

**Sunrise Rotary
Snow Ball rolls
out support for
Winters Center
for Autism...**

-See stories, page 2

Joe Winters (center) with his wife Michele and son Sean.



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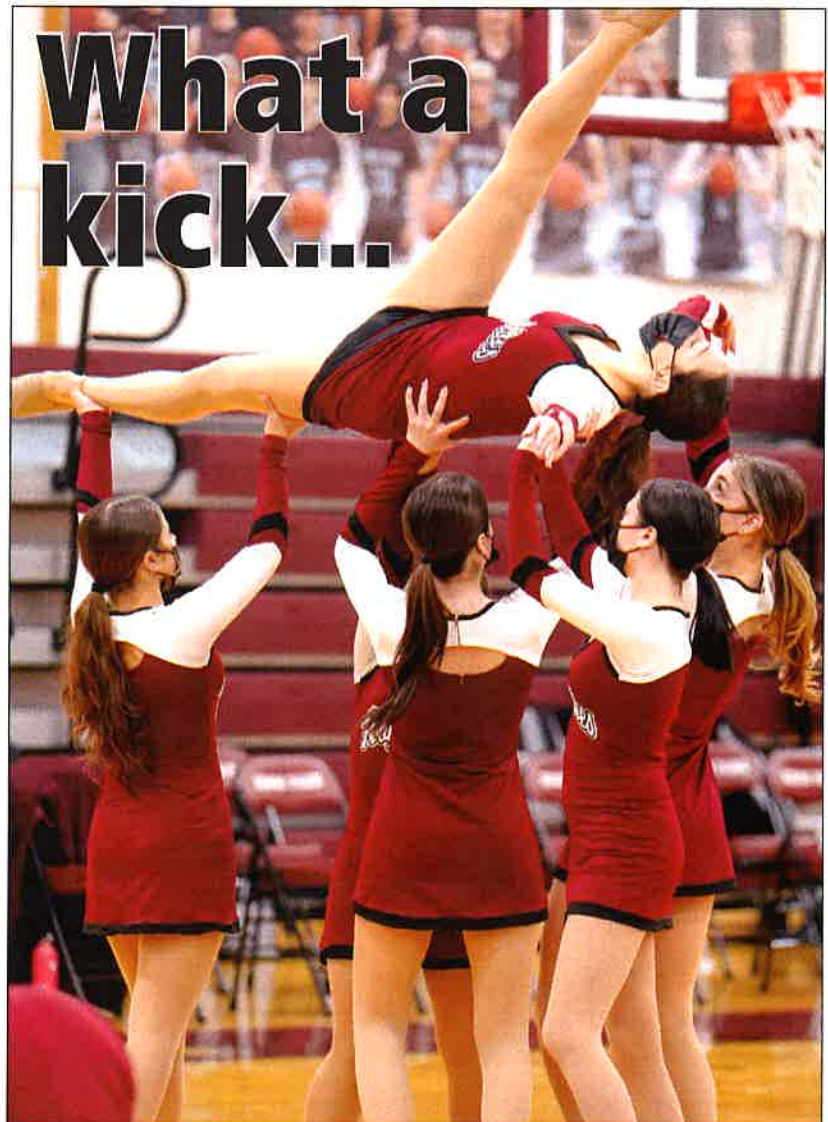


2022

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Hauppauge back atop league
-See story, page 22



What a kick...

The Kings Park High School Royalties kickline performs during halftime of the Kings Park girls' basketball team's 60-27 over Half Hollow Hills West. See game story, page 23, photo story, page 11.

