



The Vestal Town Crier



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Vestal Middle School Mathalon teams capture first and second in regional competition

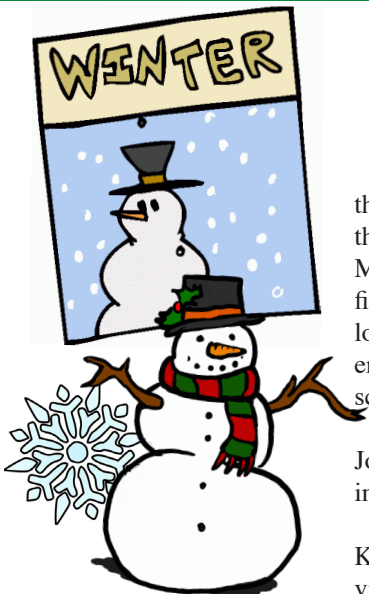
Every year, local sixth-graders test their math skills as they compete in the annual Broome County Mathalon. At this year's competition on Saturday, December 2, Vestal Middle School's Green & Gold Mathalon teams scored first and second places, respectively, in the 2023 Mathalon hosted by BAE Systems. The two teams of sixth-graders competed against five other teams from area middle schools.

Congratulations to first-place Green team members Joshua Cirillo, Zohar Friedman, Yihong Liu, Dylan McKinney, Kush Patel, Daphne Stang, and Evan Zheng!

We also applaud second-place Gold team members Kenan Agung, Leafen Beaston, Josiah Cason, Aniket Govindaraju, Leyla Kamil, Darsh Kukkar, and Asher Pasha!

In addition, Leyla Kamil won a trophy for finishing first place overall in the individual competition, and Evan Zheng was runner-up in the individual round.

Photos courtesy of Scott Smith



PET OF THE WEEK:

Louis



Hi, I'm Louis, but my family likes to call me Lou-berry! I'm a black lab and doxen mix. I have big, floppy ears and a goatee on my chin. I love to go on walks, steal toys from my little brother, climb on the furniture, and sunbathe! I can't wait for Santa-Paws to get here!

Send in a photo of your pet with a short bio to: kirsten@tiersnews.com to have your pet in the paper!

"Vestal Museum Cozy Concert" Article On Page 7, And Photos On Page 8! Article And Photos Courtesy Of Kaitlyn Hession.

"Tips For Parents Buying Technology Toys This Holiday Season" On Page 6

Vestal Students Get A Lesson In Basic Car Maintenance

Vestal High School's Life & Career Readiness class helps prepare students for the practical side of life. As the students finished up a unit on what it takes to own a car, including a deep dive into the intricacies of car insurance, Bernice Thompson thought it might be useful for her students to learn about car maintenance, as well. She consulted with School Counselor Becky Martino, who reached out to her contacts at the Department of Labor. Last week, they came in with virtual-reality goggles for students to experience how to perform a basic oil change.

Following up on that experience, on December 7 Transportation Supervisor Ken Starr invited Mrs. Thompson, her class, plus students from BOCES Heavy Equipment Repair & Operations class to use the bus garage's wash bay to practice some routine maintenance checks on her personal vehicle. Transportation mechanic Matt Darrah, with an assist from mechanic Mitchell Dabrovolskis, showed the students how to check the oil, washer fluid, and air filter. They also checked tire pressure and then

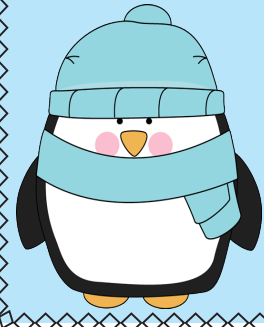
made sure the brake lights were working properly.

"Learning basic car maintenance skills can give students the ability to become more independent and capable young adults," said Mrs. Thompson. "Knowing how to perform these maintenance checks themselves, even how to change an air filter, can save students a lot over their lifetimes as well."

