

DECEMBER 2016

CLIFTON PARK

AN EXCLUSIVE MONTHLY PUBLICATION
FOR RESIDENTS

Neighbors



The Staples Family
Welcoming a New Season



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Cover photo by Mark Bolles

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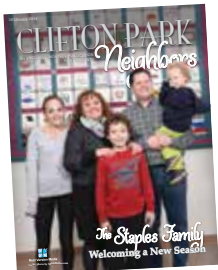
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MAGAZINE DEADLINES

Please submit your content by the 10th of each month.

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ON THE COVER
The Staples Family

Dear CLIFTON PARK RESIDENTS

Each year I become more and more nostalgic during the holidays. Sharing gifts, while always a joy to see my children's smiles, is not as important as the precious time spent with family and friends. And just as meaningful, is that special feeling of doing something extra, no matter how big or small, to help someone who may not be as fortunate.

If you are looking for a way to bring a smile to a child's face, Make-A-Wish, our non-profit spotlight, is doing wonderful things right here in Saratoga County, to grant wishes for children and teens diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses.

This month, our cover story features Greg and Damaris Staples, new to Clifton Park, who came here bringing their goodwill and fellowship as husband and wife pastors of Clifton Park Center Baptist Church. They share their excitement to become part of the community, and to begin their new roles. Check out our feature story to learn more.

I would also like to welcome Mark Bolles to *Clifton Park Neighbors*, as our contributing photographer. Through his photography, Mark brings to life the families and individuals of our feature stories.

So, as we close out our second year of *Clifton Park Neighbors*, I want to thank all the businesses that make this magazine possible, and all the readers who enjoy the stories we bring you month after month. I wish everyone a joyous holiday and a happy, healthy New Year!

Jill



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Make-A-Wish® Is In Your Neighborhood!

By Tim Riley, Marketing/Communications Director Make-a-Wish Northeast New York

Since the first wish was granted in Arizona in 1980, Make-A-Wish has grown to include 62 U.S. chapters and 42 international affiliates. Supported by selfless volunteers and generous donors, Make-A-Wish has granted over 250,000 wishes, 1,700 of them local.

Since 1987, Make-A-Wish Northeast New York has served the 15 counties in the 518 area code, granting the wishes of kids and teens diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition. This past year, 101 local wishes were granted, including in Clifton Park and surrounding Saratoga County. Local Chapter CEO, Bill Trigg, said, "A wish is more than just a nice thing to do – it can be a game-changer for the child and family."

He explained that "wishes impact everyone involved – wish kids, volunteers, donors, sponsors, medical professionals and entire communities. For wish kids, their wish can give them the courage to comply with their medical treatments and imagine a future beyond their illness."

Each wish is as unique as the child wishing it. Some kids wish to travel (Disney is the most frequent destination), to meet a celebrity (such as Pope Francis, Dave Matthews, the



Ten-year-old, Faith, from Clifton Park, who is battling leukemia, recently had her wish granted – to set sail aboard the Disney Fantasy for an unforgettable cruise! Faith is assisting Make-A-Wish this holiday season by serving as a Wish Ambassador and is one of six local kids whose stories are featured on paper star ornaments available at Adopt-A-Wish booths in local malls.



Cast of *The Big Bang Theory*), to try out a certain career (fireman, policeman, fashion model to name a few) or to have something special (such as a tree fort, an iPad, a therapy dog).

Anticipating their wish experience is sometimes the one thing that gets a wish kid and their family through a very dark time in their lives. The majority of wish kids go on to lead amazing lives; sometimes the wish even points them toward a career path such as Channa's wish to travel to Israel, as she hopes to become a Rabbi one day.

To volunteer, support local wishes or to refer an eligible child in the 518 area code, contact Make-A-Wish Northeast New York at (518) 456-9474 or via their website, www.neny.wish.org. You can help them transform lives one wish at a time! ■

Know of a great local non-profit? Let us know so we can spotlight them here. Send submissions to jcaputo@bestversionmedia.com

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The Staples Family

Welcoming a New Season

COVER STORY

By Jenna Caputo

Photos by MarkBolles.com

"To everything there is a season...." Many of us know this phrase well, but for Reverends Greg & Damaris Staples, they know firsthand the joy these "new seasons" can bring to our lives. They have recently taken on positions as co-pastors of Clifton Park Center Baptist Church (CPCBC) and their journey here was filled with divine intervention and a true calling.