-Peggy Gallery photo

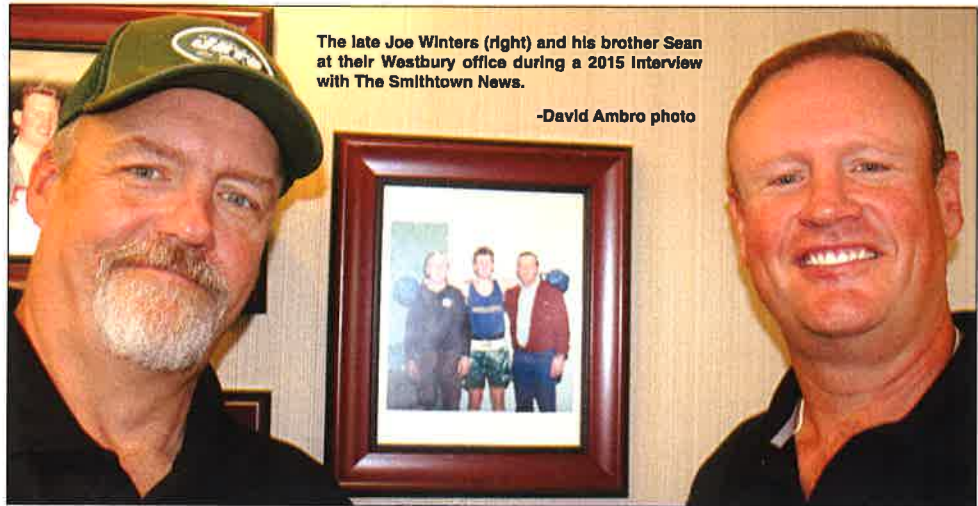
Support snowballs for Winters Center for Autism

Sunrise Rotary Club to donate proceeds from annual dinner

By David Ambro

When Joe Winters, of St. James, passed away from coronavirus (COVID-19) a week after his 54th birthday January 5, 2021, it was a tragic loss felt far beyond his family circle.

Mr. Winters, chairman and chief executive officer of Winters Brothers Waste Systems, Inc., Long Island's largest garbage carting company, was beloved in his community for his benevolence. He and his brothers, Smithtown football players in their youth, were generous with their support of local student-athletes. They would bring their unique mobile Jets grill to every Smithtown Bulls home football game and they would raffle off tickets to Jets home games and take the winners to the stadium on their lavish Jets bus. They would also arrange for students to attend Jets practices as VIPs, which included special seating, lunch with the team, and autograph sessions with the players. Winters Brothers has



The late Joe Winters (right) and his brother Sean at their Westbury office during a 2015 interview with The Smithtown News.

-David Ambro photo

also been a major contributor to the Smithtown Booster Club.

Mr. Winters and his wife, Michele, have also been benevolent to the Autism community. Their son Sean was diagnosed with autism in 1996 and since that time the Winters have been actively involved on many levels.

Mr. Winters served on the Board of Directors for Nassau-Suffolk Services

for Autism (NSSA) which provides outreach, education and therapy services to children and young adults with disabilities. He also served on and was past president of the Board of Directors of the Ascent Funding Organization, a childhood autism education, research and advocacy group operating in the greater New York metropolitan area. The Winters were also active in establishing a group home in Smithtown for young men with autism to live on their own.

Perhaps the ultimate involvement, however, came in August 2020, just months before Mr. Winters death, when he, his family and co-workers held a ribbon cutting at one of their buildings in West Babylon to announce the launch of a project to renovate the space into the Winters Center for Autism, a facility where young adults with Autism will be trained for meaningful employment.

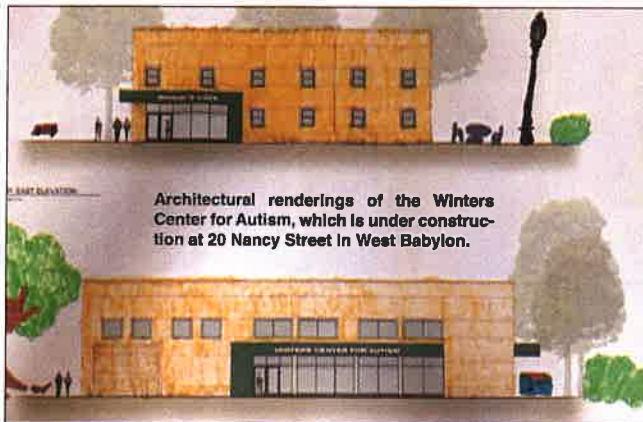
In memory of Mr. Winters and his steadfast benevolence, the Rotary Club of Smithtown-Sunrise will dedicate its annual Snow Ball gala dinner dance to the memory of Joe Winters, the proceeds to be donated to the Winters Center for Autism. The Snow Ball will be held Thursday, March 10 at the

Watermill at 6:30 p.m. Attendance is limited. For tickets, call 631-835-9136.

