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Climbing another mountain

Local Marine who lost both legs gets own handcycle via fundraising event

By Melina Makris

Riding a bike has always been one of John Curtin's favorite activities and soon he'll have his very own set of wheels.

Thanks to All Sport Fishkill and the generosity of local residents and businesses, more than \$3,000 has been raised toward the purchase of a handcycle for Curtin, 21, who lost his legs last year while serving with the United States Marine Corps in Afghanistan.

The Wingdale native, a lance corporal with the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, was on foot patrol in the Sangin region of Afghanistan's Helmand Province on February 14, 2010 when he stepped on an Improvised Explosive Device, commonly called an IED or a roadside bomb.

The bomb briefly knocked him unconscious, shattered his left hand and inflicted a deep wound in his right arm. And when he came to less than 30 seconds later, he realized that his legs were gone, too.

"They were putting tourniquets on my legs," he said, describing how he went into shock and was losing a great deal of blood at the time.

Curtin was transported via helicopter to the hospital in Afghanistan, where he remained for a few days before being flown to a hospital in Germany. From there, he returned to the United States, undergoing treatment at Walter Reed Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

It was during his stay at Walter Reed, while undergoing numerous surgeries and physical therapy and learning to walk with prosthetic legs, that he got involved with handcycling.

A handcycle is a cross between a wheelchair and a bike. It's a three-wheel cycle powered by hand-cranked pedals.

Handcycles are loaned to patients at Walter Reed by Achilles International, a non-profit organization founded by amputee Dick Traum in 1976 as Achilles Track Club. Worldwide, Achilles helps more than 10,000 people with physical dis-



John Curtin, riding a borrowed handcycle, competes in the 2011 Detroit Marathon. Inset, Curtin in his uniform as a lance corporal in the United States Marine Corps.

—photo courtesy of Achilles International

abilities compete in athletic competitions such as marathons.

"We spend lots of time at Walter Reed," said Genna Griffith, director of the Achilles Freedom Team of Wounded Vets, a branch of Achilles that assists American service

personnel with athletic competition.

Representatives of Achilles take handcycles to the military hospital and encourage the wounded soldiers, sailors, and Marines to try them out.

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Molinaro addresses challenges

Exec's 1st State of the County speech held at Beacon High School

By Goldee Greene
Staff Writer

BEACON—Newly installed Dutchess County Executive Marcus "Marc" J. Molinaro gave an inspired State of the County address at Beacon High last Tuesday night. The packed house of elected officials, the public and students showered accolades on the affable former Tivoli mayor, county legislator and New York State assemblyman during his 58-minute speech.

"How about those Giants?" was his opener, with thunderous cheers in response. He acknowledged Beacon High Honor Society president Alyssa Barber

before starting his comprehensive commentary regarding the past, present and future of the county, which is recovering from a trickle-down national recession.

He cited **Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro.**

—photo by Margaret Slomin

Incline Railroad, which is looking for a comeback, as a metaphor. The two-car funicular was a major attraction that took 3.5 million thrill-seekers straight up and down the almost 2,000-foot slope from 1902 to 1978.

"The county is climbing up a steep slope with virtually no available fund balance," he said. He also referred to exponentially escalating expenses caused by "under-funded state mandates, pension and health insurance hikes and a property-tax cap." Decreasing county tax reimbursements are also in the mix.

Indeed, the new exec inherits a daunting fiscal legacy: former county executive William Steinhaus, who served for five terms, pulled \$24.3 million out of the \$29.9 million county fund balance in 2011 to plug a 2012 tax-levy increase. This balanced his final budget, but translates to the county either recouping that amount this year, or living with an almost \$25 million hole forthwith until it is refinanced.

"Economic stagnancy" has caused a 67 percent increase of people needing

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Firefighters brave cold for rescue drill

By Kristine Coulter
Staff Writer

FISHKILL – The air temperature was 35 degrees. The temperature of the water in the Fishkill Creek off of Washington Avenue by Jean Van Pelt Park, in Fishkill, was said to be around the mid-30 degree mark. Members of four local fire departments and companies attended an Ice Water rescue training drill on Saturday, February 11. Those that participated were the Glenham Fire Department, Rombout Fire Company, Hughsonville Fire Department and Chelsea Fire Company.

"The biggest thing for the public, if something like this happens, call 9-1-1 immediately. Don't try to rescue the person by yourself," said Rombout Fire Company Public Information Officer Kevin Barry. "The firefighters have the equipment and the training."

Craig Elderkin was the day's instructor. "If this was ice, we wouldn't be using the boat," said Elderkin. Elderkin said this is his 22nd year being an instructor.

There were three firefighters in the Rombout Fire Company rowboat and one firefighter played the victim in the water under the bridge. There were firefighters on the bank of the creek, as well as the bridge. Both sets of firefighters had ropes.



