

**Mask or no mask:  
So far, so good  
at local businesses**

by Rich Thomaselli

This might have been the perfect example of the progress gained in the fight against COVID-19, but also the confusion that still exists for some.

Standing outside the Lane Bryant women's clothing store in the Poughkeepsie Galleria on Friday, Helen Sommers turned to her daughter, perplexed.

"I don't understand," she said. "I can come to the mall without a mask, but I can't go in the store without a mask?"

That's the general tone of patrons and store owners at the Galleria and nearby businesses in the Town of Poughkeepsie. It's been more than a week now since the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) relaxed its guidance on Americans wearing face masks, and New York State followed suit. People who are vaccinated can go without a mask outdoors, or in the wide open spaces of the mall. Those who are not vaccinated can't, or shouldn't. As for indoor spaces, like Lane Bryant and restaurants and other establishments, it's up to the individual owner whether or not to relax the mask mandate.

"It's still a little confusing and it's going to take some getting used to until we're all back to the point of where we used to be and didn't have to worry about masks," Sommers, of Fishkill, said.

It all comes down to choice.

Yours.

But also, theirs.

And by theirs we mean the many business owners faced with the decision of whether or not to open their doors to unmasked patrons. Right now, it's all being done on the honor system.

"We haven't heard of any problems at all so far. It's been really

*continued on page 5*

**Vietnam-era casualties  
recalled in Dutchess County**

by Jim Donick

The Vietnam Memorial Plaque for Dutchess County lists just over 50 names. As in any war, the official records of who did what and where they did it are sometimes a little confused, but for the families of those young men the reality of their loss endures.

Their names and faces are memorialized around the county on plaques in churches, government buildings, the American Legion and VFW Posts, and countless other sites. Those names and their stories are still vivid memories to many.

Two of the casualties are memorialized in the name of the Poughkeepsie VFW Post on Violet Avenue. Driving past, one sees the sign out front. There are four names on that sign. The first two, Vail and Wolff, were casualties of World War I, a conflict that most find easy to understand. The other two, McKenna and Frye, died in Vietnam, a conflict that haunts many to this day. They are representative of the price that Dutchess County families paid



The names of Nelson McKenna, top, and John Frye are shown on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington D.C. Both were Dutchess County residents who died in the Vietnam War and both were enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. *Courtesy photos and photos by Jim Donick*

during that period of our history.

PFC Nelson McKenna was a Marine who'd enlisted in April of 1966. The Poughkeepsie Journal, in reporting his death, noted that he was the first Poughkeepsie-area Marine to die in combat. He was born on Aug. 12, 1948, the son of Peter and Ruth McKenna. When he was killed by rifle fire, not far from Hue City in Vietnam, it was Nov. 30,

1967. Nelson William McKenna was 19 years old.

Friends and family recall him as happy and caring person. A "cousin by marriage" remembered him on a web site a few years ago. She noted that "He had the sweetest and most charming smile that accented his handsome Irish-Italian

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**Haviland students speak as  
grandparents in writing contest**

by Kate Goldsmith

"Imagine the year is 2070. You are narrating the story of the COVID-19 pandemic to your grandchildren and how it changed your life. Write a 500-word story that weaves in your personal experiences and lessons learned."

That was the writing challenge issued by Youngzine.org to students ages 10-14 from around the English-speaking world. As it happens, some of our own local youth at Haviland Middle School in Hyde

**Read samples of the students' essays on page 2**

Park are taking part in the competition, which will offer prizes for the top three essays.

Haviland's Library Media Specialist Danielle Fried heard about the contest and reached out to the middle-school students.

"It's such a great opportunity for these kids to process, in writing, some of what was going on [in the pandemic]," she

said. "I put out an all-call to the students to participate in it ... even if they didn't want to submit the essay to the contest, but wanted to get together with us to do some writing."

Fried, a former English teacher, then worked one-on-one with the students, some virtually, others in person. She had them do revisions to make the text the best it could be.

"Many of them worked really diligently," she said.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NORTHERN DUTCHESS NEWS welcomes your letters. Letters must be submitted via e-mail to be considered for publication; e-mail to [northerndutchess@sdutchessnews.com](mailto:northerndutchess@sdutchessnews.com) and include the phrase "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Include a telephone number and address for verification purposes. Letters may be edited for legal considerations, reader interest and length. We look forward to hearing from you.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NOTE: Letters to the Editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Dutchess News. Letters must be e-mailed to be considered for publication. We cannot accept handwritten or faxed letters.

### Memorial Day and our democracy

To the editor:

On Memorial Day of 2021 I will think of the words of the Star Spangled Banner written by Francis Scott Key in September 1814 during the War of 1812.

"O say can you see by the dawn's early light – What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming – Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thru' the perilous fight- O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?"

I feel the same emotion that Key must have felt when I think about our Democracy still being here after the January 6, 2021 attack on our capital by a crazed mob following a crazed president and of the legislators, including the intended Vice-President Pence victim, who courageously carried out their electoral duty.

Memorial Day was set aside to honor those who died in our wars - first observed on May 30, 1868 at Arlington National Cemetery. As a nation, we respect the day and celebrate it with parades, speeches and build monuments with names of those who served. I remember as a child in the 1930s, my father, a Spanish American War veteran being driven around. In my teen years, it was watching WWII veterans marching and retired General Walter Delamater speaking.

