

WOODSIDE HERALD

SERVING SUNNYSIDE-WOODSIDE AND LONG ISLAND CITY

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FREE

CONGESTION PRICING PUTS NY 'ON NOTICE'



HOCHUL REVERSES COURSE

Gov. Kathy Hochul's administration has backed away from its earlier push to permanently bar approximately 2,000 correction officers—who opted not to resume work following a recent three-week strike—from regaining their peace officer certifications in New York. On March 10, Hochul issued an executive order at the conclusion of the 22-day strike, which had severely disrupted operations across numerous state prisons. The order revoked the peace officer certifications of those who did not return to work that day and prohibited them from employment with other state or county agencies. The restriction on these officers working for counties, which manage local jails, sparked significant backlash from sheriffs and county officials, many of whom challenged the legality of the governor's directive.

In response, Oneida and Chemung counties initiated lawsuits in the state Supreme Court, contesting Hochul's authority to impose such a ban, particularly as their jails grapple with staffing shortages. Earlier this week, the New York State Sheriffs' Association met with Hochul administration officials. Marcos Gonzalez Soler, the governor's deputy secretary for public safety, informed them that, following the expiration of the 30-day emergency order on April 9, the administration intended to pursue legislation permanently barring these former state correction officers from re-certification as peace officers—a requirement for correction officer roles. However, multiple sources familiar with the situation report that the governor's office has since softened its stance. The officers will now be permitted to seek re-certification, opening the door for them to work in county jails, though Hochul has maintained they cannot return to state agency positions.

Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente, whose county hosts three state prisons, held a news conference earlier this month condemning the governor's order. "It is an abuse of the governor's authority and discretion and unlawfully intrudes on the county's power of home rule ... and the United States Constitution," he stated. Picente argued that the order effectively blocked these officers from securing other law enforcement positions—such as correction officers, 911 dispatchers, or sheriff's deputies—or any county government job. "That is complete and utter overreach by the governor of the state of New York, who, in the hypocrisy of it, has stated to the federal employees that have been dismissed (by President Donald J. Trump's administration) come and work for New York state," Picente said. "This is completely hypocritical, completely ridiculous, complete overreach and complete violation of home rule. We have seen this before with this governor and this (state) Legislature."

Matt Janiszewski, a spokesperson for Hochul, defended the initial action, stating that the officers "willfully violated" New York's Taylor Law, which bans strikes by public employees, as well as a court order mandating their return to work. He argued this rendered them "no longer suitable for roles in public service."

The Trump administration has pushed back the deadline it imposed on New York City to terminate its pioneering congestion pricing initiative, even as state officials pledge to maintain the tolling system. The Federal Highway Administration had originally directed the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to halt toll collection by this Friday to facilitate an "orderly cessation."

However, on Thursday, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy took to social media to announce a "30-day extension as discussions continue," just one day before the deadline. Duffy emphasized that "the billions of dollars the federal government sends to New York are not a blank check. Continued noncompliance will not be taken lightly." He also issued a stern warning to New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, stating that President Donald Trump and the federal government are "putting New York on notice." "Your refusal to end congestion pricing and your open disrespect towards the federal government is unacceptable," Duffy added.

In defiance, Hochul pointed to her earlier social media statement from last month, when the U.S. Department of Transportation revoked federal approval of the plan on Feb. 19. "The cameras are staying on," she had declared. The reversal came after a review initiated by Trump, with Duffy arguing that the "scope of this pilot project as approved exceeds the authority authorized by Congress" under the Federal Highway Administration's Value Pricing Pilot Program, labeling it "backwards and unfair."

The MTA has responded by filing a legal challenge in federal court, seeking a declaratory judgment that the Department of Transportation's decision lacks legitimacy. Both Hochul and MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber have made it clear they will not deactivate the tolls absent a court order. Speaking at an unrelated press briefing on Tuesday, Lieber reinforced this position, saying, "We're just proceeding with the dispute as you would normally in any litigation setting." He clarified, "This is not a test of wills. It's just the reality of when you have a dispute, things don't change until a court orders it, and that has not yet taken place." Lieber expressed confidence in their stance, noting, "We don't expect it will, because we're on pretty strong legal footing." He added that the federal government has yet to respond to the MTA's initial complaint, with time still remaining for them to do so. Highlighting the program's success, Lieber said, "The good news is that the program, which has had such amazing benefits for New Yorkers -- faster travel, cleaner air, fewer crashes, less honking, quieter, better environment for all, and also great economic benefits -- all that is going to continue."