This was a wonderful team effort! So, many thanks to Vestal IT gurus Tyler Clements, Taylor Ehrets, and Storm Kurtz, who ensured the VR goggles worked with District technology, the Department of Labor, Vestal CSD Transportation Department, and especially to Becky Martino for bringing this all together. We appreciate everyone who contributed to this life lesson for our students!

Photos, Courtesy Of Regina Felice, Are On Page 5!

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: It is the time for home." — Edith Sitwell





Calendar

Saturday, December 16th
VHS Winter Wonderland Dance
8:00 PM; VHS Gymnasium

Sunday, December 17th
TCRC Sunday Group Run Rail Trail
8AM - 11AM; Vestal Rail Trail
Event By Triple Cities Runners Club

Monday, December 18th
ARE Holiday Night & Light Tour
6PM

Tuesday, December 19th
>Dollars for Scholars Meeting
7:00 AM on Zoom
More info on www.vestal.stier.org
>VHS Chorus & Vestal Voices Concert
7PM; VHS Auditorium

Wednesday, December 20th
VMS PTO Meeting
6PM; VMS Library

Thursday, December 21st
Greenlight Networks Toy Drive
4100 Vestal Road Ste 260

Friday, December 22nd
Start of Winter Break!

Tuesday, December 26th
30th Reunion for VHS Class of '93!
Vestal Museum, 6PM - 10PM

Thursday, December 28th
Zoning Board of Appeals; 6PM

Friday, December 29th
Bowling And Pizza Party
12PM; Midway Lanes; To RSVP visit:
<https://forms.gle/r55vKMAhJnpBB5ZG9>



Vestal Fire Department Responses

vestalfire.com

by *Walt Schlundt, Public Information Officer*

12/05 20:39	Vestal Parkway E.	Commercial fire alarm
12/06 11:17	Main Street	Odor of gas in kitchen
12/07 10:51	N. Main Street	Two-car motor vehicle accident
12/07 16:13	Murray Hill Road	Gas odor in building
12/08 15:16	Murray Hill Road	Commercial fire alarm - duct detector activation
12/08 17:47	Duke Drive	Gas odor in residence
12/09 07:57	Murray Hill Road	Fire alarm
12/09 12:41	Midvale Road	Odor of gas outside the residence
12/09 16:49	Vestal Road	One person stuck in elevator
12/09 19:38	West Access Road	Fire alarm
12/10 10:07	Vestal Parkway E.	Commercial fire alarm
12/10 15:36	West Drive	Elevator rescue - 8 people
12/10 22:43	East Access Road	Fire alarm
12/11 00:47	East Access Road	Bathroom fire alarm
12/11 02:43	East Access Road	Commercial fire alarm
12/11 19:14	East Access Road	Fire alarm activation
12/11 19:29	Siena Lane	First floor hallway smoke detector activation



VESTAL POLICE REPORT

Jiri Simon, 44, Johnson City, arrested for Assault 3rd Degree for striking the victim in the face with a closed fist after a motor vehicle accident.

Matthew Hendrickson, 31, homeless, arrested for Arson 3rd Degree for lighting his clothes on fire in a motel room, causing damage.

Robert Lewis, 38, Binghamton, arrested for Petit Larceny for shoplifting from Wal-Mart.

McKenna Westgate, 26, Binghamton, arrested for Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 7th Degree for possessing Meth during a larceny investigation.

Robert Pike, 29, Binghamton, arrested for Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 7th Degree for possessing Meth during a larceny investigation.

Siobian Campbell, 35, homeless, arrested for Petit Larceny and two counts of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 7th degree for shoplifting from Wal-Mart and possessing Fentanyl and Meth.

David Decker, 30, Endicott, arrested for Trespass for entering Wal-Mart after previously being banned from the location.

Megan Lefever, 37, Rome PA, arrested for Petit Larceny and Falsifying Business Records 1st Degree for shoplifting from Wal-Mart and making false exchanges on unpaid merchandise.

