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PUTNAM COUNTY'S LOCAL NEWSPAPER

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PCLT President Judy Terlizzi, second from left, acknowledges the dinner committee, including, from left, Lorna Cook, Linda Lund and Cheyanne Alberti. At the far left is Christine Zirkelbach, dinner emcee. Additional Photos are on page 11. Photo by David DeRita.

Land Trust Celebrates its Volunteers

See Highlights at PutnamTimesVideo.com

The Putnam County Land Trust held its 46th annual benefit dinner and auction April 18 to recognize outstanding volunteers who contributed to the conservation of vital nature preserves, trails and habitats. Started in 1969, PCLT is one of the oldest land trusts in the state, protecting more than 1,000 acres

through 31 preserves.

Members of the Free to Speak Self Advocacy Group of Putnam ARC were honored with the Leadership and Giving Award for their stewardship of the Linder Loop Trail, Putnam's first handicapped-accessible nature trail. The group holds semi-annual fundraisers

for supplies and work sessions, performing services like stain-treating benches and planting bulbs along the trail.

Camp Herrlich Executive Director Bob Gentile received the coveted Blue Heron Award for his efforts in conservation

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Kent Town Supervisor Maureen Fleming reads a proclamation officially designating Kent as a Purple Heart Town, during the April 21 Town Board meeting. Photo by David DeRita.

Kent Becomes Purple Heart Town

By David DeRita

In recognition of its support of military veterans, the Town of Kent has officially been designated as a Purple Heart Town, joining the ranks of Carmel and Southeast, which have also recently been designated.

In a ceremony conducted during its April 21 meeting, the Kent Town Board presented its proclamation accepting the title, before an audience that included County Executive MaryEllen Odell and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Kent Supervisor Maureen Fleming began the meeting with a quote from Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who in 1932 requested Congress make the Purple Heart award standard: "The soldier, above all others, prays for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."

The proclamation states that Kent has "great admiration and the utmost respect and gratitude for all the men and women who have selflessly served their country" and, in becoming a Purple Heart

Town, promises to provide the "honor, respect and support they have earned."

Lt.-Col. Neil Gross, junior vice CDR/adjutant of the Military Order of Purple Heart Chapter 21 NY, grew up in Putnam Valley and said he recognizes the county as loyal and patriotic.

"I will not forget tonight," he said. "I won't forget all that's been done for the members of my chapter."

He noted that many of the patients of Veterans Affairs hospitals

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Ire Over Common Core Spreading

By Holly Toal

Another year of Common Core Standardized Testing has wreaked havoc in school districts across the state, with many parents deciding to "opt-out" their children from the English language arts and math exams that were administered April 14 to 16 to students in grades three through eight, saying the tests are unfair.

With school board members and administrators in most of Putnam's school districts having voiced opposition to the standardized testing, county legislators also voiced their dissent, following a request to support legislation to discontinue Common Core that was made at the county's April 20 Education Committee meeting.

"I am disgusted with the bullying of parents who are exercising their rights to refuse the test aligned with the Common Core," said Cathy Sapeta of Philipstown, executive director of New Yorkers United for Kids. "We will not remain silent."

Mahopac saw about half of its students opt out of the test-

ing last week, while Carmel had about 35 percent refuse to take the test. Nearly 75 percent of middle-schoolers opted out of the testing in Brewster, with about 25 percent of the district's elementary students refusing to be tested.

"The reading passages in these tests are well beyond grade level, and these tests are bringing kids to tears," said Sapeta. "Education is no longer fun for these children. With regard to the Common Core, it attempts to have every child learn the same thing to the same degree. But can you truly set one standard for everyone?"

She said Common Core takes the average performance of students in a certain grade and sets a standard that is in-line with only those students, which leaves kids who are capable of higher standards unchallenged, and those who are under-performing with no hope of catching up.

"We know from all of our facts and all of our research that the children at the bottom are

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Residents Invited To Speak on Budget

Meet School Board Candidates April 28

Carmel Central School District voters will have the opportunity to cast their ballots on the proposed 2015-16 school-year budget, a capital reserve fund proposition and Board of Education candidates Tuesday, May 19.

The proposed spending plan is \$119 million and represents a 2.32 percent budget-to-budget increase, with a tax levy increase of 2.12 percent, which falls below the 2.23 percent maximum tax levy increase allowable by the state.

"The 2015-16 proposed budget retains our comprehensive range of offerings in our academic programs, athletic teams and student clubs/activities," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Ryan. "It also allows for the implementation of a full-day kindergarten program, yet the budget is below our maximum allowable tax levy increase."

Along with the basic budget, voters will be asked to decide on the establishment of a capital reserve fund, which allows the district to pay for a project or part of a project with cash. Not having to borrow money helps keep the district' long-term debt lower and saves the cost of paying interest payments, said Ryan.

Voter approval is required to establish the account, as well as to withdraw any funds from it.

The proposition asks voter permission to collect no more than \$5 million over the course of 10 years. The funds would come from any unexpended money from the general budget that is available (fund balance). Funds received from New York State and/or district budget appropriations could also be added to the reserve. No additional money will be added to the budget to fund this reserve, so it

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This Week on PutnamTimes Video.com:

- * Local Weather
- * Putnam County Land Trust dinner
- * Carmel & Kent Town Board meetings
- * Carmel School Board meeting
- * And more!