



## Letters to the editor, Jan. 10



### **Who will save Edgemont Park?**

For those of us who frequent Edgemont Park regularly, the fallout from last year's extensive construction work at the park is clearer to see every day.

Since that year-long project ended last summer, the park has been transformed into a marsh-like bog, particularly along the northern and eastern perimeters, with much of the terrain perpetually waterlogged and muddy, and effectively unusable — except by the local ducks and geese.

Whole areas of the park, which in years past were home to various and sundry recreational and sports activities, are now submerged in water and impassable. Indeed, one cannot walk across the lawn of the park east to west without sinking into water six inches or deeper.

Not unexpectedly, this water build up is also wreaking havoc on the park's vegetation.

Some of our largest, oldest trees are now inundated with water, foretelling certain imminent demise. One mature tree directly across from the crossing bridge on the east side of the park has already been cut down after it died when its roots became permanently inundated with water.

New plantings installed during last year's renovation work are also drowning in water, and are already dead or dying. If nothing is done to correct the drainage problems left in the wake of last year's construction work, many more trees will succumb and we will lose many of the majestic old trees which currently grace the park.

To make matters worse, the lack of drainage since last year's "renovation" has turned the park into a vast breeding ground for mosquitoes, further eroding the safe enjoyment of the park in the warmer months, when usage is typically at its peak. Edgemont Park is a wonderful community resource and it needs saving on an emergent basis. If we wait until Spring, it will be too late.

## **MICHAEL E. QUIAT**

Montclair

### **Saving our Environment**

As I contemplate the New Year, I find two wishes are overwhelming for me. They are the avoidance of nuclear war and disastrous climate change. Alas, there is little I can do about the former except write letters.

We can all do a bit to deter climate change, and I feel called to point out some important steps for my neighbors. Two that seem to need emphasis are avoiding leaf blowers and minimizing vehicle idling. Idling a vehicle for more than 30 seconds damages its engine, significantly lowering its life expectancy and costing much money in replacement, along with costing money for the fuel and causing climate change. Thirty seconds is needed only in subfreezing weather. The rest of the time, please turn on your engine only when you are about to drive away.

Studies indicate that prices for lawn care do not rise when towns prohibit leaf blowers. They cause people, like my husband, with allergies to get sick suddenly, they damage the soil for lawns and other crops, and the sound is very uncomfortable for those of us who want to work or play outside. One congressman said that if the country is serious about preventing climate change, we will ban all power lawn machinery. That audience of several hundred clapped enthusiastically. I doubt that is possible soon, but I do think that towns can and should prohibit leaf blowers. I have cared for my property for over four decades with no power machinery, and it looks quite respectable.

I have also raised most of my family's vegetables with no power machinery or poisons in the Garden State and I highly recommend it. Transporting food long distances is not good for the environment and, alas, too much food is raised in ways that are damaging in other ways.

Other ways to help the environment are to drive as small a vehicle as convenient, keep its tires well inflated, and provide it with regular maintenance. Recycle. Don't buy anything unless someone you know wants it.

Don't have any more children than you really want. There are 2.5 times as many people on this planet as when my father said to my fiancé and me, "The world is getting very crowded. Perhaps you two should adopt your family." Support others' decisions to have few or no children.

I really want the human species to continue long beyond my own death. We are such an interesting, lovable species.

## **PAT KENSCHAFT**

Montclair

## **The economic injustice behind the TSA ‘blue flu’**

Trump and his “gang of Republican blind follower enablers” need to “wave the surrender flag” to give up on their outrageous shutdown of our government.

Words cannot describe the feelings that over 800,000 federal workers have toward this outrageously-uncouth-lying- pompous-egotistical-narcissist-“liter.”

Does America deserve better than “Stump”? Absolutely.

Thankfully Mr. Mueller is getting to the bottom of all the alleged crimes and shenanigans committed by “Stump” and his “despicable gang of convict men and women”.

Thankfully there are sufficient jail cells available to “house” all of them — not the lifestyle to which they had become accustomed to. Would I personally feel one iota of sympathy for any of them? Are you kidding me!

Nobody in America is above the law, even if you’re rich and famous, or have an “in” with the “liter” of the free world.

## **MIKE SYLVAN**

Montclair

## **Montclair Schools in Need of More Oversight**

I decided to write this after the ongoing reports of asbestos in the stair systems at Montclair High School. Soon after reports of the partial collapse, I emailed district officials of the likelihood of asbestos in the stair structure despite the report from the district consultant, Detail Associates, reporting they were asbestos free. The asbestos consultant was wrong about the stairs and continues to work for the district despite other major oversites.

As a parent touring then choosing schools for our children in Montclair in 2017, one of my first inquiries was to review asbestos inspection reports for the elementary schools. AHERA (Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act), is a 1986 federal law that requires surveillance of asbestos containing materials (ACM) in schools. It also allows parents and other residents to review any of these reports including maintenance or repair records, at any time.

I had the feeling that I was the first parent to ever do this when I reviewed records for all of the elementary schools in 2017. This act doesn’t require any removal unless there is a health threat, so our schools are loaded with ACM in floors, ceiling tiles, wall plaster, and even HVAC systems.

I expected to see at least some ACM in the school because of their age, what I did not expect were inadequate reports and inspections that revealed systemic problems with ACM surveillance and remediation, and no real oversight. I immediately notified different administrators in the district including principals, the board of education, and the acting superintendent. I was able to identify one issue that was promptly repaired which was putting all of the students and teachers at Bradford School at risk. This was done with no public notification.

I sent numerous emails over these two years which often included technical and procedural recommendations. I had meetings with various district employees, made a suggestion to replace the current asbestos consultant who has not acted on behalf of the health and safety of our students and teachers, and to form a Health and Safety Advisory Council to assist the district with these often technical and serious issues. The council would be comprised of those professionals directly trained in a related field like public health, toxicology, and environmental management. In fact, I offered to be the first volunteer for the job as someone educated in environmental health, toxicology, and building design, but also who has experience with ACM in buildings as a building developer. I even suggested a separate fund just for remediating ACM each year, so eventually it is eliminated from our schools.

So far, nothing has changed but hopefully more voices will change that with our new superintendent. I always encourage people to do their own research, so request to see the AHERA reports from your child's school and decide what you think. Research asbestos in schools and decide if you are comfortable with our current ACM inventory and how it is managed. There is no safe level of asbestos, so it is in a different class than issues like lead or mold.

**JUSTIN KLABIN**

Montclair