



West Hudson Psychiatric Society
of the American Psychiatric Association
serving Rockland, Orange, Sullivan & Delaware Counties



10 Flitt Street, West Nyack, NY 10994, westhudsonpsych@gmail.com, WestHudsonPsych.org

eSynapse

May 2016

Editor's Comments

James Flax, MD, MPH, DLFAPA

There were about 30 of us who turned out Friday evening, May 6th for our spring meeting, a wonderfully expert and detailed review of treatment resistant depression by Dr. Jon Stewart from Columbia University. I have put his slides from the evening, some notes I took of his main points & pearls, his comments & summary and a couple of articles he references into a Dropbox folder. If you email me of your interest in accessing these, I'll send you the link to view the contents of that folder. Put a subject line that includes "Jon Stewart Dropbox". My email is DrFlax@AOL.com.

In this issue you will find a synopsis of our meeting so all readers will have an idea of district branch business. But, it's only a synopsis. Please **come** to a meeting to appreciate the rich discussions. Our president has written about the Veteran's Mental Health Primary Care Training Initiative. There is a report from the APA. Dr. Abdullah has again sent us a new article in his long line of erudite essays. Keep 'em comin', Dr. Abdullah. There is another anonymous poem. Dr. Deborah Cross of the Westchester County District Branch has also contributed a brief synopsis of the Veteran's Mental Health Training event. Dr. Paras is encouraging participation in the Out-Of-Network-Preservation-Committee. There are ads and announcements that may interest you, including from my malpractice insurer, PRMS. Please scroll all the way to the end to see it all. And, if you are not receiving the MSSNY eNews, here's a link where you can read about issues of interest to all of medicine in New York State: <http://www.mssny.org>.

I want to underline the importance of the APA PAC. However much we may dislike it, this is the way American politics works: **more important than the amount of money contributed is the number and percentage of members who contribute.** Politicians want to know how many people feel strongly enough about the issue to give to the PAC. If you haven't contributed, please consider doing so. Even \$1 adds your name to the list and number of donors. See the form below.

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Executive Council Meeting
Il Fresco Restaurant, Orangeburg, NY
Friday, June 10
Journal Club (15 minutes) PROMPTLY at 12:30 Followed immediately
by Business Agenda
Please contact Mona Begum, MD (drmonabegum@gmail.com) if you are
planning to attend.
IT'S A FREE LUNCH!

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<http://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/search-directories-databases>.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

May 2016

Mona Begum, MD, DLFAPA [drmonabegum@gmail.com]

Dear West Hudson Psychiatric Society Members, Colleagues and Friends:

The Veterans Administration provided a grant to the New York State Psychiatric Association [NYSPA] for a Veterans Mental Health Primary Care Training Initiative to raise awareness and provide quality treatment for veterans suffering from PTSD and other mental disorders.

On April 6th Dr. Raj Mehta, Dr. Alexandra Berger, Liz Burnich and myself attended the educational event co sponsored by NYSPA, WHPS and the Westchester and Bronx Psychiatric Society.

The topic was “The Psychiatric Wounds of War: What Physicians and Providers Need to Know About Combat Veterans Mental Health Conditions and Military Culture.” The speaker was Richard Silverman, MD, Consultant, VA Hudson Valley Health Care System. The topic is very timely and requires great attention from our psychiatric community as well as primary care physicians. We know the alarming number of suicides committed by our veterans due to depression, PTSD and other mental health disorders secondary to the trauma of war.

Coming home does not mean their war is over. For some veterans it means a new battle begins. Many of them not only suffer from debilitating symptoms of psychological impairment but also have to deal with physical disability from combat injury.

With an average of 22 veteran suicides daily they need our support now more than ever. It is a tragic statistic that more veterans die from suicide than in war in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is our moral responsibility to properly educate ourselves and our physician colleagues from other specialties to be able to treat these veterans and prevent these heart breaking tragedies happening over and over again.

Changing the subject, many of you enjoyed the talk by Dr. Jonathan Stewart on Treatment Refractory Depression. You will be happy to hear that we already selected our fall educational meeting speaker and topic: How Genetics Is Changing Psychiatry by Jay Lombard from Genomind.