Smithtown-Sunrise Rotary Club President Nick Schroder, a former coach and athletic director in the Smithtown School District, counts himself among the many friends of the Winters family, close to Joe and his brother Sean, who he once coached in football. During an interview this week, Mr. Schroder said the Rotary decided to posthumously honor Mr. Winters at this year's Snow Ball, not only because he was well liked and respected in the community but also because the work of the Winters Center for Autism is so important.

Mr. Schroder said young people with Autism are able to remain in the public school system until they are 21 years old, after which many of them are young adults living at home with no job training or opportunity to do anything productive with themselves. The Winters Center for Autism will fill that void, providing young people with the training they need to prepare them to enter the workforce.

Mr. Schroder said the money from the Rotary Snow Ball will help the
(Continued on page 10)



Architectural renderings of the Winters Center for Autism, which is under construction at 20 Nancy Street in West Babylon.

Smithtown Hibernians chip in for autism center

The Smithtown Ancient Order of Hibernians recently made a donation to the Winters Center for Autism, a not for profit organization committed to enhancing the lives of adults with autism through job creation, training and placement while helping provide valuable employees to Long Island businesses.

The Winters Center for Autism, founded by the late Joseph Winters, who passed away from COVID in January 2021, and his wife Michelle, of St. James, is currently the process of renovating a West Babylon building into a workforce training center, which is tentatively scheduled

to open April 1. Smithtown Hibernians Vice President Brian Clancy presented a donation January 12 to Winters Center for Autism Executive Director Christine Ponzio and Board President Patrick Winters at Travis Hall in Kings Park.

"Joe (Winters) was a great Irishman that I admired from the day I met him. His death left a big hole in the Long Island community, but efforts like yours make it feel like he is still here. The center is a great legacy to a great man," Mr. Clancy said when presenting the check.

"As a brother of the
(Continued on page 10)



HELPING HANDS: Presenting a donation to the Winters Center for Autism are Ancient Order of Hibernians Vice President Brian Clancy, Winters Center for Autism Board President Patrick Winters and Executive Director Christine Ponzio.

Editorials & comments

Chip in to support Winters Center for Autism

As the Winters Center for Autism makes its final push to a tentative opening April 1, local residents should donate generously, a worthy cause with homegrown beginnings with the potential to change the lives of people we know and love.

The intention of the Center is to train young adults with autism for a place in the workforce and then to partner with local businesses to hire these young workers so that they can live independent and fulfilling lives. The Center will be located at 120 Nancy Street in West Babylon. It is the idea of the late Joseph Winters and his wife Michelle, of St. James, who have a son Sean who is autistic.

In August 2021, the Winters held a ribbon cutting to kickoff construction of the Center for Autism in an existing building in an industrial park where the Winters Brothers Waste Systems, Long Island's largest garbage carting company, operates its business from a campus of different office and industrial buildings.

With the renovation project advancing, Mr. Winters died suddenly in January 2021 at 54 years old of coronavirus (COVID-19). It was a tragic loss for his family, but also for the Smithtown community. Mr. Winters was a benevolent man who spent his life trying to help others anyway he could. The Winters Center for Autism was near and dear to him, but Joe Winters and his family have always contributed to students, schools, local businesses and community causes.

There is little doubt that Joe Winters has been missed. In his memory, it is important that we all try to contribute a little or a lot to help ensure that the Winters Center for Autism lives on as a legacy to Joe Winters.