Emily Button, 24, Endicott, arrested for Petit Larceny for shoplifting from Kohl's.

Taylor Conrow, 21, Kirkwood, arrested for Driving While Intoxicated, Driving While Intoxicated-More than .08 BAC, Moved from Lane Unsafely, Unsafe Tires and Speed Not Reasonable and Prudent after a motor vehicle accident.



Vestal Town Crier

NEWS/ADVERTISING DEADLINE

The Vestal Town Crier goes to press on Wednesdays. Deadline for news and advertising is the Friday before the desired week of publication.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Subscription rates to The Vestal Town Crier are \$35 a year in Broome County, \$100 outside of Broome County, and papers are mailed every Thursday from Conklin.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All letters to the editor are welcomed. All letters must be signed and include the phone number of the writer, to be used for verification of authenticity, not for publication. The editor reserves the right to refuse to publish letters which contain potentially libelous or erroneous statements. Also, letters endorsing political candidates are considered advertisements and should be prepaid as is all political advertising. No letters to the editor regarding political candidates will be accepted.

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Spartans Dominate Golden Bears

By Hal Ehrhardt

The defending STAC Metro Division and Section 4 Class B champions from Maine Endwell took care of business and finished on top of the Golden Bears by a final 97-79 score last week. The Golden Bears picked up a pair of individual event wins in the middle of the meet, along with wins in the final two events when the Spartans had the meet clinched and swam exhibition. Logan Kim again improved on his 100 Fly time to capture that event and Ben Elie turned in a career best in the diving breaking the 200 barrier for the first time with a 222.00 final score to capture that event.

Adi Banerjee had his season fastest 100 Breast to win, while the team of L. Kim, Ben Hutchings, Ocean Sun and Banerjee were credited with the win in the 400 Free relay. Coach Shore was celebrating some of the non-winning swims including the team's season fastest 200 Free swim by Hutchings in his first attempt at the event. Sayum Singhal lowered his best times in both the 200 IM and the 100 Back to lead the Golden Bears in both events. David Cozma improved on his prior time in the IM, along with finishing right behind Harrison Cappellett in his first swim of that distance. Cappellett finished 2nd with his career best swim of the 500 Free, while Finn Hynes earned 4th in his first attempt at the distance event.

Banerjee also had a career best in the 50 Free. Lucas Matt was one of several Golden Bears who turned in their career bests in the 100 Free. The 200 Free relay team of Elie, L. Kim, Sun and Hutchings turned in Vestal's best 200 Free relay of the season, finishing 2nd. The Spartans swept the Bears in the Medley relay as the team of Cappellett, Banerjee, L. Kim and Elie finished 3rd by a half second. Other point scorers this meet included: sprinter Ian Chung, backstroke Jayden Kim, along with breaststrokers Cameron Smith and Keith Dai.

Vestal 79 – ME 97

Medley Relay: 1st ME (1:47.60); 3rd Cappellett, Banerjee, Kim, Elie (1:54.04);

200 Free: 1st Thomas (ME 2:05.91); 2nd Hutchings (2:12.64); 4th Sun;

200 IM: 1st Arron (ME 2:15.69); 2nd Singhal (2:28.54); 3rd Cozma;

50 Free: 1st Anastos (ME 23.50); 4th Banerjee (24.98); 5th Chung;

Diving (6): 1st Elie (222.00);

100 Fly: 1st L. Kim (1:00.31);

100 Free: 1st Anastos (ME 52.01); 3rd Hutchings (58.39); 4th Sun; 5th Matt;

500 Free: 1st Thomas (ME 6:03.81); 2nd Cappellett (6:19.41); 3rd Cozma; 4th Hynes;

200 Free Relay: 1st ME (1:38.08); 2nd Elie, Kim, Sun, Hutchings (1:42.94); 3rd Matt, Hantsch, Hynes, Sobel;

100 Back: 1st Arron (ME 1:00.62); 3rd Singhal; 5th J. Kim;

100 Breast: 1st Banerjee (1:09.48); 2nd Smith; 3rd K. Dai; EXH 1st M. Shattuck (ME 1:08.72)

400 Free Relay: 1st L. Kim, Hutchings, Sun, Banerjee (3:55.78); 2nd Cappellett, Chung, Singhal, Cozma; EXH 1st ME (3:51.80);