Greg grew up in Augusta, Maine. Living in a country setting, he participated in many outdoor activities, including camping in Baxter State Park and sailing on Penobscot Bay. Also enjoying music, Greg was a classical pianist and played trumpet in the school band. He is a

coffee aficionado and at one time managed a high-end coffee shop. He could even discern coffee by different countries of the world. Greg also enjoys solving the Rubix Cube, solving it in about two minutes. He's hoping to one day learn all the algorithms so he can solve it in under 30 seconds.

Despite these varied talents, Greg decided to major in social sciences in college, with the intention of becoming a professional counselor or an attorney. After college he worked as a paraprofessional with behaviorally impaired middle school kids, and processed case notes in a mental hospital, but he wasn't sure which direction he wanted to go. Through it all, faith and church had always been a central part of his life. "After graduating from college,

I was looking for what I was going to do next. As doors kept closing on me, I felt more and more frustrated. One day, my pastor reminded me that I had once considered the ministry as a vocation. Following the conversation, I pursued seminary. From that point, the doors of opportunity opened like never before, including the opportunity to meet my wife, Damaris."

Damaris is originally from Barcelona in Catalonia, Spain. Growing up, she also enjoyed the outdoors, as well as gymnastics, hiking, spending time by the Pyrenees Mountains and traveling to France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy with her family in a RV. But she knew from an early age what her calling was. "At the age of 16-17, I felt God calling me to make His love and His message known. It was a call to go to other cultures, a call to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ," she explains.

She ended up going to the European Bible Institute, an international and evangelical school of theology and missions north of Paris, France, to study with people from around the world. After graduating, she knew she needed to prepare herself further for ministry. Knowing that her parents could not afford to send her to graduate school, she applied to various theological seminaries in the USA and England. While waiting, she spent a year in Barcelona as a nanny, but month after month, she kept hearing back from her schools that no scholarships were available.

"I had a very strong conviction that God wanted me to further my studies and to prepare for the ministry that He had for me. It was a frustrating process for a while because I could not see how things were going to come together, and yet, I knew God wanted me to do this. It got to the point where I started to get a bit discouraged so I decided to do what we Christians do when we cannot figure out things or do not know which way to go: pray. I spent an entire night in prayer (literally), asking God to show me

the way, asking God to bring down barriers, to open a huge door for me if this conviction to further my studies in Theology was indeed coming from him. I left it in God's hands." Two days later, she answered a call from her former youth pastor, saying he had just received a call that she had been accepted to Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Center, MA on a full scholarship. "I was speechless," she says. "I knew God had heard my prayers and had answered them in a powerful way."

It was in her third year there that she met Greg in

the mailroom where she worked. He kept coming in to say hi and they eventually went for coffee together, becoming friends, then dating. They were engaged on the Pyrenees Mountains in Catalonia and married at the International Community Church in Allston (Boston) on June 24, 2000.

They now have three children – Jessica (13), Nathan (9) and Samuel (2). They enjoy travelling and camping together. Music is still big in their family. Damaris sang with two contemporary worship bands in her college years. Greg continues to play the piano, while Jessica has played the viola and is learning to sing, and Nathan plays the trumpet.

Nathan is an excellent soccer player and Jessica is an accomplished gymnast, winning the New England Regionals last spring. An active family, they are

looking forward to discovering the Adirondacks and the other adventures waiting for them in their new home here in the Capital District.

The Staples previously lived in Melrose, MA for over 16 years, but sensed that God was calling them to a new season of ministry. While they weren't directly applying for a new position, Damaris' profile had been circulating within the American Baptist denomination. The Associate Executive Minister saw her profile and thought she might be a good match for CPCBC. "It was definitely meant to be," says Greg. "All of the pieces came together beautifully.



Once the church realized that I was also an ordained minister, they decided to bring us both on board as co-pastors."