As always, I welcome your ideas and exchanges. Our next meeting is on June 10 at 12:30 pm in Il Fresco restaurant in Orangeburg.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Editors note: I vowed when I started this publication to publish anything sent to me by our members. Please do so.)

The Gaia Hypothesis and the Destiny of Man

Syed Abdullah, M.D.

“The concept of Mother Earth, or as the Greeks called her long ago, Gaia, has been widely held throughout history. As a result of the accumulation of evidence about the natural environment and the growth of the science of ecology, there has recently been speculation that the biosphere may be more than just the complete range of living things within their natural habitat of soil, sea and air.” James Lovelock.

What is the Gaia Hypothesis? Simply stated, it is the belief that our earth is one huge living entity greater than any prehistoric animal we have discovered. The Gaia hypothesis was devised by atmospheric chemist James Lovelock, working for NASA, and the world- renowned microbiologist Lynn Margulis. In their 1979 publication *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* they wrote: “The entire range of living matter on Earth from whales to viruses and from oak to algae could be regarded as constituting a single living entity capable of maintaining the Earth’s atmosphere to suit its overall needs and endowed with faculties and powers far beyond those of its constituent parts.” They defined Gaia as “a complex entity involving the Earth’s biosphere, atmosphere, oceans and soil; the totality constituting a feedback of cybernetic systems which seek an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet.”

The idea was so new and unprecedented that the peer review process for its publication was slow and generally negative. Their proposal regarding the existence of a living Earth was regarded as unscientific and at best a poetic metaphor. According to the Gaia hypothesis, the history of life on Earth can be regarded as a progressive modification of the planet’s chemistry and temperature by biological organisms acting in ways that enhance their own survival and flourishing. The Earth’s atmosphere, for example, was modified over billions of years, by photo-synthetic microorganisms, from one that was predominantly carbon dioxide and methane, into its present oxygen-rich state. This oxygen-rich atmosphere set the stage for the evolution of multi-cellular life forms which ushered in the “Cambrian explosion” that took off some 570 million years ago. The term “Cambrian explosion” is used to denote the appearance of animal phyla that preceded the beginning of the Cambrian geological period and continued throughout this geological period.

During the Cambrian period there was a vast diversification of life, and finally the colonization of the Earth by plants and animals. Then, 250 million years ago, as the result of a catastrophic event, 95% of the life forms were extinguished. The leading explanation of these mass extinctions are attributed to the havoc caused by asteroids slamming into the earth. Every time, following these catastrophes, Gaia picked up the thread and started over again. Dinosaurs and flowering plants eventually evolved to dominate the earth. This was the Cretaceous period some 146 to 65 million years ago. The asteroid that brought the Cretaceous period to an end is estimated to have been 10 miles wide, creating the 110-mile diameter Chicxulub crater off Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula.

Other massive asteroids, some 10 times larger, have visited the earth from time to time, causing havoc on the slowly evolving life forms. Each time Gaia went about restructuring and reviving the Biosphere.

Commenting on the indefatigable attempts of Gaia to reestablish life on earth led James Lovelock to ask the question “To what extent our collective intelligence is also part of Gaia? Do we as a species constitute a Gaian nervous system and a brain which can consciously anticipate environmental changes?” Ronald Bailey has posed the interesting possibility that having gotten tired of getting whacked by asteroids she has evolved technologically sophisticated, big-brained mammals who can travel in space as a way of protecting herself from asteroids. Calling it ‘just a thought’ that perhaps like antibodies that protect the body from invading disease organisms, humans can defend Gaia from extraterrestrial intruders!

The earth’s atmosphere today is 79% nitrogen, 21% oxygen with traces of carbon dioxide, methane and argon. As we know, this is crucial to the survival and subsistence of life on earth. Compared to this, the atmospheric compositions of Mars and Venus are 95-96% carbon dioxide, 3 to 4 % nitrogen, with traces of oxygen, argon and methane that is not conducive to the development of life forms as we know them.