In a busy week (results unavailable at press time), the Golden Bears competed at the Johnson City Relay Invitational meet on Saturday and then hosted Elmira on Tuesday, looking for their first win. Vestal's next meet will be on Tuesday, Dec. 19th, when they again travel to Johnson City for a Metro division dual meet against the Wildcats who defeated Elmira in their first meet of the season. Vestal then begins a four-week holiday training period before their next dual meet in mid-January.

Tioga Hills Elementary Students Support The Community With Holiday Projects

A holiday tradition, which completes a Social Studies unit on wants and needs, the fifth-grade Community Box Project at Tioga Hills Elementary was completed on November 30, 2023. In all, 50 shoe boxes filled with personal-care items were wrapped and delivered to the Park Terrace

Community Food Pantry by fifth-graders and their teachers. The school's annual Holiday Food Drive, in conjunction with the Apalachin Lions Club, ended on December 5, 2023. The school-wide Food Drive netted 864 non-perishable food items, which were packed and picked up by Apalachin Lions Club members who were helped by fifth-grade Student Council members.

Facilitated by the fifth-grade teachers each year, the Community Box Project is tied into a Social Studies unit where students differentiate between needs and wants. Students also learn a lesson in kindness and giving back to the community. Students and their families filled the shoe boxes with personal-care items. The students brought the boxes to school and wrapped them, decorating the paper with holiday-themed messages and scenes. After lunch, they walked the short distance down Glann Road to deliver the boxes in person, where they will be shared with families who visit the Park Terrace Food Pantry during the holidays. While there, they toured the pantry and learned about its role in the community.

Also an annual tradition, the Tioga Hills Holiday Food Drive ran November 13 – December 5, 2023, in support of the Apalachin Lions Club Food Drive. Lions Club members Bob Jensen, Dave Houser, Dave Rupright, Jerry Strazik, Pete Sylvester, and John Whiting came by on December 1 and were assisted in packing up the donations by fifth-grade Student Council members Gianna Casterline, Melani Howell, Salvatore Peretore, and Sophia Secord.

Photos, Courtesy Of Regina Felice, On Page 4!

Here are some fire safety tips for this winter

As temperatures drop, the likelihood of a fire occurring in your home or business rises. John D'Alessandro, the Association Secretary for the Firefighters Association of New York (FASNY), explains that various factors contribute to this heightened risk during the colder months. As the weather gets colder, D'Alessandro notes, people tend to spend more time indoors, increasing the use of heating systems and hot water heaters. Additionally, fires may start unnoticed and escalate into significant issues over time. D'Alessandro emphasizes the importance of ensuring the functionality of detection systems in your home, stating it is crucial for everyone to have operational smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. While we hope for the best, these devices can provide precious extra seconds to safely evacuate in the event of an emergency. He cautions that many winter fires originate from heating systems, underscoring the necessity of maintaining them properly. Regularly check and have your heating system, furnace, and water heater examined by an authorized maintenance company. Keep these units clean and ensure there are no flammable materials nearby. In case of a fire, FASNY recommends promptly dialing 911 and concentrating solely on evacuating all family members and pets from the premises.

Angelica's Law Protects New Yorkers From Dangerous, Reckless Motorists

On December 12th, Governor Kathy Hochul signed legislation S.4671/A.3983, Angelica's Law, which protects New Yorkers from reckless or dangerous driving. The law decreases the number of prior license suspensions needed to qualify for aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the first degree, a class E felony. Governor Hochul signed the legislation at the Department of Motor Vehicles' Garden City location, joined by the family of Angelica Nappi who lost her life after being killed by a driver with multiple prior suspensions.