The logistics of the move were a little complicated as Damaris had to finish her duties at her church in Melrose. Greg came here first and there was a little back and forth as they finished their duties and brought the family out, but as Greg says, "Amazingly, the transition has been incredibly smooth. This is another factor that has helped me confirm that this move was meant to be." As with any big change in life, a new move can be daunting, but they are looking forward to discovering the area and learning about their new home. Damaris has a wonderful way of looking at it that rings true for any big change in life: "We need to be flexible with ourselves and flexible with one another as we give each other the space and time to go through this transition. We miss all our friends and family, but we are looking forward to making some new friendships here. It is not about comparing one place to another. It is about welcoming the new season and the new people God brings to our lives. Life becomes so much better when we accept that!"

They are excited to lead their new community and are hoping to expand the church's reach by involving it in more areas of service within the community, enhancing their existing ministries as well as beginning new ministries, building their mission program bigger, and expanding their youth group.

It's obvious these two are passionate about their work, stressing that it is indeed a call and not just a job. They say it's "humbling and exciting" to see where God leads them, to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others and helping others to find their God-given calling, whatever that may be.

As Greg says, "A minister wears many hats. You preach and lead worship. You are also an administrator, a mediator, a teacher, a counselor. In my first month, I have already had the opportunity to review the budget, research investment possibilities for the endowment, provide

pastoral care/counseling, officiate a funeral, mediate discussions, and of course, preach and lead worship. Every day is a little different – every week is a little different. You have to be ready for whatever comes at you."

At the same time, they also live very normal lives, attending school meetings and after school activities and pursuing their outside interests. "Ministers are real people, like anyone else," Damaris explains. "We are not perfect. We make mistakes. We get tired. We need breaks. It is wonderful to get to know so many people in the churches and in the communities we serve. CPCBC is a wonderful group of people who genuinely care about each other and live out Christ's love. Greg and I are committed to preach and teach the word of God in a relevant way to impact this generation for Christ. We are thankful to the people of CPCBC for calling us to co-pastor this church and hope to bring in new ministries for couples, families, and in the areas God will show us, to help us to continue to grow spiritually. As I said in my first sermon at the church, God has brought us here for a season and for a reason. That is how God works!" ■

Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at jcaputo@bestversionmedia.com.

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No Secrets to Losing Weight... It's Mostly Common Sense

By Ellis Medicine

There are no big secrets to reveal regarding how to successfully lose weight; most of what you need to know is common sense. There is no magic pill or magic wand out there to help you lose weight. In order to be successful, you have to consume fewer calories than you burn, which means eating less and exercising more.

"Everything in moderation, including moderation," as Oscar Wilde once said, are words to live by, especially when it comes to diet and exercise.

The skinny on a proper diet can be found at choosemyplate.gov and by talking with your doctor. Essentially, you should eat a variety of foods from the main food groups that are high in nutrients. Additionally, be sure to keep unhealthy things like saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt and alcohol to a minimum. You should also stay away from the "diet" mentality. Don't think of it as having to be on a diet. The changes you are making are for a healthy lifestyle for life.

Define your long-term goals and then start by making small changes. Success will come if you start small. Aim to make one tweak a day: add a new fruit to breakfast, skip your pre-dinner cocktail or use a smaller plate at a buffet.

Some people have to ask themselves if they are using food as a coping mechanism to deal with stress in their lives. If the answer is "yes," you should talk with your doctor or possibly see a counselor to help

you better deal with the underlying problem.

The winter months tend to keep us indoors more, so it does take some extra effort to exercise. Consider walking at the local mall and exercising in your home with a treadmill or to a workout video that suits your level of activity.

Standard guidelines suggest adults should engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Sixty minutes of moderate to higher intensity activity on most days of the week, while not exceeding caloric intake requirements will provide greater health benefits and better weight management for most people. *You should consult your doctor before you begin any new exercise routine to ensure it's safe for you.*

Sometimes obesity cannot be treated by diet and exercise alone. For people who are severely obese and can't lose weight by traditional methods or who suffer from serious obesity-related health problems, weight loss surgery may be a viable option. Visit www.ellismedicine.org for more information about Ellis Medicine's comprehensive, nationally recognized weight loss surgery program. So are you ready to make 2016 the year you get healthier? Before you answer, consider what good health is worth to you? Better yet, ponder what is more valuable than your health.