In the 1960’s James Lovelock was asked by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and NASA to help design experiments to detect life on Mars. Lovelock, on the basis of the analysis of the gaseous composition of the Martian atmosphere predicted that no life would be found on Mars - because of the ‘dead equilibrium’ of its atmosphere.

Looking from the perspective of outer space he saw the earth, not so much as a planet adorned with diverse life forms, but a planet transfigured and transformed by a self- evolving and self-regulating living system. By the nature of its activity it seemed to qualify as a living being. He named it Gaia, the Greek Goddess that drew the living world from Chaos. Gaia is not a synonym for the biosphere and it is not simply the collection of life forms on the planet termed the “biota”. The biosphere and the biota taken together form a part, but not the whole, of Gaia. The rocks, the air, the oceans are all parts of Gaia. Gaia has a continuity with the past back to the origins of life and to the future as long as life persists. Gaia cannot be known just by knowing individual species or life forms living together. Gaia is a total planetary being. Gaia, according to this hypothesis, is a living entity and its temperature, oxidation, acidity are in a state of dynamic homeostasis maintained by active feedback processes operated automatically.

Stephen Miller in a brilliant review of James Lovelock’s book: *The Ages of Gaia* makes some very interesting observations on the concepts of Gaia. One of his comments is that perhaps there is awareness appropriate at every level of the life process. Perhaps that is a property of life. We might assume that the production of the human species is a great step upward for Gaia, a sort of rapidly evolving brain tissue. Or that Gaia prepares the earth as a cradle and crucible of consciousness evolving. Miller states “Other analogies come to mind; are we part of her arsenal of interplanetary spores? What stage would Gaia be in now? Is our species part of her maturity or an incubation period? Is Gaia herself somehow part of a larger living being, perhaps on a galactic scale? If so how do the cells of this larger being remain in communication? Will we eventually be able to experience something of the awareness which Gaia has?”

Lovelock points out that Gaia, being ancient and resourceful enough to have carried out these successive changes of the planet in spite of asteroid collisions and other setbacks, herself is probably not endangered by the relatively momentary depredations of the human species as it

befouls and cripples the bio-dynamics of its environment. Rather, the danger is to the human race, not only by our own actions, but also by Gaia's reaction to them. When Lovelock first expressed his ideas about Gaia, the science behind his constructs was still very sketchy and provoked a storm of criticism. But it also aroused much research and thinking, and raised our consciousness to newer possibilities awaiting us. As Teilhard de Chardin noted over half a century ago, "the human person is the sum total of fifteen billion years of unbroken evolution now thinking about itself." By the same reasoning we are not separate beings on Gaia: We are a mode of being of Gaia. Gaia's story is our common sacred story.

In the beginning of his book *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry says, "One of the most remarkable achievements of the 20th century is our ability to tell the story of the universe from empirical observation and with amazing insight into the sequence of transformations that has brought into being the Earth, the living world, and the human community. There seems, however, to be little realization of just what this story means in terms of the larger interpretation of the human venture." Ultimately, we are called to consciously participate in the further evolution of the universe through love and knowledge. The meaning of the Gaia theory lies through that door. Indeed with love, wisdom and humility man could wear the mantle of Gaia's consciousness.

Poetry

Anonymous

I forget that I think of you as my saviour
the one who lifted me above all the muck and shit so
that I could lift my head in the air and draw a cleansing breath
that would be enough to sustain a raging lunatic and an innocent newborn

I know that you do not tend to believe in macjikle things and yet our relationship
is a touch majick because of the spark I saw, caught a glimpse really, of what could be
If I let you weave it, If I allowed love to cascade from unlikely sources
All within the grace of natural and goodly influences and resources

DISTRICT BRANCH HOSTS MEETING FOCUSED ON VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

C. Deborah Cross, MD

On April 6 at Tre Angelina Restaurant in White Plains, the Westchester DB hosted the Bronx and West Hudson District Branches in a CME dinner meeting titled "The Psychiatric Wounds of War: What Physicians and Providers Need to Know About Combat-Veterans' Mental Health Conditions & Military Culture". The speaker was Dr. Richard Silverman, currently a Consulting Psychiatrist at the VA Hudson Valley Health Care Systems in Montrose, who previously had spent over 20 years as the Director of their Outpatient Mental Health Services treating veterans.