To donate to the cause while enjoying a night out, the Rotary Club of Smithtown-Sunrise announced that proceeds from its annual Snow Ball at the Watermill in Smithtown Thursday, March 10 will be donated to the Winters Center for Autism in memory of Joe Winters. Tickets are \$125 and they are on sale now, dinner, dancing and raffles to benefit a charity with local roots and boundless potential. For tickets, call Rotary Club of Sunrise-Smithtown President Nick Schroder at 631-835-9136. Sponsorships are also available.

For those interested in supporting the cause but perhaps not inclined to drink, eat and dance at the Watermill March 10, there is an alternative. Go to winterscenterforautism.com where there is a link to

donate. There is also a great deal of information, renderings, and background about the Center for Autism.

There are a lot of worthy causes in our community: service dogs and food pantries, scholarships and support services and we support them all. Right now, though, residents should target their support for

valuable program launch with momentum and the Winters Center for Autism to help this overwhelming community services.



The road once traveled Good deeds shining...

The Facebook group Keep it Kind Smithtown is a breath of fresh air. The group's mission is to jettison negativity and, as the name implies, keep things benevolent in our town. With the last few years of Covid-related mental and physical fatigue and polarizing political thoughts, Keep it Kind Smithtown sounds like something that could be beneficial to us.

After scrolling through their page, I was quickly reminded about how important warmth is in our lives. A simple act of holding the door open at 7-Eleven or a fellow driver letting me pull out in front of him as I exit Dairy Barn can easily brighten a morning for me. Admittedly, I can forget to be kind and it sometimes takes someone else's act of hospitality to remind me how important it is.

Tippling at a take-out place or saying good morning to someone I pass on the street. A thank you to the cashier who rings me up or a wave to the sanitation worker when he returns my empty trash can to the curb. That's all it takes. Simple acts speak volumes about character and I'm glad that a group is reminding us to take the extra second and spread kindness. I hope this devoted decency can define our community down the road.

As is my wont when I scroll on Facebook, my mind began to drift and when I was on the Keep it Kind Smithtown page I thought of an afternoon I experienced over twenty years ago in Madrid that exemplifies the group's spirit...

I noticed her limp immediately when she sat next to me on the bench in the park outside of Madrid's Prado Museum. Her deep brown eyes behind her octagonal glasses looked sad and defeated and I inquired about why. "I was robbed here yesterday, during slesta," she said. "Two men with knives jumped out from the bushes." She was Finnish and her trip to Spain had to be cut short because of the incident.

For a moment I wondered if I was being conned, but that didn't stop me from asking her if I could buy her a cup of coffee. Minna looked tall and slender in black jeans and matching leather boots and her hair billowed while she hobbled as we walked to a nearby café. We chatted about our countries over coffee and chocolate; I told

her about Brooklyn and baseball and she talked of a girl's life in Helsinki. When our cups were empty we drank cold Spanish lagers under the café's awning and we laughed and connected and Minna seemed to forget about the previous day's terrible afternoon with each cool sip.

I trusted her and asked her if I could lend her some cash. "You can mail me a check when you get home," I said, but Minna shook her head. "At least take some pesetas to get you through the day," I added. I reached for my wallet, but she touched my arm. She smiled faintly and brushed her hair out of her face. "There is something you can do," she said. "I don't want to leave Madrid with a bad taste in my mouth. Can you walk with me past where I was robbed yesterday?"

My guard went up again and I thought for a shameful moment that this was part of her plan. I reluctantly agreed to help Minna exorcise the thievish vibes and we walked back to the spot of the offense. She held my hand and I half-expected a knife-wielding duo to spring from the shrubbery, but there was nothing except for the sleepy midday Spanish sun poking itself through the canopy of trees.

"Do you feel better?" I asked with more than a hint of relief as we returned to the bench in front of the Prado. She didn't say anything, but held my hand tighter...

Now I'm not saying we should all offer loans to visiting Europeans or be prepared to stop potential knife fights, but maybe we can all step it up a notch. My afternoon with Minna over two decades ago still resonates with me and has kept me cognizant of nurturing kindness in my heart during tough times. Yes, I need a reminder sometimes, but I've learned that an act of goodwill is rarely wasted and frequently sets a ripple effect in motion.