For more information about nutrition services, including programs available at the Ellis Medicine's Medical Center of Clifton Park, visit www.ellismedicine.org or call 518-243-4345. ■

Fit Tips

- **GET MOTIVATED.** Keep yourself motivated during your weight loss journey by doing the "write thing." Writing down your weight loss goals reinforces them in your mind.
- **WANT IT.** Another "stick with it strategy" is to use the word "want" instead of "should." Saying you should do something, like exercise, implies that you feel the activity is a burden. Telling yourself you want to work out or you want to eat less is the better approach.
- **SHOP THE PERIMETER.** When grocery shopping, stick to the outside walls of the store to get the freshest, healthiest foods. The packaged, less healthy food choices

tend to be kept in the aisles in between.

- **WEAR A Pedometer.** A pedometer can actually prompt you to be more active. Aim for 2,000 steps per day, and work up to 10,000. Consult your physician before beginning any new physical activity.
- **PROTEIN FIRST!** Gram for gram, protein has the same number of calories as carbohydrates and half the fat, but takes longer to digest, so you feel full longer. Include a serving of lean protein with each meal and snack.
- **STOP SMOKING.** The adverse health effects for smokers are staggering. Sign up for a smoking cessation class at www.ellismedicine.org or call the New York State Quitline at 1.866.NY.QUITS (1-866-697-8487).

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passengers hot chocolate and cookies
while they read along with the classic
children's book, *The Polar Express*,
by Chris Van Allsburg. Santa and his
helpers greet passengers at the North
Pole and then board the train, where
each child is given the first gift of
Christmas – a silver sleigh bell. Chefs
aboard each car lead passengers in
singing Christmas carols on the ride
back to Saratoga Springs.

Time: 5:30-7:30pm

Cost: Ticket Prices Vary by Class and
Availability

December 1-6

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Cost: FREE

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Sunday, Dec.4

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as well as educational displays & free seminars while enjoying the many other family activities in the plaza! For more info call 668-9892.

Time: 10am-4pm

Cost: \$7 Adults; Kids 12 and under FREE

Sunday, Dec. 4

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@Downtown Troy

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Time: 11am-5pm

Cost: FREE

Sunday, Dec.4

EMPIRE STATE PLAZA TREE LIGHTING AND FIREWORKS FESTIVAL

@Empire State Plaza, Albany

Come join in the tree lighting and

other family festivities!

Time: 1-8pm

Cost: FREE

Sunday, Dec. 4

ALBANY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

@Palace Theater, Albany

Celebrate the holidays with the Albany Symphony and 200 brilliant young singers and dancers from the Capital Region. For more info, 694-3300.

Time: 3pm

Cost: \$19-\$60

Tuesday, Dec. 6

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@Brookside Nursery, Ballston Spa

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Friday-Sunday, Dec. 9-18

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The classic TV special comes to life in this faithful adaptation where the Peanuts gang grapples with the real meaning of Christmas.

Time: 12/9 & 16, 7:30pm; 12/10, 11, 18 1pm; 12/17 1 & 4pm

Cost: \$18/\$12

Saturday, Dec. 10

FAMILY SATURDAY: SNOWFLAKES

@Tang Teaching Museum, Skidmore College

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Time: 2-3:30pm | Cost: FREE

Friday-Saturday, Dec. 16-17

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

@Cohoes City Music Hall, Cohoes

Come see this holiday classic at the

newly renovated Cohoes Music Hall! Tickets available at www.cohoesmusichall.com, www.palacealbany.com, or 800-745-3000.
Time: 7pm | Cost: \$13 plus fees

Saturday, Dec. 17


JCC JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL: THE GREEN PRINCE

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Time: 7pm
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Saturday, Dec. 31

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Welcome to the Neighborhood

By Pete Bardunias, President/CEO, the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County

Partners Paul Massaroni and Dan Mahoney, General Manager Matt Cudemo, hotel staff, elected officials and volunteers from the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County cut the ribbon as the new **Courtyard by Marriott** (627 Plank Rd, (518) 579-6100, www.marriott.com) opens in downtown Clifton Park this past September. This elegant hotel is the latest to come online as Clifton Park flexes its muscle as a major tourism destination in upstate New York. Featuring 130 rooms and built by BBL Construction, the new hotel was completed in just 17 months and has a bistro for breakfast and dinner. The hotel offers state-of-the-art accommodations and is another reason for people to "Discover Clifton Park" as they make their travel plans.