The meeting was also sponsored by the New York State Psychiatric Association, who has received a multi-year grant from the NYS Office of Mental Health to train physicians in

recognizing and understanding Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide in returning veterans.

Dr. Silverman gave a comprehensive overview of the pathophysiology and neurobiology of trauma and traumatic brain injury and the resultant myriad of symptoms with which veterans present. The impact of these symptoms on veterans' lives and their families is often catastrophic. Through the use of powerful vignettes of patients he has treated over the years, Dr. Silverman's presentation drove home the need for better recognition and treatment of the devastating problems our returning veterans bring to us as physicians. He also focused our attention on the work the VA has done in establishing evidenced based treatments, both psychological and pharmacological, for PTSD and TBI and presented a very clear overview of the way in which we as physicians can be better prepared to meet the needs of this very special group of patients.

The evening was an exciting one, with a large turnout for an excellent presentation, dinner and an opportunity to meet and mingle with colleagues from other District Branches. We look forward to having other such presentations in the coming year and to more members joining us for our meetings.

Summary from Executive Council Meeting Friday, April 22, 2016 Il Fresco, Orangeburg, NY

Attendees Present: Mona Begum, Nigel Bark, Jim Flax, Raj Mehta, Russ Tobe, Dom Ferro and Liz Burnich.

Veterans Mental Health Training:

- Meeting was held on April 6 in White Plains in conjunction with NYSPA and the Westchester and Bronx Psychiatric Societies with speaker Richard Silverman of the Hudson Valley VA.

Spring 2016 Educational Meeting:

- Dr. Jon Stewart will be our speaker on the topic of Treatment Refractory Depression on Friday, May 6, 2016 at La Terrazza Restaurant, New City at 6pm. Raj will introduce Dr. Stewart and act as moderator.

Fall 2016 Educational Meeting:

- Jay Lombard from Genomind will be our speaker on the subject of mental health and genetic testing on Friday, October 4, 2016.
- ORMC will host this event at their location. Liz will coordinate the details with Tina Diaz, the Resident Program Coordinator at ORMC.

Committee Update: (Mona Begum for Lois Kroplick)

- Women's Meeting will be held on May 12 at 12 noon at Jane Kelman's office.

- Coalition meeting will be held on May 3 at Robert Yeager Center, Building F Conference Room at 12 noon.
- Public Forum will be held on Wed. Oct. 5 from 7-9pm at RCC on the topic of Mood Disorders. Dr. Joseph Goldberg, a psychiatrist from Connecticut will be one of the speakers.
- NAMI-Walks, a fundraising event for NAMI will be held on Saturday Oct 7 in NYC – we will sponsor Rena Finkelstein’s team, Rena’s Angels with a donation.
- On Oct 4, Dr. Lois Kroplick will be doing a presentation to a psychology class at RCC along with a patient on the topic of adolescent depression.

NYSPA/APA Update: Nigel Bark

- Dr. Nigel Bark attended the first annual APEX Awards called an “Orange Tie” event to bring about awareness of mental illness in prisons.
 - This event took place on April 18 at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington DC. Political commentator, Cokie Roberts emceed this event that was attended by 450 people. Special guests included actors of the Netflix series “Orange is the New Black”.
 - The 2016 Apex Award recipients include:
 - House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
 - Sen. Al Franken
 - State Sen. Miguel Díaz de la Portilla
- NYSPA is still looking for cases where patients are being denied coverage or psychiatrists are being harassed by UHC insurance for the United Healthcare case they are currently working on.
- NYSPA also requested the importance that all members consider making PAC donations for 2016 membership dues. Membership forms were distributed - see attached form.
- Potential task force on the shortage of psychiatrics in the public sector, specifically at Rockland Psychiatric Center, which resides in our district branch. Nigel, Russ and Liz would like to participate on this task force.
- Next NYSPA Meeting is Saturday October 22, 2016. Please mark you calendar and try to attend one of the committee meetings.