A local druggist Dewitt Gurnell organized a group that purchased a statue of the "doughboy" that now has a home in Rhinebeck Village on East Market Street.

My personal respect goes out to the son of a deceased brother-in-law who died in Vietnam, friends who died in service, two nephews who earned their purple hearts with life-long problems, as well as Uncles, brothers and sister who also served.

David F. Queen  
Red Hook

### Questioning U.S. support of Israel

To the editor:

For anyone familiar with Israel's treatment of Palestinians, there isn't really much new. The Israeli Army is bulldozing houses in the West Bank so that more Jewish settlers can move in.

Then there are the attacks on mosques using teargas and rubber bullets. There are the shootings and crippling of protesters determined to save their farms and homes - or the beating and incarceration of children. We have seen it all before, like an old documentary film on Kristallnacht.

The people of Gaza have endured much more: the attack on their schools, hospitals, power plants and sewage systems.

What is new about Israel's behavior is that more Americans are finally becoming aware of our country's role in perpetuating this carnage. The U.S. protects Israel from the condemnation of the rest of the world at the UN. When it comes to more bombs, missiles and planes, the U.S. is always there to arm and fund the Israeli war machine.

Fred Nagel  
Rhinebeck

### No discrimination, just goodwill to each other

To the editor:

The Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting stands against racism in any form. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have experienced centuries of discrimination and violence in the United States. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an escalation of anti-Asian hate crimes in our country.

As Quakers, we affirm that there is that of God in all people. Every person has worth.

Because we value each person, we seek understanding, not blame. We seek to celebrate our differences, not discriminate because of them. We seek playgrounds and schools where no child is bullied or excluded. We seek a community where all our residents are free from intimidation and fear.

Let's see what a little more goodwill toward all will do. Each of us can make a difference for good in our community.

Don Badgley  
Presiding clerk  
Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting

### Charity begins at home

To the editor:

Growing up, we all heard the truisms of the time. "You take care of your own first." "The hand that feeds gets bitten." "Charity begins at home." Recent tabulations of costs for immigrants allowed to flood our country have totaled billions of dollars. Something is very wrong here.

We see on TV folks living in their cars; some have no idea where they will go to survive. What about those in homes? Hundreds of personal items, furniture, clothing to be removed. It all sounds and looks like people living in a war-torn country. We're going to have "Hooversville"-like communities everywhere (a shanty town in Central Park during the Great Depression)

Wouldn't those billions be better served to keep Americans in their homes during these horrid, unprecedented, pandemic times? Shouldn't we come first?

Our American idealism, "Give me your hungry, your tired, your poor." Noble, yes, but there has to be a line drawn. We can't feed and house the world's poor and hungry. Statistics state one in six American children are hungry. House all these people while millions of our own are soon to be homeless, hungry? For me it is again, a question of common sense. Take care of your own first. What is left over, help where needed.

We have a horrendous debt, yet we spend these billions on immigrants? Once again, common sense must prevail. Allow only a certain number in each year. Learn English, our Constitution and documents. Lines/rules are drawn in every aspect of life. They must be drawn regarding immigrants.

It is wrong to allow these thousands to flood our country. Wrong that our own people are without. Just plain WRONG!

Joyce Benedict  
Hyde Park

## GUEST COLUMN / OPINION

# Now is the time to make a difference through foster care and adoption

Editor's note: May is Foster Care Awareness Month.

by Angela Trento Sommella

All children who enter foster care have a goal of permanency. The nature of foster care is to provide a temporary place for a child to reside, before returning home to their birth family. But what happens, when, in many cases, a child may not be able to return home? If those foster children are lucky, they are residing with foster parents who have made the decision to give that child a "forever home."

I have served as the home finding supervisor for Astor Services for Children & Families' Therapeutic Foster Boarding Program in the Hudson Valley and Bronx, New York since 1995. In June of 2017, I became a foster parent and we adopted in 2019. Because I had worked in foster care for so long, I was very aware of the need for foster parents. It is something I had longed to do for many years.

At the time my husband and I became foster parents, we had a 10-year-old son. We talked about what foster care would

mean for all of us. As someone who has such extensive experience working in foster care, I knew how essential it would be to have the whole family committed to taking on the task of fostering. Often, without complete family commitment, foster care placements disrupt. With everyone onboard, we decided to open our hearts to a child in need.

Fostering and subsequently adopting has changed our lives. My son had been an only child until the age of 10; having a sibling changed the dynamic of our family. It added another element of adventure, laughter and, most of all, love.

Many people ask me how has Covid changed the way the foster care system operates. The truth is, while we do use video conferencing and will continue to make virtual meetings a possibility for families that are more comfortable with that, we never stopped doing in-person visits and have remained in the community throughout the pandemic, using proper precautions. The pandemic has also underscored how important the foster system is. Many children in the system have already experienced trauma and hardship, leaving them

more vulnerable to pandemic-related changes.

Giving any child a "forever home" is such an extraordinary experience. To give a child a second chance at life – one who may no longer be a baby, but still needs a family – is something that should be celebrated!

Angela Trento Somella is home finding supervisor for Astor Services for Children & Families' Therapeutic Foster Boarding Program. To learn more about Astor Services for Children & Families, visit [astorservices.org/](http://astorservices.org/).

The views expressed in this column are not necessarily those of Northern Dutchess News. To submit a column, write to us at [creativeliving@sdutchessnews.com](mailto:creativeliving@sdutchessnews.com)

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