

## Spring to the library to relieve stress

I've been wondering why April is designated as National Stress Awareness Month. The month of April comes with so many new hopes and anticipations. It's the month when you can finally feel the refreshing breath of spring in multitudes — comfortable temperatures outside, trees starting to get green, longer days, the aroma of rainy days and the soothing softness of sunny rays. Yet, at the same time, when April comes, it brings along a large mixture and various degrees of stress factors. People are dealing with tax-season deadlines, college-decision days and

### LIBRARY MATTERS

BY LANA PEKER

upcoming graduation anxieties, suffering through the beginning of allergy season, planning summer camp stays and vacations, beautifying their yards and cleaning up their homes, in addition to some lingering winter exhaustion.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed during this time, think of nature. Imagine for a moment how nature awakens during the spring season. Visualize the butterflies

emerging from cocoons, new sprouts coming out of the ground or, better yet, think of the bears coming out of hibernation. They all go through a transition. Picture the bears again and think about it for a second. Would the bears vigorously pop out of their holes? Or would they slowly wiggle their toes, stretch their spine and perhaps squint their eyes as they are awoken by sunlight? Maybe we humans should follow nature in our spring awakenings to reduce the anxiety?

Sometimes anxiety comes from the unnecessary desire to have things done

quickly, although our minds and bodies might not be ready yet. We should slow down and take care of our minds and bodies first.

Here are my favorite ways to reduce stress and prepare for change:

When you go for a walk, do any other favorite type of exercise or hit the gym, you feel much better almost instantly. You fill up your body with happy hormones and naturally boost your energy. The added bonus is that you sweat both your worries and toxins straight out of your body and

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## WOHS: not a stereotypical experience

Everybody gets nervous on their first day of school. However, the first day of high school is usually the most nerve-racking of them all. We've seen countless movies and TV shows that take place at a high school, and they usually do not portray the school in a positive manner. We also hear high school students in real life talk about how much they hate the school and their teachers. I also personally recall one of my eighth-grade teachers saying that in high school, you're just a number, that none of the teachers are going to care about you, the work assigned is infinitely more difficult than in middle school, and you will be begging to return to middle school after the first two weeks. That was definitely not what I wanted to hear.

However, almost every single frightening or intimidating thing I had heard about high school was either over-exaggerated or not even present. Almost every single teacher I've had at West Orange High School has taken the time to help me when I was struggling, had a likable personality

### PAUSE & REFLECT

BY JOSH BAKER

and motivated their students to become invested in the subject they taught. I believe that one of the key elements to becoming a good teacher is making the students appreciate and value you. Having a positive and/or relatable personality, enthusiasm and, of course, being nice to your students while still maintaining limits is an admirable balance.

Another high school stereotype that had me concerned before I started was established through several of the John Hughes "high school survival movies" I've seen. Films like "Sixteen Candles," "The Breakfast Club" and definitely "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" had me under the illusion that everyone in high school would be horny, slutty, desperate for sex and entirely uninterested in any of their classes. But this was not entirely accurate. These films are about fairly typical American teenagers,

teens you can like even when you can't always relate to them, teens who are vulnerable and serious and nervous about not just their futures but also their day-to-day survival. What I find most interesting is that the concerns and emotions of high school teens are timeless. These 1980s movies and the students they portrayed are still current, even today. Even after more than 30 years, teens still have the same insecurities and desires for acceptance.

Another major school stereotype I over-estimated was the bully. Most students at WOHS are either open-minded and have no reason to harass others, or are too lazy to get in anyone's way. When you picture a bully in your head he is usually knocking books out of someone's hands or slapping a lunch tray to the floor in the cafeteria. Luckily at WOHS, there is zero tolerance for bullying. I admire and appreciate the stance the school has taken and I believe my high school experience — and that of my peers — has been better because I take comfort in knowing this policy is there to

protect all students. Society has also witnessed a major increase in tolerance of race, ethnicity and sexuality, which has assisted in the decrease of bullying as well.

I would like to mention again, because I truly believe it has made a huge difference in my high school education, how supportive my teachers have been. They are approachable, warm and so invested in the success of their students. From calming my fears as a freshman who couldn't get his locker combination to work, to writing a letter of recommendation for college, my teachers have always had my back.

I hope that the future students of West Orange High School have the same privilege of experiencing this important phase in life without going through the stereotypical downsides they have seen through others' eyes.

**Josh Baker is a senior at West Orange High School and staff member of The Pioneer, the school's newspaper.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Continued from Page 10)

We hope that you will support us by coming to the dinner and/or purchasing a business card advertisement for our spaghetti dinner placemat. It is a reasonably priced, well-attended, fun event to participate in.

On behalf of the Lions Club, I would like to thank you for your past and anticipated support.