"Public safety is my top priority, and I'm committed to doing everything possible to keep New Yorkers safe," Governor Hochul said. "After Angelica Nappi tragically lost her life more than a decade ago, her family have channeled their pain into purpose to push for this legislation. I'm honored to stand with Angelica's family as we sign this law and make our roads safer for all."

Angelica Nappi of Holbrook was just 14 in 2008 when she was struck and killed by a driver who did not have a valid license and who had more than five previous driver's license suspensions. Angelica's Law will help to keep drivers with prior suspensions off of the road by applying a felony to recidivist drivers who operate vehicles without a valid license after having committed five or more moving violations resulting in prior suspensions or revocations.



Interested in a Seasonal Job?

The holidays are one of the best times to get a new seasonal job in New York State. Whether you're looking for a part-time gig to give you a little more gift-giving cash, a second job to support your family, or you're looking for a fresh start in a new career field, there are so many seasonal jobs that are hiring right now.

To find seasonal jobs in your area, visit seasonalworks.labor.ny.gov.



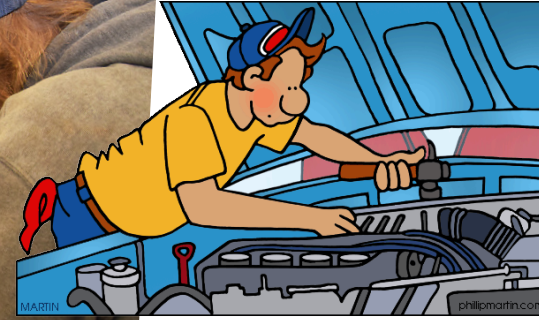
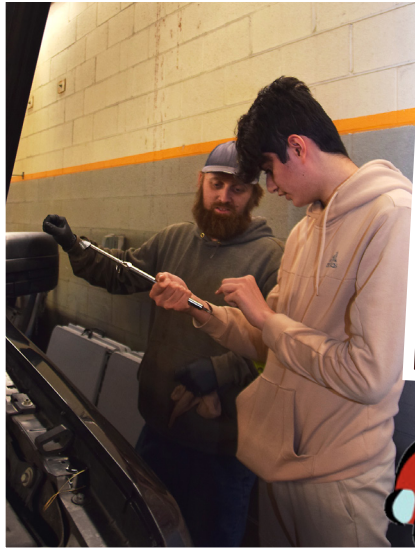
Tioga Hills Elementary Students Support The Community With Holiday Projects



Photos Courtesy Of Regina Felice



Vestal Students Get A Lesson In Basic Car Maintenance



TOY DRIVE
 Taking Donations On
Thurs, December 21st
 4100 Vestal Road Ste 260

greenlight™
networks



Read To Therapy Dogs

Monday, December 18th; 6-7:30PM

The Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs will be back at VPL on select Mondays! Grab a book, sit with a Therapy Dog, and read aloud to them in the Youth Services Department. Reading to animals builds confidence in reading and improves reading fluency. Plus, the pups love to hear stories!

“Welcome, winter. Your late dawns and chilled breath make me lazy, but I love you nonetheless.”

-Terri Guillemets

New Consumer Protection Law for Credit Card Customers Took Effect on December 10th

New Law Requires Credit Card Companies to Provide Consumers a 90-day Grace Period to Use Up Any Points When Rewards Accounts are Closed

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced a new state law will take effect that protects credit card holders from losing earned credit card rewards. Starting Sunday, December 10, credit card companies must take additional steps to protect consumers from losing accrued points when rewards programs are modified or terminated.

“Protecting New Yorker’s wallets is a top priority and we’re helping families save money this holiday season,” Governor Hochul said. “With this law taking effect, New Yorkers can rest assured that they won’t lose the credit card rewards they’ve earned.”

Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez said, “With holiday shopping in full swing, many consumers are using their credit cards to rack up rewards under the assumption they can be redeemed at any time. But that’s not always the case. This new law will protect consumers by guaranteeing them a minimum grace period to use those rewards.”

Pursuant to the new law, credit card issuers have 45 days to provide notice to cardholders when any existing credit card account or rewards program is cancelled or closed or modified in a way that is less favorable to the consumer. This includes any change that eliminates or reduces the value of a consumer’s points, makes it harder to accumulate points, limits rewards availability, or otherwise diminishes the value of the rewards program. From the day the credit card issuer sends this notice, consumers have 90 days to redeem their accrued points or rewards in accordance with the program’s original terms and condi-

tions. While consumers often cash in their rewards before closing their accounts, the law requires a grace period after any account is closed.

Many consumers strategically save up credit card rewards, like points, airline “miles,” and cash back rewards to fund trips, vacations, large purchases, or other goals. Unexpected termination of rewards programs or unfavorable modifications can cost consumers who save their points the equivalent of hundreds and, in some cases even thousands of dollars in lost value. Even when a consumer voluntarily decides to close their credit card account, additional time to redeem points can prove valuable for consumers to make the most of their points.

State Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, “For many people, a sudden loss of rewards can amount to the loss of a significant amount of money. Individuals will now receive notification and a grace period to use their rewards when an account is being closed, thereby increasing transparency for all New Yorkers and ensuring earned credit card rewards can be used. I thank Assembly Member Nily Rozic for carrying this legislation in the Assembly and Governor Kathy Hochul for signing it into law.”

Tips For Using Credit Card Rewards:

Make the most of your points: Many rewards programs give multiple options for consumers to redeem points, like cashback, airline “miles,” or “pay with points” options. Compare the value of each potential reward and pick the option that provides the highest dollar value per point.

Review reward expiration policies:

While most credit card rewards do not expire as long as you keep your credit card account open, certain airline and hotel reward “miles” and points expire after 12 to 36 months. Read the terms and conditions of any rewards card to understand the expiration policy. Even if the terms provide for the expiration of points in some circumstances, remember that the credit card company cannot deny consumers a 90-day grace period to redeem points after modifying or ending a reward program.

Avoid becoming delinquent on your account:

Losing credit card rewards is only one aspect of the negative impact that making late payments can have on your financial wellbeing. Most credit card issuers require consumers to maintain their accounts in good standing with on-time payments to access points. Making purchases to gain rewards can be tempting, but never spend more than you can afford just to earn points or rewards.

Close accounts strategically:

If you decide you need to close a credit card account, plan to redeem all your points before the end of your 90-day grace period. In some cases, you may also be able to transfer the points to a spouse or another card in your name.

Tips For Parents Buying Technology Toys This Holiday Season

As technology evolves, so do the toys that children play with. Technology toys are becoming increasingly popular among kids of all ages, but with this trend comes the need for data privacy protection and increased safety measures. During Safe Toys and Gifts Month, it’s important for parents to be aware of potential risks and take steps to ensure their child’s safety while playing with tech toys.

Common types of internet-connected toys include interactive games, robots, dolls, and wearable gadgets. These toys incorporate technology to enhance the play experience for children. However, there are concerns about the potential security and privacy risks associated with these toys.

“As the season of giving continues, it’s important that parents and guardians keep the safety and privacy of children in mind before purchasing increasingly popular tech toys as gifts,” said Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez. “While these toys can be a great form of entertainment and even learning resources for kids, they can also pose risks to their privacy, so following these tips from the NYS Division of Consumer Protection will help ensure their safety.”

Here are some tips to make the user experience safer for children:

Before buying

Confirm that the toy is age appropriate. Make sure the toy is designed for your child’s age group. If buying a toy for a small child, confirm that it doesn’t pose a choking hazard, and monitor your child while they play with the toy to ensure they are using it safely and correctly. If shopping for video games or a video game console, learn about age-appropriate content ratings and make informed choices about which games are suitable for your child by visiting <https://www.esrb.org/>

Understand the key features. Does the toy have a camera, microphone, or facial or speech recognition? Make sure you understand what the toy can do and what settings are defaulted when you use the toy.

