

WESTCHESTER COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

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NONPROFIT WESTCHESTER: IT'S NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S LIBRARY!



Joanna Straub
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Nonprofit
Westchester

Today's library is a hub of activity for everyone and for all ages – from infants to mid-career professionals to seniors. It provides the cornerstone for an educated society, allowing everyone to reach his or her full potential.

Of course, you can still walk into any Westchester public library (there are 44 public library locations in 38 communities) and find stacks of books, including The New York Times Bestsellers. But you will also find your neighbors participating in all kinds of activities.

There will be preschoolers learning to read in bilingual story-time classes, teens hanging out in specially designed areas where they can learn coding, robotics or virtual reality or just relax; middle schoolers in STEM Camp; and adults taking an art class with a teaching artist.

Some are there just for the free WiFi. Others come to take part in an eight-week Managing Your Career in Changing Times seminar led by a professional career counselor. Others might be there to meet with a senior benefits counselor to learn more about Medicare and other benefits for seniors.

For corporations and small businesses

alike, the library provides an added resource for its employees, expanding their range of expertise in a number of skills.

Today's library stretches beyond the building's walls with many library resources available 24/7 on your tablet, phone or PC. With a few clicks and your library card you can access a language class (**Mango Language** – more than 70 languages are available), build your proficiency in MS Powerpoint or finally learn how to use your digital camera and much more with **Lynda.com**; check your investments with **Morningstar**; or get health information with **X-Plain Health Education**.

All this is yours with your library card, a valuable resource allows everyone in our community to thrive. If you don't have a card – get one. It's the most valuable card in your wallet. To find out more, go to www.westchesterlibraries.org.

Westchester Library System and its affiliates are all members of Nonprofit Westchester. To find out more about Nonprofit Westchester, visit www.npwestchester.org, and follow us on Facebook.com/[npwestchester](https://www.facebook.com/npwestchester) and Twitter [@NPWestchester](https://twitter.com/NPWestchester).

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Hey Alexa, what's Burbio? Pelham calendar app grows with voice tech

Colleen Wilson, cwilson2@lohud.com 12:56 p.m. ET March 30, 2017

Burbio grew from having calendar information for four municipalities to more than 200 in 18 months.



(Photo: Ricky Flores/The Journal News)

PELHAM - Dennis and Julie Roche are like most parents — they run their four kids around town to the never-ending, constantly changing commitments like soccer practice, band rehearsal and school plays.

But keeping track of every time and place in a digital world was a frustrating task with each school, organization and sport keeping a different calendar on individual websites and in varying formats.

So, they built a solution.

In 2014, the couple launched a digital master calendar platform called Burbio where users type in their ZIP code and tailor a personal calendar — that can be accessed on an iPhone or web browser — based on their kids' schools, local libraries and other organizations like concert halls or museums.

[EDUCATION: Teens take over school help desk \(/story/news/education/2016/10/25/briarcliff-teens-take-over-high-school-help-desk/92313900/\)](/story/news/education/2016/10/25/briarcliff-teens-take-over-high-school-help-desk/92313900/)

[CHAPPAQUA: Locals make app to tackle campus sexual assault \(/story/news/education/2016/08/16/chappaqua-locals-make-app-tackle-campus-sex-assault/88508844/\)](/story/news/education/2016/08/16/chappaqua-locals-make-app-tackle-campus-sex-assault/88508844/)

[PELHAM: Superintendent resigns \(/story/news/education/2017/02/15/pelham-superintendent-resigns/97966914/\)](/story/news/education/2017/02/15/pelham-superintendent-resigns/97966914/)

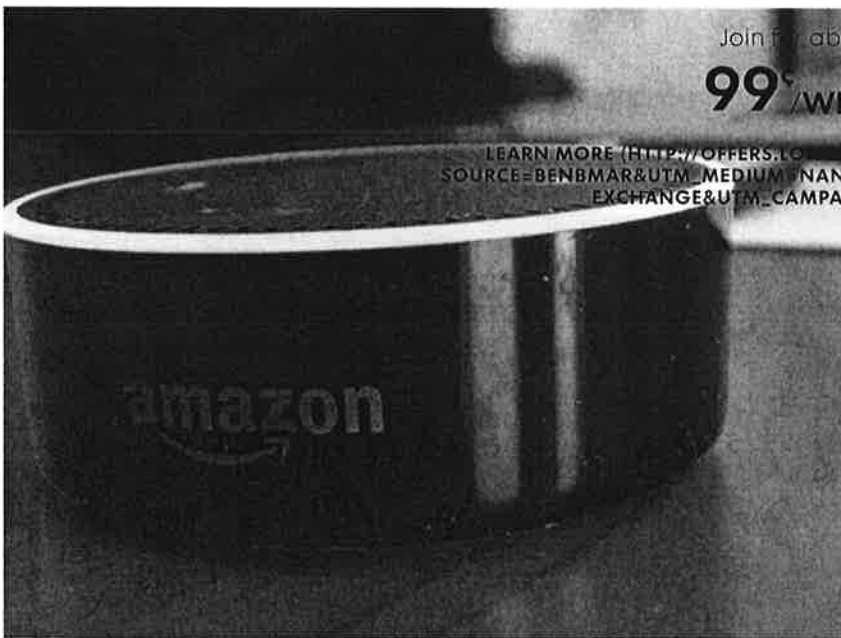
"We basically figured out how to take all of those different things and put them into one place, and make it really consistent so our users have one standard easy way" to access the information, said Julie Roche. "They learn Burbio, and that's it."