Roger S. Schneider  
President, Lions Club of West Orange

### Celebrating architecture

To the Editor:

Every year, a week in April is chosen by the American Institute of Architects to celebrate architecture across the country. This year the celebration begins April 22. April is the birth month of Thomas Jefferson, the country's third president and a self-taught amateur architect.

Two famous buildings everyone should know are his home, Monticello, and the Uni-

versity of Virginia campus. His buildings became known as Jeffersonian Architecture and many buildings in this classical style became the norm for architects who followed. His architecture was based on that of Andrea Palladio, an Italian architect who lived more than two centuries before Jefferson.

I have written letters to the Chronicle annually to inform the citizenry about this celebration and various connections to some historic architecture right here in West Orange and around New Jersey. One of the campaigns AIA started some years back was the "look up campaign," which is just one way for people to appreciate the built environment around us.

This year AIA-NJ is celebrating by having architects visit the public schools from which they have graduated. I will visit George Washington School in Hillside and speak to more than 200 sixth-graders about architecture as a career. While I do not expect that all 200 students will become architects, I do hope to teach them to appre-

ciate architecture and begin to understand the importance of building safety.

When I was in sixth grade, I first admired the architecture expressed by a grand window at the end of the school's center hall. I had no idea at that time of the connection to Andrea Palladio or to Thomas Jefferson as architects. However, just one year later — upon learning how to create one- and two-point perspective drawings — I was told by the art teacher that I should consider architecture as a career. I never looked back and have practiced as a licensed professional for more than 35 years.

Jerome Leslie Eben  
West Orange

### Policy on letters, columns

The West Orange Chronicle welcomes submissions from its readers. Letters to the editor or opinion pieces on any subject will be considered for publication on the opinion pages. Responses to response letters will not be printed. The West Orange

Chronicle reserves the right to edit all submissions for length, content and style. Writers must include their name, address and daytime telephone number for verification. Letters must not be longer than 250 words. Longer pieces must be arranged in advance with the editor.

The West Orange Chronicle accepts letters to the editor and guest columns via email. The address is wochronicle@thelocalsource.com. All letters and guest columns must be received by 5 p.m. Friday to be considered for publication in the Thursday edition of the West Orange Chronicle. Letters received must be on topics of interest, preferably in response to content that appeared in the newspaper.

Writers are asked not to include lengthy lists of people and organizations they wish to thank. The editor will make necessary grammatical corrections to the text of the letter. Although the writer's style will be maintained, certain changes may be made in the interest of clarity.

**POETRY CORNER**

**One Night**  
By Peggy Vassallo

I dreamed we were nearly in love  
and you asked me out for coffee.  
You were not married or attached at  
all,  
no stones to take down my balloon.  
Over coffee — I had tea — you  
moved fast.  
I willed it and pretended not.  
Your eyes were notions of blue,  
mine never blinked at the light  
beyond the room.  
I was immortal again as were are at  
nineteen.

**How To Eat a Tomato Sandwich**  
By Peggy Vassallo

Go outside some time near noon,  
pick out a tomato.  
Be sure it is red ripe  
all the way to the top  
of its green umbilical cap.  
Twist it, listen for the snap  
as it is pulled from a dangling vine.  
Raise it to your eyes,  
rest it in your palm,  
smell the work of sun  
mixed with dirt and time.

Slice it warm, thick pieces,  
so flesh and seeds stay put.  
Lay them on a white plate.  
Let the aroma trail  
through your kitchen.  
Toast bread, semolina,  
never trim crust.  
Do not use lettuce,  
only salt, pepper if you must.  
Eat it slowly.  
Softly lick the dripping juice  
that slides down your pinkie.

This is best if you are not alone.  
Share it with your father.  
Have him tell you stories of his  
plants while you eat.  
Let both memories  
lie side by side.

*Peggy Vassallo's poetry has appeared in numerous journals. She has repeatedly won honorable mentions for The Allen Ginsberg Poetry Contest of the Paterson Literary Review. She was a previous officer of South Mountain Poets, and assistant editor of their 2010 journal, Off-Line. She has been a judge for her local high school's participation in the national Poetry Out Loud contests. She is a member of the West Orange Arts Council, for which she runs workshops and coordinates readings.*

# After winter storms, you need to restore the garden

**THE GARDENER'S APPRENTICE**

BY ELISABETH GINSBURG

lead to scores of blue flowerheads in late spring or early summer.

There is no use mourning for all those lost branches, uprooted trees and roses that will never happen. Time only moves in one direction. Instead, encourage the phoenix of your garden to rise from the ashes of winter. I started by removing all the brittle, thoroughly dead canes from the roses, double checking carefully to make sure that none of them showed any signs of life. The bushes are now considerably smaller, but all the remaining canes are healthy. I suspect that warmth, sunshine and a little organic fertilizer will bring them back nicely.

