

Summer savings section -inside



Pavinelli shines in national spotlight

-see story, page 23



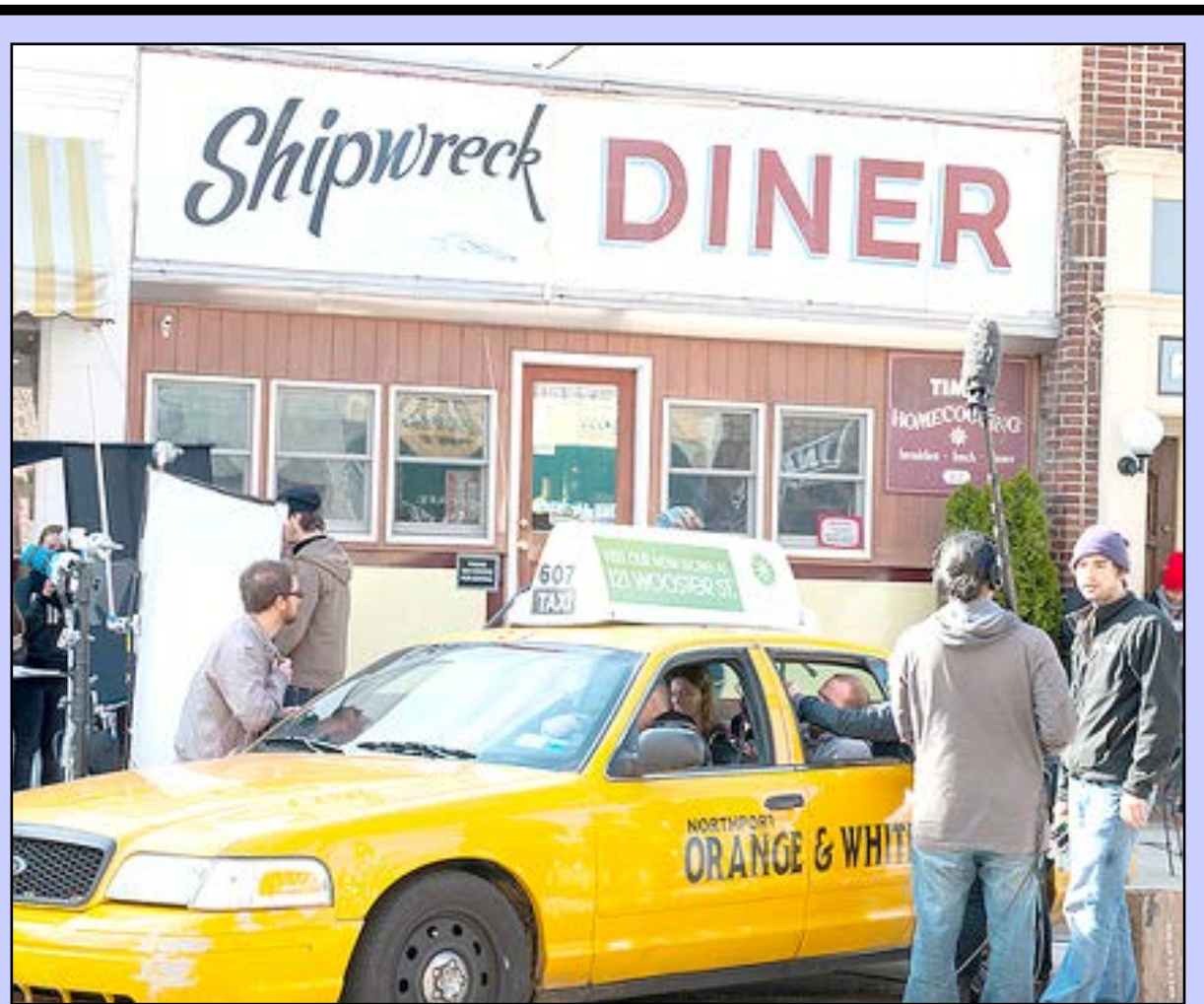
LIRR strike looms, page 2



# The Observer

NORTHPORT'S COMMUNITY WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

86TH YEAR, No. 30 JULY 17, 2014 75 CENTS



**FINAL CUT:** After years of production, including scenes filmed at Tim's Shipwreck Diner on Main Street in Northport, Grace, a film by Northport High School graduate Marisa Vitali is edited and ready to be released. See story, page 7.