WHPS Member Update: Congratulations to the following members who have achieved the status of Life Membership with the APA:

- Peter Semkiw, M.D.
- Carol Paras, M.D.
- Edward Hall, M.D.
- Gill Bhupinder, M.D.

Next Executive Council Meeting - Friday, June10, 2016 at 12:30pm at Il Fresco, Orangeburg, NY. The meeting will commence with a 15 minute Journal Club presentation by Dr. James Flax.

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News and Notes for APA District Branches/State Associations: May 2016

This monthly newsletter is prepared by APA's Communications Team as a benefit for our District Branches and State Associations. Feel free to share the articles below in your own newsletter. If you have any questions, please contact James Carty at jcarty@psych.org or 703-907-8693.

Want to keep up with APA in between newsletters? Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) (@APAPsychiatric) and [LinkedIn](#) for the latest news and updates.

What's New at the APA

- APA held its first-ever American Psychiatric Excellence (APEX) Awards on Monday, April 18, in Washington, D.C. The APEX awards recognized those who have demonstrated the highest levels of mental health advocacy and who are working to reduce the number of Americans with mental illness in our prisons and jails. Honorees included the hit Netflix show "Orange is the New Black," journalist Cokie Roberts, Sen. Al Franken, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, and Florida State Sen. Miguel Diaz de la Portilla. You can read more about the APEX Awards [here](#).
- APA was joined by three other leading mental health organizations in calling for an end to harmful "religious freedom" laws. The American Psychoanalytic Association, National Association of Social Workers, and American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work joined APA in expressing dismay over the spate of recent bills that would allow businesses and health professionals to deny services, employment and housing to LGBT people under the guise of religious freedom. You can read more about APA's response to this discriminatory legislation [here](#).
- Late-Advance registration for APA's 2016 Annual Meeting in Atlanta is open until May 12. Late-advance registration is online only. You can find more information about and register for the annual meeting [here](#).

Mark Your Calendar: May is Mental Health Month

May Course of the Month

Each month, members have access to [free CME course](#) on the APA Learning Center. Less than 30 minutes in length, , this course can help you brush up on a trending topic over lunch. During May, members can focus-in on their female patients by taking [Updates in Women's Health: Depression and Anxiety During Pregnancy and Postpartum](#).

Course Overview: Depression and anxiety are common in pregnancy and in the postpartum period. Unfortunately, many women are either undertreated, or untreated, as doctors may be hesitant to recommend medications to pregnant or lactating mothers. Subsequently, women may not be well informed of the risks and benefits associated with the use of taking medications during pregnancy. This course will:

- 1) Discuss the impact of untreated depression and anxiety disorders in pregnancy and postpartum;
- 2) Discuss treatment decision-making, both to help guide the practitioner and to help educate the patient;
- 3) Summarize the current data on the safety of antidepressant/anxiolytic medication use in pregnancy; and

4) Provide an overview of the safety of antidepressants and anxiolytics in lactation.

**This course is free to members until May 31, 2016; after which there will be an enrollment fee for the course.*

New Benefits for 100% Club Program Directors

Residents at 100% Club programs already receive free access to SET for Success, offering more than 60 free courses designed to supplement and reinforce what they're learning in the patient care setting. To help programs use this resource, 100% Club Program Directors now also receive free access to SET for Success courses. This includes the opportunity to earn CME for each course completed. This new benefit is automatic, and all SET for Success courses have been added to 100% Club Program Directors' APA Learning Center portfolio.

Program Directors can get started by downloading the [SET for Success Syllabus](#), which includes a printable checklist of available courses, as well as by checking out the platform's new features:

- The Catalog, offering the ability to search by topic, core competency, milestone, and activity type.
- Improved tracking and reporting so residents can easily provide certificates and transcripts documenting their learning progress.
- Business of medicine education to help your residents prepare for the transition to practice

New Online Applications Improve the Membership Process

APA encourages DB/SA executives to integrate new online applications into their membership recruitment process. The new applications offer a simple fillable PDF format that is easy to complete and outline the benefits of APA membership for each membership category. The applications are available through the [DB/SA resources section](#) of psychiatry.org.