From the company's headquarters at the historic Pelham Post Office building, Burbio grew from having calendar information for four municipalities to more than 200 in 18 months. Today, they have 150,000 subscribers using the service in suburban communities in five states, including New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The goal for the start-up — which employs 12 people, half of whom are part-time — is to grow to a national scale.

One way of accelerating that process occurred to the Roches this winter when they kept seeing TV advertisements for "Alexa."

Alexa is Amazon's counterpart to Siri that is part of the booming voice technology sector where individuals can speak to their devices — in this case, an Amazon Echo — and get information.



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Alexa is Amazon's counterpart to Siri that is part of the booming voice technology sector where individuals can speak to their devices — in this case, an Amazon Echo — and get information. (Photo: Ricky Flores/The Journal News)

"It became clear that this voice category was exploding," Dennis Roche said. "Schools are using them in the classroom, a lot of our friends or friends of friends have them, so we started realizing that there was great penetration among the towns that we were already in."

Over the winter, the Roches reached out to Amazon, were assigned an account manager, and then coded an Alexa "skill" — which is the voice equivalent of an app — so that anyone with an Echo can access Burbio on it.

When Echo users are picking skills they want to ask their device, like weather, history or home functions like turning on or off house lights, they can turn on the Burbio skill to ask about local events.

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Picture the mother running behind, trying to finish up the dishes and needs to know what time her next local event is, and has an Echo sitting nearby on the counter.

Out loud that mother could say: "Hey Alexa, ask Burbio what time Pelham High School's soccer practice is?" And the Echo, which looks like a small, inconspicuous paper weight, would respond with the answer.

"It's about real information," Julie Roche said. "So voice (technology) is just really kind of the perfect way to ask, search and get your answer quickly and move on."



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Dennis and Julie Roche, co-founders of Burbio, at their office in Pelham. (Photo: Ricky Flores/The Journal News)

Terry Kirchner, executive director of the Westchester Library System, said he immediately saw the potential for connecting voice technology, calendars and libraries.

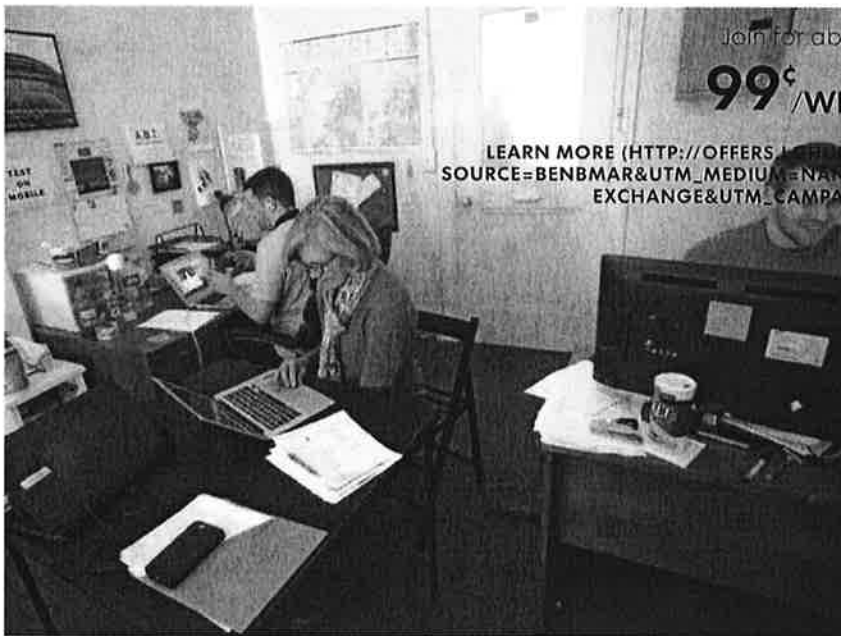
"At the moment, the relationship will be an individual could be at home and ask Alexa, 'Is my local library having any special events?' and you'll be able to hear that and get that information immediately" with the Burbio skill, Kirchner said. But down the line, he added, "We could have someone order a book from home, just using their voice."

About 150 companies and groups advertise on Burbio, mostly local businesses, Realtors and education services, and that is the company's main income.