A firefighter is "rescued" from the Fishkill Creek during a recent training session.

—photo by Kristine Coulter

The first two hours of the day firefighters spent at Glenham Fire Station for the classroom instruction. During the classroom instruction, Barry said, firefighters learned about scene control, techniques of rescuing a victim, safety procedures and hazards that could be in the water and at the scene.

"We have hypothermia in this area all along cause

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Southern Dutchess News
Your News



Viewpoints

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters may be edited for legal considerations, reader interest and length. Please include a telephone number and address for verification purposes. **Deadline for letters is Friday at noon.** Letters must be submitted by e-mail to be considered for publication. Letters can be e-mailed to newsplace@aol.com, and the phrase "Letter to the Editor" should be included in the subject line of the e-mail.

Taxpayers are watching school board closely

To the editor:

I am writing this as a reminder: the hearing to remove two Wappingers school board trustees, Mr. John Lumia and Mrs. Marilyn Shultz, will once again convene on Monday, February 27. The hearing will be held during working hours at the District Offices on Myers Corners Rd.

The Wappingers school board originally authorized the expenditure of \$20,000 on this matter..

Subsequently, the school board voted 6 to 3 to authorize "additional" funds when the original \$20,000 was depleted. I am curious to know how many more thousands were allocated and spent up until the time of the first hearing, which was held January 13. Was it \$30,000? \$40,000? As of now, I understand that there have been an additional eight hearings scheduled on this matter.

I was in attendance for the entire all-day proceedings January 13, and between the school district attorney, the hearing officer, and the stenographer the total cost for this one hearing alone, must have been in the neighborhood of \$10,000. And let me say it again: there have been eight more of these hearings scheduled! I wonder if the board majority would have been so anxious to vote for this expenditure if the money were coming out of their bank accounts, as is the case for Mr. Lumia and Mrs. Shultz for the payment of their own attorneys.

In reading the charges brought against the two board members, one comes to the conclusion that they are both being chastised for being pro-active rather than reactive, and I urge the taxpayers to avail themselves of the documents and related charges, and see if you agree. The bulk of the charges appear to be of a procedural nature, and surely could have been handled within the confines of the workings of the Board Of Education, saving the taxpayers their hard-earned tax dollars. These are tax dollars that should be spent on education.

Budget season will soon be upon us. Let's see how these same board members that voted to spend a small fortune of our hard-earned tax dollars on this debacle will be peddling the rhetoric of the need to raise our tax bill for the sake of the students or the sports programs or the arts and music programs, or better yet, to hire new teachers. They will be correct: the above items are where our tax dollars should be wisely spent, not on what appears to be a power play and a personal vendetta.

We have arrived at a sorry place in our nation (and, it seems, in this, our school district Board of Education) where public service, which was once a noble endeavor, has turned into a battleground for self-serving and personal gain. The us-against-them attitude is destroying the fabric of our democracy on so many levels.

Elections will be held in May for positions of three of the board members that have supported this imprudent use of our tax dollars. All of us who foot the bill need to make our displeasure heard. Otherwise, it will be business as usual until the well that is known as the Wappingers School District taxpayers runs dry. Please try and attend as many of these upcoming hearings as possible. It is of utmost importance that a message be sent, that the people that do the working, paying, and voting are watching closely.

John Regan
Village of Wappingers Falls

Falls is lucky to have Scott Davis

To the editor:

In a recent article Wappingers Falls GOP chair Bill Fulton was quoted as saying he wanted voters to have a choice in the upcoming election. In the third ward his wish has been granted. Voters have a clear choice in the race between Scott Davis and Charles Ferry.

Mr. Ferry, a former village police commissioner with a total of one year of service was also, prior to his early withdrawal, a candidate for third ward trustee in the last village elec-

tion. He also lists himself, among other things, as founder and president of the Wappingers Falls Civic Association, which currently seems to exist only in name only.

Contrast this to Scott Davis. Scott served two full terms as village trustee during some of the village's most trying times in recent memory. In addition to his elected service Scott has been active in a host of community and cultural activities before, during and after his service on the board. Further, he has personally procured many donations for multiple village activities and events.

Mr. Ferry says the 3rd ward needs a voice and he is right. The voice, however, needs to be more than a litany of everything that is wrong and everything he wants. The voice should be that of someone that we can count on. Someone competent and reliable and who will see things through to the finish. That voice belongs to Scott Davis and we are lucky to have him.

I would also like to say a few words about 2nd ward candidate Matt Sgambelluri. I have known Matt since he was 8 years old. I have seen him grow from a child to a teen and now to honorable manhood. We should all be proud that our community produces young people such as he and I offer him my wholehearted support and urge the voters of the second ward to do the same.

