

# NORTHERN WESTCHESTER EXPRESS

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## District offers 'responsible' plan

In Katonah-Lewisboro, a dozen jobs face cuts in \$111 million budget

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LEWISBORO — Spending would rise by 1.69 percent and roughly a dozen jobs would be lost under the Katonah-Lewisboro school district's proposed \$111 million budget.

About half of those would be layoffs while the other jobs are being

cut through attrition or lowering some employees' hours, acting Superintendent Michael Jumper said.

The district has lost more than 90 positions in three years, including those proposed in the 2011-12 budget, Jumper said.

"We have really trimmed the staff down to what we need to be at," Jumper said.

A few jobs would be eliminated by the district's plans to move its administrative offices from the high school to Increase Miller Elementary School, according to the district's budget synopsis. The spend-

ing proposal also cuts maintenance workers, special-education teachers and teaching assistants.

District officials said in an 11-page budget outline that it's facing familiar challenges as some costs spike and revenues remain under pressure.

For example, the district is facing a roughly \$2 million projected increase in its employee retirement contributions and a \$1.7 million rise in health insurance costs.

Interest income is expected to drop \$60,000 and state aid is expected to drop about \$340,000, ac-

ording to the district's figures. County sales-tax receipts are expected to be flat.

"I think it's a very difficult budget environment," Jumper said. "I've been doing this for 11 years, and the last two or three years have been the most difficult budget environments I've ever experienced."

School board President Michael Gordon said more cuts beyond those already being proposed would have a very serious impact on programs.

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### INSIDE



### Making his mark

Mount Kisco's Matt Brophy will be a key player on the Gettysburg College football team in the fall, when he enters his junior year. 4

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Class sizes grow and the staff shrinks under the proposed Chappaqua Central School District budget proposal. 8

### ON THE WEB



### Your community

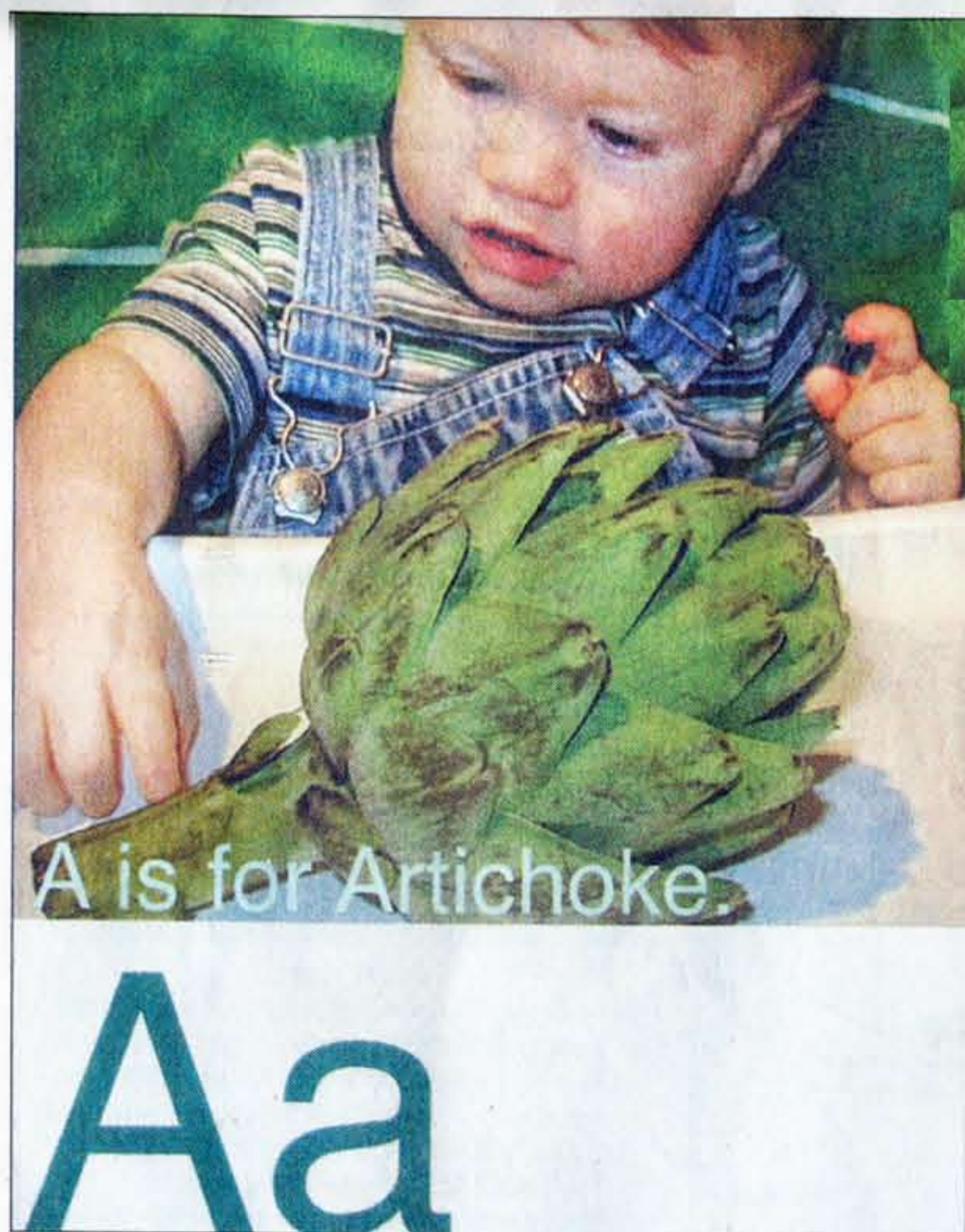
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Photos by Seth Harrison/The Journal News

