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## Workshop Highlights Tax Breaks

BY MARLO JAPPEN AND CHRIS BOYLE

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Plainview resident Cila Schlanger was eager to attend a two-hour property tax workshop at the Farmingdale Public Library last week — the problem is, so were many other people.

"I was taken aback once I came here because there was such a line," she said. "I thought it would be a two-hour workshop, but individuals had to wait to be helped on a first come, first serve basis."

Residents are trying to save a buck whenever and wherever they can, especially when it comes to property taxes. To try and lend a helping hand, elected officials recently hosted a property tax exemption workshop at the library, drawing residents from across Nassau County.

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Plainview resident Cila Schlanger gets some tax help from Legislator Michael Venditto.  
(Photo by Marlo Jappen)

## Lives In Transition

BY CHRIS BOYLE

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The kids may be grown. The marriage may have not worked out. Perhaps retirement affords more free time than was anticipated.

Enter The Transition Network, an national social group featuring an active chapter on Long Island that meets regularly at the Plainview-Old Bethpage Library.

Judy Forman, Plainview resident and program co-chair, noted that The Transition Network is an organization of women ages 50 and over who are 'transitioning' into the next phase of their lives — whether it be retirement, divorce, losing a loved one or so on — and helping them to meet new people while expanding their horizons.

"We are a national organization, and on Long Island we have a chamber that has almost 500 members between Nassau and Suffolk County," she said. "The whole point of The Transition Network is to meet new people and make new friends that we might not have otherwise in our prior lives."

Hiking, photography, mah jongg, discussion groups, engaging guest speakers; the categories of interest available to members is nearly limitless, according to Forman. In addition, the group also uses its considerable membership to help the less fortunate, said program co-chair Joan Ayoub, a Massapequa resident. The Transition Network serves all manner of local charitable causes throughout Long Island.

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## Schools Seek Upgrade Committee

BY STEVE MOSCO

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Plainview school officials are looking for public input for the next round of capital improvements.

The Plainview-Old Bethpage Central School District announced the search for volunteers to serve on its Facilities Upgrade and Improvement Advisory Committee at a special Board of Education meeting held on July 16. The committee will advise and assist the District in preparing a capital improvement

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"We work a lot with children, and we're also a very active partner with local food bank Island Harvest," she said. "We've held Chinese auctions and donated the proceeds to Island Harvest, we go over to their offices and stuff envelopes...anything that is necessary. So, The Transition Network is not only a wonderful organization for people who not only want to be social, but who want to be involved in and have a positive effect upon their communities as well."

"There's an expression- 'giving is getting.' And we get so much more by what we give," Forman added. "And we really get so much joy out of helping the community...we have a knitting group that makes scarves and hats for kids and soldiers, and we recently held a prom dress drive for girls that couldn't afford their own prom dresses, accessories, and make-up. It's such a good feeling to use what we have to help others."

Claudia Cohen, a retired teacher who currently resides in Merrick, came across a notice extolling the virtues of The Transition Network three years ago and thought that it sounded like a splendid thing to check out; she's been a steadfast member ever since.



"It just spoke to me on so many levels, because it has connectivity to other women, and it has volunteerism and charitable work," she said. "The main thing that spoke to me, however, were the 'Peer Groups.' They're based around your

individual interests, and can vary anywhere from theatergoing, the arts, cooking, day trips, and more. It's engaged me personally...I've met interesting women, formed lasting friendships, and my social calendar is filled. Once the children

**The Transition Network meets at the Plainview library. (Photo by Chris Boyle)**

are grown and the nest is empty, you want to do things that are fulfilling to you, and this is a great way to do it."

Great Neck resident Arlyn Wasserberg said that The Transition Network serves an important purpose to the many older women on Long Island, truly giving many of them an entirely new perspective on life; that your later years are not the beginning of the end, but simply the start of yet another exciting chapter in the adventure of your life.

"We fill a void that exists in society, particularly on Long Island...there are not a whole lot of groups like this," she said. "I can't tell you how many women have said, 'you've saved my life.' It's an exaggeration, of course, but what they really mean is that we've enhanced their lives. These are women who have lost their structure, an organized life, and suddenly there's a void. We're 500 strong and growing, and we really make a difference in the lives of so many women."

To find out more about The Transition Network, visit [www.thetransitionnetwork.org](http://www.thetransitionnetwork.org).

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Sen. Kemp Hannon said that bringing the tax exemption workshop to the people in settings such as the Farmingdale Library was merely a logical — and more convenient — extension of the services available every day that some residents might not be aware of.

"We realized that all too often we have skipped over existing property tax exemptions that can benefit people a great deal," Hannon said. "So, we have the County Assessor's Office here with all of their experts, and we're looking at things such as Senior Citizen tax exemptions, Veteran's

tax exemptions... Anything that can help with the most dreaded tax of all, property tax."

Hannon acknowledged that the number one woe for most Long Island residents are their overbearing property taxes, which is especially true for members of the island's most vulnerable population, he said.

"It's heartbreaking... as you can see, the average age here is a bit over 70," he said. "These are people who are on fixed incomes and they don't realize that they're entitled to tax breaks, and those extra dollars are essential to keeping their lives going."

During the workshop, staff members with the County Assessor's office

were on-hand in case any attendees were first-timers or pursuing a renewal of an existing property tax exemption.

"As people become older and they have a different economic outlook," Hannon added, "they may be eligible for something that just a few years before they may not have been."

For Farmingdale resident Paul Vecchio, 68, this was just the case.

"[The workshop] was very helpful," Vecchio said. "I learned that I was eligible for benefits that I didn't even know I qualified for."

Jeanette Muirhead, 74, of Farmingdale came to take advantage of the senior benefits that she qualified for.

"They helped immensely," Muirhead said. "They were very kind and walked me through the process step-by-step."

John Sficos added that he feels property taxes are too high as it is and wanted to see if he was getting the most of his benefits. "I came here to see if I'm getting the primary benefits that I can get," Sficos said.

Also on hand at the workshop were legislators Michael Venditto and Rose Marie Walker.

"People can come to Mineola, but we really found that we can help our residents within their communities... especially some of the seniors, for

whom a trip all the way to Mineola might be a bit much for them," she said. "But they can come here with their paperwork, sit with someone from the Assessment Office who will go over everything, and get their questions answered. It's really been very beneficial to our residents."

Alberto Almonte of Hicksville was recently a victim of a scam involving unscrupulous individuals offering to save him money on his taxes for a fee. Instead, he was taken for a ride to the tune of several hundred dollars with nothing to show for it, he said. His next stop- Farmingdale's Tax Exemption Workshop, where he was hoping to achieve more legitimate avenues of financial assistance.

"I would like to take advantage of the opportunity that the county is offering to us...I just came from a very bad experience with people who I ended up paying for no reason, and I was taken advantage of. People must be very careful of swindlers like that," he said. "I'm now in the neighborhood, I'm learning and want to be a part of the community, and I saw the letters from the local politicians about this Workshop. They have helped me a lot today."

Applications and specific documentation requirements are available on the Department of Assessment website at [www.mynassauproperty.com](http://www.mynassauproperty.com).

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