Keep it Kind Smithtown reminds me of a quotation I have pointed out when I teach Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: "How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world." Let's return to the classic act of kindness and let this candle burn even brighter.




By MATT KINDELMANN

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Serial bank robber caught in the act

Dominic Scotto, 31, of East Northport, who is alleged to have robbed four banks between December 29 and January 13, was arrested by Suffolk County police robbing the Chase Bank on Grand Boulevard in Deer Park.

He is charged with four counts of robbery in the third degree, a class D felony, one count of attempted robbery in the third degree, and parole violations. He is alleged to have robbed the Chase Bank on Vanderbilt Motor Parkway in Commack December 21, the Capital One Bank on Jericho Turnpike in Commack December 29, the HSBC Bank on Jericho Turnpike in Commack December 29 and the Citibank on Larkfield Road in East

Northport January 3, according to police. He was arraigned in First District Court in Central Islip January 4 and remanded to jail. He was due back in court January 19.

According to police, on January 13, Mr. Scotto entered Deer Park Chase Bank and handed the teller a note demanding cash. The teller refused and Mr. Scotto left the bank. When he got outside, Mr. Scotto was arrested by police were at 4:50 p.m. His getaway-driver, Adam Postiglione, 32, of West Islip, was also arrested. He is charged with attempted robbery in the third degree. He was released without bail and is due back in court January 31.

According to police, during the

January 3 incident, Mr. Scotto entered the Citibank and handed the teller a note threatening violence and demanding money. The teller complied and gave him money. Mr. Scotto was last seen fleeing the bank on foot. Police said he was wearing a COVID-19 mask during the robbery.

The incident at the Capital One Bank in Commack 11:50 a.m. December 29 was similar, a note threatening violence, the teller handing over cash, and Mr. Scotto allegedly last seen fleeing the bank on foot.

Later that day, at 4:35 p.m., there was a similar incident at the HSBC in Commack, a note threatening violence, the teller complying and Mr. Scotto fleeing on foot. In this incident,

police said Mr. Scotto was wearing a baseball cap, a blue face mask and gloves.

The December 21 incident was similar, though the police did not disclose that the note included a threat of violence. In that incident, which took place at 12:59 p.m., Mr. Scotto was described as about six feet tall and he also wore a hat and mask. Again, he was last seen fleeing on foot in an unknown direction.

The case was investigated by the Suffolk County Police Department Major Case Unit, which each sought the public's help with information after each robbery. The investigation was assisted by the Suffolk County Police Crime Stoppers Tips line.

Sunrise Rotary honors Joe Winters at annual Snow Ball

(Continued from page 2)

Winters Center for Autism with its mission. He said the Center is expected to open April 1. At the Snow Ball March 10, Mr. Schroder said there will be a video about the life of Joe Winters, which will include a segment of him talking to people about the Center for Autism.

"Winters Brothers never turned the Smithtown School District down for anything," Mr. Schroder said. "They have done a lot and Joe was the man who would always say 'okay, we'll

do it. He has been wonderful to our community because he grew up here and he never said no."

Mr. Schroder urged residents to buy tickets to the Snow Ball and to support the Winters Center for Autism, just as Joe Winters supported the Smithtown community.

Although the Winters Center for Autism is still under construction and scheduled to open April 1, Mr. Schroder said the program is already in the works and he has had the opportunity to visit the facility. "When I go there I

am amazed at what these kids can do. They train them for a specific job, but they also mentor them in terms of their behavior," he said. "What impressed me the most is that everyone is smiling, everyone is excited, and everyone is busy doing something."

According to the Winters Center for Autism, there are nearly 50,000 people with autism entering adulthood annually and they have a 85% to 90% unemployment rate, compared to the national average of 3.5% unemployment. The Winters Center for

Autism will facilitate the hiring process by connecting businesses with qualified, reliable and hardworking job prospects who have the skills and talents to fit the specific needs of the company for positions of five to 40 hours per week. The Center will offer clinical staff to assist bringing the workers on board and with orientation to the workplace. As well as on-site training and supervisor to ensure success.