Look for information on parental controls. Some interactive toys and games may come with important parental control information. The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires that companies provide notice and obtain parental approval before collecting, using or disclosing a child’s personal information. COPPA gives you tools to control the personal information collected from your kids by online services or apps.

Read the policies. As children interact with technology-enabled and connected toys, usage, and personal information (like location) may be continuously uploaded to company servers. Read the policy documents to see what information is stored and what is automatically deleted. If this information is not clear, consider choosing another product.

Research complaints. Parent blogs, social media, and security company websites often sound the alarm well before news stories hit. Check for known security issues before considering a purchase.

After buying

Make sure you are present when Internet-connected toys are being set up.

Create an alias. If setup requires additional information, provide a different name or nickname, alternative birthdate, and other modifications to sensitive information. If the toy is hacked, this decreases the chance of child identity theft.

Ensure privacy settings are set for maximum protection. Opt in to all privacy safeguards and block access to chat rooms. Additionally, do occasional checks and keep

software up to date.

Supervise. When children are playing with technology-enabled toys, watch their interactions closely to understand how the toys work and quickly identify when something is not right with a toy. If the toy lets your child send emails or connect to social media accounts, have an age-appropriate conversation with them about online safety and risky behaviors. For ideas on how to approach the conversation, check out the FTC website: <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/kids-socializing-online>

Keep the connection secure. Never use technology-enabled toys on public Wi-Fi. Hackers can gain access to the toy and use it to capture other protected information in the home.

Strengthen passwords. Make sure your passwords are unique and updated regularly. Try using a passphrase instead of a password and include special characters and numbers.

Watch out for accessories associated with the toy, such as video games and downloadable apps. Educate children about in-app purchases and explain the importance of getting permission before making any purchases.

Stay informed. Fill out any product registration cards entirely and send them back to the manufacturer so you are notified of recalls.

Turn it off. When a child is done playing with a toy or leaves it, make sure the toy is first disconnected from the internet and then turned off. When toys remain connected to the internet in sleep mode, your personal privacy and information can still be accessed.

Stay offline. Finally, it’s important to set limits on screen time and encourage children to engage in other forms of play as well. Old-fashioned games, books and puzzles are making a comeback. Consider a family game night – without technology toys!

Department of State's Consumer Protection Division Issues Warning And Tips For Consumers In Preventing Package Thefts During The Holiday Season

**Don't let the grinch steal your holiday spirit or your packages.
These Measures Can Help Prevent Package Theft and Protect Your Identity this Holiday**

Last weekend's holiday shopping, both online and in-store, set record levels for consumer spending which indicates shopping is showing no signs of slowing down according to the National Retail Federation. The increase can lead to more packages being delivered which could also lead to a rise in thefts of packages from porches or other places around one's home.

"The rising popularity and convenience of having goods delivered directly to one's doorstep has unfortunately come with a downside; an increase in package thefts," said Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez. "On the heels of Cyber Monday, don't let the grinch steal your holiday spirit or your packages and take these preventative measures from the Division of Consumer Protection."

"As the holiday shopping season is upon us, and online commerce continues to grow, it presents another opportunity for criminals to steal," said New York State Police Acting Superintendent Dominick Chimento. "Thieves have no boundaries, and this includes snatching packages off porches and driveways. Remember to always track your packages, schedule deliveries when someone will be home, or have a neighbor assist. Be mindful of what you see in and around your neighborhood, and take

note of suspicious behavior, vehicles, plates and activity. Report anything out of the ordinary to law enforcement. Partnered together, we can ensure that special gift gets to where it needs to this year."