As Clifton Park grows, so does its need for medical services. **St. Peter's Health Partners'** new medical buildings at 855 Route 146 and 1 Tallow Wood Drive are designed to provide fast, efficient, compassionate patient care. The new Urgent Care Center is open 7 days per week on a walk-in basis, and can provide extensive services for both emergency and



non-emergency cases. The adjacent medical complex offers OB/GYN, Diabetes, Endocrine, Cardiology, Pulmonary, Pediatrics and more. St. Peter's is consolidating its Clifton Park operations onto this campus in order to better serve the community, and to expand the types of medical services it can make available. For more information and a free downloadable brochure, please visit www.sphpma.com/medical-campus-clifton-park.

Meet other business neighbors at www.southernsaratoga.org.

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How Important Are Your Holiday Traditions?

By Karen Kulak, Kulak's Nursery & Landscaping

When I asked a young college-aged staff member what her favorite holiday tradition was, she did not hesitate to say, "My favorite tradition is when we all come home and decorate the house together. We always place our decorations in the same place, year after year, bringing back memories as far back as when I was five." As we



chatted more about family traditions, I could see in her smile how important having these memories made and re-made were for her.

Owning and working at my garden center where we sell 1,500 Christmas trees in the weeks before December 25, I see so many families' traditions as they come back, year after year, many with the whole family to select their perfect tree. That in of itself can be a challenge with everyone's busy schedules. Some come as early as Thanksgiving break when the college-age child is in town, while others are here at the very last minute, having to wait for the last family member to be home. Customers share their stories with us. They are proud and fond of their traditions and it makes them feel happy this time of year, no matter what is going on with the rest of their lives.

Holiday traditions are an important component in building a strong bond between family and community. They give us a sense of belonging and a way to express what is meaningful to us. Traditions connect us to our history and help us celebrate generations of family. Most people can share a story similar to "oh this was great-grandma's recipe used for Christmas Eve" or "I remember stringing popcorn with my mom when I was young." Holiday rituals keep memories of the past alive and are shared with newer generations.

Traditions supply comfort to us, instilling a sense of security, belonging and family identity. It's comforting to know that not everything has to change. We may lose a family member throughout the years but it's comforting to know they live on through these traditions. Family traditions provide connectedness from generation to generation. Older family members will enjoy seeing new generations carrying on what they learned and cherish. May you be blessed with many fond memories that your family traditions provide for you. ■

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**TREES, TRIMMINGS, HOLIDAY BLOOMS,
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Savor the Here & Now for a Joyous Holiday —Reflections from a Fellow Journeyman

By Chuck Oakes, Author of *Your Home, Your Castle*

As we approach the holidays in this special election year, many of us are under unusual pressure due to the uncertainty and change from the recent election. So what can we do? Some choose to unplug and distance themselves from the elections and even our country. This

writer believes that the "common core" refers to our *common core of values*.

We must focus on our individual core of values and the maintenance of standards of excellence and integrity, as best as we can. While this might sound unrealistic and a pie-in-the-sky ambition, it is nonetheless, essential for our health and wellbeing. (It is well known that prolonged stress and

anxiety can cause immune dysfunction.)

Some suggestions to savor the delicacy of the festive season (regardless of external circumstances):

- Focus on the positive (people, things, circumstances, activities) in your life as it is today! (Some call this "mindfulness"....I refer to it as-- *savor the here and now!*)
- Recognize elements of life that are out of your control; try keeping these *out of your mind*.