John Tyliczszak
Wappingers Falls

Molinaro addresses challenges

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some kind of assistance, "over 43,000 social service clients as opposed to 28,000 two years ago," said Molinaro. His PowerPoint charts indicated more low- and middle-class families crossed over to poverty levels, and welfare protection is up 19 percent.

Jails were the second-largest fiscal expense, up 34 percent. Moreover, the county pays \$5 million per year to house inmates in other correctional facilities. This is because the daily average 292-inmate capacity in the Dutchess County Jail has increased to about 450 from 2007 to the present.

The following are a few of Molinaro's revenue-raising or saving ideas:

"Since 80 percent of job growth comes from existing businesses, we will partner with Gov. Cuomo's commissioners, of which there are 10 scattered throughout the state," he said. "Through these we can secure micro-loans, business counseling and other tools for local businesses to grow."

Also, the county comptroller will do an audit of the airport.

Looking to squeeze as many pennies as possible, Molinaro urged motorists to "Renew Local First: If you renew at your local Motor Vehicle office, 12 percent of every transaction stays in your county."

Additionally, he also has made two hires

to help spur economic development in various ways. Ronald Hicks is coming aboard as deputy commissioner for the Department on Planning and Development.

"The Four R's: Reform, retain, reinvest and recruit ... is a cornerstone," said Molinaro.

Solid Waste Coordinator Lindsay Carille is joining the team and a Dutchess County Historian will also be appointed.

Molinaro's stance on the county's mental health services was unequivocal, with new delivery models for "dignity, preventive and primary care leading to personal recovery."

All in all, like other government heads in a cash-strapped era, Molinaro will walk an economic tightrope. Basically this means choosing between cuts, or "streamlining services," and/or higher taxes as he looks ahead to formulating his 2013 budget.

"The county faces many economic challenges," he said. "But residents and government officials can weather the storm together in the year ahead."

"The state of our county is being challenged. But we possess the same spirit that brought those innovators and laborers, poets and historians, visitors and proud Dutchess County residents to the peak of this city's namesake in 1902," he said. "The same resilience that will bring us there again!"

Local Marine gets own handcycle

Continued from page 1

Curtin said the handcycle attracted him because he's always loved to ride bikes. Very physically active and in shape before losing his legs, he was determined to stay that way afterward, too. Working with physical therapy and the handcycle were ways to "start moving again."

And by all accounts, he has. Since getting involved with Achilles, he's biked two half marathons, one in Detroit last October and a second in Disney World in January (in which he came in third), as well as one full marathon. He also recently returned from a weight-lifting competition in Oklahoma during which he lifted 300 pounds to earn first place.

Since Curtin has been racing, he's used a handcycle loaned to him by Achilles. But he's on his way to having one of his own, thanks to Kim Kolins, who does marketing design for Salon Dorian in Fishkill. After witnessing a race that included disabled veterans like Curtin, Kolins came up with an idea to raise funds to buy Curtin a handcycle.

On February 9, All Sport Health & Fitness in Fishkill hosted a fund-raising spin class, free concert and raffle to raise the money for the cycle. Participants were asked to pay \$5 for the class, but many, like Kim Wilson, gave more when they found out where the funds were going.

"It's for a good cause," said Wilson.

The class, led by instructor Clinton DeSousa, the raffle and assistance from more than a dozen local businesses have raised \$3,000, almost ninety percent of the money needed to purchase the handcycle.

Griffith thinks Curtin having his own bike is wonderful.

"He can keep the handcycle and he'll always have it," she said, adding that she's seen Curtin's progress since he's been biking. "He's building strength and he's building confidence."

Curtin had praise for Achilles, too, saying that they've been there with him through his first races and been very supportive.

"They're great people," he said.

Curtin went on to say that he's "extremely grateful and appreciative" for the efforts of everyone who organized or participated in the All Sport fund-raiser.

"I don't know how they found out [about me] but it's just a great thing," he said, noting that the cycle will help him stay in shape by allowing him the opportunity to exercise.

A self-described "very competitive guy," Curtin has been enjoying racing.

"I'm glad I got involved," he said. "It's put me back in shape."

His next challenge is the Boston Marathon this coming April. No doubt he'll tackle it with the same attitude he's applied to everything he's faced in the last year. The home page of Curtin's web site includes a quote from the 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche that pretty much sums it up.

"On the mountains of truth you can never climb in vain: either you will reach a point higher up today, or you will be training your powers so that you will be able to climb higher tomorrow."

Additional information about Curtin can be found at www.marinejohnncurtin.com. Information about the Achilles Freedom Team of Wounded Vets or Achilles International in general can be found at www.achillesinternational.org.

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