The butterfly bushes were a mess. Their wood is relatively weak in the best of times and the ferocious winter blasts inflicted a three-way split on my oldest specimen. One of the trunk pieces came out of the ground when I jiggled it. The other two showed new growth. To help give them a fighting chance, I cut a double length of stout garden twine and pulled them back together. Now the plant stands upright. I'll wait and see what happens next. Weak wood notwithstanding, butterfly bushes are inherently hardy creatures. My money is on survival and future flowers.

Garden twine fixed the Korean box as well. I was able to tie the individual shrubs back into hedge shape, a job that took a little muscle and a lot of twine. Right now elegant appearance is unattainable, but a return to health might be possible. With the right care — water, fertilizer and mulch — the Korean box hedge may be strong enough to stand on its own by fall.

I am taking a good hard look at all the

## My Korean box looks like it has gone a few rounds with one of the evil Decepticons.

spring flowering shrubs. I don't want to sacrifice this year's blooms, but dead wood contributes nothing to that process. It will take days to eliminate the dead wood on the lilacs, deutzia, abelia and spirea, but the shrubs and I will feel better for having gotten rid of it.

I thought nothing could phase rose-of-Sharon, a showy shrub with an iron constitution and prolific self-seeding tendencies. One rose-of-Sharon that I had trained into standard, or tree, form, now looks like someone tried to part its bouffant-like crown down the middle. I am not sure whether to do more work with twine or simply cut it back hard and see what happens. Given the species' strong survival instinct and late summer blooming habit, I am leaning toward hard pruning.

If your yard and garden have suffered similar injuries over the past winter, don't worry. Once the trees and shrubs leaf out, many of the wounds will be camouflaged. Some species also adapt and produce an abundance of new growth in response to damage. It must be Nature's apology for the wild winter.

**Elisabeth Ginsburg, a resident of Glen Ridge, is a frequent contributor to Worrall Community Newspapers. The writer archives past columns at [www.gardeners-apprentice.com](http://www.gardeners-apprentice.com).**

There is no doubt about it. Wind and wet snow wreak havoc in gardens. This past winter wind weakened branches and wet snow brought them down, except on days when wet snow weakened branches and wind brought them down. The sad results have been visible for the past few weeks on every curb in the area.

But once all the branches, sticks and other debris have been picked up and chipped, what is left? In my case, a few roses seem to be completely dead and others harbor loads of dead canes. Two butterfly bushes, stalwarts of the garden, had their trunks split down to the ground and now sit with major limbs splayed out at unnatural angles. The privet, with which I have a love/hate relationship, is mostly fine, owing to the fact that it underwent radical pruning last year. Korean box, which bounded one end of my upper back garden, looks like it has gone a few rounds with one of the evil Decepticons from the Transformers franchise. What used to be a low, short box hedge is now a collection of bedraggled, twiggy blobs, no longer strong enough to pull together.

I count myself lucky that the beautiful red maple on the front strip only lost branches and did not topple right out of the ground, its trunk in the street and roots exposed for the world to see. That fate befell some of the grandest, oldest trees in my town and we are poorer for it.

Despite all that, hope also abounds. The remaining canes on the damaged roses have broken dormancy and are beginning the annual leafing-out process. The butterfly bushes are returning to life and even some of the trunks that were partly wrenched out of the ground sport new growth. The hydrangeas' stems are covered with fat green buds and unless we get a very late, very hard frost, those buds will

# Relieve your stress with a good book

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feel ready for a new challenge.

Sleep seven to eight hours regularly. Start by giving yourself 30 more minutes of sleep. I know suggesting more sleep might sound unreasonable when you are so pressed for time in dealing with decisions, deadlines and other time-consuming things on your list. However, not only does sleep do wonderful things to your hormones, your ability to lose weight, your mood and attitude, but you will be able to accomplish so much more when you feel refreshed and rested.

Spend more time with your friends and family. It doesn't matter what you do with them — walk, talk on the phone, shop or dine together, travel or gather at home — the social interactions face to face — rather

than through social media — are enormously important for emotional well-being.

Start taking baby steps when you feel you are procrastinating. You don't want to be caught up in the moment when you have to play a catch up game that will undoubtedly skyrocket the stress level you already have. Getting more organized at work and in your personal life is an important strategy to combat stress. If you feel that you have way too many things to handle, make a list and prioritize them. If you know you have plenty of minor things that are not urgent enough, yet still occupy your mind, take baby steps by addressing at least one a week and you will feel very good and empowered after accomplishing even one. If you are really great at procrastinating, you might want to think of some creative

ways of addressing this, like developing a system of rewards.

And now, my absolute favorite one: picking up a book at the library that will explain how to deal with stress, as it can branch out into many other ways to reduce stress. If you are a newcomer to the stress scene, we'll help you find a book that talks about the basics of stress management. For the professional warrior, we have a full menu of books explaining how to deal with stress in a variety of ways, conventional and non-conventional, from helpful DVDs on exercises to diets directed toward curbing emotional eating.

What are your favorite stress reducers?

**Lana Peker is a reference librarian at the West Orange Public Library.**