Many consumers have already started their holiday online shopping and anticipate deliveries will arrive in time for the holidays. This is a great time to take some measures to prevent package theft and protect your identity.

Follow these tips to prevent package theft and identity theft while checking things off your shopping list:

Keep track of your packages. Package theft peaks during the holiday season so keeping track of your deliveries is critical to prevent theft. Delivery companies offer real-time tracking and the option to receive customized alerts so you can stay on top of your holiday shipments once they arrive and retrieve your packages as soon as they're delivered.

Schedule shipments when someone is home. Many online retailers and delivery companies allow consumers to schedule specific delivery timeframes. Choose a timeframe when someone will be home to avoid potential theft. When you are home, closely monitor delivery progress via tracking links and grab the shipment as soon as possible to limit the window of vulnerability.

Enlist your neighbor's help. If you're not going to be home, enlist the help of a trusted neighbor. When possible, have your packages delivered to a location where they can be received in person.

Monitor your front door with a security or doorbell camera. While a camera may not deter thieves, the presence of a camera can help you keep track of when packages are delivered so you can retrieve them quickly. If a

package is stolen, the video recording of the theft can also be shared with police.

Take advantage of the "Ship to Store" option. Many retailers offer a "ship to store" option. This means that you can order items online and have them sent to a local brick-and-mortar store. You can then pick up your purchase at a time convenient for you.

Consider alternative delivery options. Most delivery companies have alternative pickup and delivery options available. Some include redirecting packages to a local merchant partner or holding packages at their location. Do some research by visiting their websites to explore your options and update your delivery preferences. If you know you're going to be on vacation, request a vacation hold on all shipments.

Opt for other services. If you're doing most of your shopping online consider alternative services like a package locker, lockbox, or smart lockers.

Require delivery confirmation signature. Consider requesting a signature for packages, especially for high ticket items. This will ensure your items are not left unattended when delivered. This may require choosing a pricier shipping option.

Beware of phishing attempts. Another common scam this time of year is scammers using phishing emails and text messages to impersonate delivery companies (e.g., UPS, USPS, FedEx), banking and credit card companies, and other large retailers (e.g., Netflix, PayPal, eBay, Amazon), which often include links to sites attempting to steal your information. Always open a browser and type the company's website address yourself instead of clicking on a link in an email or text message.



Vestal Museum Cozy Concert Article and Photos Courtesy Of Kaitlyn Hession Photos On Page 8!

Winter is that time of year when everyone bundles up and stays comfortable indoors. While the weather outside will become frightful, the inside of the Vestal Museum stays delightful as the organization will be hosting "Cozy Concerts" throughout the season starting with its first concert that took place on December 9th.

From 7pm-10pm, six musicians, each with their own style of music, performed inside of the museum. These styles included Hip-Hop, Folk, Singer/Songwriter and more that altogether brought a warm and cozy tone to the audience. This month's line up included Nino, Sad Matt, Party Cat, Edge and Babi Lou, Hannah T., and Janmariz. While listening to the local music, participants enjoyed a cup of hot chocolate or coffee and cookies while either

sitting and enjoying the music or checking out the local photographer that was showing their work in the museum.

The purpose of "Cozy Concerts" is to not only provide a warm environment during the upcoming winter season, but to bring together a variety of local musicians with original music regardless of age. "It's hard to hear younger artists perform when most of the local venues are bars. Not only will this help provide a comfortable space for these musicians, but it will also be a place where those young or old can sing," said the Vestal Museum Curator Jenna Szczepanski.

"Cozy Concerts" will take place once a month throughout the season as the next dates will be January 13th and February 17th. The event is free and open to all ages.



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Vestal Museum Cozy Concert

Photos Courtesy Of Kaitlyn Hession



The duo brings up Sad Matt for a solo.



Jenna announces the next musician.



Party Cat sings her original songs.



Edge + Babi Lou



Snacks!



Party Cat



Sad Matt



Sad Matt sings to the audience.



Nino performs his unique music.

