

EDITORIAL

Be flu savvy

One of the worst aspects of the winter season isn't the weather – it's the flu. Bring on the icy rain and multiple inches of snow, it's okay, but those microscopic virulent organisms can render even the most robust among us down and out in a matter of hours or less. Once down, expect to stay that way for a while. So what can we all do about it? Get flu savvy.

Flu season begins around October and peaks between December through February, and can last into May. The most recommended way to prepare for influenza is to get a flu shot. Although the shot does not offer a guarantee that you won't get the flu, there is said to be enough protection against multiple strains to at least lessen the impact.

The severe H3N2 virus that has hit this year has been reported to be on track as the worst in nearly a decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) recommends the flu shot for children over the age of 6 months and for adults 65 or older, as well as anyone with a chronic condition. That's because the flu will overtax compromised immune systems and could cause severe complications such as pneumonia in these individuals, resulting in hospitalization and sadly in some cases, death. There have already been many deaths recorded, 53 of them children.

Aside from getting a shot, there are many other ways to protect against the virus. Common-sense strategies include getting enough rest, eating healthy and avoiding contact with people you know are already infected. Wash hands frequently, keep hands away from your face, and if necessary wear a disposable facemask. A 2015 article in Healthline.com noted that facemasks worn by family of those who already had the flu reduced their risk of getting sick by 70 percent.

Look, it doesn't take a lot of effort to be flu savvy; it just takes a commitment to work on staying healthy.

Correction

The photo of Pat-Med wrestling freshman Danny Horton featured on page 31 in last week's edition was mistakenly credited to Andrew Bacon, when it should have been credited to the photographer Ray Nelson. We apologize for the error.



'The Shape of Water'

Golden Globe winner for Best Director and Academy Award nominated for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Original Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Costume Design, Best Film Editing, Best Art Direction, Best Score, Best Sound Editing and Best Sound Mixing.

"All know that the drop merges into the ocean, but few know that the ocean merges into the drop," from Kabir, 15th-century mystic Hindu poet. I cite this poem as a lens through which to see Guillermo del Toro's latest film, "The Shape of Water," a romance between a mute woman and a foreboding, godly Amphibian Man from the sea, a kind of "Beauty and the Beast" fairy tale. The codes of society that dictate who we are often deny us the opportunity to get to know what we don't know about the world and ourselves, and instead fill us with fears, robbing us of freedom and self-discovery.

One might ask what happens to the drop, to us humans, if indeed we let the ocean come all the way in to occupy and merge? As in his other films, "Pan's Labyrinth" and "Hell Boy," del Toro's fascination with monsters as symbols of political power force us to face our innermost fears.

Some critics have dismissed this film as being an incomplete, shallow fairy tale, expecting there to be more complexity to the intimate relationship at the center of this story. Elisa Esposito, played in all its complexities by the character actor Sally Hawkins ("Happy-Go-Lucky," "Maudie," "Paddington"),

falls in love with a captured beast under scientific research at the lab where she is a maid. The Amphibian Man, played by Doug Jones, who also played the Faun in "Pan's Labyrinth" and the Angel of Death in "Hell Boy," is a god-like beast with magical healing powers, understood only by Elisa and her neighbor, a closet gay man, Giles, played by Richard Jenkins ("The Visitor"). Elisa has scratch marks on her neck that imply how she might have lost her voice. Could they be from some fantastical monster that visits her every morning in her bathtub? She seems to have an immediate private understanding with Amphibian Man. She feeds him her hard-boiled eggs and steals him away from his imminent death in order to keep him alive. She seals off her bathroom, turns on the water and indeed lets the sea merge into the drop of her existence to make love with this creature. She gets Giles to help her protect and deliver Amphibian Man back to the sea. In the end, the scratch marks on Elisa's neck turn into gills, giving her a life with the god-like monster. As a drop in the sea, she finally has a voice in another world because she let the sea into her life.

Show times Feb. 9-15: Friday, 4:45, 7:45 p.m.; Saturday, 5:30, 8:30 p.m.; Sunday, 1:30, 4:30, 7:30 p.m.; Monday, 4:30, 7:30 p.m.; Tuesday, 1:30, 4:30, 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday, 4:30, 7:30 p.m.; Thursday, 4:30 p.m. For additional films, events, and classes please visit www.plazamac.org or call the box office (631) 438-0083.

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LETTERS *Deadline is 5 p.m. on Monday*

SC loves animals

The news about heinous acts of animal abuse in Suffolk County is heartbreaking. In contrast to this type of news, I have found that there are good people in our county whose actions usually go unnoticed. I would like to share the story of two such individuals. My wonderful friend passed away two and a half years ago at the age of 92. Having no family, she doted on her three cats, JoJo, Cassie and Tippy. While she was hospitalized, her neighbor, Gail, tended to the cats every morning. She fed them, cleaned the litter, and gave them love. At 4 p.m. every day, another friend, Ralph, arrived to feed them their second meal. He spent about four hours with the cats each evening, talking to, petting and loving them. After six weeks, my friend passed away and for the following two and a half years while the estate

was being settled, Gail and Ralph continued to tend to the cats. The three stayed in the home they knew and followed the same routine they were accustomed to. Gail and Ralph did this for the cats but also to honor their late friend. In September, the house was sold. Knowing the cats were not adoptable because of their ages and knowing that her friend would have been deeply saddened by placing them in a shelter, Gail took them in, where they joined her own cat and dog. Ralph continues to visit the cats on a regular basis. After reading this story, I hope some will be encouraged to volunteer at a shelter, a rescue or even at the home of a neighbor who might need help with pet care. These activities would be wonderful projects for a class, Scouts or a club. Young people could experience the joy that comes with taking care of animals, see how the animals respond to love and, hopefully, reduce the animal abuse.

Penelope Grippo
Patchogue

Our dedicated first responders

To the residents and business owners of the Patchogue Fire Dis-

trict: We would like to inform the community of some of the work that the fire department has done in the past year. In 2017 the department responded to 660 calls for help; in 2016 the department responded to 589. That's 71 more alarms in one year. That being said, we would like you to read the following response times. Out of the 660 calls, 46 of them we responded to in less than one minute, 151 calls we responded to in less than two minutes, 183 of them in less than three minutes and 155 in less than 5 minutes. To add to this, our volunteers have put in over 10,000 hours on calls for the year; this does not include the several hundred hours of training and hundreds more in other functions related to the fire department. This could not be possible without the men and women who help protect our district. We are so proud of the work our chiefs, officers and members do day in and day out for this community. We hope that you as residents and owners are also proud of this department and continue to help support them as they keep our neighborhood safe.

Board of Fire Commissioners of
the Patchogue Fire District

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Advance

It is not our aim to tell readers what to think, but to provide them with food for thought and to make interpretive editorial comment on the news

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