Now in its 10th week since launching on Jan. 5, the congestion pricing program imposes a \$9 fee on passenger vehicles entering Manhattan below 60th Street during peak hours, aiming to reduce traffic and fund public transit improvements. Small trucks and charter buses face a \$14.40 charge, while large trucks and tour buses pay \$21.60. According to the MTA, the tolls raised nearly \$50 million in its first month and remain on pace to meet the projected \$500 million in net revenue by year's end. "The program is underway now for 10 weeks, and it's been successful by every standard," Lieber said. "And it's the right thing to do for New York to continue it."

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MANAGING YOUR EVERYDAY STRESSES AND ANXIETIES

by Stan Popovich

Everybody deals with stress and anxiety, however the key is to know what to do when you're stressed out. It is not always easy to keep your feelings from getting the best of you. With this in mind, here are seven tips that a person can use to help manage their daily stresses and anxieties before they get out of control.

1. **Get all of the facts of the situation:** Gathering the facts of a certain event can prevent us from relying on exaggerated and fearful assumptions. By focusing on the facts, a person can rely on what is reality and what is not. Most importantly, do not focus on your fearful thoughts when you're stressed out.

2. **Take a break:** Sometimes, we get stressed out when everything happens all at once. When this happens, a person should take a deep breath and try to find something to do for a few minutes to get their mind off of the problem. A person could take a walk, listen to some music, read the newspaper, or do an activity that will give them a fresh perspective on things.

3. **Carry a small notebook of positive statements with you:** Another technique that is very helpful in managing fear is to have a small notebook of positive statements that makes you feel good. Whenever you come across an affirmation that relaxes you, write it down in a small notebook that you can carry around with you in your pocket. Whenever you feel depressed, open up your small notebook and read those statements.

4. **You can't predict the future:** While the consequences of a particular fear may seem real, there are usually other factors that cannot be anticipated and can affect the results of any situation. We may be ninety-nine percent correct in predicting the future, but all it takes is for that one percent to make a world of difference.

5. **Challenge your negative thinking with positive statements and realistic thinking:** When encountering thoughts that make you fearful or depressed, challenge those thoughts by asking yourself questions that will maintain objectivity and common sense. Focus on the reality of your situation and not on your thoughts. Your fearful thoughts can make things worse so try to focus on something positive when you get anxious.

6. **Divide your activities into separate steps:** When facing a current or upcoming task that overwhelms you with a lot of anxiety, divide the task into a series of smaller steps and then complete each of the smaller tasks one step at a time. Completing these smaller activities will make the stress more manageable and increase your chances of success.

7. **Take advantage of the help that is available around you:** There are many individuals who have been expertly trained in the field of psychology to help you find ways to manage fear and anxiety. Seek out someone whom you trust to provide sound advice and guidance. This same professional can also help you create an action plan for dealing with your fears and anxieties in the future.

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WRITE YOUR OWN MEMOIR

by Rix Quinn

Not long ago at a class reunion, I started talking to my crush in sixth grade. I had not seen her in years. I reminded her of the time I took her bowling. My Mom drove us there. It was my first actual date. "No," she said, "I do not remember that." A friend overheard this exchange, and he laughed that I had apparently "left no footprint on the sands of time." He was right.

For 40-plus years I've worked as a memoirist, writing short biographies for business magazines. I've helped others make impressions in the sand. But I never wrote my own memoir until recently... and I'm glad I did. Because I believe everybody's got a unique story to tell, and we need to verbalize it before we get too old. Should we all write our life story? It's hard if we try to explain things on a timeline. It's much easier if we just tell stories about memorable things we experienced...or reply to questions family members ask about us.

Have you written about yourself? Do it today, so your descendants and friends will know more about your childhood, and your adult feelings, thoughts, and dreams. Writing about yourself is easier if you first ask yourself questions. You can then answer them in the form of a story that explains what happened to you, the actions you took...and what you learned from the experience.

A memoir company can provide lots of questions to stir your memory. Go online for a list of specialists who offer this service. I think you'll be glad you did. Next week, I'll try to be funny again. But this week I'm wearing a more serious look.

WOMEN'S WORK

by Dr. Sharon M. Cadiz

As Women's History Month draws to a close, I am musing about the way that women's work has shown up in my life. I begin by recalling how, in an effort to fend off the potential distress of a six week period of recovery from surgery, I started making cloth knapsacks to take to the New York Exchange for Women's Work located at 149 East 60th Street. That already makes me part of history because that fine old consignment institution with the mission to provide "a retail outlet" for women's handiwork was founded in 1878 and closed its doors in 2003. It was originally designed as a charitable institution "that supported middle class Civil War widows."

