled to once again partner with Pace University on a student event that addresses one of the most pressing issues of our time: the global freshwater crisis," said

Katie Ginsberg, founder and executive director of CELF. "Just as we see young people across the country stand up and address societal issues, the CELF student ambassadors work to build awareness of the global fresh water crisis. We are so proud of them for speaking up and for contributing their talent and energy to the walk. As high school students, they are already making an impact by educating their own communities about this crisis and enabling students in Kenya to have access to fresh water."

"Photos or stories of women and children throughout the developing world traveling miles for water, often of terrible quality, is not enough," said Michelle Land, director of programming at the Dyson College Institute for Sustainability and the Environment at Pace University. "Our water walk helps Pace students briefly experience what it is like to have to do this every day."

John Cronin, senior fellow for environmental affairs at Dyson College Institute for Sustainability and the Environment, delivered the keynote address, titled "Water, Water, Everywhere... and Nowhere."

The walk recognized contributions of Patti Bressman, founding CELF board member and founder of CELF's Student Ambassador Program.

Separation Anxiety

By Ann Muro

In college I majored in behavioral psychology. One of the required psychology classes was child psychology. In that class, we discussed separation anxiety in children and its long-term effects. A child may experience such anxiety when separated from his or her parents, similar to the situation that the detained immigrant children are experiencing now, or even something as simple as suddenly being cared for by a new babysitter.

The reality is that the immigrant children may suffer long-term effects that will result in trauma. Those who suffer from separation anxiety have even become xenophobic (fear of strangers). It is interesting to note here that often when a child's parents get divorced, the child blames himself or herself for the breakup, asking themselves, "What did I do that caused this?" The same holds true as some of the immigrant children may blame themselves, thinking, "Why did mom do this? Was it something I did?"

Astorino Leaves Continued from Page 1

Department Superior Officers Association. These four contracts, settled in late December 2017, failed to cover retroactive costs in 2017 and costs in the 2018 budget. At the same time, the prior administration failed to come to agreement with the Civil Service Employees Association, which covers the vast majority of county employees, extending their period without a contract to seven years. This is a huge expense to the county with no provision in the 2018 budget.

"Promises made under the past administration included a commitment to freezing property taxes for nearly a decade; failing to fund agreed-upon labor contracts for some employees, while allowing the labor contracts for other employees to languish and a future obligation to grow exponentially: closing budget gaps with one-shot actions or proposed monetization of public assets without a public discussion or agreement upon the policy impacts of such proposals; and decimating the workforce with dramatic reductions in force, placing reliance on outside consultants and contractors.

"This new administration will deal with this crisis in the way we have worked over our first six months in office – with openness and transparency, with a cooperative spirit to county legislators and all our colleagues in state and local governments, and with a willingness to make tough decisions in order to secure long-term fiscal health.

"We will be developing, over the next 60 days, a game plan to address the current shortfall for 2017 and 2018, even as we plan the 2019 budget. We will be reaching out to meet directly to the bond rating agencies to deliver a plan for addressing the elements of the current situation. We will speak with the governor and the State Legislature to outline the assistance we need from their authority to get us through this period. We will meet with the press to answer questions about where we are, how we got there, and where we go from here. The people of Westchester County need to know that we did not get into this situation overnight, and it will take time to chart us on the responsible path that will get us out of this crisis. I have faith and confidence that the people of this county will be able to discern rhetoric from reality.

"These policies and decisions have created a fiscal mess for Westchester County." (End of Latimer statement).

At the press conference announcing the financial review of the county's books for 2017, Nick DeSantis of auditors O'Conner Davies broke down the numbers. He explained that \$15 million of the \$32 million shortfall came as a result of the county not moving forward with a plan to privatize Westchester County Airport, which Astorino had called for, and for which money was included in his budget plan. The Board of Legislators rejected the idea twice, and Latimer's administration is reviewing the plan again.

DeSantis also explained that the county has \$32 million in revenues that it can ask the taxpayers for without going over the property tax cap next year, including an additional \$10 million in unused taxing authority from the Astorino years.