## Courtroom commotion

Judge moving Monday sessions from Village Hall to Legion Hall with air conditioning on the fritz

By DAVID AMBRO

Northport Village Justice Paul Senzer, calling conditions at Northport Village Hall on Main Street oppressive and inhumane, has moved Monday night Northport Village Justice Court sessions to the Northport American Legion Hall on Woodside Avenue.

During an interview this week, Judge Senzer said the air conditioning system at the village hall building has been broken all summer and that the temperature in the building during court has violated OSHA regulations. Judge Senzer met with American Legion representatives Tuesday, July 15 and said they have agreed to allow him to hold justice court Monday nights at no charge until the fall. The Legion Hall, Judge Senzer pointed out, is just up the block from Village Hall.

"Judge Senzer, his staff and District Attorney Bill Reynolds are all extremely professional," said Northport attorney David Badanes, a Northport-East Northport School Board trustee. "Unfortunately, the lack of air conditioning in the courtroom is intolerable and I support Judge Senzer's decision to temporarily move the proceedings."

"I agree with the judge. He called it 'inhumane,' is the word he used," said Northport attorney Edward Yule.

Mr. Yule practices regularly in Northport Village Justice Court and he was in the courtroom at Northport Village Hall Monday, July 14. "It is inhumane," he said. "It was packed with people and everybody was suffering. Something has to be done."

"There is serious stuff going on down there and people should be able to concentrate on that," Mr. Yule said.

(Continued on page 8)

## Request records about Brosnankitchen project

By DAVID AMBRO

In an attempt to obtain additional details about the project to gut the kitchen at the William Brosnan School on Laurel Avenue in Northport Village, **The Observer** this week has requested documents related to the project from the Northport-East Northport School District.

In June outgoing Northport-East Northport School Board Trustee Joseph Sabia stumbled upon the kitchen project when he went to the school and saw two dumpsters behind the building filled with the discarded equipment from the

kitchen. Mr. Sabia raised questions of then School Board President Steven Waldenburg, Jr. and administrators about the project. Since the work had never come before the school board, and since he considered there to be resale or scrap value to the equipment being discarded, Mr. Sabia wanted to know who authorized the work and what happened to the kitchen equipment.

Mr. Sabia's three-year term on the school board expired June 30. Concerned that he was never provided with an explanation of the kitchen equipment that he had asked for, he attended the

July 2 school board meeting and asked for a public explanation. During his presentation to the school board, Mr. Sabia demanded to know what happened to the kitchen equipment, what revenue the district received, and what happened to the money.

In response, Superintendent Marylou McDermott told Mr. Sabia that the kitchen had been gutted so that the space can be used for storage of equipment by the internet technology (IT) department. She also said the use of the kitchen space for IT storage will free up much needed

(Continued on page 14)

NEWS FLASH: Superintendent response to kitchen concerns, page 5



# Film featuring Shipwreck Diner ready for run in festival circuit

By EMILY MANCINI

In October of 2012, aspiring Northport actress and producer Marisa Vitali approached the Northport Village Board with a deeply personal proposal.

After struggling with a heroin addiction in her early twenties, Ms. Vitali, a Northport native, requested to film a movie about her personal experiences with recovery at a particularly special location: Tim's Shipwreck Diner on Main Street in Northport. The Village Board approved her request, waiving the \$1,000 permit fee so that Ms. Vitali could put the money towards the cost of production.