Another related memory came to mind when I recently visited the home of my dear friend Olga Giouroukakis and saw some beautiful rugs that adorned her home. These rugs were of varied sizes and designs: luxurious white shag ones and others with intricate, colorful patterns. My friend noticed my interest and shared that her mother made them all. I was intrigued by what she told me about the process and the effort that her mother put into the making of each of these masterpieces on her loom over the winter months at home in a village in Greece. The artistic quality of each of the pieces is remarkable. Being curious, I looked into it further and discovered that the white rug is called Flokati and it is made from natural undyed sheep's wool that is spun into yarn and then woven into a "thick, long pile rug." Apparently, the tradition goes back to the 5th century. The patterned runners and rugs are yet another marvel of women's handiwork. Although Olga did not acquire her mother's skill in rug making, she has an uncanny ability to do very intricate needlepoint that my husband and I were lucky enough to showcase in the gallery space at the Long Island City library on 21st Street some years ago. Like her mother, she would work on these stunning pieces in the evening during the winter months. The incredible skill and patience of such artistry and craft speaks to a time honored tradition of value attached to women's work.

Women's work takes many other forms such as leadership in the field of journalism and documentary film. It has been my pleasure to know two amazing women who put women's work "on blast" through their vision and dedication. The first is Marilyn Johnson, who I met many years ago while doing work with the Women In Crisis Program in conjunction with veterans at the Harlem Vet Center. She showed a documentary trailer highlighting the Black women who answered the call to serve in the military beginning during World War II. Her film includes accounts of the experiences of these heroic women during and after their military service. The film captured personal accounts by women from that era, some of whom are no longer with us. It also includes women who have served in the years that followed after World War II. It can be found on YouTube as "Sister Soldier Trailer," and I highly recommend viewing it to get a feeling of pride from the sense of honor and service of these women. Marilyn is a frontrunner with this story that is yet to be told anywhere else by the women themselves. She comes from a background in the theatre and was inspired to take on the task of making this film because of a female family member who was among those women who answered the call to serve during World War II. The rest is history; and Marilyn's commitment to this chapter is an inspiration to me and so many others.

A third woman doing women's work is connected to journalism and she is Lisa Daniell, Operations Manager of the Women's Press Collective (WPC). Just this month, I took my daughter with me to their 18th Annual International Women's Day Celebration "Honoring the Leadership of Working Women." WPC is a free and voluntary, membership association organizing independent publication resources "to tell the truth in a climate of disinformation." WPC was founded by women in 1982 as a women-led, non-government funded organization. They teach members how to produce newsletters, posters, leaflets, books and other publications promoting social and economic change. Lisa Daniell is an inspiring leader who works tirelessly to support a mission of social justice and truth in journalism. She is always front and center at each year's annual International Women's Day event and it feels like she is the heartbeat of the organization because of her passion, hard work and dedication. She will tell you that much of the work is about community engagement and raising funds because the organization is independent and does not rely on any government funding. This is especially relevant given the current state of affairs in our country.

I take my hat off to these women and the countless other women who hold the fabric of our society together with their humble acts of service to tradition; just causes and the enhanced value that their work brings to our shared quality of life. Happy Women's History Month!

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STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT

NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. is pleased to announce the passage of Senate Bill S.1673, a vital step toward increasing financial awareness and stability for New York's workforce. Co-sponsored by Addabbo, the bill mandates that new employees receive essential information regarding student loan repayment options, helping them make informed financial decisions early in their careers.

With student loan debt posing a significant financial burden on many New Yorkers, this legislation aims to ensure workers are educated on repayment programs, loan forgiveness opportunities, and other economic resources that can ease their debt obligations. By requiring employers to provide this information, the bill promotes financial literacy and helps individuals avoid common pitfalls associated with student loan repayment.

The passage of this bill is expected to significantly impact residents from Senate District 15, where many young professionals, recent graduates, and working families struggle with student debt. According to a 2019 NYC Department of Consumer Affairs report "Student Loan Debt Distress Across NYC Neighborhoods," total student loan debt in the US has reached a staggering \$1.5 trillion. The debt load for 2016 college graduates nationally averaged more than \$30,000, in New York, the problem is even worse: the State Comptroller estimates that between 2006 and 2015, the delinquency rate among New York borrowers rose more than a third, with debt averaging more than \$32,000 per borrower.