DeSantis threw out a number – 5.9 percent – which could be a possible property tax increase, which Latimer immediately tried to defuse at the presser when he said: "Let's be clear, nowhere here have we discussed a property tax increase. Anyone who does is playing politics with our finances. In November we will know. This doesn't trigger any increases today."

DeSantis also said the county could ask for an additional half a percent sales tax increase, but that would require state approval and not be available until next year. That sales tax increase would generate \$70 million, but would have to be

split with local governments. He ended by saying that the county's finances have not been that bad for many years – not even during the recession of 2008.

The county's largest union, CSEA, with 4,000 members, is without a contract and has been for several years. Latimer is negotiating with the union and cannot discuss the terms until a deal is reached, but DeSantis explained that a 1 percent increase in the CSEA members' contract would cost the county \$48 million, and \$16 million in the current budget.

There are more than 2,000 children who need special care and special attention, and locating and returning them to their parents should be our priority. One can only wonder how many children will go missing into the system and never be found.

Latimer was conciliatory, peaceful, and not interested in laying blame at the press conference. "We will not hold any member of the Board of Legislators accountable, we are trying to create a new relationship," he said.

When asked about Astorino, Latimer added: "We had a campaign and litigated those issues. I'm not looking back but moving forward."

Latimer also accepted responsibility for closing the budget hole in November when he presents his first county budget. The county executive also identified several cost-cutting measures that his administration is reviewing, including contracts to private vendors including Liberty Lines and at Playland, moving out of leased county office space into county-owned office space, shared services, collecting revenues from hotel occupancy taxes and other taxes aside from property taxes, and energy reductions.

The county executive joked that his administration had looked at the state's unclaimed funds website and found \$20,000 in county government funds. "It shows the intent of this administration to fix this and solve the problem presented to us," he said.

Latimer also made it clear that he would not immediately make a knee-jerk reaction and raise property taxes at a large amount when the serious budget negotiations begin in the fall and early winter. This was refreshing to hear, politically wise, for Latimer to say to the many voters in Westchester who cast a vote on two occasions for Astorino but last year cast their vote for Latimer.

Latimer also didn't seek to blame the legislators that voted with Astorino on county budgets over the past seven years. Let us remember that Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, while a member of the BOL, proposed and voted on a budget with a 2 percent tax reduction.

Most of the voters, homeowners and taxpayers in Westchester wanted the tax relief that Astorino gave to us. Now with Latimer's help, and not scorn, we are coming to the conclusion that this year and maybe beyond, we will have to pay for that relief.

The City of Yonkers faced a similar budget dilemma last month, after adopting budgets in prior years that were below the tax cap. The bill came due and this year's property tax increase was 6 percent.

County Board of Legislators Chairman Ben Boykin added: "For years I've warned about structural fiscal imbalance and repeatedly voted against budgets that contained one-shot revenues and borrowing, with services reduced and investments neglected, under the guise of no taxes for six years. We now embark on a new course with new leadership on the county board and a new county executive. We may have some difficult solutions ahead, including belt tightening and costs to pay."

Others couldn't resist the swipe at Astorino. "As many of us in the Legislature warned, the prior county executive's politically-motivated 'no tax increases' ploy did nothing more than push off to the future costs that we are now faced with paying today," said Majority Leader Catherine Parker. "Our job is to fix this mess and responsibly restore Westchester's financial position, while continuing to ensure that county's roads, parks and essential services support the quality of life in Westchester."

Saving a Life EVERY 11 MINUTES

*I'm never
alone*

*Life Alert® is always
here for me.*

One touch of a button
sends help fast, 24/7.



Help at Home



Help On-the-Go

Life Alert®

Batteries Never Need Charging.

For a FREE brochure call:

1-800-404-9776

yonkerstimes.com

FINALLY

The only place to read
news that matters to
your community
ONLINE

YONKERS TIMES
News in Yonkers and around Westchester

**Donate A Boat
or Car Today!**

BoatAngel

"2-Night Free Vacation!"

800-700-BOAT
(2628)

www.boatangel.com

sponsored by boat angel outreach centers

STOP CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