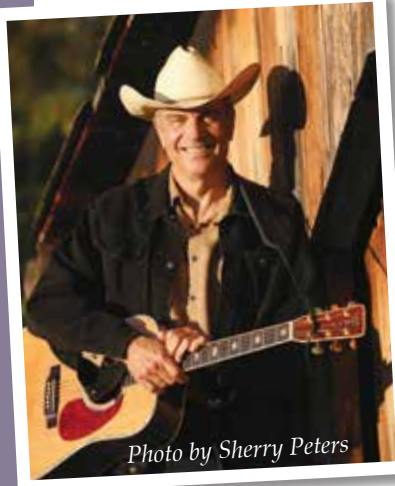


Photo by Sherry Peters

- Life is not a spectator sport—savor every moment, since life is fleeting and fragile.
- Strive to be happy....it is a choice!
- Seek to add joy to your life...and share it with others.
- Add spice to your life—try new things:
 - o Try a new recipe
 - o Begin to learn a new musical instrument
 - o Join a social group based on crafts, hobbies, etc.
 - o Invite friends to your home who have not been there before
 - o Do something nice for someone who is NOT expecting it....(a non-relative preferably)
 - o If you are working, try a new route to work (without getting lost)
- Capture (and retain) the positive energy, friends, family members and activities with media devices. Continue to savor these memories with digital picture frames or simply paper copies of moments—taped onto your refrigerator, so as to be reminded daily of the positive aspects of your life.
- Call/email long-distance friends and family members on "off days"...when they least expect it!
- Do something kind for YOU! You deserve it! Become your best advocate...not your worst critic!

Chuck Oakes is an entertainer, actor and advocate for "Graceful Aging Matters". Visit www.chuckoakes.net for blogs, books and articles or call 518-280-6077. ■

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By Emma Huneck, Saratoga Arts

Saratoga Arts invites you to the area's largest New Year's Eve celebration: First Night Saratoga – A Night of Magic! We have over 30 performance venues & 170 performances including local headliners The Figgs, SIRSY and Wild Adriatic; old favorites including Big Fez, Harold Ford, Hot Club, Ramblin' Jug Stompers and MopCo; fresh young singer songwriters including Arianna Stewart, Benjamin John, Maddy Hicks and Shane Guerrette; dance bands Nitro Jive and Alex Torres with the Saratoga SAVOY

Center of Dance; and some magic acts to blow your mind including world renowned mentalist Jon Stetson, comic hypnotist Michael Ray, magician Patrick Davis, Mediums, Tarot, Runes & much more. Starting with the 5K Run at Skidmore College at 5:30 and ending with the midnight fireworks in Congress Park, there is sure to be something fun for everyone!



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Lisa Broome's Chocolate Crinkle Cookies



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- 3 large eggs
- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 4 squares (4 ounces)
unsweetened chocolate, melted
- ½ cup canola oil
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups powdered sugar

In a large mixing bowl lightly beat the eggs. Add the sugar, melted chocolate, oil, baking powder and vanilla, beat well. Slowly stir in the flour until thoroughly combined. Cover and chill for one to two hours or until the dough is easy to handle.

Preheat oven to 375°. Shape the dough into 1-inch balls then roll in powdered sugar to coat. Place cookies on an ungreased cookie sheet two inches apart. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until edges are set and tops are crackled. Remove cookies right away from cookie sheet and cool on a wire rack. If desired, sift more powdered sugar over cookies. Store in an airtight container.



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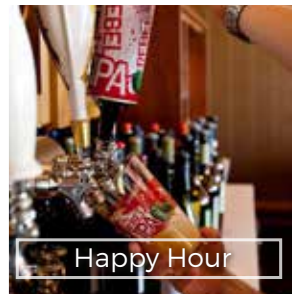
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 Town Board Members.....371-6651
 Animal Control Officer.....371-6756
 Town Attorney *Tom McCarthy*.....371-6651
 Assessor *Walter Smead*.....371-6460
 Building & Development Director
Steve Myers.....371-6702
 Building & Grounds Director
Mike Handerhan.....371-6651
 Town Clerk *Pat O'Donnell*.....371-6681

Town Court, 5 Municipal Plaza371-6668
 Community Development Director
Barb McHugh.....371-6651
 Town Comptroller *Mark Heggen*.....371-6651
 Storm Water Management Technician
Scott Reese.....371-6054
 Director of Communications & Tech
Dahn Bull.....371-6651
 Highway Superintendent
Rick Kukuk.....371-7310

Parks and Recreation Director
Myla Kramer.....371-6667
 Planning Director *John Scavo*.....371-6054
 Receiver of Taxes *Lorraine Varley*.....371-5720
 Director of Safety and Security
Lou Pasquarel.....348-7311
 Town Security Officers.....369-6651
 Sewer Director *Mike O'Brien*.....348-7313
 Transfer Station Supervisor
Jeff Vedder.....371-6669

If the person you wish to reach is not on the list above, please call 371-6651 to speak to a receptionist who will direct your call to the appropriate individual or department. The Town's office buildings are open from Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm, excluding holidays. The Town Clerk's Office is open until 7pm every Thursday. The Building and Parks and Recreation Departments are open at 8am Monday through Friday.

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