"I remain committed to advocating for policies that support New York workers, students, and families. The inability to repay student loans and build future assets has many consequences, forcing the borrower to forego other purchases such as a car or a home, or interfering with the decision to get married and start a family," said Addabbo. "Additionally, defaulting on a loan can cause an enormous amount of stress, anxiety, and depression for a borrower who sees no way out of the financial hole they're in.

The passage of S.1673 represents an important step toward addressing the student debt crisis and ensuring a more financially informed workforce across the state," Addabbo concluded.

After passing the Senate, S.1673 was delivered to the Assembly Banks Committee for review and consideration.

Dr. Richard Belli
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MANDATING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR LUNG CANCER

The New York State Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill S.2000, sponsored by Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr., mandating health insurance coverage for follow-up screening and diagnostic services for lung cancer without patient cost sharing. The bill aims to improve early detection and treatment of lung cancer by removing financial barriers associated with necessary follow-up tests.

Lung cancer remains one of the most common cancers and the leading cause of cancer deaths among New Yorkers. Each year, over 6,700 men and 7,200 women in New York are diagnosed with lung cancer, with approximately 3,800 men and 3,600 women succumbing to the disease. Detecting lung cancer early is challenging, as symptoms typically do not appear until the cancer is in an advanced stage, making treatment more difficult.

Despite the effectiveness of lung cancer screening, uptake has been low, with approximately 19.5% of eligible individuals getting screened. Research indicates that cost-sharing, including co-pays, co-insurance, and deductibles, presents a significant barrier to completing the process, preventing many patients from accessing critical early detection resources.

“Far too many people are impacted by cancer, either personally or through a close relative or friend. I’m proud to make early detection screening and treatment available to everyone, especially those who would otherwise avoid these important tools, due to the cost,” said Addabbo. “An individual’s health is one of the most precious things affecting your physical, mental, and emotional well-being. That’s why it’s so important to be proactive about your health and take appropriate actions to prevent illness and disease,” concluded Addabbo

Addabbo’s bill received bipartisan support in the Senate and has been delivered to the Assembly for consideration. Advocacy groups, including the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), have supported Addabbo’s bill and urged the Assembly to pass the companion bill, A.1195, sponsored by Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, without delay.

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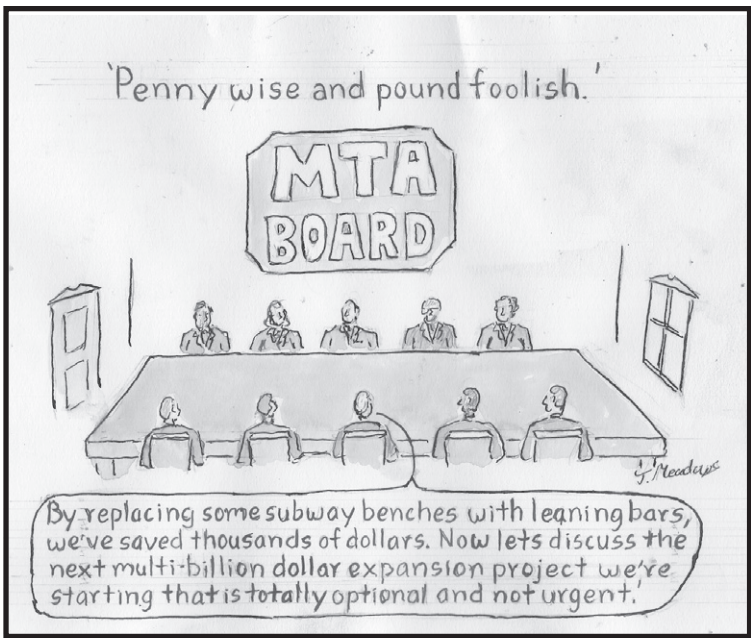
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URINETOWN CORRECTION

Dear Editor:

I received helpful feedback from two readers who reminded me that the Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Secondary School for the Arts and Technology located at 47-07 30th Avenue, Long Island City, NY 11101 goes from grades 6 to 12. I am pleased that they enjoyed the article about the play "Urinetown" that was performed by students of RFW Secondary School because it was a smashing success; and I wanted everyone to acknowledge the fine effort of the students, faculty and parents.

Respectfully,
 Dr. Sharon M. Cadiz



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