PRIVATE PRACTICE: FEES Here is a link to a legal public site where you can look up fees for a given zip code. <http://www.fairhealthconsumer.org/>

PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS If you are frequently bothered with cumbersome and seemingly unnecessary requests for prior authorizations, the APA is eager to hear from you: Ellen Jaffe, Director, Practice Management HelpLine/Medicare Specialist, Office of Healthcare Systems and Financing, American Psychiatric Association, (703) 907-8591 ejaffe@psych.org Practice Management HelpLine (800-343-4671) - email at hsf@psych.org. Also, one of our members posted to an international list-serv with regard to any denial of benefit, so I quote Dr. John Fogelman:

The URL below will direct you to a database for the regional CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) headquarters. The names of the regional Medical Directors are listed. When you call, hang in through all the options, and at the end type in the name of the medical director. You will get either the real live doc, an assistant, leave a message, or the name of someone to call for in an emergency. It usually works.

http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/sharedsavingsprogram/Regional_Contacts.html

My experience has been that the higher you go in any organization (hospital, government, insurance companies), the closer you are to the decision maker, and the decision makers do not have to stay on the unvarying mindless script. They do not instruct you to have a good day, apologize for your inconvenience, thank you profusely and hear how they know how valuable your time is. They usually listen, and if you do not scream at them, a favorable result often follows.

PARITY ENFORCEMENT FROM NYSPA: If you missed the NYSPA Webinar on parity I strongly suggest you listen to it; accessible on the NYSPA website. Seth Stein and Rachel Fernbach have presented a packet of wonderful new tools that potentially will allow us to better manage and respond aggressively to insurance company efforts to restrict care.

PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO RETURN PHONE CALLS. EVEN IF YOU HAVE NO ROOM IN YOUR SCHEDULE FOR NEW PATIENTS: I have frequently heard complaints about patients leaving voice mails with psychiatrist's offices and never getting a return phone call. If true, this reflects very poorly on our profession.

Out-Of-Network-Preservation-Committee

Dear Colleagues,

We are in practice at a time when patients have a rapidly diminishing choice of which physicians they can see because of restrictions of their out of network benefits, increasing out of network deductibles, and co-insurances.

For the vast majority of our patients, getting reimbursement from their insurer is the only way they can afford to see the doctor of their choice.

Out of network reimbursement is important to our patients. It is also important to us as providers who wish to continue to provide a high level of care to our patients. It is imperative that we act now to preserve and improve out of network coverage in N.Y.

After reading about the "Out-Of-Network-Preservation-Committee" in the APA news, I participated in a teleconference December 11th. The OON Preservation Committee is a unified, coordinated group of physicians, of all disciplines, from all NY Organizations, societies, institutes and associations. They are committed to keeping patients and their physicians in charge of determining from whom they seek their medical treatment.

Currently there are 280 members; the group only formed 6 months ago. They are seeking new members in all fields of medical practice. I have volunteered to participate in recruiting.

There is no formal application process to become a member. Now is the time to advocate and speak up in a loud unified voice to ensure patient choice. Please join and support their efforts. And please recruit any concerned colleagues in NY State (of any specialty) who might be interested in adding their voice to this effort. The email for this committee is einbinder@aol.com

Carol Paras, M.D., Pearl River, N.Y., drcarolparas@gmail.com

Refuah Health Center

Seeking Board- certified or Board-eligible psychiatrist for full- or part-time position at Federally Qualified Health Center in Rockland County, NY. NYS license required.

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Depression Support Group

Depression support group meets 2 times a month in Pomona, NY. We are inviting new members at this time. We are moderated by a clinical social worker. This is not a therapy group but social support for people fighting depression. Call Kathy for more information (914) 714- 2837.

Rockland County Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Peer-to-peer run support group for people with depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder or any related mood disorder & their friends & family. The support group meets every Thursday night from 6:30 - 8:30 at Jawonio, inc. 775 N Main St. New Hempstead. Reservations are not required. There is no fee for attending the support group meetings. This is a very warm and welcoming group run by people who have been there and can help. Any questions please call Leslie or Leonard at 845-837-1182.