Now, Ms. Vitali has announced that her film, symbolically titled "Grace," has completed its post-production phase and is ready to be submitted to film festivals at the local and international level.

Ms. Vitali grew up in Asharoken and graduated from Northport High School in 1994, where she was heavily involved in Theatre Troop and school musicals. After high school, she attended New York University Tisch School of the Arts. It was

after she moved to the city that her substance addiction began. Ms. Vitali underwent treatment at Daytop Village Inc., a substance abuse facility in Rhinebeck, New York, followed by a day program in Huntington Station. She has been clean for twelve years since.

Ms. Vitali spent her first year clean on Long Island, working at the iconic Shipwreck Diner in Northport, which is what makes the location so meaningful to her. "The Shipwreck Diner is important to me because I worked there during my first year clean, in recovery it's often called 'The Miracle Year.' That's when I was really experiencing recovery, life on life's terms, without using. So the Shipwreck Diner was really a source of my inspiration for making a film about recovery. Looking back on it, I couldn't imagine shooting the film anywhere else."

'Grace' tells the story of Janice, played by Vitali, a single mother involved in a custody battle with her powerful ex-husband over their daughter. A recovering addict, Janice must face the demons of addiction as she

tries to balance the stress of her waitressing job at the Depot Diner and her duties as a mother. The cast includes Stephanie Brait, Chris Kerson, Zach Grenier, and Alysia Reiner of 'Orange is the New Black' fame.

Ms. Vitali said she hopes the film will inspire conversation about recovery and raise awareness of the issue. "I wanted to focus the story on hope and recovery, rebuilding relationships and lives after addiction. Anyone can watch a film about shooting dope or smoking a crack pipe. I wanted to tell a story of hope and recovery, to bridge that gap between addicts and non-addicts and start that conversation of recovery. Once we allow for that conversation to happen, to talk about addiction and recovery without judgment or doubt, then people will be able to heal. If we choose not to talk about it, people suffer in silence until it's too late."

Ms. Vitali is also working with non-profit recovery organizations to create a teaching guide structured around the film to help those in recovery. Northport



Marisa Vitali (left) during filming of Grace at Tim's Shipwreck Diner.

Village Mayor George Doll put Ms. Vitali in contact with Anthony Ferrandino of the Northport-East Northport Drug and Alcohol Task Force, and together they are brainstorming ways to use the film in the future to reach out to local residents and generate discussion about addiction and recovery. With heroin-related arrests on Long Island up by a record 163% in just the last year, outreach on the local level could prove to be immensely beneficial.

Returning home to Northport to film was an emotional, inspiring and exciting experience for Vitali, her cast and crew. The diner's owner, Tim Hess, was extremely generous and supportive, often preparing food for the actors to eat on and off set.

"They really extended the Northport hospitality," Vitali said. "Everyone was so excited to come to Northport and shoot there, they really enjoyed it. Tim made the best breakfast.

It was an amazing time, and at the end of shooting Tim gave everyone a Shipwreck Diner mug and they were all so excited about it."

'Grace' isn't the first movie to be filmed at Tim's Shipwreck Diner; Frank Oz's 1997 film 'In & Out,' featuring Tom Selleck, Kevin Cline and Joan Cusack, shot several of its scenes in the landmark railroad car restaurant.

Though 'Grace' is her "heart project," Ms. Vitali has also been working on a web series for the summer and recently guest starred for a new TV show that will air in October.

To celebrate the completion of the post-production phase, 'Grace' has launched its own website at [www.grace-the-movie.com](http://www.grace-the-movie.com). For more information and updates on potential screenings, 'like' the official Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/GraceTheMovie](http://www.facebook.com/GraceTheMovie) or follow the official Twitter page at [www.twitter.com/grace\\_the\\_movie](http://www.twitter.com/grace_the_movie).

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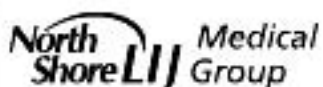


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