Chris Cunniffe and his wife, Jane Hanstein Cunniffe, are creators of PROJECTAlphabet.com, a free Web-based app that lets people make their own alphabet book using their pictures and copy. The two appear in their Pleasantville home.



A sample of the PROJECTALPHABET.COM application.

## Alphabet app lets you build a book

Web-based offering helps make learning more fun for kids

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PLEASANTVILLE — Ideas have a way of mushrooming out of Jane Hanstein Cunniffe's head.

Cunniffe's conversations almost impulsively veer into side notes — "I haven't colored my hair in 20 years," the gray-haired woman of 50 says — and yet she has managed to stay the course on converting her many sparks of inspiration into tangible products.

Cunniffe, a former creative director at an advertising agency and now a freelance copywriter, is the brains behind PROJECTAlphabet.com, a free Web-based applica-

tion that lets people create alphabet books, counting books and calendars using their own pictures and copy.

"Kids love to look at themselves in the mirror, so if they see their own pictures in a book, it makes learning that much more fun," Cunniffe said.

She, along with her husband, Chris, 40, who takes care of all the back-end business, have created a site that has won praise from many, including Martha Stewart Baby, Parents.com and Reader's Digest.

Back in 1999, Cunniffe, then 39, was a new stay-at-home mom, caring for her son Harry.

"It can be stressful when you are home all day, especially if you have been in a creative field and have no outlet," Cunniffe said, explaining the genesis of her idea.

Looking through the piles of

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# APP: Website wins praise

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photos of her son that she had taken, she was struck by a photo of Henry catching a reflection of himself in a four-way mirror.

“‘That’s number four,’ I thought,” said Cunniffe, who almost instantly came up with an idea for a counting book as well as an alphabet book using red-headed Henry’s pictures.

That Cunniffe didn’t have much luck getting the books published (“Alphabet books are over,” her literary agent apparently told her) didn’t stop her from continuing on the journey and coming up with new ideas, including, “Henry’s Book of Cliches.”

Eight of them from the book — including photos of Henry paired with the sayings “Don’t cry over spilled milk” and “Piece of cake” — were made into Notecards by teNeues Publishing in 2004 and sold at museum stores internationally.

In 2001, when her second son, Eli, was born, Cunniffe launched 2ndBorn.com, a concept for a coffee table book and website celebrating famous second-born people, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Martin Scorsese.

As the digital camera revolution took hold, Cunniffe said she and Chris realized it would be great to have a software application that lets people make their own books.

“New moms are a captive

## FYI

Pleasantville’s Bedford Road School Alphabet can be found at [www.smilinggoat.com/alphabets.html](http://www.smilinggoat.com/alphabets.html)

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<http://northernwestchester.localnewsblogs.com>. Follow the blog and local news on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/Nwestchester>

audience. They’re always looking for things to do with their kids,” said Chris Cunniffe, a manager of Internet fundraising at the March of Dimes in White Plains, about developing PROJECTalphabet.com.

“This gives them a project to do, and they get to have the same experience Jane was having,” he continued.

Elsa Berndt, a camp director for Camp Lakey Gap, a summer camp for children and adults with autism in Black Mountain, N.C., has linked to the program on the camp’s website.

“People with autism are very visual learners, and the more concrete and personal the learning can be, the more likely they will pick up the skills,” Berndt said.

And since many people

“New moms are a captive audience. They’re always looking for things to do with their kids.”

**Chris Cunniffe,**

manager of Internet fundraising, March of Dimes, White Plains

with autism tend to have a spike around certain areas of interest, the project could be made around topics, Berndt said.

“The idea is simple, yet so useful,” Berndt said.

Cunniffe has never been short on buzz. Her various projects, including an art installation — which lasted a few minutes — of orange cheddar cheese crackers on a Central Park footbridge spoofing Christo’s and Jeanne-Claude’s “Gates” a few feet away, was written up in The New York Times and featured on CNN.

To visit Cunniffe’s website, SmilingGoat.com, is to be bombarded by plans for future development, from gray-girls.com, Plasticbagbag.com to V is for Vince Vaughn (yes, an alliteration project).

So does this mean the couple can quit their day jobs?

“Right now, it involves Chris and I working on projects late into the night making 10 cents,” Cunniffe said. “But hopefully, corporate partnership is just right around the corner.”