For more information or to make a donation, go to winterscenterforautism.com or call 631-635-1169.

Ancient Order of Hibernians backs Winters Center for Autism

(Continued from page 2)

Hibernians, and my father being a former brother, I am humbled by their support of the Winters Center for Autism. The Hibernians have always strived to better the community and we are grateful we can be considered for their work. Their continued support will further job training and placement for adults with autism," Patrick Winters said upon accepting the donation.

For more information about the Winters Center for Autism or to make a donation, go to winterscenterforautism.com.

The Winters Center for Autism will be located at 120 Nancy Street in West Babylon.

"Over the past year, my father, our founder, Joe Winters, broke ground on construction of the campus that will be home to the Winters Center for Autism, bringing to fruition his

lifelong dream of creating a place dedicated to helping individuals with autism successfully gain and maintain employment," Patrick Winters said.

"My whole life I watched my father do everything in his power to provide the best possible life for my brother Sean, who was diagnosed with autism at a very young age. From that, what was once just a goal for him became a passion as he realized the lack of help for adults

with autism. My father's relentless work ethic and desire to do more for the autism community has led to his vision to create the Center, a place where every adult with autism can and will realize their fullest potential. In light of my father's passing, I am happy to tell you all we are staying strong and are inspired to carry on his vision and mission of providing outstanding services for adults with autism."

Letters from our readers

(Continued from page 5)

that are today the Nissequogue Wildlife Refuge - to the Village of Nissequogue. The State retained all of its property and related Public Trust interests in and to all of the lands surrounding that area in Stony Brook Harbor, Smithtown Bay, and northward into the middle of Long Island Sound. There were never any private lands in the harbor to transfer to the State because already owned and to this day owns them.

The State also owns all of the underwater lands seaward of/from the mean high water line, as it exists from time to time, along the shoreline of Smithtown Bay, including the area of the "entrance" channel to Stony Brook Harbor and northward to the NY/CT state line down the center of the length of most of the Long Island Sound. No entity may dredge or otherwise take or

remove or place structures on or over or occupy or use those lands without permission from the owner of them. That owner is the State of New York. That permission is not in the form of a permit or similar approval from the State's Department of Environmental Conservation. It's required from the Commissioner of the State's Office of General Services, which is the State's "landlord", responsible for managing State owned lands and properties not owned by any specific State agency. And there are limitations to - even a prohibition of - the Commissioner's authority to grant permission to dredge or remove sand or gravel from State owned lands under water in areas such as the entrance channel to Stony Brook Harbor, which the US Army Corps of Engineers itself has said should not be dredged, and that maintaining a viable dredged

channel there would not be possible without building massive, mile long parallel jetties into the bay. Costing today many tens of millions of dollars to build, and tens of millions more to maintain, causing a host of other problems costing even more.

These matters have been raised and considered over and over and over again for decades. The facts haven't and won't change. The waste of taxpayer dollars and efforts to change them should have ended with the last \$250,000 grant to model hydrographic and sediment bedload transport in the area. Which some folks in the business thought a waste of money. Because similar studies with almost identical information had last been undertaken more than two decades earlier.

Stop the dissemination of misinformation and the pandering to the relatively few recreational interests

who believe the misinformation - and those who perhaps don't believe it but want at all costs to keep and use vessels too large for the shallow and highly valued area of Stony Brook Harbor.

Location is everything. This is not the place for new dredging and its direct and indirect economic, recreational, public safety, environmental and other effects, no matter how minor it might appear. Because it's not minor.

Steven C. Resler
Albany

(Editor's Note: Mr. Resler was Smithtown's first full time environmental professional and sole Environmental Analyst, former Bay Constable and briefly Harbormaster, and retired Deputy Bureau Chief and Section Chief with New York State's Coastal Management Program.)