Eventually, the cofounders said, they may charge a nominal fee for businesses to advertise their events, like a local wine store that may have tastings once a month. Right now, the Roches already added some businesses on Burbio for free, like The Capitol Theatre in Port Chester.

Stefanie May, marketing director at The Capitol, said she had never heard of Burbio, even though the concert venue's calendar appears on the platform.

"It seems like it's free advertising for us so that's pretty awesome," May said. "As a business, it would be cool if we could set up a profile ... (Burbio) seems like a great initial idea, seems like the possibilities could be endless."



The staff of Burbio at their office in Pelham. (Photo: Ricky Flores/The Journal News)

Expanding Burbio's calendars from schools, municipalities and libraries to adding commercial businesses and events could bring a younger generation into using the product, the cofounders said.

"Voice is kind of a new and emerging technology. It's so convenient, it's on demand, it's on time and it's kind of the wave of the current generation of folks and how they want to be communicated with," Julie Roche said. "We want Burbio to be the answer to when, and that's kind of always been the goal ... so we're very excited."

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Mt Vernon Residents Fight For MVPL To Keep Its Central Library Status

Friends Of Mount Vernon Public Library Vow Not To Lose Central Library Status Without A Fight!

Posted on March 29, 2017 by AJ Woodson in BW News



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Elmsford, NY – When word spread that the Mount Vernon Public Library could lose its status as the central library of Westchester, the community came out in full force in support of the MVPL. 50 or so elected officials, community stakeholders and residents heard the rallying cry to stop the Westchester Library Systems (570 Taxter Rd #400, Elmsford) from voting to strip the MVPL of Central Library status responded. They shared their support and let the trustees know just how much the MVPL means to the community.

PEOPLE POLITICS Every Sunday 3PM- 5PM
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A dozen or so people got up and spoke one after the other including former State Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (who informed she had her library card for 70 years since she was four-years-old), County Legislators Lyndon Williams and David J. Tubiolo, Delia Farquharson, Jamie Pessin gave one of the greatest brief speeches of the night, speaking on the importance of the MVPL and keeping its Central Library status, longtime library employee Cathy Webb, Interim MVPL Director Evania Thompson, Library Board Trustee Brian Johnson, and Library Board President Oscar Davis all made their case why the MVPL should keep its Central Library status.

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Wood Harris on Growing Up in Chicago, Effects of Crack Era vs. Today's Drugs [Vlad TV]

by AJ Woodson in Culture & Community Actor Wood Harris is responsible for portraying some of the most fascinating, compelling characters in recent television and film history, from his long-term work on The Wire Read More

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After hearing from everyone who spoke, the board decided they may need to take another look at the situation before making their decision. So instead of the vote being the number one item on the agenda, they shelved the vote and instead voted for a sub-committee to look further into it, before voting. If the board thought this was going to be an easy action, the residents of Mount Vernon let them know they were there to fight for their library.

The Board decided to push back the vote until September but agreed to come to an upcoming open house and check out the MVPL. Even if it turns out to only be a temporary delay of the inevitable, Mount Vernon residents put it on record that they are not going out without a fight. The MVPL's Central Library status vote may have just been pushed back until September, because of the pressure and presence of the press and public. It could have been an effort to postpone the decision, but if they think they will sneak in that vote without the public, one speaker had a word of warning to board;

"Mount Vernon is 70,000 deep and what you see here is nothing, we can and will come back in greater numbers every time if we have to," longtime MVPL employee Cathy Webb said to the board in closing.

If you want to show your support for keeping the Mount Vernon Public Library as the Central Library, you can write a letter to:

Catherine A. Draper, President
 Westchester Library System
 570 Taxter Road – Suite 400
 Elmsford, NY 10523

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AJ Woodson is the Editor-In-Chief of Black Westchester and Co-Owner of Urban Soul Media Group, the parent company. AJ is a Father, Author, Writer, Rapper, Radio Personality, Hip-Hop Historian and A Freelance Journalist whose byline has appeared in several print publications and online sites including The Source, Vibe, the Village Voice, Upscale, Sonicnet.com, Launch.com, Rolling Out Newspaper, Spiritual Minded Magazine and several others.

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NEWS

Mount Vernon Public Library could lose central library designation



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The Mount Vernon Public Library could lose its designation as the central library of Westchester. (3/28/17)

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Updated March 28, 2017 10:47 PM

MOUNT VERNON - The Mount Vernon Public Library could lose its designation as the central library of Westchester.

libraries in Westchester - there are 38 - the opportunity to submit a proposal to become the central library.

Education

Employees at the Mount Vernon library, along with Mount Vernon officials, said at a meeting Tuesday evening at the Westchester Library Headquarters in Elmsford that losing the designation would be a blow to the community.

They say the library provides extensive databases and has copies of books that are rarely circulated.

After roughly a dozen people spoke at the meeting, the board decided to table the vote and form a subcommittee so they can get all their questions answered.

Another meeting is scheduled for September.

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